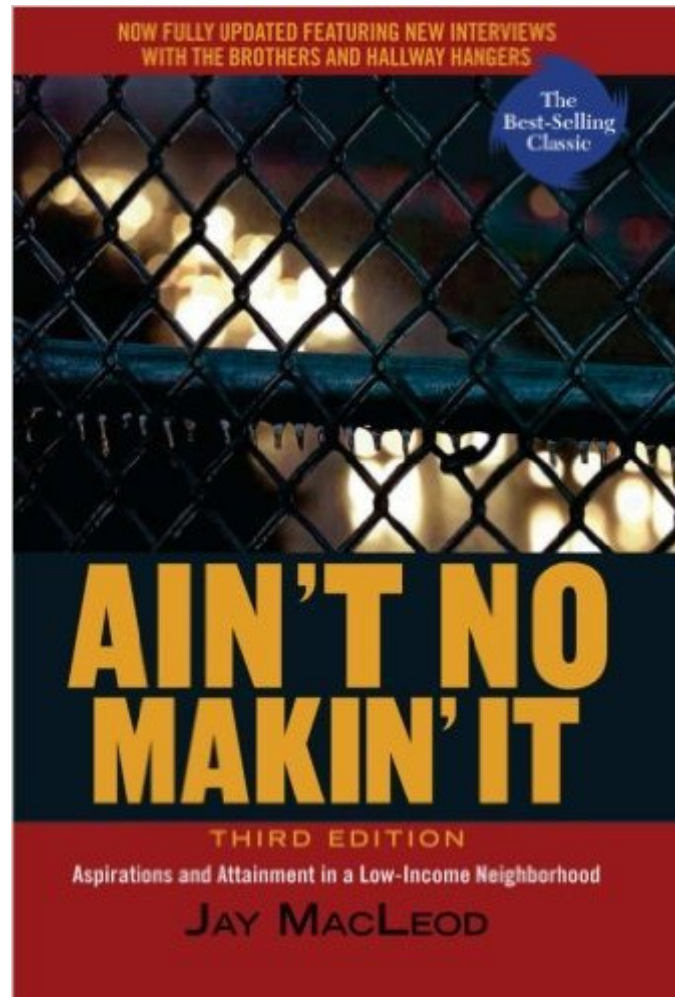


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# Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations And Attainment In A Low-Income Neighborhood, 3rd Edition



## Synopsis

Â This classic text addresses one of the most important issues in modern social theory and policy: how social inequality is reproduced from one generation to the next. With the original 1987 publication of *Ain't No Makin' It* Jay MacLeod brought us to the Clarendon Heights housing project where we met the "Brothers" and the "Hallway Hangers." Their story of poverty, race, and defeatism moved readers and challenged ethnic stereotypes. MacLeod's return eight years later, and the resulting 1995 revision, revealed little improvement in the lives of these men as they struggled in the labor market and crime-ridden underground economy. Â The third edition of this classic ethnography of social reproduction brings the story of inequality and social mobility into today's dialogue. Now fully updated with thirteen new interviews from the original Hallway Hangers and Brothers, as well as new theoretical analysis and comparison to the original conclusions, *Ain't No Makin' It* remains an admired and invaluable text. Â ContentsÂ Part One: The Hallway Hangers and the Brothers as Teenagers 1. Social Immobility in the Land of Opportunity 2. Social Reproduction in Theoretical Perspective 3. Teenagers in Clarendon Heights: The Hallway Hangers and the Brothers 4. The Influence of the Family 5. The World of Work: Aspirations of the Hangers and Brothers 6. School: Preparing for the Competition 7. Leveled Aspirations: Social Reproduction Takes Its Toll 8. Reproduction Theory Reconsidered Part Two: Eight Years Later: Low Income, Low Outcome 9. The Hallway Hangers: Dealing in Despair 10. The Brothers: Dreams Deferred 11. Conclusion: Outclassed and Outcast(e) Part Three: *Ain't No Makin' It*? 12. The Hallway Hangers: Fighting for a Foothold at Forty 13. The Brothers: Barely Making It 14. Making Sense of the Stories, by Katherine McClelland and David Karen

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I read this book from cover to cover (which, in its current edition, is quite some doing) and was absorbed by the reality of the stories all the way through. It's not always the easiest book to read, but the fact that the author really immersed himself in the lives and world of his subjects for several years, seeking to truly understand them, is evident on every page. Tracking two groups of lower-class men from 'the projects' (one black and one white) for more than twenty-five years, the book remains the gold standard for exploring the issue of social mobility over the life course in the United States. That the original edition was written before the author even graduated from college, and that he went on to a career as a parish priest instead of an academic sociologist, makes it all the more impressive. The author does have his own biases, but he never draws conclusions that aren't supported by the evidence. And the evidence is overwhelming: it usually takes more than a 'good attitude' or a 'strong work ethic' to get ahead in America. It also takes many of the substantive and symbolic resources that middle-class children take for granted, yet middle-class parents are careful to pass down to them. Meanwhile, the mistakes and poor choices that middle-class youth easily overcome can be devastating for poor youth, starting a downward spiral from which it is very difficult to recover. Lastly, this book describes in vivid detail what all the statistics report: that, on average, poor black children have more ambition than poor white children.

My rating above is on the text as a whole. If you are a student looking to buy this for a class, consider the note at the end of my review. I do NOT factor that content into my rating, but it may keep you from making the same mistake I did. *Ain't No Makin'* It is an ethnography following the lives of two groups of boys growing up in Clarendon Heights, a public housing development in Massachusetts. Jay MacLeod considers the differing aspirations of the two groups of boys: one composed primarily of blacks and one composed primarily of whites. He began his studies of these boys in the 1980s and follows up again with them in 1991 and finally in 2006. Applying sociological techniques, he both documents the specific actions and comments of the boys and also considers these observations in the light of various social reproduction theories. The book contains raw, honest documentation of the boys' lives. It is clear that MacLeod spent an incredible amount of time with the subjects and built deep relationships with them. It is particularly useful to gain a perspective of the challenges faced by the urban poor trying to make their way in the job market. However, at times the book feels repetitive and drawn out. MacLeod seems to restate some points

excessively. The book contains substantial portions of dialogue, which are full of profanity. While he is only accurately quoting the boys, the language does make it difficult to read at times.-----For STUDENTS looking to buy this for class: You can frequently get by and save money by purchasing a slightly older version of a text. Not so here. I purchased the 2nd edition thinking I would cleverly beat my bookstore and save on costs. Unfortunately, I did not research my purchase well.

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