



The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis

Professor Jerald E. Podair

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On 9th May 1968, junior high school teacher Fred Nauman received a letter that would change the history of New York City. It informed him that he had been fired from his job. Eighteen other educators in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville area of Brooklyn received similar letters that day. The dismissed educators were white. The local school board that fired them was predominantly African-American. The crisis that the firings provoked became the most racially divisive moment in the city in more than a century, sparking three teachers' strikes and increasingly angry confrontations between black and white New Yorkers at bargaining tables, on picket lines, and in the streets. This study revisits the Ocean Hill-Brownsville crisis - a watershed in modern New York City race relations. Jerald Podair connects the conflict with the sociocultural history of the city and explores its legacy. The work presents a sobering tale of racial misunderstanding and fear, a New York story with national implications.

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