



## Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men (Legacies of Social Thought Series)

By Elliott Liebow

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### Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men (Legacies of Social Thought Series) By Elliott Liebow

The first edition of *Tally's Corner*, a sociological classic selling more than one million copies, was the first compelling response to the culture of poverty thesis—that the poor are different and, according to conservatives, morally inferior—and alternative explanations that many African Americans are caught in a tangle of pathology owing to the absence of black men in families. The debate has raged up to the present day. Yet Liebow's shadow theory of values—especially the values of poor, urban, black men—remains the single most parsimonious account of the reasons why the behavior of the poor appears to be at odds with the values of the American mainstream.

While Elliot Liebow's vivid narrative of "street-corner" black men remains unchanged, the new introductions to this long-awaited revised edition bring the book up to date. Wilson and Lemert describe the debates since 1965 and situate Liebow's classic text in respect to current theories of urban poverty and race. They account for what Liebow might have seen had he studied the street corner today after welfare has been virtually ended and the drug economy had taken its toll. They also take stock of how the new global economy is a source of added strain on the urban poor. Discussion of field methods since the 1960s rounds out the book's new coverage.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

*Tally's Corner* is an important book for anyone seeking to understand America. (Herbert Gans, author of *Democracy and the News*)

Whenever and wherever people come out of the dark to face the shadow of America's befuddled relation to the Black man of the city, *Tally's Corner* is somewhere on the penumbra of consciousness, serving as a lifeline against the currents of ill-informed racist blather about urban poverty. . . . The story of the Black man of the city is ultimately the story of the modern city itself, and in turn of the postmodern global economy. It is a story that is nowhere near its final chapter. (Charles Lemert, Andrus Professor of Sociology, Wesleyan University)

From Reviews of the First Edition: Elliot Liebow is an honest and talented anthropologist who can see clearly, feel unashamedly, and write a straight lively sentence. His book, *Tally's Corner* . . . emerges as a valuable and even surprising triumph. ?Sunday New York Times This is a sharp, hard-hitting observation of a segment of life and society in action. ?Washington Star Nothing short of brilliant?a work of importance ?Daniel Patrick Moynihan

The true mark of a classic book is whether it can withstand the test of time. [Liebow's] arguments concerning the work experience and family life of black street-corner men in a Washington, D.C. ghetto still ring true today. . . . In the last three decades, low-skilled African-American males have encountered greater difficulty gaining access to jobs, even menial jobs. (William Julius Wilson, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geysler University Professor, Harvard University)

From Reviews of the First Edition:Elliot Liebow is an honest and talented anthropologist who can see clearly, feel unashamedly, and write a straight lively sentence. His book, *Tally's Corner* . . . emerges as a valuable and even surprising triumph.?Sunday New York TimesThis is a sharp, hard-hitting observation of a segment of life and society in action.?Washington StarNothing short of brilliant?a work of importance?Daniel Patrick Moynihan

It's a remarkable book, an academic work - it grew out of Liebow's doctoral thesis - that isn't dry or boring. It's an in-depth look at a group of men who routinely hung out on a Washington street corner in the early 1960s. These are poor men, flawed men, unemployed and underemployed men. But they are treated with respect. And although Liebow used pseudonyms, giving the men such names as Tally, Sea Cat, Richard and Leroy, they come across as flesh-and-blood individuals. When *Tally's Corner* was published in 1967, the New York Times called it "a valuable and even surprising triumph." The late senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) called it "nothing short of brilliant." (*The Washington Post*)

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About the Author

**Elliot Liebow** (1925-1994) served as chief of the Center for the Study of Work and Mental Health of the National Institute of Mental Health. Liebow wrote *Tally's Corner* as his Ph.D. dissertation at the Catholic University of America. He also published *Tell Them Who I Am*, a study of homeless women in America, in 1993.

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#### **Betty Sanchez:**

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