



# **Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood (Morality and Society Series)**

*Omar M. McRoberts*

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Long considered the lifeblood of urban African American neighborhoods, churches are held up as institutions dedicated to serving their surrounding communities. Omar McRoberts's work in Four Corners, however, reveals a very different picture. One of the toughest neighborhoods in Boston, Four Corners also contains twenty-nine churches, mostly storefront congregations, within its square half-mile radius. In McRoberts's hands, this area teaches a startling lesson about the relationship between congregations and neighborhoods that will be of interest to everyone concerned with the revitalization of the inner city.

McRoberts finds, for example, that most of the churches in Four Corners are attended and run by people who do not live in the neighborhood but who worship there because of the low overhead. These churches, McRoberts argues, are communities in and of themselves, with little or no attachment to the surrounding area. This disconnect makes the churches *less* inclined to cooperate with neighborhood revitalization campaigns and *less* likely to respond to the immediate needs of neighborhood residents. Thus, the faith invested in inner-city churches as beacons of local renewal might be misplaced, and the decision to count on them to administer welfare definitely should be revisited.

As the federal government increasingly moves toward delivering social services through faith-based organizations, *Streets of Glory* must be read for its trenchant revisionist view of how churches actually work in depressed urban areas.

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