

State of the City: Challenge and Dream

New York Times (1923-Current file); May 25, 1975; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times
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New York—which one of its great chroniclers described three quarters of a century ago as “a ragged purple dream, the wonderful, cruel, enchanting, bewildering . . .” metropolis—is all of that and more. It is America’s greatest city; it is, as seat of the United Nations, the capital of the globe. It is the focal point of industry and commerce; of banking and finance; of arts and science; of communications and learning; of taste and of style. It is a conglomerate of many people and of many kinds of people; it is a citadel of wealth and a slough of despond; it reaches to the skies with grandeur and nobility; it plumbs the depths of avarice and greed; it is the most diverse, exuberant, disturbing and human city in all the world.

In a notable address at the opening of New York’s own Bicentennial celebration, Dr. René Dubos—a true New Yorker though, characteristically, not a native one—spoke of the “hope and excitement of discovery . . . that have made New York the experimental city par excellence—a place that incarnates the challenges and the dreams of modern existence.”

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