

# AFRICAN AMERICAN URBAN HISTORY SINCE WORLD WAR II

Edited by  
Kenneth L. Kusmer  
and Joe W. Trotter



AFRICAN AMERICAN URBAN HISTORY SINCE WORLD WAR II



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EDITED BY KENNETH L. KUSMER  
AND JOE W. TROTTER

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CONTENTS

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Contributors	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
Introduction	
KENNETH L. KUSMER AND JOE W. TROTTER	i
<i>Part One: The Second Great Migration and the New Immigration</i>	
1. The Second Great Migration: A Historical Overview	
JAMES N. GREGORY	19
2. Blacks, Latinos, and the New Racial Frontier in American Cities of Color: California's Emerging Minority-Majority Cities	
ALBERT M. CAMARILLO	39
3. The Young Lords and the Postwar City: Notes on the Geographical and Structural Reconfigurations of Contemporary Urban Life	
JOHANNA FERNÁNDEZ	60
4. Great Expectations: African American and Latino Relations in Phoenix since World War II	
MATTHEW C. WHITAKER	83
5. Citizens and Workers: African Americans and Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia's Regional Economy since World War II	
CARMEN TERESA WHALEN	98

*Part Two: The Second Ghetto and the Suburb*

6. Realtors and Racism in Working-Class Philadelphia, 1945–1970  
DAVID MCALLISTER 123
7. Deadly Inequalities: Race, Illness, and Poverty in Washington, D.C., since 1945  
BRETT WILLIAMS 142
8. “The House I Live In”: Race, Class, and African American Suburban Dreams in the Postwar United States  
ANDREW WIESE 160

*Part Three: Class, Race, and Politics*

9. All Across the Nation: Urban Black Activism, North and South, 1965–1975  
HEATHER ANN THOMPSON 181
10. Harvesting the Crisis: The Newark Uprising, the Kerner Commission, and Writings on Riots  
KEVIN MUMFORD 203
11. Affirmative Action from Below: Civil Rights, the Building Trades, and the Politics of Racial Equality in the Urban North, 1945–1969  
THOMAS J. SUGRUE 219
12. “Trouble Won’t Last”: Black Church Activism in Postwar Philadelphia  
KARL ELLIS JOHNSON 245
13. The Black Professional Middle Class and the Black Community: Racialized Class Formation in Oakland and the East Bay  
ERIC S. BROWN 263

*Part Four: Gender, Class, and Social-Welfare Policy*

14. Shifting Paradigms of Black Women’s Work in the Urban North and West: World War II to the Present  
JACQUELINE JONES 295

15.	“Something’s Wrong Down Here”: Poor Black Women and Urban Struggles for Democracy	
	RHONDA Y. WILLIAMS	316
16.	Gendering Postwar Urban History: African American Women, Welfare, and Poverty in Philadelphia	
	LISA LEVENSTEIN	337
	<i>Part Five: Culture, Consumption, and the Black Community</i>	
17.	African American Consumers since World War II	
	ROBERT E. WEEMS, JR.	359
18.	Black Dollar Power: Assessing African American Consumerism since 1945	
	SUSANNAH WALKER	376
19.	Race, Place, and Memory: African American Tourism in the Postindustrial City	
	ELIZABETH GRANT	404
	Notes	425
	Index	513





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Composed for the most part of original essays written specifically for this book, *African American Urban History since World War II* is designed to introduce readers to the most recent, innovative writing on the subject. In deciding on topics for this collection, we have included seminal essays by young scholars as well as works by established historians; and articles dealing with traditional themes as well as new approaches to the subject. While most contributors are historians, this volume also incorporates historically oriented social scientific or cultural studies from a variety of fields. Examining African American urban life from many different perspectives, the essays highlight the changing interplay of structural constraints and agency that shaped the black urban experience as cities underwent dramatic change in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. At the same time, they explore both the continuing promise and the limits of the structure-agency conceptualization of the black urban experience.

In producing a book of this nature, we have inevitably incurred many intellectual debts. *African American Urban History since World War II* has benefited greatly from the work of interdisciplinary programs at Temple University, from the Center for Africanamerican Urban Studies and the Economy (CAUSE) at Carnegie Mellon University, and from the Midwest Consortium for Black Studies.

Among the antecedents that laid the groundwork for this volume, we wish to acknowledge at Temple University the Department of Geography and Urban Studies, which over the years has served as a venue for numerous lectures on black urban history and related topics as part of its ongoing interdisciplinary Urban Studies Colloquium. Equally important, during the years 1989 to 2000, were the lecture series and symposia sponsored by the university's Center for African American History and Culture (CAAHC),

which did so much to encourage research exploring the connections between black women's history, cultural studies, and urban history. In 1993, CAAHC's energetic director, Professor Bettye Collier-Thomas, invited one of the editors of this volume, Kenneth Kusmer, to present an early theoretical statement on the postwar African American urban experience that, in expanded form, would be published in the *Journal of Urban History* two years later. It is a testament to the rapid growth of this field of research since then that, of the more than three hundred scholarly works on the postwar period cited in that article, only three significant studies were authored by historians—Michael B. Katz's collection on the "underclass" thesis, the groundbreaking study of Chicago by Arnold R. Hirsch, and Thomas J. Sugrue's dissertation on Detroit, later published as *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

*African American Urban History since World War II* also builds upon the work of Carnegie Mellon's Center for Africanamerican Urban Studies and the Economy (CAUSE) and its long-standing collaboration with the Midwest Consortium for Black Studies (which includes—in addition to Carnegie Mellon—the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin, Michigan State, and Case Western Reserve University). In 2004, *The African American Urban Experience: Perspectives from the Colonial Period to the Present* was published—a cumulative product of papers presented at CAUSE in collaboration with the Midwest Consortium. Edited by Earl Lewis, Tera W. Hunter (former associate director of CAUSE), and Joe W. Trotter, this volume not only brought together a broad range of scholarly essays on a variety of topics over more than two centuries of time, but also underscored the need for more systematic research on the post-World War II years. As such, it helped to energize the initial conceptualization of this book.

Temple University, Carnegie Mellon University, and local foundations provided generous support for the initiation and completion of this project. At Temple University, we would like to express our deep appreciation to President Ann Weaver Hart, Provost Lisa Staiano-Coico, and Dean Teresa Scott Soufas of the College of Liberal Arts, whose encouragement and support helped make this project possible.

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Administrative and clerical assistance at Temple University was provided by Patricia Williams, administrative assistant in the History Department; Elaine Willis-Stemley, administrative coordinator, Office of Vice President for Research; and Michael Doneson of the History Department. For providing similar services at Carnegie Mellon, we thank Nancy Aronson, CAUSE administrative assistant; and Gail Dickey, business manager of the department of history. We also wish to express our deep appreciation to the University of Chicago Press for its support and commitment to this project. We extend a special thanks to Robert Devens and his staff, particularly Emilie Sandoz, and to manuscript editor Nancy Trotic for helping us to bring this book to fruition.

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## INTRODUCTION

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KENNETH L. KUSMER AND JOE W. TROTTER

U ntil the last quarter of the twentieth century, research on slavery, Emancipation, and Reconstruction dominated historical scholarship on the African American experience. Even as the mass migrations during and after World Wars I and II transformed African Americans into the most rapidly urbanizing sector of the U.S. population, historians only slowly joined demographers, sociologists, and economists in studying these phenomena. In the wake of the urban riots of the 1960s, however, historians gave increasing attention to black urban history. This development paralleled the emergence of urban and social history in a broader way, as historians began to study how the average person had influenced the historical development of the United States. By the turn of the twenty-first century, African American urban history had emerged as one of the most prolific and exciting areas in U.S. and African American historical scholarship, a research area as important in its way as had been such traditional scholarly foci as slavery or black life and race relations in the segregation-era South.<sup>1</sup>

Influenced by early landmark sociological studies—in particular W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) and St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton's study of Chicago, *Black Metropolis* (1945)—a generation of historians embarked on a series of case studies of individual black urban communities. Beginning with studies of Harlem by Gilbert Osofsky in 1966 and of Chicago by Alan Spear in 1967, the African American urban experience emerged as a legitimate historical research area in the 1970s and 1980s—one that seemed especially relevant in the wake of the civil rights movement and the ghetto riots of the 1960s. Ironically, however, the decades immediately preceding the “civil disorders” of 1964–68 (as they were officially known by the Kerner Commission report of 1968) were not the preferred subject of these scholarly investigations. Instead, the first generation of



historians to study black urban history turned their attention to earlier periods, especially the decades between 1890 and 1940, and focused overwhelmingly on the development of African American communities and race relations in the urban North. The subjects and methodologies of these works were extraordinarily wide-ranging, encompassing—among other topics—migration patterns, residential segregation, interracial violence, black urban religion, the transformation of migrant black workers from agricultural laborers into an industrial proletariat, and the evolving class structure of black communities. Still, significant areas of research remained untouched or, at best, little studied. Prior to the late 1980s, little historical work was done on African American women and gender issues in the urban context, and few scholars took an interest in black communities in the South and West, even when some cities in those sections had substantial black populations.<sup>2</sup>

Most importantly, while this literature made a tremendous contribution to both urban and African American history, for the most part it remained focused on the period before 1945. After 1970, a number of sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists produced important works on the postwar decades, but these works were often lacking in historical depth. Political scientists who studied the ghetto riots of the 1960s, to give one example, frequently attempted to develop theories that would explain why rebellions occurred in one community and not another, but these studies were usually heavily quantitative and provided scant insight into the long-term development of conditions that contributed to black rebelliousness.<sup>3</sup>

Arnold Hirsch's 1983 study of housing segregation in Chicago between 1940 and 1960, *Making the Second Ghetto*, would be the first significant historical study to break with the pattern of previous scholarship that had focused on the period prior to World War II. Hirsch's volume demonstrated how the pattern of residential segregation of the post-World War I era remained and even intensified during and after World War II, as local forces that aimed to keep the expanding black population within restricted areas now benefited from discriminatory federal lending policies that "redlined" impoverished or black areas of cities as poor risks for Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans. Meanwhile, the controversial sociological theory positing the growth of a black urban "underclass" in the post-civil rights era promoted a growing interest in the historical origins of the conditions of African Americans in the inner city. At first, most students of the underclass were social scientists, but the 1993 volume *The "Underclass" Debate*, edited by Michael B. Katz, contained essays on a variety of topics that traced

the historical background of inner-city poverty and its effects on poor African Americans.<sup>4</sup>

Emerging from the debates over the underclass thesis, journalist Nicholas Lemann's journalistic study *The Promised Land* (1991) underscored the significance of the post-World War II migration of southern blacks to northern cities, but the postwar black urban experience gained its most systematic historical treatment in Thomas Sugrue's 1996 case study of Detroit, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*. Sugrue connected racism in corporate hiring practices and union policies to the important structural changes in the economy that heralded the first stage of what would, in the 1980s, come to be known as deindustrialization. His superbly researched volume demonstrates the parallel development of racial discrimination in the Detroit economy and racial bias in the city's housing market, which severely restricted the ability of African Americans to break out of ghettoized inner-city neighborhoods. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, like Hirsch's study, devotes considerable attention to the violent or intimidating actions of white ethnics who resisted the civil rights demands of African Americans. It is far less attentive, however, to the agency of Detroit's black community in response to these circumstances. In her subsequent book on postwar Detroit, historian Heather Thompson provides a much-needed corrective to the "origins of the urban crisis" thesis. Thompson probes both the inter- and intra-racial dimensions of African American activism and convincingly concludes that an emphasis on the loss of inner-city white residents and on the decline of interracial labor and civil rights coalitions downplays important aspects of African American and working-class life during the onset of deindustrialization.<sup>5</sup>

Over the past two decades, scholarship on African American urban history has proliferated as the field has incorporated a broad range of new time periods, topics, geographical regions, and theoretical approaches. Although much of this new scholarship continues to deal with the Great Migration of southern blacks into the urban South, North, and West during the interwar years, the post-World War II period is for the first time becoming an important area of interest. Taken as a whole, this scholarship has largely redressed the previous imbalance in African American historiography, which often privileged studies of the black population in a predominantly southern, agricultural environment during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Recent work in African American urban history has built upon earlier areas of scholarly interest in exploring the complicated interplay of class,

race, and gender dynamics in the transformation of black urban life, while employing some of the most recent theoretical insights into the workings of class formation, residential segregation, and race relations. Perhaps because of the changing nature of the social-geographic order in the late twentieth century, in which large central cities no longer necessarily dominate the suburbs around them, recent studies of the postwar period have exhibited a greater tendency to break with traditional approaches for understanding urban race issues. Scholars such as Wendell Pritchett and Robert Self have eschewed the conventional urban case study approach and adopted the metropolitan region on the one hand and the neighborhood on the other as their principal units of analysis. Others have begun to apply comparative approaches, examining more than one black community or asking how the status or activities of African Americans living in the postindustrial city (or suburb) compare with those of other racial minorities. Most importantly, in the past decade especially, the scholarship on the postwar era has shifted away from an exclusive emphasis on communities in the North or Midwest to encompass conditions and trends in a variety of cities in the South and West as well.<sup>6</sup>

Despite important strides in the development of African American urban history over the past several decades, perhaps the greatest challenge facing the field is the need for comprehensive assessments of the immediate postwar era and the subsequent period of suburbanization and deindustrialization. Accordingly, this collection explores five closely interrelated socio-economic, demographic, political, and cultural themes in postwar African American urban life. Each thematic section includes case studies on a variety of topics and cities in different regions, but we have favored essays that transcend the usual case study through a comparative approach or that take the neighborhood, the metropolitan region, or even the urbanized nation as a whole as the primary unit of analysis.

While cities in all sections of the country are represented in this volume, the black communities of Atlanta, Baltimore, Charlotte, N.C., Chicago, Detroit, Las Vegas, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Washington, D.C., Oakland, and several smaller California cities serve as the primary focus of specific essays. Considering the significance of New Orleans in the public imagination since the advent of Hurricane Katrina, some readers will undoubtedly wonder why there is no essay on New Orleans's class, ethnic, and race relations. Our explanation for this gap is partly related to an emerging body of scholarship that takes Katrina and the city of New Orleans as its primary focus in the call for new research on the urban environment, past and present.

In December 2007, the *Journal of American History* published its special issue "Through the Eye of Katrina: The Past as Prologue?" The essays in that volume not only employ a variety of conceptual approaches, but also cover a wide range of topics and time periods. Similarly, the *Journal of Urban History* will soon publish a special section on the subject titled "Hurricane Katrina: Urban History from the Eye of the Storm."<sup>7</sup> Moreover, while the special circumstances related to Katrina have brought to public awareness the plight of poor African Americans in New Orleans, these deleterious conditions are by no means limited to that city. Many of the essays in our volume cast light on the historical development of Katrina-like conditions in other places and thus, hopefully, can broaden much of the recent discussion of the hurricane's impact.

The overall geographic range of the essays in our volume is very wide, with well over a dozen communities from many sections of the nation represented. Geographic balance, however, was only one factor influencing our choice of articles. For example, some of the Philadelphia contributions reflect our decision to move beyond simply a locational rationale for the selection of essays and to draw attention to new approaches to post-World War II African American urban life and history, in order to address certain substantive gaps in the literature: in particular, the dynamics of gender and poverty, the role of the postwar church, and the emergence of the African American heritage-tourism industry. Moreover, not all of the essays with a Philadelphia component deal only with that important metropolis. Regardless of the particular locale, we were especially interested in essays that link neighborhood, city, and metropolitan change with larger national and global processes. The contributions to this volume illuminate the transformation of urban class and race relations during an era of fundamental change in economics, social relations, and cultural production that accompanied the shift from the industrial to the postindustrial city.

## Part 1: The Second Great Migration and the New Immigration

Fundamental socioeconomic and demographic changes transformed the landscape of urban and suburban America during the final half of the twentieth century. Beginning during World War II, the Second Great Migration witnessed the movement of some five million black men, women, and children into the urban South as well as the North and West. More than twice the volume of the Great Migration of the interwar years, the Second Great Migration had run its course by the late 1970s. At the same time, increasing numbers of Latino, Asian, and Caribbean immigrants entered the country

and settled in large metropolitan areas adjacent to black neighborhoods. For the first time in U.S. history, people of color emerged as the majority, or near-majority, populations in many of the nation's largest cities. One result is that comparative historical research on African Americans and diverse ethnic and racial groups is becoming more important, as urban America attracts increasing numbers of people from countries in Latin America and Asia. As suggested by the essays in Nancy Foner and George M. Fredrickson's volume *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States* (2004), scholarship on the interplay of African Americans and the new immigrants represents an exceedingly promising area of research.<sup>8</sup>

In part 1 of the present volume, contributors James N. Gregory, Albert M. Camarillo, Johanna Fernández, Matthew Whitaker, and Carmen Teresa Whalen illuminate the twin impact of the Second Great Migration and the new immigration on African American urban life. Building upon his innovative comparative study of twentieth-century southern black and white migration, Gregory brings analytical rigor and specificity to the notion of the Second Great Migration. He pinpoints fundamental continuities between the first and second waves of the twentieth-century black population movement, while highlighting certain distinctive features of both. He shows how the Second Great Migration made possible the emergence of large black communities in the urban West; the completion of the urban transformation of the South; a significant "brain drain," as better-educated African Americans left southern communities; and the rise of more dynamic social and political movements for social change than had been true of the earlier Great Migration.

Focusing on the social and political impact of the new immigration, Albert Camarillo documents the emergence of what he calls the "new racial frontier" in a variety of urban and suburban locations in California. His essay not only provides a splendid context for understanding the rise of "minority-majority" cities in large metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, but it also explores the impact of these changes on African American-Latino relations in smaller cities such as East Palo Alto, Compton, and Seaside. Along with analyzing the growing conflict between African Americans and Latinos over scarce political and educational resources, Camarillo also documents emerging patterns of interethnic cooperation between the two groups.

In her study of the Puerto Rican Young Lords Organization (YLO) during the 1960s and 1970s, Johanna Fernández reinforces Camarillo's analysis of interethnic alliances. She demonstrates that the YLO was an organiza-

tion that modeled itself after the Black Panther Party, and also one that welcomed both Latino and African American activists into its ranks. Most importantly, her essay documents the complicated process by which deindustrialization and the increasing globalization of the capitalist economy disrupted the lives of Puerto Ricans on the island, precipitated their mass migration to the mainland United States, and underlay the increasing hardships that spawned the emergence of the Young Lords as a grassroots social movement, with close ties to the modern civil rights and Black Power movements.

Matthew C. Whitaker and Carmen Whalen support Camarillo's and Fernández's emphasis on the changing dynamics of race and ethnicity in the late-twentieth-century city. More so than Camarillo and Fernández, however, they accent the difficulties that prevailed between African Americans and Latinos (primarily Mexican Americans) in Phoenix, and between African Americans and Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia. Whitaker argues that African Americans took the lead "in fighting racial discrimination against people of color" and received little support from the expanding Latino population, even after the advent of the Chicano movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. Thus, whereas Camarillo and Fernández find substantial promise for African American-Latino alliances, Whitaker finds such alliances were more problematical, and he suggests that cooperation between "progressive black and white citizens" sometimes offered the best prospects for interracialism in Phoenix. Whalen's essay on African Americans and Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia emphasizes the persistence of interracial tension between the two groups, as well as with whites, and challenges "culture of poverty" and "underclass" interpretations of the city's African American and Puerto Rican workers. All three minority groups, Whitaker and Whalen maintain, suffered similar, though not identical, patterns of racial discrimination, socially and economically; yet common action against racism on the part of these groups was often difficult to sustain.

## Part 2: The Second Ghetto and the Suburb

Postwar African American communities also experienced the rise of what some historians call the "second ghetto" and the emergence of black suburbia. In the wake of the New Deal and World War II, a plethora of federal transportation, housing, and urban renewal projects reinforced residential segregation along the color line and too often decimated stable African American or integrated neighborhoods. Dubbed "Negro removal" projects by many black urbanites, federal urban-redevelopment programs of the 1950s

and 1960s included funding for a variety of new public housing projects for working-class and poor families. While such programs provided improved living space for significant numbers of African Americans, they failed to compensate the destruction of dwellings defined as "slums," "blighted," or "unfit" for human habitation, including many buildings housing African American civic, religious, professional, and business organizations.

The gap between the housing, health, education, and social welfare of African Americans and whites diminished under the impact of the modern civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, but the onset of deindustrialization and increasing suburbanization reversed these favorable trends, creating new disparities during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>9</sup> The black suburban population increased (nearly doubling during the 1980s and 1990s), and growing numbers of African Americans moved into neighborhoods previously closed to black people in Chicago, Detroit, New York, Milwaukee, Oakland, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and other major metropolitan areas. Partly because suburban blacks had higher levels of education, income, and home ownership than their inner-city counterparts, suburbanization signaled the emergence of a larger and more stable black middle class and offered hope for the gradual desegregation of the urban housing market for some African Americans.

Despite the gradual movement of blacks into previously all-white communities, however, residential segregation and racial inequality persisted in both the city and the suburbs, as David McAllister, Brett Williams, and Andrew Wiese make clear. McAllister focuses on the gradual transition of North Philadelphia from an all-white to a predominantly black community in the 1950s and early 1960s. He analyzes the discriminatory role of federal housing programs and the grassroots hostility of some white residents toward blacks, but he concludes that the racial policies and practices of the real estate industry were the most important factor in promoting the spread of racially segregated neighborhoods in Philadelphia. McAllister thus revives an argument associated with the emergence of the first ghetto, challenging the approach of scholars who stress the interplay of federal policy and grassroots white opposition to explain the continuing high levels of housing segregation among postwar urban blacks.

The chapters by Brett Williams and Andrew Wiese complement McAllister's treatment of residential segregation. Together, they illuminate the relationship between housing and various aspects of African American urban life within and beyond the central city. Focusing on Washington, D.C., as a case study of African American urban health care and well-being, Williams, an anthropologist, offers a detailed ethnographic account of how

Washington's segregated black population has suffered disproportionately high mortality and morbidity rates through HIV/AIDS, diabetes, tuberculosis, and heart disease. She acknowledges the creative ways that poor and working-class black families have coped with illness but emphasizes how poverty, race, and class inequality undermine their capacity to gain necessary health care to prevent chronic diseases, disability, and death. As Williams succinctly puts it, diseases "do not transcend history or the social conditions that construct, shape, create, diagnose, and heal them."

In his essay on black suburbanization, Wiese both reinforces and challenges studies of the first and second ghettos. He shows how African American movement to outlying areas represented an extension of social processes associated with both early- and late-twentieth-century transformations of black urban communities, and he underscores the role that African Americans played in shaping and envisioning their own quest for homes on the suburban periphery. Employing the language of "citizenship," Wiese demonstrates how middle-class blacks supported and benefited from cross-class movements to desegregate the metropolitan housing market. They demanded and gained access to space that most poor and working-class blacks could not afford. Nonetheless, Wiese concludes, the color line shaped suburban housing no less than inner-city housing, thus ensuring an ongoing link between black suburbanites and the larger African American struggle for social change in metropolitan America.

### Part 3: Class, Race, and Politics

Concurrent with the spread of residential segregation, urban renewal, and suburbanization, African Americans confronted the gradual and then rapid onset of deindustrialization and the decline of employment in mass-production industries. As industrial firms moved increasingly to the suburban periphery, to the South, or overseas during the final decades of the twentieth century, the dominant manufacturing economy nearly disappeared from the urban landscape. Not only did African Americans shoulder a disproportionate share of the resulting job losses, they also found it exceedingly difficult to gain a viable foothold in the new high-technology and professional service jobs that replaced the old industrial sector.

African Americans mounted concerted campaigns against class and racial inequality during the second half of the twentieth century. These included the demands of the modern civil rights and Black Power movements for social justice; the eruption of urban "race riots"; the movement for affirmative action in all aspects of American economic life; and blacks' efforts



to capture city halls in their own interest. The African American quest for freedom and full citizenship cut across all regions and classes of the country and persisted well into the 1970s.

Heather Thompson, Kevin Mumford, and Thomas J. Sugrue break new ground in their emphasis on the urban roots of the modern black freedom struggle. Thompson analyzes black activism in the automobile plants of Detroit, the Attica state prison of New York, and the city of Charlotte, North Carolina. She finds that despite the widely disparate circumstances that African Americans faced in these locales, black activists who rebelled against white supremacy during the 1965–75 period actually had much in common. She questions whether, in these contexts, the traditional distinction between civil rights and Black Power activities makes sense. Still, according to Thompson, the perceived transition from “freedom now” to militant Black Power generated mixed reactions among liberal white supporters of the movement for racial equality. Whereas many northern whites accepted the rise of African American demands for social justice and armed self-defense in the South, some rejected these developments “in their own backyard” of the urban North and West.

Kevin Mumford analyzes reactions to the eruption of racial violence in U.S. cities during the 1960s, especially the violent 1967 Newark riot. He documents the emergence of three distinct but interrelated perspectives on the subject: “the riots as a crisis,” “the riots as racism,” and “the riots as rebellion.” He concludes that while each of these viewpoints “proved to be equally ideological and politically interested,” first-person accounts by contemporary black grassroots activists accented the riots as a form of rebellion. These sources, Mumford shows, document how African Americans forged their own diverse responses to class and racial inequality, helping to counter elite academic and official government interpretations of the violence, respectively, as a crisis in African American culture and as just another product of white racism.

Local black activism also shaped the emergence of national policy on employment discrimination and social-welfare services. Whereas most prevailing studies of affirmative action privilege the role of national civil rights, labor, and political organizations, as well as the courts, Thomas Sugrue’s essay demonstrates how such programs had their origins in grassroots urban movements to remove racial barriers in the building trades. Similarly, sociologist Eric S. Brown illuminates the ways in which class and cross-class alliances emerged at the local level and influenced national policy. Using Oakland as a case study, Brown analyzes the politics of two groups of middle-class African Americans: (1) members of the black profes-

sional middle class employed by predominantly white mainstream firms; and (2) self-employed or community-based black professionals (e.g., teachers and social workers) serving a predominantly black clientele. The former joined mainstream boards and nonprofit organizations and pushed for more opportunities for blacks in professional fields. The latter participated in grassroots, community-based organizing activities, with links to what Brown calls the “symbolic/national” drive to maintain a national policy of affirmative action designed to level the playing field for African Americans seeking upward socioeconomic mobility.

In his essay on postwar black religious institutions in Philadelphia, Karl Ellis Johnson reminds us of the little-understood role played by the black church in the northern civil rights movement. Johnson persuasively argues that it is a mistake to artificially separate church-sponsored community activities of a social-welfare nature from the struggle against discrimination in the job market and other civil rights activities. He shows that northern black ministers were much more involved in political activities than is usually understood, and he finds a close connection between militant black church leaders such as Leon Sullivan and the New York Baptist ministers Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., and Jr. Black churchwomen played a particularly important role in cross-class movements to elect blacks to public office, support the southern civil rights struggle, and boycott businesses that discriminated against African Americans in Philadelphia.

#### Part 4: Gender, Class, and Social-Welfare Policy

Deindustrialization, residential segregation, suburbanization, the new immigration, and the intensification of urban poverty were not merely racial- and class-inflected processes; they were highly gendered ones as well. Among black families, those headed by women increased from about 25 percent in the 1960s to well over 40 percent by the 1980s. African American women also carried the burden of increasing black male incarceration rates, drug addiction, and homicide. At the same time, African American women and their children were disproportionately represented among tenants of large public housing projects; recipients of AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) welfare programs; and the homeless. By the late 1980s, African Americans accounted for 56 percent of all homeless women and children.

Historians Jacqueline Jones, Rhonda Y. Williams, and Lisa Levenstein show not only how black women faced the brunt of deindustrialization, welfare reform, and the spread of urban poverty, but also how they took the

lead in movements for social change, within both public- and private-sector employment, housing, and welfare services. Focusing largely on Las Vegas, often described as a quintessential postindustrial American city, Jones provides a broad conceptual framework for understanding transformations in black women's labor from the end of World War II through the early twenty-first century. She shows how, as black men continued to move into lower-rung industrial jobs during the postwar years, black women occupied the domestic and personal-service sectors of the Jim Crow economy. Although African American women gained access to more diverse employment opportunities with the onset of the modern civil rights movement, deindustrialization, and the emergence of the new economy during the 1970s and 1980s, they nonetheless entered the low-wage service sectors of the new economy in disproportionately larger numbers than their white counterparts.

According to Jones, African American men and women had turned to the federal government to dismantle the Jim Crow system in all areas of employment during the early postwar years, but it was black women who led the movement to increase access to federal social-welfare programs, as a cushion against unstable and poorly remunerated work. As they lost the battle to expand the welfare state during the closing years of the twentieth century, however, poor and working-class black women turned to grassroots labor organizing to change the terms on which they worked. Black women's organizing activities aimed to combat low wages and benefits in expanding service-sector jobs and to offset the government's determination to "end welfare as we know it" for poor and working-class families.

Drawing upon the recent explosion of scholarship on low-income black women's political struggles (including her own groundbreaking study of Baltimore), Rhonda Williams moves well beyond the single case study in her analysis of poor black women's resistance to class and racial inequality in urban public housing of the North, South, and West. She documents the myriad ways that low-income black women organized themselves and forged alliances that influenced public-policy discussions and decisions at the local, state, regional, and national levels. By focusing on the ways in which "low-income," "subsidy-reliant," and "AFDC" women insisted on their claims to full citizenship rights, her essay also helps to recast the existing narrative of the modern civil rights and Black Power movements, which too often privileges well-known national civil rights organizations and leaders at the expense of local grassroots activists.

Lisa Levenstein deepens our understanding of state welfare programs and the disproportionately large numbers of black women who utilized such services. In careful detail, she documents poor and working-class women's

interactions with Philadelphia's public-welfare department between World War II and the early 1960s. She makes the compelling argument that welfare recipients devised a variety of assertive strategies (including work in the informal economy and defying prohibitions on the presence of men in subsidized housing) for gaining and supplementing their access to public welfare to care for themselves and their children. Levenstein concludes that black women's grassroots activism provoked widespread white resistance to welfare, touching off a national debate about welfare that influenced public policy. By shifting the focus of scholarship from men to women and from private-sector institutions to public-sector services, Levenstein addresses key issues that have been neglected in the historiography of the postwar years.

### Part 5: Culture, Consumption, and the Black Community

African Americans increased their buying power in the years after World War II and used it to leverage their demands for full inclusion in the urban political economy. Closely intertwined with the rise of the modern civil rights movement was an increase in African Americans demands for equal access to the predominantly white consumer market. These demands produced complicated results when African American patronage of white-owned establishments increased. Although African Americans remained insufficiently integrated into the mainstream of consumer society, certain traditionally black-owned businesses declined as their black customer base dwindled. At the same time, by the end of the twentieth century, African American communities increasingly divided along class lines over the uses to which they would put their growing though unequal spending power. While some African Americans hoped to harness black spending power to a new era of black entrepreneurial and community development, others advocated group improvement through equal access to all phases of the corporate economy, without regard for skin color.

Robert E. Weems, Jr., contrasts patterns of black consumer behavior before and after the advent of the modern civil rights and Black Power movements. Drawing upon evidence from professional sports organizations, the film and music industries, insurance companies, and tobacco and alcohol producers, he offers a sobering and convincing assessment of the meaning of increasing black spending power in the wake of civil rights gains. He also analyzes aggressive corporate advertising campaigns and increasing divisions between the black haves and have-nots—including the emergence of the "bling-bling" culture of consumption, associated with the hip-hop

movement of the 1980s and 1990s. Corporate firms used very different class-based stereotypes to attract black middle-class clients on the one hand and the black working class and poor on the other. Weems also argues persuasively that the opening of white establishments to black consumers undermined the business infrastructure of the black community, making it more vulnerable to the spread of poverty.

Susannah Walker explores the growth of African American consumerism, the limitations and successes of black consumer activism, and the black beauty-culture industry as a case study of post-World War II changes in the urban political economy. She argues that the beauty industry represented a "paradoxical position" for black businesses during the modern civil rights and Black Power movements, particularly as the black dollar gained increasing attention in the mainstream economy. Her essay shows not only how the integrationist phase of the modern black freedom struggle threatened to undermine the autonomy and survival of black businesses, but how corporate firms soon responded to the market potential of the Black Power movement. Large corporations exploited what she calls the Black Power aesthetics, while virtually ignoring its themes of economic and political liberation under the banner of black nationalism. Equally importantly, her essay gives us a close look at change over time by taking up shifts in black consumerism associated with deindustrialization and the simultaneous expansion of black urban poverty on the one hand, and the rise of a new and more economically viable black middle class on the other. By calling attention to contemporary ethnographic studies by scholars such as Elizabeth Chin, Walker also offers a valuable counterpoint to most media accounts of the "bling-bling" culture of consumption during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

In the final essay in this volume, Elizabeth Grant analyzes the economic, political, and cultural meanings of two annual celebrations in the Greek world of African American college fraternities and sororities: Freaknik in Atlanta and Greek Picnic in Philadelphia. Both events emerged within the larger context of the globalizing postindustrial city of the 1970s and 1980s. Together, they attracted nearly five hundred thousand young black men and women to these cities each year. As the festivities expanded, growing numbers of poor and working-class black residents augmented the ranks of the upwardly mobile, educated fraternity brothers and sorority sisters. As incidents of violence associated with the events increased during the late 1980s and early 1990s, political and economic elites in both cities took steps to control the Greeks in the interest of protecting the cities' expanding tourist trade. Grant convincingly demonstrates that these efforts not

only split African Americans along class lines, but also revealed the social and political impact of contrasting “collective memories.” Specifically, the history of Jim Crow produced a more oppressive management of Freaknik in Atlanta, compared to the concerted effort to incorporate black elites and Greek Picnic into Philadelphia’s Center City tourism economy and to separate black Greeks from the city’s poor and working-class African American neighborhoods. Placing this analysis in context with the changing landscapes of these two cities, Grant’s study reveals shifting dimensions of public and private, social and political spaces and places and their impact on, and reflection of, race in the postindustrial city.



This volume includes seminal essays by young scholars as well as works by established historians. It deals with both traditional themes of black urban history and new approaches to the subject. With the exception of a few chapters that are revised versions of previously published works, this collection brings together a wide-ranging set of original essays, including contributions that explore the wider implications of recent monographs or scholarly articles. Our goal is to reach not only urban and African American historians, but a broadly interdisciplinary audience—by offering a state-of-the-art collection of essays that will, hopefully, represent the first source consulted by the next generation of scholars and students on this subject.



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PART I

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*The Second Great Migration  
and the New Immigration*





## The Second Great Migration: A Historical Overview

JAMES N. GREGORY

“**W**ith a four-year-old boy and a ten-week-old girl I boarded a train bound for Oakland.” Thus begins Dona Irvin’s account of leaving Houston in September 1942. Her husband, Frank, was already in California and had taken a job in one of the shipyards that had recently started to hire African Americans. Full of anticipation, hoping for a better standard of living and freedom from southern Jim Crow restrictions, the young family instead found Oakland very difficult. Housing was a nightmare. Initially, they squeezed into an aunt’s already crowded flat in West Oakland, which before the war had been the site of Oakland’s small black community. Dona felt lost in the frenzied wartime city, where black people were finding certain kinds of jobs but struggled for living space. She appreciated the new freedoms. She could sit in the same seats on streetcars and shop in the same stores as white people. But Oakland crackled with racial tension. “I seriously considered returning to Houston,” Dona recalls. Then things got much worse. Four-year-old Frank Jr. died during a routine tonsillectomy. The devastated couple had many reasons to think that they had made a mistake in leaving Texas.<sup>1</sup>

Dona and Frank Irvin, their daughter Nell, and their son Frank Jr. were part of the Second Great Migration, a term historians use to distinguish between two eras of massive African American migration out of the South. The exodus began in the early part of the twentieth century, especially during World War I and the 1920s, and that first phase has long been called the Great Migration. The label may have been premature. By some measures, a greater migration was still to come. Beginning during World War II and lasting through the Vietnam era, African Americans left home in unprecedented numbers, and in doing so, they reshaped their own lives and much more. Close to five million people left the South between 1941 and the late

1970s. More millions left farms and villages and moved into the South's big cities. Within one generation, a people who had been mostly rural became mostly urban. A people mostly southern spread to all regions of the United States. A people mostly accustomed to poverty and equipped with farm skills now pushed their way into the core of the American economy. And other changes followed. A people who had lacked access to political rights and political influence now gained both.<sup>2</sup>

This essay explores key dimensions of the Second Great Migration. Less is known about the second than about the first sequence of black migration from the South, and even the basic numbers appearing in encyclopedias and textbooks are often incorrect. New statistical data and new research by historians and sociologists enable us to clear up some of the confusion. Much of what I will report is based on the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) that have been developed by the Minnesota Population Center in cooperation with the Census Bureau.<sup>3</sup> The pages that follow assess several issues: where people went and in what numbers; who moved and why; their impact on the cities they went to and on the South they left behind. And I also assess their experiences. Did most benefit from relocation?

The Second Great Migration is usually defined as migration from the South to other regions of the country. But the same forty years saw a massive intraregional shift from farms to cities within the South, and I will discuss some aspects of internal southern migration as well as migration away from the South. When I refer to the South or southern-born, I am following the Census Bureau's definition of the District of Columbia and sixteen states (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia).

### How Many?

Historians and demographers have typically underestimated the number of African Americans who left the South during the four decades associated with the Second Great Migration. Figure 1.1 provides an updated look at the volume of migration during each decade of the twentieth century. It uses IPUMS data and a more sophisticated formula than earlier studies, taking into account estimates of mortality and return migration in calculating how many new migrants left the South each decade. The volumes are low-side estimates. We can be confident that the actual numbers were higher.<sup>4</sup>

Over the course of the twentieth century, approximately eight million African Americans left the South. Figure 1.1 shows the relative size of the

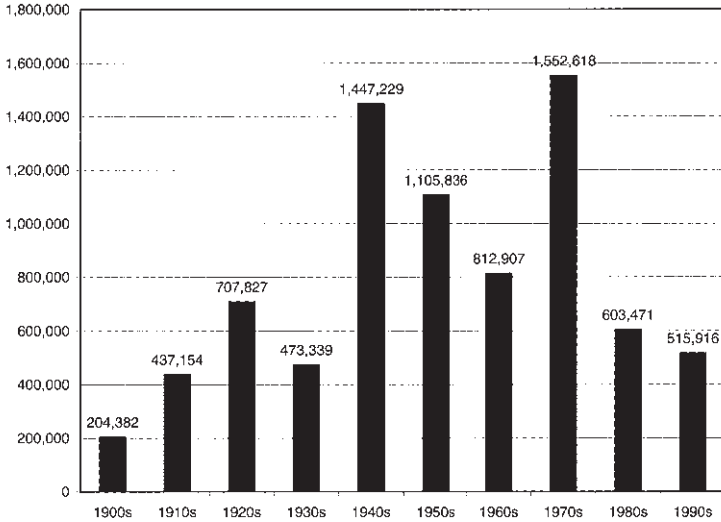


Fig. 1.1. Volume of black migration out of the South, by decade.  
(Data from 1900–2000 IPUMS samples; see note 3.)

Second Great Migration. From 1940 to 1980, roughly five million blacks moved north and west, more than twice the volume of the earlier sequence that is most readily associated with the label “Great Migration.” The war years and the rest of the 1940s saw both the start and the peak volumes of the Second Great Migration, as close to 1.5 million southerners left home. Migration rates declined a bit in the 1950s. This chart may underestimate somewhat the volume of the 1960s and overestimate the 1970s by the same margin. A badly worded question in the 1970 census seems to have generated some erroneous birthplace information. Most likely, volumes of migration were steadier across the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s than they appear to be in the census data. On average, 1.2 million black southerners left that region during each of these decades. Those numbers fell off dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s, when a booming Sunbelt and a devastated northern Rust Belt reversed regional patterns of economic opportunity that had prevailed for more than a century.

### Destinations

The five million southerners who participated in the Second Great Migration mostly followed pathways that had been established by the generation of southerners who moved north during World War I and the 1920s. The key

**Table 1.1** Ten Most Important Destinations for First Great Migration and Second Great Migration

<b>1930</b>		<b>Southern-born black residents</b>	<b>% of city's black pop.</b>
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Metropolitan area</b>		
1	New York–Northeastern NJ	260,952	56.8
2	Chicago, IL	198,061	72.7
3	Philadelphia, PA-NJ	152,329	63.1
4	St. Louis, MO-IL	88,459	56.6
5	Detroit, MI	68,101	72.2
6	Pittsburgh, PA	64,083	65.2
7	Cleveland, OH	59,454	74.1
8	Indianapolis, IN	42,125	69.4
9	Kansas City, MO-KS	39,904	50.5
10	Cincinnati-Hamilton, OH-KY-IN	34,264	71.4
	Total, top 10 cities	1,007,732	
	% of all southern-born migrants	71.8	
	All southern-born in North and West	1,403,889	
<b>1980</b>		<b>Southern-born black residents</b>	<b>% of city's black pop.</b>
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Metropolitan area</b>		
1	New York–Northeastern NJ	750,157	28.1
2	Chicago, IL	532,861	34.0
3	Los Angeles–Long Beach, CA	386,290	39.5
4	Detroit, MI	328,161	36.8
5	Philadelphia, PA-NJ	244,311	27.4
6	San Francisco–Oakland–Vallejo, CA	172,344	41.0
7	Cleveland, OH	123,403	35.5
8	St. Louis, MO-IL	119,643	29.3
9	Milwaukee, WI	60,444	39.6
10	Cincinnati-Hamilton, OH-KY-IN	51,601	30.2
	Total, top 10 cities	2,769,215	
	% of all southern-born migrants	67.4	
	All southern-born in North and West	4,106,945	

Source: 1930 IPUMS 0.5% sample; 1980 IPUMS 1% Metro sample.

geographic fact about both migration sequences is that they were tightly focused on big cities. This was a critical part of what made the great migrations “great.” The concentration of large numbers of African Americans in cities that were centers of the American economy and centers of political and cultural influence would give black Americans opportunities that would have been lost if migration patterns had been more dispersed.

Table 1.1 shows the major destinations of both waves. In 1930, almost

72 percent of all southern black migrants were living in just ten metropolitan areas: New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Kansas City, and Cincinnati. Only 11 percent of migrants had settled in rural areas and small cities. Another 17 percent were scattered in other metropolitan areas. The Second Great Migration added some new destinations while maintaining the basic pattern. New York and Chicago remained the top two destinations, and Detroit, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Cleveland continued to attract large numbers of newcomers. Those six cities in 1980 housed more than two million former southerners, over half the migrant population. Some cities that had been primary destinations ceased to be so in the second wave. Pittsburgh had 64,000 southerners in 1930, but fewer than 40,000 in 1980. Pittsburgh's black population had continued to grow, but mostly not as a result of new migration. Indianapolis and Kansas City also experienced only modest new migration after 1940. But the second wave added new cities to the list of black metropolises. The West Coast had benefited very little from the early migration. With World War II, families like the Irvins turned west, creating, almost overnight, major populations in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as significant concentrations in San Diego, Seattle, and Portland.<sup>5</sup>

The westward turn was not the only geographic change of the Second Great Migration. Migrants now settled in more cities. The earlier migration had been tightly focused on the major cities of the mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes states, the nation's traditional industrial belt. The new phase deepened the impact on those cities while adding others. By 1980, there were eighteen metropolitan areas outside the South claiming a black population of more than 100,000, and another eleven above 50,000.

These patterns set up the history-making potential of the two great migrations. Had black people dispersed as widely as white interstate migrants generally do (including white southerners), their impact would have been much more modest. The concentration in cities in numbers large enough to make a substantial impact on their social and political institutions was key to the transformations that would be set in motion by the great relocation.<sup>6</sup>

### Reorganizing the South

The Second Great Migration decisively transformed the South. The earlier exodus had begun the shift from farms to cities. The second phase completed the process, all but eliminating black farm life in the South—indeed, in America. The southern agricultural economy had been losing acreage

and shedding people since the mid-1920s, as marginal lands were taken out of production and farming techniques were modernized and mechanized. This process had accelerated when prices in the cotton belt collapsed during the 1930s, but the major changes belonged to the era of the Second Great Migration. As late as 1940, the South's rural population was still growing, and that year 6,288,501 African Americans made their homes in the South's rural areas, most of them living and working on farms, typically as sharecroppers. These rural dwellers accounted for 63 percent of the South's black population in 1940.<sup>7</sup> Forty years later, the black rural South existed in a much-reduced and very different form. The farm population was gone. Whereas 45 percent of blacks in the South had lived on farms in 1940, only 1 percent did so in 1980. Those who remained in areas classified as rural usually had little to do with agriculture. These declining numbers, dramatic as they are, understate the change. Villages and towns disappeared. Indeed, a whole subregion—the great cotton belt, also known as the “Black Belt”—changed composition. Whites also left, but not at the same rate. The rural South became whiter as a result of the Second Great Migration. By 1980, 85 percent of rural residents were white, as were 94 percent of all those living on farms. The “Black Belt” had pretty much disappeared.<sup>8</sup>

Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas had included the most productive section of the cotton kingdom and the demographic heart of black America. Each of these states experienced a dramatic diaspora, sending much of its African American population elsewhere. In 1970, 52 percent of all black adults who had been born in Alabama lived outside that state; 62 percent of adult black Mississippians and 63 percent of black Arkansans had left home. Figure 1.2 reveals more about the state-by-state nature of the diaspora. Blacks born in border states such as Maryland and Delaware rarely moved away. That was true also of Florida and Texas; fewer than 30 percent of their natives had left. Louisiana had lost 38 percent of its natives, but in other states at least 40 percent of adults had moved away by 1970, with West Virginians topping the list at 70 percent.

Figure 1.2 also shows the preference for nonsouthern destinations. In almost every case, far more migrants settled in northern or western states than in southern states. This defies a long-standing assumption in migration theory. The rule of thumb is that people are more likely to move short distances than long distances and to choose the familiar over the unfamiliar. But not during the Second Great Migration. Even as southern cities grew dramatically, northern and western cities were much more attractive. Some black Mississippians, for example, moved to neighboring Tennessee, especially Memphis, and to New Orleans; but most left the South. In 1970,

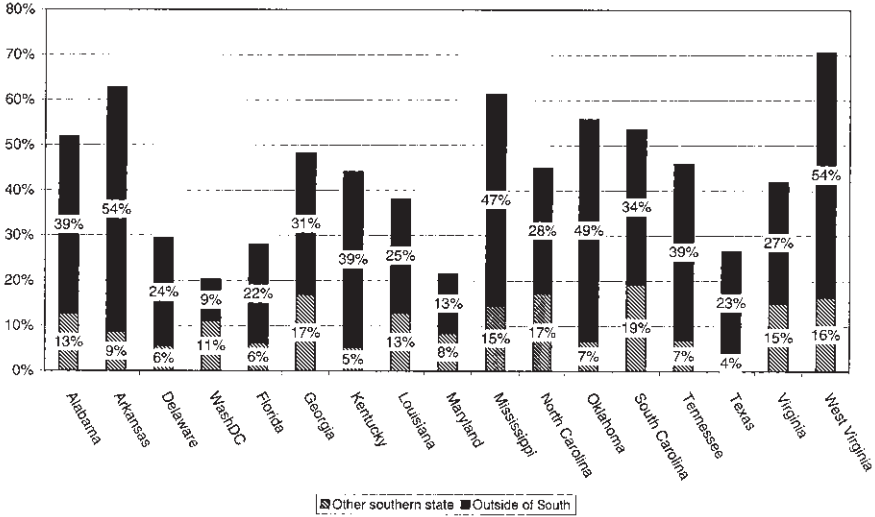


Fig. 1.2. Percentage of black adults born in a southern state who were living in either a different southern state or outside the South in 1970. (Data from 1970 IPUMS 1% Form 1 State sample; see note 3.)

there were more Mississippians living in Illinois (155,259) than in all of the states of the South beyond their birth state (127,963). Some Alabamans moved east to Georgia and Florida, but they headed north in much greater numbers, to the Great Lakes states or to New York or California.<sup>9</sup>

So who was moving to southern cities?<sup>10</sup> As people left the farms and villages, they seemed to have made a choice: either go to a very nearby city or leave the South. Rarely did they choose a more distant southern city. The growth patterns of the southern metropolises reveal this tendency. Black populations of major southern cities expanded dramatically in the decades between 1940 and 1980, with growth rates comparable to those of the northern black metropolises. But the composition of these cities was very different. Table 1.2 shows the birthplaces of African American adults living in six key cities as of 1970, dividing those birthplaces into “same state” as the city, “contiguous states,” and “distant states.” Atlanta shows the pattern common throughout the South. Seventy-nine percent of its black adult residents had Georgia birthplaces; another 9 percent were from neighboring South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, or Florida. A mere 13 percent were from more distant states. Compare that to Chicago, where in 1970 only 33 percent of adults claimed Illinois birthplaces and 64 percent came from distant states, mostly in the South. These patterns had all sorts



**Table 1.2** Birthplaces of Black Adults Living in Key Southern and Northern Cities, 1970

	Southern cities		
	Atlanta	Houston	New Orleans
Same state	79%	69%	80%
Contiguous states	9%	19%	11%
Distant states and abroad	13%	13%	9%
	Northern cities		
	Chicago	Detroit	New York-NJ
Same state	33%	29%	35%
Contiguous states	3%	2%	1%
Distant states and abroad	64%	69%	63%

Source: 1970 IPUMS 1% Form 2 Metro sample.

of implications. More homogeneous than the northern black metropolises, southern urban communities experienced less of the population circulation that promoted black cosmopolitanism elsewhere. They also, of course, dealt with different political systems and regimes of racial hierarchy.

Rural southerners made a choice between the nearby and the North, and they often did so in a particular sequence. It was common for farm people to first try out a southern city and then at a later date head north. Historians and demographers have argued over whether the Great Migration consisted mostly of rural people or of people with urban skills.<sup>11</sup> The data are mixed. A spot survey of the Detroit area conducted by the Census Bureau in March 1944 found that close to 30,000 newcomers had arrived from the South since 1940. Only 15 percent of them reported having lived on a farm four years earlier. Had they been a representative sample of black southerners, 45 percent would have said they had lived on a farm.<sup>12</sup> These early war migrants almost certainly were more urban than those who followed. Data from later censuses show that rural people made up a large segment of the migrant population. In 1960, 52 percent of southerners living in the North or West who had moved between states within the past five years had come from nonmetropolitan settings. Among those who left the South between 1965 and 1970, at least 46 percent had lived in nonmetropolitan areas.<sup>13</sup>

But these numbers may hide a more complicated migration story. Many former migrants talk about their relocation history as a series of tests and steps that began with an initial move to a nearby city, perhaps followed by a return home. Experiences of that sort made it easier to contemplate more distant relocations, and urban experiences in the South helped formerly ru-

ral people gain access to both skills and contacts that facilitated migration to northern and western places. Ultimately, it is hard to disentangle the rural-urban chain. What is clear is that the vast majority of migrants had grown up on the farms and in the villages of the South and that many had spent time in southern cities before leaving the region.

### Who Moved?

There has been a great deal of research in recent years on the demography of the two great migrations, most of it enabled by the IPUMS data. We have a better sense than ever before of the selectivity of the migrants: how they compared in terms of age, sex, education, and family composition to southerners who did not leave.<sup>14</sup>

Dona Irvin was twenty-five years old when she left Houston. In that sense, she was a very typical migrant: cross-country relocation was for young people. Figure 1.3 shows the age distributions of migrants during the two intervals for which we have adequate data. The 20–24 age group led all others, and a large portion of each migration cohort consisted of people between the ages of 15 and 29. That cohort accounted for 45 percent of those who moved between 1955 and 1960, and 54 percent of the 1965–70 movers. Some of the migrants were in their thirties, but willingness to relocate trailed off dramatically with age. Just 18 percent of movers were 40 or older in 1955–60, and only 12 percent in 1965–70. This age distribution doubled the demographic effect of the exodus. It meant that the South was losing—and the other regions were gaining—not just the migrant generation, but also their unborn children and grandchildren.

The Irvins' experience also represented a fairly typical family migration configuration. Frank had gone west first to check things out, following aunts and cousins who had moved to Oakland before the war. Dona and the children joined him soon after. Intact young families of this sort were very common. A spot census conducted in Detroit in April 1944 found that among new migrants over the age of fifteen, 63 percent of females and 71 percent of males were married, and more than three-quarters of the married segment had a spouse present. Those percentages came down in later decades, but it is safe to assume that the majority of migrants either traveled as families or reconstituted family life in short order.<sup>15</sup>

Belle Alexander was not married, and in that sense she was not a typical migrant. In 1943, the twenty-three-year-old Georgian signed up for a training program conducted by the National Youth Administration to prepare young people for jobs in defense plants. She had been living in Atlanta for

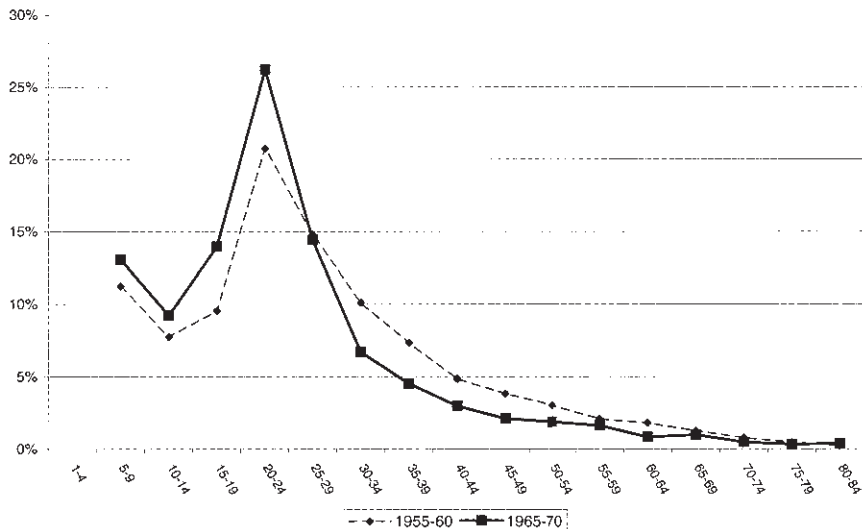


Fig. 1.3. Age distributions of new migrants, 1955–60 and 1965–70. (Data from 1960 IPUMS 1% sample and 1970 IPUMS 1% Form 1 State sample; see note 3.)

some time, having left her Georgia farm village—like so many other young women—because there were few opportunities. Now she was about to join a second migration. After several months of training in sheet-metal work, she and her classmates learned that jobs awaited them in a place called Seattle, where the Boeing Airplane Company had finally agreed to hire African Americans. “I don’t know nothing about Seattle,” she told her supervisor, “but I will take it.” She recalled, “There must have been fifty or seventy-five of us got on that train, and five days later we ended up at Union Station in Seattle.”<sup>16</sup>

Belle Alexander may not have been statistically typical, but she represents one of the surprising dimensions of the Second Great Migration: the important role played by unaccompanied females. Demographers often assume that men are more likely than women to undertake long-distance relocations. In the early phase of the black exodus, during World War I, that was indeed the case. But women outnumbered men during the 1920s and throughout the Second Great Migration. In late March 1944, the Census Bureau conducted spot censuses of Detroit, Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, San Diego, Seattle-Tacoma, and Portland, all of which had been designated “Congested Production Areas.” Except for the last two, females were in the majority in each of these black communities, and the female population had grown at least as fast as the male population since 1940.<sup>17</sup>

The trend continued after the war. During 1955–60, there were only 88 migrating men for every 100 women; in 1965–70, 91 men accompanied each 100 women.<sup>18</sup> Females especially outnumbered males in the young adult age range.

The gender distribution had something to do with unequal job opportunities in the rural South. Farmwork privileged young males, especially as agriculture contracted and family-oriented production through tenant farming and sharecropping gave way to employment on consolidated and mechanized farms. Because this was usually seasonal and undependable work, it put pressure on family incomes. Female incomes became increasingly important but also increasingly difficult as women in the rural South competed for scarce positions, mostly in domestic service. Belle Alexander thus had more reason than the young men in her village to head for a city.<sup>19</sup>

On another dimension, neither Belle Alexander nor Dona Irvin was a typical migrant. Both were better educated than the norm. Belle had graduated from high school. Dona had graduated from Prairie View College, an all-black institution in Texas. As college graduates, she and Frank were part of a tiny minority. As of 1950, only 5.7 percent of adult former southerners living in the North or West had any sort of college experience. Only 17.8 percent had graduated from high school. The majority had stopped school at the eighth grade or before.<sup>20</sup>

Even though they were much better educated than most who left the South, the Irvins and Belle Alexander illustrate something important about the Second Great Migration: the exodus represented a brain drain from the black South. In 1970, 38 percent of all southerners who had ever been to college lived outside that region.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, migrants were, on average, better educated than southerners who remained behind. Like many mass migrations, this one shows evidence of self-selection on the basis of education and ambition. The best study was conducted by Stewart Tolnay, who compared the schooling levels of blacks who left the South with those of blacks who remained and found that migrants enjoyed a significant educational advantage that shows up consistently across the decades. He also reported that the migrants were educationally disadvantaged in comparison with African Americans born in the North or the West, and also in comparison with whites. Compounding that, northerners assumed that southern schools were inferior in quality. Even blacks with educational credentials had trouble using them in their new homes.<sup>22</sup>

One other selection criterion looms large in the Second Great Migration: military service. The South has long contributed disproportionately to the armed forces. During World War II, close to one million African Americans

served, mostly southerners. And military service took them to other regions and overseas. After discharge, many chose to settle outside the South. That was true also for the servicemen and women who followed in the 1950s and 1960s. Military service proved an important pipeline out of the South. In 1970, 41 percent of southern-born black veterans lived outside their birth region.<sup>23</sup>

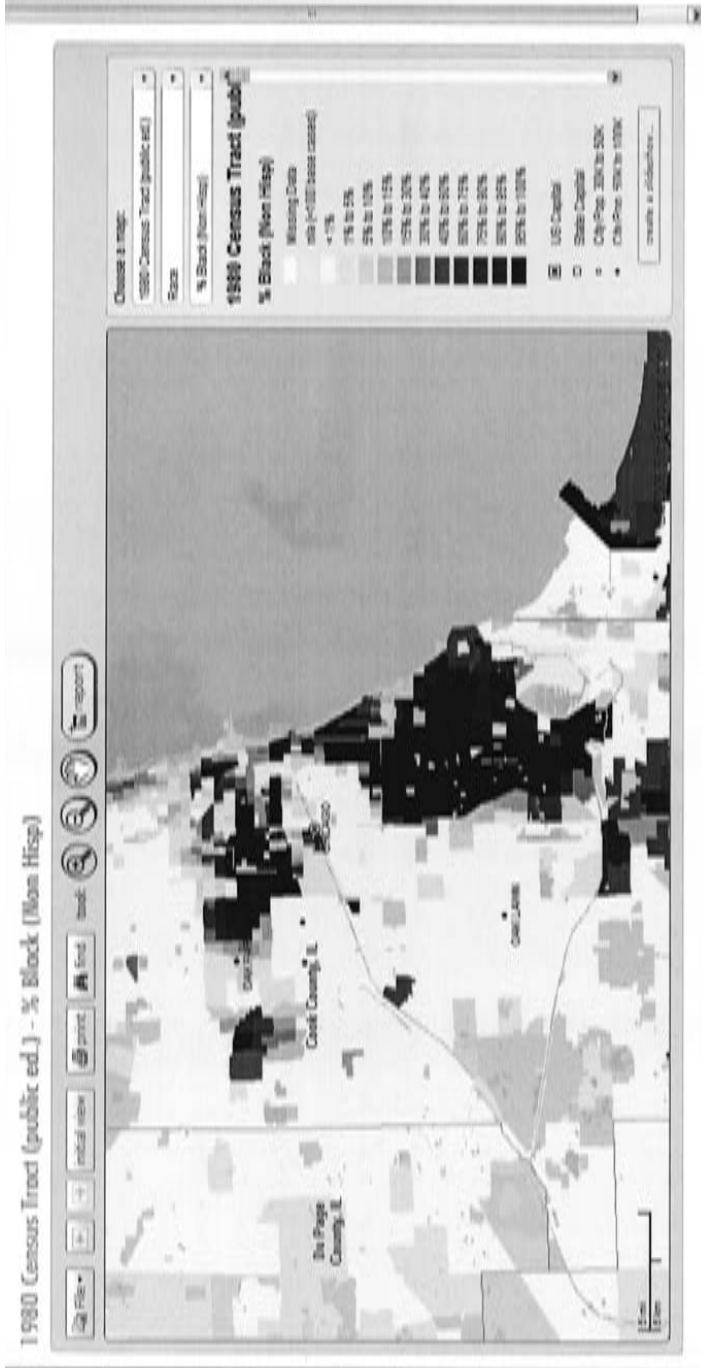
### Transforming Cities

Apart from the introduction of automobiles, it would be hard to think of anything that more dramatically reshaped America's big cities in the twentieth century than the relocation of the nation's black population. This began with the first era of migration, but the most dramatic changes occurred as a result of the second phase. In 1940, blacks were just beginning to become a political force in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and a few other cities. Nowhere outside of the South did they account for more than 13 percent of a city's population. By 1980, African Americans were a majority in several cities and above 40 percent in many others. And they had developed political influence proportional to those numbers. What's more, the growing concentration in major cities had keyed dramatic reorganizations of metropolitan space, accelerating the development of suburbs and shifting tax resources, government functions, private-sector jobs, and a great many white people out of core cities.<sup>24</sup>

A new online tool allows us to quickly map the spatial expansion of black communities in the major cities. SocialExplorer.com provides a mapping system using census-tract data for every decade since 1940. With these maps, we can illustrate the expansion of ghettos in, for example, Chicago, one of the cities dramatically transformed by the Second Great Migration. In 1940, virtually all African Americans in Chicago were crammed into a narrow corridor of census tracts on the city's South Side. In 1960, whites were still fiercely contesting black residential needs, but the ghetto had expanded, covering an area at least three times as large as twenty years earlier. The expansion accelerated in the next two decades. Chicago was still a sharply segregated city in 1980, but African Americans now had much more living space (see map 1.1).<sup>25</sup>

### Success and Failure

Much of what has been written about the Second Great Migration emphasizes difficulties and disappointments. Nicholas Lemann's *The Promised*



Map 1.1. 1980 Chicago census tract, percent black (non-Hispanic). (Courtesy SocialExplorer.com.)

*Land* is the best-known book on the subject, and it is decidedly pessimistic about the experience of southerners in the North. Lemann focuses on an extended family led by Ruby Haynes, who moved to Chicago in 1946 from Clarksville, Mississippi; he describes lives notched with more failures than successes. He ends the book with Haynes returning to Clarksville in 1979, grateful to be back home after thirty-three complicated years in a northern city that proved to be something less than the “promised land.” Lemann’s book is valuable in many ways, including his attention to the policy failures that by the 1970s had left northern ghettos with shrinking job access and escalating poverty. But the impression that the Great Migration lived up to few of its promises is misleading.<sup>26</sup>

Belle Alexander and Dona Irvin, like many veterans of the migration, speak in very different terms about their experiences. Belle faced enormous challenges in Seattle. At Boeing she became a “Rosie,” she says, but not a “Rosie the Riveter”: “I cut the parts” that other women riveted. She liked the work, and within a year she was also happily married. But as the war ended, fortunes shifted. She lost her Boeing job when the company laid off much of the workforce, especially females. Her husband, who had been serving in the Navy, came home with a fatal medical condition. By 1946, Belle was a widow with small children. The Veterans Administration helped her buy a house, and she went back to work at the local VA hospital in food service. She spent most of the next thirty years working in that hospital and today is as proud of that as she is of her now celebrated status as one of Boeing’s pioneer “Rosies.” She is also proud of her children and their education and careers. As she talks about her life, there is not a hint of the broken-dreams tone that infuses much of the academic writing and journalism about the Second Great Migration.<sup>27</sup>

Dona Irvin has spent years thinking about and writing about the meanings of her life and migration experience. Author of two books—a memoir and a history of the Oakland church that she and fellow migrants from Texas and Arkansas turned into a center of community life and political activism in the 1950s and 1960s—she knows that migration experiences varied dramatically, and she avoids clichéd concepts such as “the promised land” that invite monolithic assessments. Her own story encompasses a full range of experiences, beginning with the unimaginable tragedy of losing her eldest child. And there were other disappointments. For years, her college education counted for almost nothing in the racialized labor market of California. She was even rejected when she applied to a training program to become a physical therapist: “Your training would be useless. No one would hire you, a Negro woman.” It was only after years of low-skill jobs,

and only after civil rights activism began to open doors, that she “started to climb the ladder of inner and outward progress, milestone by milestone.” She became a medical technician, an education specialist, an administrator with the Oakland Public Schools, and finally a writer. There were other triumphs. Her husband, after a time, found a rewarding career as a technician in the Chemistry Department at the University of California, Berkeley. Her daughter, ten weeks old when the family set out for California, grew up to become the eminent historian Nell Painter. “Time has been generous in the magnificence of its gifts to me, from childhood into the ninth decade,” Irvin writes at the end of her memoir.<sup>28</sup>

Like most who have contributed memoirs or oral histories, Dona Irvin and Belle Alexander are proud of their experiences. That is predictable: people who feel differently are less likely to volunteer their life stories. So we do not want to rely too heavily on such sources in trying to evaluate the overall pattern of migrant experiences.

But census data suggest that most migrants benefited economically from migration and lend support to the kind of evaluations found in so many oral histories. Table 1.3 compares the average incomes of black southerners living in the North and West in 1950 and again in 1970 with the incomes of those remaining in the South. The table focuses on men and women in the prime earning years (ages 35–49) and separates them by educational level. The benefits of migration are clear in these comparisons. In 1950, men who had left the South reported incomes from the previous year that averaged 68 percent higher than for their counterparts who had remained in the South; for women, incomes were 67 percent higher.<sup>29</sup>

There were important variations based on education. Poorly educated southerners gained more from migration than better-educated southerners; indeed, college-educated women on average earned 11 percent less in the North or West in 1949 than their counterparts in the South. Like Dona Irvin, most discovered that their education held little value in their new homes. The teaching jobs that were a mainstay for educated females in the Jim Crow South were usually not available in the school systems of the other regions. Well-educated men also struggled, both because race discrimination closed off most white-collar positions to African Americans until the late 1960s and because degrees from the historically black colleges of the South were considered inferior. Men with college experience did earn 25 percent more than their southern counterparts in 1949, but compare that to the 71 percent premium earned by a grammar-school-educated male who had left the South or the 82 percent income advantage of poorly educated females.



**Table 1.3** Average Income at Prime Earning Age (35–49) for Southerners Who Left and Those Who Stayed Behind, by Sex and Education, 1949 and 1969

	1949			1969		
	Migrants	Remained in South	% gain / (loss) for migrants	Migrants	Remained in South	% gain / (loss) for migrants
<b>Males, age 35–49</b>						
0–8th grade	\$2,253	\$1,318	71	\$6,681	\$4,111	63
9th–12th grade	\$2,604	\$1,858	40	\$7,376	\$5,389	37
Some college	\$2,940	\$2,351	25	\$10,206	\$8,238	24
All	\$2,375	\$1,415	68	\$7,548	\$5,036	50
N	1,109	2,325		3,584	5,967	
<b>Females, age 35–49</b>						
0–8th grade	\$1,167	\$640	82	\$3,512	\$2,032	73
9th–12th grade	\$1,379	\$884	56	\$4,063	\$2,932	39
Some college	\$1,737	\$1,950	(11)	\$6,499	\$6,024	8
All	\$1,273	\$761	67	\$4,342	\$3,066	42
N	713	1,726		2,563	5,119	

Source: 1950 IPUMS 1% sample; 1970 IPUMS 1% Form 2 State sample.

Migration continued to pay off in substantial income benefits twenty years later, but the differential had been reduced. In 1969, men in the prime earning years improved their incomes by 50 percent, women by 42 percent. And the educational differences continued. Migration remained more financially beneficial for those with less education than for those who had been to college.

These income comparisons need to be put in context. The same data also show that migrants struggled with labor markets that offered only limited opportunities to African Americans. If anyone had headed north expecting to escape severe racial discrimination, they would indeed have been disappointed. The clearest way to demonstrate the powerful effects of race in the labor markets of the North and West is to compare the jobs and incomes of black southern migrants with those of white southern migrants, who shared many of the background factors (mostly rural southern origins, mostly poorly educated) and who were participating in their own great migration out of the South. I have demonstrated this skin-color effect elsewhere and will summarize it here.<sup>30</sup> Table 1.4 shows the wage gap between the two groups of southerners living in the metropolitan areas of the Great Lakes region (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin). It controls for sex, age, and education. In 1949, black male southerners in their prime

earning years earned on average 79 percent of what white southern migrants earned, while black females earned 78 percent of their counterparts' income. These ratios had become worse by 1959, when black male southerners in the Great Lakes region earned only 69 percent of white southern-born incomes; this figure improved slightly, to 73 percent, in 1969. Notice again the strange effects of education. The worst ratios were endured by college-educated black men, especially before 1969. College-educated black women earned incomes that were closer to those of white southern women in 1949 and 1959 and actually exceeded their 1969 earnings. The female comparison, however, is a bit misleading. Black southern women logged slightly longer workweeks on average than their white counterparts, and their jobs did not carry the same status as those of the white migrants.

A third framework of comparison is also revealing. Most of the scholarship on the Second Great Migration explores the question of success and failure through a comparison of the accomplishments of southern migrants

**Table 1.4.** Average Income for Black and White Southerners Living in Metropolitan Areas of the Great Lakes States, by Sex and Education, 1949–69

	Males, age 35–49			Females, age 35–49		
	Black	White	Ratio B/W (%)	Black	White	Ratio B/W (%)
<b>1949</b>						
0–8th grade	\$2,481	\$3,035	82	\$1,109	\$1,369	81
9th–12th grade	\$2,740	\$3,805	72	\$1,354	\$1,720	79
Some college	\$3,271	\$5,271	62	\$1,850	\$2,011	92
All	\$2,583	\$3,250	79	\$1,251	\$1,606	78
N	455	423		256	192	
<b>1959</b>						
0–8th grade	\$3,845	\$5,021	77	\$1,711	\$2,252	76
9th–12th grade	\$4,365	\$6,063	72	\$1,958	\$2,518	78
Some college	\$5,178	\$9,311	56	\$3,134	\$3,456	91
All	\$4,137	\$6,028	69	\$1,956	\$2,531	77
N	1,742	2,099		1,255	1,145	
<b>1969</b>						
0–8th grade	\$6,659	\$8,399	79	\$2,770	\$3,394	82
9th–12th grade	\$7,583	\$10,401	73	\$3,714	\$3,931	94
Some college	\$10,739	\$14,998	72	\$6,411	\$6,048	106
All	\$7,628	\$10,478	73	\$3,851	\$4,106	94
N	1,483	2,519		1,300	1,554	

Source: 1950 IPUMS 1% sample; 1960 IPUMS; 1970 IPUMS 1% Form 2 State sample.

with those of blacks born in the North and West. For decades, it was assumed that southern migration imposed social and economic costs on northern black communities, that migrants came north with educational and other social disadvantages that would hurt their chances and drag down their new communities. This was the impression developed in fiction as well as scholarship. Richard Wright's *Native Son*, James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro Family in Chicago*, and *Black Metropolis* by St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton—these classics all emphasized the idea that southerners were poorly prepared for life in the big cities and likely to suffer for it.

But recent scholarship has shown just the opposite. Compared to northern-born African Americans, southern migrants did reasonably well during the era of the Second Great Migration, earning slightly higher incomes, maintaining more two-parent families, relying less on welfare services, and contributing less to prison populations than the old settlers. Larry Long, Stewart Tolnay, Kyle Crowder, Stanley Lieberson, and others have conducted the detailed analyses of census and other data that show these modest but meaningful differences.<sup>31</sup> Table 1.5 displays some of what can be found in 1970 census data for residents of the metropolitan areas of the Great Lakes states. Here we broaden the age range to the main working years: ages 25–54. Southern-born men were more likely to be employed than men born in the North or West (85.7 percent versus 80.6 percent). Southern-born women had slightly lower rates of welfare use (12.7 percent versus 13.2 percent). Southern-born black men enjoyed significant income advantages, earning on average between 6 and 12 percent more than their counterparts, depending upon educational level. Among women, the income patterns were less consistent. Northern-born black women with high school or college experience earned somewhat more than southerners. At lower educational levels, southerners averaged 10 percent more than their northern-born counterparts.

There are a number of theories about why black southerners enjoyed this advantage: selective migration by more ambitious individuals; selection that favored stable and helpful family systems; selective return migration by those who had trouble in their new homes; hard work and ambition as a self-fulfilling mythology among the migrant generation; and the possibility that northern young people grew up with less advantageous value systems in ghettos that after midcentury became zones of distress and discouragement. All of these factors may have been involved.<sup>32</sup>

Five million people participated in the Second Great Migration, and each of their stories was unique. Some suffered the kinds of disappointments that

**Table 1.5** Employment Status, Welfare Status, and Average Income by Education for Black Southerners and Nonsoutherners Living in Metropolitan Areas of the Great Lakes States, 1970

	Males, age 25–54		Females, age 25–54	
	Southern-born	Other U.S.-born	Southern-born	Other U.S.-born
% employed	85.7	80.6	51.4	52
% receiving welfare	3.2	3.6	12.7	13.2
<b>Average income, 1969</b>				
0–8th grade	\$6,337	\$5,672	\$2,944	\$2,666
9th–12th grade	\$7,317	\$6,712	\$3,582	\$3,714
Some college	\$9,481	\$8,941	\$5,971	\$5,991
All	\$7,273	\$6,842	\$3,742	\$3,938
<i>N</i>	2,908	2,522	2,546	2,421

Source: 1970 IPUMS 1% Form 2 State sample.

Lemann chronicles. A few knew the sort of triumphs that Dona Irvin celebrates. Most led lives marked by the dignity of smaller accomplishments, lives that took some of their meaning from the sense of having done something important by leaving the South.

They had indeed done something important, and not just in the way they remade their own lives. The Second Great Migration proved to be one of the great engines of change for late-twentieth-century America, resulting in major transformations in where and how African Americans lived and setting up stunning developments in politics and culture. The urbanization of black America, which had begun during the first great migration, reached its apex during the second, as cities in the North, the West, and the South became increasingly African Americanized. The proletarianization of black America followed the same trajectory. Breaking both the spatial and racial barriers that had long kept African Americans trapped in agricultural and service sectors, blacks fought their way into key industries and core jobs. Deindustrialization would soon threaten these gains, but census data from the end of the 1970s show that African Americans held a disproportionate number of industrial and blue-collar jobs.<sup>33</sup>

Urbanization and proletarianization in turn enabled new cultural and political formations. As southerners moved in force into the cities, they provided the expanded consumer power and often the leadership that made the postwar black metropolises centers of innovation in music, literature, journalism, sports, and religion. They also helped supply the energy and ideas that turned the black metropolises into epicenters of political change,

fueling first the northern civil rights struggles of the 1940s and 1950s, then the southern civil rights breakthroughs of the 1960s, and then the electoral mobilizations that brought African Americans into urban political leadership in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>34</sup> The millions who had left their homes to participate in the Second Great Migration indeed had much to be proud of. Without their collective and individual efforts, the late-twentieth-century history of the United States would have been very different.

## Blacks, Latinos, and the New Racial Frontier in American Cities of Color: California's Emerging Minority-Majority Cities

ALBERT M. CAMARILLO

By the dawn of the twenty-first century, a new racial frontier had emerged in the cities and suburbs that make up the American metropolis. Census 2000 revealed a demographic change of enormous magnitude, showing that people of color constitute the majority population in the nation's largest cities. Moreover, Latinos and African Americans—the two largest racial minorities in the United States—increasingly find themselves living near and among one another in many central cities and suburban communities. These two groups, together with various other immigrant minorities, are reshaping the landscape of ethnic and race relations in large American cities and suburbs. This new racial frontier signals a significant departure from historic race relations, which were defined largely by interactions between white majorities and racial and ethnic minorities. Today, many formerly white suburbs are “minority-majority” communities, and as new immigrants continue to flow into large cities, the older, established inner-city neighborhoods that once held white ethnics and later African Americans are in the throes of population change once again. American cities and suburbs are sites of interaction where both conflict and cooperation among and between groups coexist.

The new racial frontier is not entirely new. Throughout American history, when new groups moved in and displaced more-established groups, conflict over neighborhood and community identity has occurred. Tensions over the control of local political institutions and the allocation of economic, educational, and other resources in poor, working-class communities have played themselves out for generations. Indeed, these types of conflicts characterize much of the current tension among blacks, Latinos, and others. But the new racial frontier is different from past ethnic and race relations on at least three counts. First, interactions on a daily basis in the new cities and suburbs of

color do not, for the most part, involve whites; they involve members of minority groups that now form the great majority populations. Second, a discourse involving group rights advocated by historically disadvantaged racial minorities informs and at the same time exacerbates interactions among some groups in the post-civil rights era. Finally, the geographical locations of this new racial frontier include not only the inner-city neighborhoods of the American metropolis, but now also the older metropolitan suburbs—many suffering from economic marginality, increasing violence, poverty, and other destructive forces, which I refer to as “suburban decline.”<sup>1</sup> Most recently, new racial dynamics are affecting many small towns in the Southeast, communities historically black and white but now faced with soaring numbers of Mexican immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

The public is all too familiar with stories of conflict and tension between different racial and ethnic groups in cities and suburbs of color, primarily because the print and visual media tend to focus on violence and other sensational, headline-grabbing events. Black gangs versus brown gangs on Los Angeles streets and in California prisons, riots by African Americans in Miami provoked by the shooting of blacks by Latino police officers, and other examples of intergroup antagonism are commonly reported in newspapers, national news magazines, and television news broadcasts.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, intergroup cooperation, collaboration, and peaceful coexistence are rarely reported, although examples abound; they are much more difficult to detect, because they exist below the media’s radar. In the Baytown section of Houston several years ago, for example, a coalition of African Americans and Latinos formed a watchdog group, the United Concerned Citizens of Baytown, to monitor the Houston Police Department, an agency notorious for incidents of brutality against people of color.<sup>4</sup> In Boston, New York, Atlanta, San Francisco, and Minneapolis, as well as in other cities throughout the country, dozens of multiracial organizations carry out a variety of programs and projects aimed at racial reconciliation and the goals of achieving social, economic, and political justice beyond single-group racial identity politics. These organizations were largely unknown until President Bill Clinton’s Initiative on Race highlighted their existence.<sup>5</sup>

Demographic changes of the past thirty to forty years have had the effect of locating more and more people of color within cities and metropolitan-area suburbs, resulting in diverse populations living among one another in these new racial frontiers. No state in the nation has felt the impact of these changes on intergroup relations more strongly than California. In many ways, the experience of this state is a harbinger of ethnic and race relations in twenty-first-century America. This essay focuses on three different communities in

California as examples of how ethnic and race relations are unfolding in cities and suburbs that have experienced fundamental demographic changes in recent decades. Compton, Seaside, and East Palo Alto, all relatively small suburbs within different metropolitan areas, reveal much about the larger trends shaping a new racial frontier in cities and suburbs of color.

### Demographic Transformations

The beginning of the twenty-first century saw an unprecedented development in the ethnic- and racial-group composition of urban America. In 2000, for the first time, more than half of the nation's one hundred largest cities were home to more African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and other racial minorities than whites. Consider the following: the total non-Hispanic white population in the one hundred largest U.S. cities declined from 52 percent to 44 percent between 1990 and 2000; among these cities, those with non-Hispanic white majorities fell from seventy to fifty-two during the same decade. In 2006, whites were the minority in thirty-five of the fifty largest cities, and as people of color continue to fuel the population gains in American suburbs, additional cities and suburbs will join the growing category of minority-majority places.<sup>6</sup> When viewed over the past thirty to forty years, these demographic trends are nothing less than spectacular. For example, the proportion of nonwhites, including Hispanics, in the twenty largest cities in the United States increased from 38 percent in 1970 to 60 percent in 2000. Census data reveal that at the turn of the twenty-first century, nine of the ten largest cities in the nation had a majority of minorities, and in eight of these cities, Latinos and African Americans together constituted the majority population. The overall proportion of the white population in the ten largest cities had declined to about a third (34.6 percent) by 2000.<sup>7</sup> Once minorities, people of color in the nation's largest metropolises now form the great majorities.

The demographics of California's largest cities reflect comparable transformations over the past generation. The total non-Hispanic white population in the state's ten largest cities declined precipitously between 1970 and 2000, from 67 percent to 35 percent. In Los Angeles, for example, the proportion of whites dropped from 61 percent to 30 percent; in San Jose, from 76 percent to 36 percent; and in Long Beach, from 86 percent to 33 percent. In 1970, all ten of the largest cities in the state claimed substantial white majority populations (Oakland was the only exception, with 52 percent); by 2000, all ten had majorities of people of color.<sup>8</sup> In particular during these three decades, the Hispanic and Asian-origin populations in cities soared, especially



because of massive waves of immigration from Mexico, Central America, and many regions of Asia. The changing face of California's metropolitan areas is nowhere more dramatic than in the Los Angeles region, where the surging Latino population is nearing majority status.<sup>9</sup>

The rates of demographic change over the past forty years are even more dramatic in many smaller California cities such as Compton, East Palo Alto, and Seaside. For example, in 1960 whites accounted for 60 percent of all Compton residents, while blacks made up 33 percent and Latinos 7 percent. A decade later, whites constituted a mere 16 percent as blacks now formed the great majority, 71 percent; Latinos were 13 percent of the total population of this city located in the center of Los Angeles County. During the 1980s and 1990s, Compton's population profile went through yet another major shift, with Latinos emerging as the majority population by the turn of the century: in 2000, of the approximately ninety-three thousand people in the city, Latinos accounted for 57 percent, while the proportion of blacks slipped to 40 percent.<sup>10</sup>

East Palo Alto's population changes in those decades closely paralleled those in Compton. In 1960, for example, whites accounted for 72 percent of the fifteen thousand people in this then-unincorporated area of Santa Clara County, while African Americans were the second-largest group at 22 percent. But by 1970 the proportions were nearly reversed, as blacks accounted for 61 percent and the rapidly declining white population fell to 31 percent. As in Compton, East Palo Alto's small Latino community—overwhelmingly of Mexican origin—began to increase significantly in the 1970s. In 1980, Latinos made up 14 percent of the population; by 1990, they constituted over a third of all residents (36 percent); and by 2000 Latinos, at 59 percent, were the majority population in the city (East Palo Alto was incorporated in 1983). The proportion of blacks fell to 41 percent in 1990 and plummeted further, to 23 percent, in 2000, while the proportion of Asian/Pacific Islanders increased to 10 percent. Whites accounted for only 7 percent of the city's inhabitants in 2000. In this growing community of about thirty thousand residents, Latinos now make up about two-thirds of the population.<sup>11</sup>

In much the same way as East Palo Alto and Compton, but with some important variations, the city of Seaside went through significant population changes during the last third of the twentieth century. In this community located on the Monterey Bay Peninsula, next to one of the largest military installations on the West Coast (Fort Ord), the non-Hispanic white population declined sharply after 1960. Seaside had a total population of about twenty thousand in 1960, of which whites made up 74 percent and blacks accounted for 17 percent; the remainder consisted of small communities

of Asian Americans (mostly Filipinos and Japanese Americans) and Mexican Americans. As the city's total population rose substantially during the 1970s, so, too, did the proportion of African Americans. By 1980, blacks accounted for 29 percent of the population, as the proportion of whites declined to 47 percent; Latinos made up 10 percent of all residents. As in so many cities throughout California during the 1980s and 1990s, the Latino population rose dramatically at the same time that the number of blacks dropped—drastically, in the case of Seaside, after the closure of the Fort Ord military base in 1994, which had been an important source of employment for the African American community. Between 1990 and 2000, the black population declined from 22 percent to about 13 percent, while the Latino proportion of city residents more than doubled, from 17 percent to nearly 35 percent. The non-Hispanic white population also declined during this decade, dropping to 36 percent in 2000; Asian/Pacific Islanders accounted for 10 percent of the population. Today in Seaside, Latinos form the largest single ethnic group.<sup>12</sup>

### The Origins of Black and Brown Suburbs in California, 1950S–1970S

Numbers provide important snapshots of stunning population changes occurring in California's cities, large and small, and in hundreds of other areas throughout the nation. But they do not tell us how and why these demographic transformations came about, nor provide understanding about their impact. The story behind the massive movements of people of color in and out of cities over the past forty years is intimately tied to the long history of racial residential segregation, the out-migration of whites from cities and suburbs in the post-civil rights era, the changing nature of regional and national economies, and the unprecedented volume of immigration from Mexico, Central America, and Asian countries since the mid-1960s. Although these recent historical developments are complex and interrelated, and each deserves substantial attention to detail in its own right, I provide here some brief, general contexts for understanding how, together, they influenced significant population changes over time.

Until well after the mid-twentieth century, Los Angeles suburbs such as Compton, Lynwood, South Gate, Lakewood, Inglewood, and most other cities in the region simply did not allow African Americans to reside within their boundaries. One might find small barrios of Mexican Americans in some of these communities, but if they existed at all, they were usually confined to segregated neighborhoods. The history of race and space in Los Angeles

is an increasingly well-known story of racial exclusions—systematic use of the ubiquitous racially restrictive real estate covenants, reinforced through customary practice among real estate agents and sometimes by white homeowners' associations intent on keeping minorities out of their communities. The result, over time, was a clearly defined pattern of residential concentration of the region's two largest minority groups: African Americans in the expanding South Central sections of Los Angeles and Mexican Americans in eastside neighborhoods. Asian-origin groups, especially the Chinese, had an even longer history of this type of residential separation from whites. Indeed, the residential segregation of people of color in California—experienced most acutely by blacks—was part and parcel of a widespread, national phenomenon, aided and abetted by the discriminatory practices of the Federal Housing Administration and by private mortgage lenders that drew the infamous “redlines.”<sup>13</sup>

Residential segregation based on race and class was replicated in large and small cities up and down the state during the first half of the twentieth century: in Oakland and its East Bay suburbs, in San Francisco and the peninsula, in San Jose and San Diego, and in the Monterey Bay region. The local histories of Compton, East Palo Alto, and Seaside reveal many housing patterns that were common statewide. Real estate agents and homeowners alike largely kept blacks from penetrating Compton city boundaries until the 1950s. Though a small Mexican American barrio had formed in the north-central section of the city during the first decades of the 1900s—adjacent to the unincorporated areas of Watts and Willowbrook—the systematic use of racially restrictive covenants by the 1920s ensured that blacks from South Central Los Angeles and new black migrants from the South were shut out of the so-called Hub City. However, by the 1950s, hundreds of black families were beginning to move into the northwestern neighborhoods of the city as real estate agents, both black and white, engaged in “block-busting” practices that created opportunities for middle-class black homeowners to purchase relatively new tract homes in Compton. By the early 1960s, thousands of African Americans had moved into westside homes following the flight of previous white homeowners. White real estate agents, as a result, divided Compton in half, creating a racially bifurcated city—west Compton was black and brown, while east Compton was nearly exclusively white. The Watts riots of 1965 destroyed any hope that the informal racial boundary line would hold back blacks, and white flight turned into a white exodus. By 1970, the large black majority in the city could proudly lay claim to the first city west of the Mississippi River entirely governed and administered by blacks.<sup>14</sup>

Although fear of race riots did not prompt whites to flee East Palo Alto in great numbers during the 1960s, as it had in Compton, discriminatory housing practices in the region, blockbusting, and white flight combined to achieve a similar outcome by 1970. A small agricultural community through the 1930s, East Palo Alto was caught up in the post-World War II suburban transformation of much of the San Francisco Bay Area. From a small hamlet of about fifteen hundred people shortly after the war, the area grew to twelve thousand by the early 1950s, as a result of the availability of inexpensive homes. Predominantly a white community through the 1950s, East Palo Alto soon saw its population shift, as it became one of the few areas where blacks were permitted—though grudgingly—to buy property. Although some white Palo Altans clamored against the break in the color line, real estate agents took advantage of white fears as they brought in busloads of blacks from San Francisco and Oakland interested in buying affordable homes. The trickle of black residents turned into a tidal wave during the 1960s, making East Palo Alto the largest concentration of African Americans in the area beyond San Francisco and Oakland.<sup>15</sup> By 1970, East Palo Alto and Compton had become widely known as “black cities.”

During the 1970s, when both East Palo Alto and Compton acquired reputations as black enclaves, Seaside was also increasingly identified as a predominantly African American community, at least in the perception of many people in the Monterey Bay region. However, although Seaside's black population increased significantly during the 1970s and 1980s, African Americans never accounted for more than 29 percent of the city's residents. Seaside has always been much more multiracial in character than Compton, East Palo Alto, and other cities of its size in the San Francisco Bay region. Incorporated as a city in 1954, Seaside—the easternmost neighborhood of the City of Monterey—was home to many poor, working-class, and minority people during the first half of the twentieth century. Literally a dumping ground for Monterey (the county refuse dump was located there), the Seaside area from the 1920s through the start of World War II was a hodgepodge of small homes and hastily built shacks located on small lots that housed a diverse population of a few thousand souls: poor whites, including some Dust Bowl refugees; Asians, especially Filipinos and Japanese; Mexicans; African Americans; and some European immigrant families. It is no surprise that Seaside contained most of the region's people of color, because real estate agents in Monterey worked to exclude racial minorities from neighborhoods in the city's central districts.<sup>16</sup>

The multiracial diversity of Seaside was given an added boost after the founding of Fort Ord in 1940 on adjacent lands to the east. This military

installation became, during and after World War II, one of the largest of its type on the West Coast (fifty thousand soldiers were stationed there at any given time during the 1940s). As a result, Seaside's history is closely tied to Fort Ord, and the city took on the character of a military town—for better or worse—from the 1950s through the early 1990s. As the small population of Seaside's soared (to nearly twenty thousand by 1960), so, too, did the number of military-related residents, a growing percentage of whom were minority, especially African American. Serving as the base for many U.S. Army infantry divisions, Fort Ord was home to the Seventh Infantry Regiment and the Second Filipino Regiment, both of which contained many mixed-race families—black soldiers who had married French or German women after the war and Filipino soldiers who had also intermarried with various European-origin women. During the Vietnam War era, Seaside's population continued to grow, with the city's black population expanding at an even faster clip. Despite the fact that some retired and active-duty black soldiers were officers and members of the middle class, residential segregation practices in the region kept them mostly within Seaside's boundaries. And despite the diverse population of the city, the ills that are often associated with military towns—prostitution, drugs, and increased crime rates—reinforced its stigma as an impoverished, crime-ridden, black city, an identity that retarded its ability to achieve needed economic development.<sup>17</sup> By the 1980s, then, in the eyes of the public at large, Seaside shared a dubious distinction with Compton and East Palo Alto as a “depressed black ghetto,” a characterization blown out of proportion by the local media in each area.

### White Flight and Changing Neighborhoods

The edifice of race-based residential exclusion began to break down during the 1950s and finally crumbled during the 1960s and 1970s. There were many reasons for the breakdown of racially segregated neighborhoods, but the results were the same in most localities—white flight. Despite efforts in many cities and suburbs to hold the line against the encroachment of people of color, the combination of federal laws, blockbusting real estate practices, and fear led to the wholesale departure of whites from many formerly segregated communities stretching from San Francisco to San Diego. The U.S. Supreme Court held, in the case of *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948, that restrictive real estate covenants were not enforceable by law, creating the opening public-policy salvo targeted at the house that Jim Crow built.<sup>18</sup> But informal practices by real estate agents continued to keep most blacks, Mexicans, and Asians from buying or renting property in all-white communities and neighborhoods.

Some agents, however, both black and white, broke ranks and participated in the lucrative practice of blockbusting. With greater consequences than were achieved by any law, formerly white neighborhoods and entire suburbs were affected by the initiatives of agents who encouraged—indeed, provoked—whites to sell their property before real estate values would (they argued) plummet as blacks and other minorities moved nearby. Blockbusting may have spurred white flight to outlying suburbs, but in communities in Los Angeles that bordered Watts, the riots in 1965 resulted in what I refer to as white exodus. The rapid and near-complete departure of whites, including white ethnics, by the mid-1970s in cities such as Compton, Lynwood, and South Gate led to the emergence of many minority-majority cities in the region. Cities more distant from the civil disorders of South Central Los Angeles also began to experience a steady erosion of their white populations and an influx of people of color, though at a slower pace.

In Seaside, white flight sped up during the 1960s and 1970s as the black population more than tripled between 1960 and 1980 (from 3,261 to 10,732). The 1980 census revealed that, for the first time, Seaside had become a minority-majority city, with African Americans as the largest minority group. Through most of the 1960s, as in many other cities with substantial percentages of people of color, redlining had much to do with preventing the federal government from funding redevelopment projects and with real estate agents' steering middle-class white home buyers away from the city. According to a city employee, "all of Seaside was redlined. No one could get a FHA or VA loan in the whole city until [after] . . . 1964."<sup>19</sup> According to documents in the city planning department, the reason for the holdup of federal funds was the lack of a proper sewage system, but it was commonly believed by residents that the government was unwilling to support development in a community that was perceived as an African American city.<sup>20</sup>

Race-related concerns were not the only reasons whites fled older suburbs throughout California's large and smaller metropolitan centers. The industries that had attracted millions of Americans to the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles in the World War II and postwar decades foundered during the period of economic restructuring that began in the 1970s. For example, in Los Angeles, durable manufacturing industries (such as the auto and related sectors) downsized, closed, or migrated to other regions in the United States or overseas. California cities did not undergo the same degree of deindustrialization that older "smokestack" cities in the Northeast experienced, but thousands of skilled, blue-collar jobs disappeared nonetheless. In their place were abundant jobs in the expanding service-sector economy: in construction, retail trade, and nondurable manufacturing, such as the

garment and furniture industries. These jobs were dominated by growing legions of low-skill and low-wage immigrant workers from Latin America and Asia.<sup>21</sup>

Compton, East Palo Alto, and Seaside were all caught up in this new era of economic change in California, but in different ways. In Compton, for example, the departure of small businesses, corporate retail establishments, and financial institutions coincided with the flight of the white middle and working classes. As the notoriety of the city worsened during the 1980s and 1990s, many middle-class black and Latino families abandoned Compton, leaving an increasingly working-poor population that had little access to the decreasing number of well-paid, unionized jobs in the declining manufacturing sectors of the Los Angeles economy.<sup>22</sup> East Palo Alto's black majority and the surging Mexican immigrant population during these decades also found themselves tied occupationally to a growing service-sector economy, and the perception of the city as a violence-prone, minority suburb scared away potential economic investment.<sup>23</sup> Seaside's economic stagnation was also directly affected by economic restructuring at the end of the Cold War; the closure of Fort Ord in 1994 sent a wave of panic through the Monterey Peninsula generally, but Seaside most of all. The immediate impact in Seaside was job loss, the out-migration of African Americans by the thousands—many of whom had been government employees connected to the military as support personnel—and a sharp decline in housing prices. The city's director of public works described the effects of the military facility's decommissioning: "It was almost like Seaside turned into a ghost town. City coffers dried up. There was something like a 75% or 80% drop in housing rental occupancies. The car dealerships, the auto mall really felt the hit. . . . Then all the schools started to close."<sup>24</sup>

Economic restructuring, the loss of well-paid unionized jobs, white flight, and the rapidly growing service industries all had a huge impact on the status of cities and suburbs just at the moment when minorities were becoming the majorities. Blacks and Latinos, in particular, had the dubious distinction of inheriting communities that were increasingly inhabited by poor, working-class people and spiraling downward, with diminished tax bases, weakened institutional infrastructures, mounting crime rates, and violence. This "suburban decline"—the corollary to the "urban crisis" in the older industrial cities of the Northeast—remains one of the chief challenges facing cities of color into the twenty-first century.

Into this new environment came one of the largest waves of immigration in American history. Latin Americans, the great majority from Mexico, joined a mass immigration of people from many Asian nations, fueling a

service-sector, low-wage economy in the burgeoning minority-majority cities—which increasingly depended on foreign-born workers, both legal and undocumented. The 1965 Hart-Celler Act opened the gates to legal immigration for Asians and Latin Americans, leading to the unprecedented numbers that have entered the United States since 1970. Of the 31.1 million foreign-born people in the United States in 2000, those from Asian nations constituted 26 percent (mostly from China, the Philippines, India, and Vietnam), while those from Latin America accounted for 52 percent.<sup>25</sup> The number of Mexican immigrants, documented and undocumented, far surpassed that of any other single group. People of Mexican origin in the United States numbered only 1.75 million in 1960, but by 2000 they exceeded 21 million; a high birthrate and a steady increase in immigration together ignited this enormous population explosion. California is clearly the state of preference for Mexican-origin people, claiming 8.5 million in 2000, or about 40 percent of their total numbers. California is also home to the largest number of undocumented immigrants in the nation—an estimated 2.4 million, the great majority of whom were born in Mexico (57 percent of all illegal immigrants in the nation) or other Latin American countries (24 percent).<sup>26</sup> Latinos, native and foreign-born, together with Asians and African Americans, are shaping the state's new minority-majority cities of color in momentous ways. Compton, Seaside, East Palo Alto, and dozens of other California cities, large and small, have been transformed by this new demographic wave.

### Intergroup Tensions and Conflict in New Cities of Color

In the final decades of the twentieth century, immigrants from Latin America and Asia, together with their native-born counterparts, increasingly found themselves living in many cities and neighborhoods where other minorities predominated. In these new cities of color, intergroup relations are playing themselves out in ways reminiscent of earlier eras when native-born Americans encountered new immigrants and racial minorities as they settled in cities in large numbers. However, the new racial frontier of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries reveals significant differences, not only because the overwhelming number of people in these communities are people of color, but because the issues that spark conflict and motivate cooperation are deeply influenced by the legacies of a civil rights ideology and a commitment to intergroup collaboration in a diverse, multicultural society.

American urban history is replete with examples of how the native-born reacted against new immigrants from diverse lands and domestic racial minorities as they encountered one another on neighborhood streets,



on school playgrounds, in the workplace, and in other settings. New immigrants themselves were often just as guilty of discriminatory behavior toward other immigrants and American minorities, especially blacks. Since the 1920s, sociologists and other scholars have documented intergroup relations in myriad ways, both through qualitative research and through the use of surveys and other quantitative measures. Historically, social survey research tended to focus on white-black relations, but in more recent years, some studies have examined African American–Latino relations. This research tends to rely on attitudinal surveys and argues that negative perceptions, stereotypes, and ideas about competition over various types of resources influence the interactions of these two groups as they increasingly live together in the same cities and neighborhoods. Although several researchers that have focused on black-brown relations in Los Angeles conclude that no extreme racial polarization exists between African Americans and Latinos, they point to attitudes and perceptions, especially those held by younger and less well-educated members of both groups, that affect intergroup behavior. Much of the conflict that characterizes relations between blacks and Latinos in California cities such as Compton, East Palo Alto, and Seaside—as well as in cities elsewhere in the nation, such as Chicago, Houston, and Washington, D.C.—can be partly attributed to these dynamics.<sup>27</sup>

From the perspective of African Americans, it is easy to understand how difficult it is to form common bonds with other minority groups, especially new immigrants. Over time, blacks watched as wave after wave of immigrant groups arrived in America, suffering discrimination in employment and housing initially, but within a generation or two being accepted as part of mainstream American life, with access to the jobs, housing, and education that others of the same class enjoyed. For the majority of African Americans, almost one hundred and fifty years after the abolition of slavery, inclusion in American politics and social and economic life has been excruciatingly slow and painful. In addition, the sense of belonging to a community and living in a particular geographic space for decades or generations places great strains on intergroup relations when any new population is perceived to usurp power, privilege, and the status quo. In many minority-majority communities up and down the state of California, both African Americans and Latinos have expressed anxiety over population changes that have upset their own group's status quo.

Issues over the representation and control of resources, especially those involving political and educational institutions, are among the most common that divide black and brown in many minority-majority cities in California. The struggles have surfaced in many locales between African

Americans, who gained control of city councils and related municipal committees and boards during the 1970s and 1980s, and new Latino majorities who seek political representation and a voice in local affairs. In East Palo Alto, for example, although blacks gained majority status during the 1960s as whites fled neighborhoods in great numbers, it was not until the formerly unincorporated area became an official municipality in 1983 that African Americans asserted complete political control of the city. Beginning in the 1970s, the Latino population, mostly of Mexican origin, grew significantly, skyrocketing from 14 percent in 1980 to 59 percent in 2000; during the same period, the city's black population dropped from 60 percent to 23 percent. The demographic changes in this Bay Area city of color set the stage for Latinos to question their lack of representation in all quarters of municipal government and civic participation, as established black leaders held tightly on to the reins of political power. In the twenty-five-year history of this municipality, only one Latino has held a seat on the city council. Feuds over appointments to important city commissions and boards have led to charges of exclusion by Latino leaders and responses by black leaders that suggest the newcomers have not put enough effort into mobilizing themselves in ways that African Americans did in their earlier struggle to achieve political power in the city. "They want us to hand them something on a platter," said Barbara Mouton, a longtime activist and the city's first black mayor. "Nobody handed us anything. Everything we got we had to struggle for." Marcelino López, a newcomer to civic participation in the city, responded, "I know how the African-American community worked very hard, how they risked so much, how they fought so hard for the power they have." But, he questioned, "why don't they want to share it with us?" An article in the *San Jose Mercury News* in 2001 entitled "Two Ethnic Groups Collide over Cry for New Leadership" summed up this matter: "The conflict over community board seats between Mouton, one of the city's pioneering black leaders, and Lopez, a newcomer to civic affairs, may seem trivial to outsiders. But it is no less than a fight for the soul of the city."<sup>28</sup>

A very similar scenario emerged in Compton city politics between black and Latino leaders and advocates beginning in the 1990s, in a community that mirrored the demographic changes of East Palo Alto. Frustrated by the total absence of a Latino voice in city hall, a Mexican American resident complained that "there's no one to represent the Latino community. . . . The mayor is black. . . . The city council is black. . . . There is not a single Latino representative on the council."<sup>29</sup> Addressing the city's all-black council about this same issue, another Latino activist evoked the history of black-white politics from the 1960s when she stated, "It was not that many years

ago when black people were at this podium saying the same things of white folks. How could you forget?"<sup>30</sup> Commenting on the state of political affairs in the city in 1990, a *Los Angeles Times* journalist reported that "blacks control every public and quasi-public institution in Compton—the schools, City Hall, the Compton Chamber of Commerce, and the Democratic party machine—and show no sign they intend to share their power."<sup>31</sup>

In the adjacent city of Lynwood, Latinos recently achieved what their counterparts in Compton aspire to in local politics. This city had also been transformed from a predominantly white suburb to a black and then Latino-majority community, roughly during the same decades when Compton's population profile changed. In a recent article entitled "Black versus Brown," *Newsweek* reported on the contentious political climate in Lynwood, opening with a focus on Leticia Vásquez, the current mayor of the city. She recalled the racially charged politics in 1997, when the new Latino majority was mobilizing to gain control of the black-run city council. Vásquez remembered "people knocking on the door saying we needed to get rid of black city-council members."<sup>32</sup> After the political tide turned and the first Latino mayor gained power, together with a Latino-majority city council, that mayor fired several black city employees and terminated the city's relationship with some black contractors, the latter resulting in a discrimination lawsuit against the city. In reaction to this type of behavior by the Latino mayor, a black resident, a former teacher and social worker, remarked, "A lot of them [Latinos] want to shut us out completely."<sup>33</sup> The politics of exclusion, practiced by both groups in Lynwood and in Compton, appeared to have a stranglehold on any potential for intergroup cooperation.

Unlike Compton and East Palo Alto, Seaside has historic status as a military town, which provided many residents with a common bond. Filipinos, African Americans, and Mexican Americans who were connected to the military were able to come together over divisive issues such as urban renewal in the 1960s and 1970s because they accepted one another as members of a military community, not just as members of communities of color. However, the more recent immigration of Mexican nationals who have never had an affiliation with the U.S. military or Fort Ord has created some of the same tensions and conflicts that developed in Compton and East Palo Alto.

Seaside was the one community on the affluent Monterey Peninsula where new Mexican immigrants could afford to live in the 1990s. Real estate values increased dramatically everywhere else, but in Seaside the out-migration of African Americans from the poorest sections of the city kept rents and housing prices low, thus attracting Mexican immigrants and Mex-

ican Americans to these neighborhoods. The new migrant community seized the opportunity to settle, to buy homes, and to establish businesses as they became integral members of the city, changing the face of Seaside from black and white to increasingly brown. Seaside's first Latino mayor, Ralph Rubio, noted that the growth of the Hispanic population "put pressure on neighborhoods by increasing the density—Hispanics have bigger families, two families in a house, more people in small spaces. . . . Seaside was known for basketball, now soccer is big. Blacks come to city council meetings complaining about 'those people' who have too many kids and chickens in their yards."<sup>34</sup> The city's director of public works claimed that she received many of the complaints generated by non-Hispanics, mostly African American residents, about the new migration. "We were receiving a lot of complaints that the Mexican immigrants had a negative impact on the city, city services," she stated. "There were too many pedestrians—they walk everywhere. Hispanic stores were popping up everywhere. They brought their own food, music, clothing, religion."<sup>35</sup> The mere presence of "so many Mexicans" elicits almost visceral responses from many African Americans, but also from Filipinos and whites who are struggling to contend with what appears to be a dramatic loss of city identity. According to a nun at the local Catholic church (a self-consciously multiethnic, multiracial, multicultural church in the heart of the city), "There's always tension in this community. The thing is the numbers have increased, first with the Blacks, now the Mexicans."<sup>36</sup>

Tensions have played out politically in Seaside over development, housing, day laborers, and language, particularly the use of Spanish in the public schools. Conflict erupted over the existence of Mexican immigrant day laborers in the city, as it has in so many other urban areas that are part of the new racial frontier. Day laborers responded to perceived police harassment in the summer of 2002 by marching in protest on city hall. The police department had frequently, even daily, received racially charged complaints about the presence of day laborers in front of the 7-Eleven store since at least 2000, and almost all of these complaints came from Seaside's African American community. A police department spokesperson explained, "I have to tell you that the most biased group in Seaside is African American. One man called . . . and said his wife was intimidated [by the presence of the day laborers] and that I should 'get those Mexicans off the street.'"<sup>37</sup>

Elsewhere in California, black-brown contentiousness has surfaced in other settings, such as in public schools, in the main hospital serving residents of South Central Los Angeles, and among street gangs in South Central Los Angeles, East Palo Alto, and Compton. For example, a series of fights and melees erupted in 2005 involving more than twenty high school campuses

and pitting black students against Latino students—mostly, though not exclusively, at several formerly predominantly black high schools in South Central Los Angeles. Violence also erupted at Santa Monica High School on the west side of Los Angeles and at Taft High School in the San Fernando Valley. When the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the “Mexican Mafia has . . . [directed] Latino gang members to target blacks with shootings, beatings, and harassment,” and when rumors spread in May 2005 that Latino gangs planned to massacre blacks, parents kept thousands of students out of school on Cinco de Mayo, the day of the rumored attacks. Black-brown tensions had not been this high since the riots of spring 1992.<sup>38</sup>

In nonviolent ways, parents and teachers also contributed to tensions over various education-related issues, especially the allocation of scarce resources in cash-strapped schools. In East Palo Alto’s Ravenswood School District in 2002, many Latino parents sided with the California Department of Education in requesting a U.S. district judge to order a takeover of the district’s schools—which were run by a controversial African American superintendent—because of failures to effectively serve special-education students, the majority of whom were Latino.<sup>39</sup> Similar complaints came from Latino parents in Compton, a district that in 1993 had the sad distinction of being the first in California history to be taken over by the state. The state assessment team that made regular reports on the district’s progress toward the goal of reinstating local control heard from parents who claimed the district was negligent because it allocated insufficient resources for limited-English proficient students, who made up 41 percent of all pupils in Compton schools.<sup>40</sup> The problems were so numerous in the Compton schools, which were run mostly by black administrators and staffed mostly by black teachers, that some Latinos filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education claiming that “school staff and administrators made racially disparaging remarks about students and/or treated students differently on the basis of race.”<sup>41</sup> Yet the increasing attention paid to the needs of Spanish-speaking students in local districts is difficult for some African Americans to accept. For example, a former Seaside councilwoman and new school board member expressed outrage when she was denied permission to distribute flyers for Martin Luther King, Jr., Day in the public schools because they were available only in English and not in Spanish. “Is this America, Baby?” she asked, questioning whether it was appropriate to give Spanish the same value as English in official school documents.<sup>42</sup>

In Compton, the ongoing criticism by Latinos of the public schools, city hall, and the city’s African American leadership prompted Mayor Omar Bradley in 1998 to state, “I see this as a well-constructed attempt to utilize

the historical context of the African American civil rights movement for the benefit of a few people, who in fact probably don't even consider themselves nonwhite."<sup>43</sup> The tensions between African Americans and the increasing Latino population in cities such as Compton and East Palo Alto remind us, in some basic ways, of similar political tugs-of-war among earlier groups of native-born Americans who resisted the entrance of new Euro-American groups into the body politic in the late 1800s and early 1900s (e.g., the Irish and later Italians, Jews, and others). But Bradley's comment regarding civil rights illustrates a distinctly new context for understanding contemporary relations among people of color. In contrast to conflicts among white ethnics, which were usually based on struggles for power and geographic space and did not draw on the language of rights and past injustices caused by prejudice, many black and Latino leaders alike use the rhetoric and the premises of group rights as historically disadvantaged people to make claims to representation, political power, and control of institutions. These claims surfaced in the realm of politics but were also manifested in tensions in other institutional settings. For example, in Compton in 1990, a group of Latinos proposed an affirmative action plan for the hiring of Latinos for city jobs and in the school district, where Latino children made up the large majority. A member of the board of the Compton Unified School District responded by claiming that affirmative action programs were established as reparations for black enslavement and were not "based on going back and forth across the [U.S.-Mexico] border 10 to 15 times year."<sup>44</sup> Referring to an earlier era in the city's recent history when blacks protested against discriminatory treatment by whites, a veteran African American leader and councilman added, "I have walked many picket lines in Compton [and] I have yet to have one Latino walk the picket line with me. . . . They crossed it many times."<sup>45</sup>

Latinos, too, staked a claim to the civil rights era, to the long struggles for inclusion by Mexican Americans, and to the protections guaranteed by law against discrimination based on race. Indeed, in numerous instances beginning in the 1980s, Latinos have used local and federal agencies to intervene on their behalf because of alleged discrimination against them by African Americans. For example, Latinos filed complaints with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Los Angeles County Office of Affirmative Action Compliance (LACOAAC) in the 1980s and again in the 1990s charging racial discrimination in hiring practices at the King/Drew Medical Center, located in the Watts/Willowbrook area of South Central Los Angeles. Since its inception in the wake of the 1965 Watts riots, this medical center had become one of the primary black-run institutions

in Los Angeles. But over time, the demographic changes in the hospital's service area resulted in a majority of Spanish-speaking patients but few Latino employees. The investigation by the LACOAAAC concluded that "the hospital and its overseer, the Department of Health Services, had done little to improve conditions for Latinos"; and in 1995 the Los Angeles County Civil Service Commission found, similarly, that the medical center "has an unwritten policy of maintaining itself as a black institution, and of placing black candidates in positions of leadership within the institution, to the exclusion of non-blacks."<sup>46</sup> In education, Latino parents, as in the case of Compton and East Palo Alto, sought intervention by the state when they deemed that their children had suffered discriminatory treatment in districts administered primarily by blacks. And, as mentioned previously in the case of Lynwood, when blacks found themselves in the minority in a Latino-dominated city, they, too, resorted to lawsuits claiming discrimination based on race.<sup>47</sup>

### Understanding and Cooperation in Multiracial Communities

In the post-civil rights era, claims and counterclaims by many African Americans and Latinos served to open the divide even wider, especially among certain political leaders and advocates. Yet conflict and adversarial intergroup relations—the issues considered most newsworthy, and those we tend to hear most about—do not tell the other story: one of cooperation, collaboration, and the possibilities of coalition-building. When one looks deeper into cities of color, many examples surface of African Americans, Latinos, and others forging respectful, meaningful, and important initiatives of cooperation. There are many grassroots activists, nonprofit organizations, and ordinary citizens in nearly every locale that hold a belief that people of color share a common destiny in a diverse society. They believe that principles of fairness, justice, equality, and self-determination—ideas that inspired the civil rights and ethnic-nationalist movements—are foundations upon which various groups can build. Some of these people and organizations draw their inspiration from Christian religious beliefs, while others base their efforts on a realist perspective about how an ethnically and racially diverse community can function effectively.

Omowale Satterwhite, one of East Palo Alto's pioneering black community activists, remarked several years ago that "the oppressed must free themselves. . . . but then those that happen to be in power have to be open and conscious of ways to provide opportunity and not be unnecessarily or unduly resistant to the process."<sup>48</sup> Bob Hoover, a resident of East Palo

Alto since 1959 who runs an after-school golf program for children in the community, looked back on his days as a Stanford graduate student and remembered how he was refused rentals in nearby communities because he is black: "We [African Americans] ought to be the most understanding of prejudice and denial of any people on the planet. . . . We ought to be working to create unity."<sup>49</sup> Many nonprofit groups in the city, including One East Palo Alto and the East Palo Alto Mural Art Project, are about creating understanding, communication, trust, and cooperation as they promote and encourage civic unity among African Americans, Latinos, and Pacific Islanders.<sup>50</sup>

Much like their counterparts in East Palo Alto, individuals and organizations in Compton are working to counter the black-brown conflicts and tensions that have characterized the city since the late 1980s. In some instances, religious leaders helped pave the way for reconciliation between the two groups. For example, Rev. William R. Johnson, head of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in the city, made the case in 1994 that black political leaders should work to include Latino representation on the basis of a common experience of exclusion by race. "We [African Americans] are today the entrenched group trying to keep out intruders," Johnson declared, "just as whites were once the entrenched group and we were the intruders." "Latinos should have a voice," a black resident remarked after witnessing a Latino protest at a city council meeting. "We went through the same thing when blacks came into the city and it was all white." Rev. B. T. Newman is pastor of the Citizens of Zion Baptist Church and a key participant in an unprecedented ecumenical coalition—Pastors for Compton (PFC), a collaborative initiative by black Protestant and Latino church leaders. Newman claimed, "It's [the PFC] trying to preserve this transition [from a majority black to a majority Latino community] to where it don't end up in war." He commented, "I've learned if we have it right we can share power. . . . The power can be shared."<sup>51</sup> As an advocacy organization, the PFC pushed elected leaders to consider several issues to ensure equity for blacks and Latinos alike.

In addition to religious-oriented groups, some organizations outside the city stepped in to help ameliorate the growing conflict between Latinos and African Americans in Compton. For example, the Unity Summit in 1994, cosponsored by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund and the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), allowed both groups to air grievances. At another Unity Rally that same year that drew a large crowd of Compton residents, both black and brown, one of the organizers of the event, Rev. Reuben Anderson, stated,



"We recognize the ethnic diversity among us, yet we realize we have more in common that binds us together than issues that divide us."<sup>52</sup> New groups continue to form, such as the Compton Community Partners, a group of African American and Latino grassroots activists committed to launching a biracial organization to advance the educational welfare of black and Latino youth in the city.

In Seaside, the Coalition of Minority Organizations was formed explicitly to bring the new Latino population into conversation with the NAACP in order to work together for social and political justice. As a result, Latinos and African Americans worked together to help elect two African American women to the Monterey Peninsula Unified School Board. Groups such as the Yellow Jackets and the Seaside Concerned Citizens Committee (SCCC), organized in the 1990s to raise awareness about increasing crime in Seaside, included blacks, whites, Asians, and Latinos. A former Seaside mayor, Jerry Smith, who is African American, led SCCC and spearheaded a political coalition with the current Latino mayor, Ralph Rubio, to push commercial and residential development projects forward that are helping Seaside recover economically from the losses brought on by the closure of Fort Ord. And, under the radar of the news media and out of the public eye, are many small but significant acts of collaboration between Latinos and African Americans in Seaside. For example, although the city council meetings often attract the vocal and the angry, most new Latino immigrants live in quiet harmony with their white and African American neighbors, according to anecdotal reports from Seaside residents.<sup>53</sup>

In the emerging cities of color in California and across the nation, sweeping demographic changes have created challenges for communities of diverse people to find ways to coexist in peace in the new multicultural settings in which they live. These struggling, working-class cities, typically with scarce resources, face many daunting challenges as they grapple with multiple problems. The intergroup conflicts and tensions we routinely read or hear about are part of the realities of the new racial frontier in minority-majority cities; but so are the efforts engineered by individuals and organizations to develop collaboration, cooperation, and understanding among and between diverse groups. From East Palo Alto to Seaside to Compton to Lynwood, examples abound of these efforts. Lynwood's mayor, Leticia Vásquez, a former schoolteacher and the daughter of Mexican immigrants, views herself as someone who can bridge the divide between Latinos and blacks in her city. According to Rev. Alfreddie Johnson, a member of the city council, "The unique thing about her . . . [is that] she has this huge affinity for black people." The *Newsweek* article that gave national exposure to Lynwood as

one of the many new cities of color struggling with vexing intergroup relations aptly concluded, "Lynwood is a case study in the power of prejudice, the pitfalls of ethnic conflict and, perhaps, ultimately, the potential for interethnic cooperation. It may also foreshadow America's future—one that will increasingly see blacks and Latinos fighting, sometimes together and sometimes each other, to overcome a history of marginalization."<sup>54</sup>

## The Young Lords and the Postwar City: Notes on the Geographical and Structural Reconfigurations of Contemporary Urban Life

JOHANNA FERNÁNDEZ

In 2005, the Oscar-winning film *Crash* projected onto the big screen an entire cast of characters—white, black, Mexican, Korean, and Iranian—who in the United States’ highly segregated and class-divided society rarely interact on the same stage. In spite of its mixed reception as a work of art, the film left an imprint in the nation’s popular consciousness. Set in Los Angeles, *Crash* captured the attention of viewers because it put a mirror to the changing face of contemporary American society. With the largest minority population in the United States, where seven of every ten residents are nonwhite, Los Angeles is one of the best examples of this shift.<sup>1</sup>

As Albert M. Camarillo emphasizes in chapter 2 of this volume, Los Angeles is among a growing number of American cities that have a “minority-majority” population, in which minorities form more than 50 percent of the residents. Since the 1960s, approximately twenty million immigrants have settled in the United States. Half of these newcomers are from Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately one-third came from Asia, and the remainder came from Africa, from the Middle East, and from eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Balkan wars and the collapse of the Soviet Union. As of 2000, the number of foreign-born immigrants in the United States stood at thirty-one million, the largest in the nation’s history. As a percentage of the U.S. population, this figure is only slightly below the percentage of those who settled in the United States during the great influx of European immigrants at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

As in the case of late-nineteenth-century migration, rapid globalization, uneven development, economic crises, and political upheaval are at work in the migratory patterns of the last fifty years. What has become known as the new immigration is the product of a global upsurge in transnational migration fueled by political crises in the developing world, displacements

caused by economic restructuring abroad, and the cheap-labor requirements of capitalist globalization in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>3</sup>

But the increasing racial diversity that is visible in American society today, especially in urban centers, has its origins in World War II and was initially fueled in large measure by internal population movements of racial minorities to the nation's cities. The story of one of these populations, Puerto Rican migrants and their children, is particularly instructive. In the story of Puerto Rican migration and the rise of the Young Lords Organization (YLO)—the Puerto Rican mainland revolutionary nationalist organization that championed the independence of Puerto Rico and consciously fashioned itself after the Black Panther Party—we find many of the demographic, structural, and political forces that began to transform American cities in the period after World War II and beyond. These include the beginnings of deindustrialization, the growth of racially diverse urban populations, and the struggle for power within these new contexts. Despite its self-professed Puerto Rican nationalism, the YLO was a surprisingly multiethnic organization. Its political outlook was shaped by the social and economic crises that began to grip northern cities in the postwar period, and the global processes that fueled the deindustrialization of American cities are imprinted in the organization's evolution.

Radicalized by the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1950s and 1960s, a subsection of urban dwellers increasingly became aware of the global dimension of domestic problems, the transnational character of capitalism and its exploitation of cheap labor, and the pivotal role of racialization in this nexus. Through an examination of the origins of the Young Lords Organization in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood and the struggle for humane care at a South Bronx hospital in New York, this chapter explores the origins of America's contemporary racial landscape and seeks to paint a more complex portrait of the relationship between structural urban decline and the people who fought to preserve the dignity of the place they called home. The history of the Young Lords, together with that of other urban activist formations, challenges popular narratives of what has become known as the "urban crisis"—defined as the decline of the city, with its residents often imagined as passive victims of structural forces and urban policies beyond their control.



The Young Lords was led by first- and second-generation Puerto Rican radicals raised in the mainland United States, rather than on the island. Yet

despite its largely Puerto Rican membership and professed Puerto Rican nationalism, the organization possessed a rare multiracial and multiethnic composition that presaged the contemporary demographic character of American cities. Operating in the interstices of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Young Lords attracted Chicanos, African Americans, and other Latinos. According to Iris Morales, former member of the New York chapter of the Young Lords and producer of the documentary film *¡Palante, Siempre Palante!*, “activists who had participated in the Civil Rights, Black liberation and cultural Nationalists movements joined” the organization. While Puerto Ricans were a majority of the members, African Americans “made up about 25 percent of the membership. Other Latinos—Cubans, Dominicans, Mexicans, Panamanians, and Colombians—also joined. One member was Japanese-Hawaiian.”<sup>4</sup> Most importantly, non-Puerto Rican members were not merely passive participants in the organization but were part of its lifeblood. The locally revered African American radical Denise Oliver of New York was the first woman elected to the Young Lords’ central committee. Pablo Yoruba Guzman, one of the founders of the New York group and a member of the central committee, was of Afro-Cuban parentage, and Omar Lopez, the major strategist of the Chicago YLO, was Mexican American. With a formal leadership in New York composed largely of Afro-Latinos, and with fully one-quarter of its membership made up of African Americans, it is no surprise that the Young Lords launched one of the first Latino formations that identified with the Black Power movement, that saw itself as part of the African diaspora, and that was instrumental in theorizing and identifying the structures of racism embedded in the culture, language, and history of Latin America and its institutions.

The Young Lords’ diverse racial and ethnic makeup foretold the advent of a much more complicated racial landscape in the United States—of which contemporary New York, Miami, and Los Angeles are the best expressions—in which ethnicity would play a more significant role in the identity formation of racial minorities, if not yet in the nation’s dominant racial discourse. The presence of so many different racialized groups in America today, as demonstrated in the unexpected and unprecedented wave of mass protests by undocumented immigrants from Latin America that began in March 2006, complicates the traditional black-white understandings of racism in the United States; social critics wondered whether the grievances identified by these protesters could constitute the basis for a new civil rights movement. Moreover, the acceleration of population transfers from Latin America and the Caribbean since 1965 complicates the racial landscape of the United States, because many of the recent immigrants were

reared in societies where the idea of race, forged under social and historical conditions different from those of North America, did not produce the strict black/white racial binary that has historically defined the American experience.<sup>5</sup> The tendency in Spanish-speaking islands such as Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, as well as in other parts of Latin America, is to affirm ethnic and cultural identity and to de-emphasize or deny, as some might argue, black racial identification. However, the challenges to the nation's traditional paradigms of race that the postwar period and the 1960s engendered opened up a space wherein non-African American migrants to the city would explore common causes with African Americans, rather than dissociate from the nation's historically vilified and scapegoated minority.

The demographic shift that began in the postwar period was a consequence, in part, of the large waves of emigration triggered by post-World War II decolonization movements and Cold War conflicts in the developing world in places such as Guatemala, Iran, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Nigeria, Angola, and Indochina, a region from which over a million refugees and immigrants came to the United States in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. These population transfers were also the unintended by-products of the economic and political crises that gripped African and Latin American nations in the aftermath of "structural adjustment" policies led by the International Monetary Fund during the 1980s and 1990s, which attempted to address the worldwide debt crisis of the 1970s in places such as Panama, Nigeria, Ghana, and Jamaica.<sup>6</sup> But the demographic transformation of American cities was also a consequence of the large-scale migratory patterns unleashed by the elimination of racially discriminatory immigration policy with the passage of the Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965.<sup>7</sup>

But before these new immigrants would begin the process of reconstructing the soul of the nation's major cities, Puerto Ricans would break the difficult path of settlement for them. Existing in the interstitial limbo between colonialism and full American citizenship, Puerto Ricans were the first non-English-speaking migrants to settle in working-class neighborhoods of Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia in large numbers during the postwar period. Over the course of the 1940s, the Puerto Rican population in New York City quadrupled, and throughout the 1950s Puerto Ricans migrated to the city in larger numbers than African Americans.<sup>8</sup> By the late 1950s the number of Puerto Ricans in New York born in Puerto Rico, or of Puerto Rican parentage, reached approximately nine hundred thousand.<sup>9</sup> As the major point of entry for Puerto Rican migrants historically, New York became home to 85 percent of the newcomers.<sup>10</sup> The rest continued their sojourn to other industrial cities, such as Chicago, Newark, Camden, and Philadelphia.

The large-scale transfer of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland was part of a larger migratory pattern spurred by the changes produced by World War II, which would irrevocably transform both the face of the city and the nation's racial economy.<sup>11</sup> The most dramatic population transfer of this period was that of African Americans, five million of whom settled in northern cities. Mexican Americans also swelled the populations of Los Angeles, San Diego, and the San Francisco Bay Area. From 1950 to 1960, the Chicano population in Los Angeles County doubled, from three hundred thousand to six hundred thousand, and by 1968 the Chicano population, centered in East Los Angeles, approached one million.<sup>12</sup>

The transfer of more than one-third of Puerto Rico's population to New York between 1943 and 1960 produced a unique generation of mainland-identified Puerto Rican youth. Out of this vast demographic dislocation of Puerto Ricans emerged a distinct mainland urban experience and identity, whose expression was unleashed with the rise of the Young Lords. As sons and daughters of the migration, the young people of this generation were exponentially more numerous than previous generations, and their consciousness was shaped by an unlikely combination of politicizing experiences—from the rise of the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War to their own experience in an urban setting beset by industrial decline and greater economic and racial segregation. The Young Lords articulated and dramatized the consequences of these developments in their politics, publications, and activism.

Puerto Rican migration soared in tandem with the process of global economic restructuring, which began to take shape during World War II and which eventually reconfigured the world's economy. Many of the young people who swelled the ranks of the YLO came from families that were affected by the U.S.-led project to industrialize Puerto Rico in 1947, Operation Bootstrap, which unleashed an exodus of coffee and tobacco growers displaced by American sugar companies' increasing power and control over the island's landholdings. As the object of the United States' first attempt to export and develop a modern capitalist economy abroad, Puerto Rico became a laboratory for the development and application of market strategies to be implemented in developing third-world nations, and in Latin America in particular. The plan transformed Puerto Rico's market system from a monocultural plantation economy to an export-driven industrial economy based on factory production, largely by wooing foreign companies to the island with cheap-labor guarantees and federal tax-break incentives.<sup>13</sup> While the goals of U.S. foreign intervention in the postwar period were complex, one

of its aims was the integration of the predominantly agricultural economies of the third world into the world economy.<sup>14</sup>

Ironically, the post-Bretton Woods, U.S.-led economic movement that launched the modernization of economies like that of Puerto Rico created unanticipated sources of cheap labor abroad, with the unintended consequence of putting pressure on domestic industries to relocate in search of cheaper production costs and thus fostering a long-term process of industrial decline in northern cities. Studies by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in the 1960s demonstrated an emerging concern over groups of predominantly black and Puerto Rican men in their prime working years living in New York's poorest slums. These young men were neither employed nor counted as unemployed, because they had long ago ceased their search for employment. Relative to the labor participation of black and white men, lack of job activity was highest among Puerto Ricans. In 1966, 47 percent of Puerto Ricans in New York were either unemployed, underemployed, or permanently out of the labor force for lack of success in finding employment.<sup>15</sup> Similar processes were under way in Chicago, where the Young Lords first emerged.

Thus, radical movements in the cities cohering in the second half of the 1960s reflected the distinctive social features of the urban environment in which they emerged. They were a response to automation and to the new structures of capitalism and its "modernization" in the second half of the twentieth century, which created an unprecedented class of permanently unemployed and discouraged young workers.<sup>16</sup> Radical groups such as the Young Lords and the Black Panthers addressed this crisis in their politics. In many ways, their apocalyptic depictions of what they deemed the economic and social dispensability of people of color under postindustrial capitalism presaged later discussions of the end of the American dream.

One of the most striking aspects of the history of the YLO is its genesis. The Young Lords was a gang that had been active in Chicago since the 1950s and emerged politicized in that city in the tumult of 1968. Imprinted in the Young Lords' evolution from gang to political organization is a powerful story of agency and rebirth. This extraordinary and deliberate political transformation on the part of poor urban youth challenges the dominant historical narrative of radical movements of the sixties, which features white students, urban rioters, and a narrowly conceived New Left as its major protagonists.

The phenomenon of the proliferation of gangs in postwar Chicago is complex and obfuscated by contemporary media-driven and racialized un-



derstandings of this form of social organization.<sup>17</sup> In 1950s Chicago, gangs were a way of life in poor and working-class neighborhoods, black, white, and the hues in between. Through gangs, young people of all races sought to cobble together an identity and a sense of belonging. They provided a structure for benign social activities—such as parties and fund-raisers for the acquisition of stylish jackets, which became associated with a particular gang formation—as well as for more marginal activities, such as petty crime. In times of economic uncertainty, when ethnic and racial tensions grew, local gangs engaged in defensive competition for turf control along racial and ethnic lines. In the racially shifting neighborhoods of postwar Chicago, racial turf wars were fed, generally, by the influx of black, Puerto Rican, and Mexican migrants at a moment when the economic structure of the city was changing. But locally and on the ground, urban renewal policies exacerbated intergang violence and rivalry, as working-class families were displaced from their homes to make room for middle-class housing and business-led economic development.<sup>18</sup>

The Chicago Young Lords recount stories of multiple displacements from their neighborhoods, a process that usually culminated in their relocation to the unwelcoming neighborhoods populated by Irish, Italian, and German immigrants and their descendents. Former Young Lords describe the brutal racial harassment they suffered. One former member, Rory Garcia, remembers waking up one day and refusing to go to school, because he “simply did not want to fight anymore.” He left school in ninth grade and never went back.<sup>19</sup> Former members describe how their gang networks and activities taught them how to fight at a young age—and prepared them to navigate the mean streets of Chicago.

This brief history offers a dramatic example of how a complex web of conscious interventions and unplanned circumstances contributed to the radicalization and transformation of the Young Lords. The primary architect of the gang’s political conversion was its chairman, Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez. Like many black and Latino urban youths of his time, the Puerto Rican gang-leader-turned-activist was radicalized in prison. Ironically, incarceration during this moment of social upheaval opened up possibilities for potential leaders such as Jimenez. In prison, Jimenez read the story of religious transformation told by Thomas Merton in his bestseller *Seven Storey Mountain*. He also read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. These books were made available to him by a prison inmate and librarian who was a member of the Nation of Islam. Conversations about these books with fellow inmates in the atmosphere of possibility created by the social movements of the era awakened Jimenez to the world of political ideas. The Nation of Islam’s reli-

gious intervention in the prisons and its contribution to the transformation of Malcolm X are perhaps the pivotal centerpiece of the otherwise untold history of the evolution and character of northern struggles. Upon release from prison, Jimenez was targeted by a War on Poverty program designed to bridge inmates' transition from jail to civilian life and help them find employment. He was also approached by a local activist, Pat Divine, who convinced Jimenez that he should join the struggle against urban renewal in the Lincoln Park section of Chicago, where the Lords were active.

In short, the actions of the Nation of Islam in prison, an anti-poverty program, the conscious intervention of a seasoned local activist, and the atmosphere of possibility created by the social movements of the era all contributed to Jimenez's political transformation and drove him to take on the herculean task of redirecting the activities of his gang. Jimenez also cites the dramatic example of the Black Panther Party (BPP), which established a compelling model to follow. But challenges for Jimenez abounded. He suggests that the learned behavior of survival adopted by gang members was perhaps his greatest stumbling block.<sup>20</sup> In many ways, gang members were conditioned to thinking narrowly and in a sectarian fashion about turf control and protecting their own, and consequently they were not easily politically mobilized.

The transformation from gang to political organization thus did not come easily. Jimenez explains the alienating experience of living through two opposing realities: being a respected leader of his community one day and then awakening to the painful process of being an outcast, a suspected "Communist," the next—until one night in 1968, that is, when a group of five Young Lords witnessed the fatal shooting of one of the gang, Manuel Ramos, by an undercover police officer named James Lamb. That night, the Young Lords who were present during the altercation were arrested. Jimenez, who was not at the party, was the person the Lords called from prison. That was the turning point. The five Young Lords spent weeks in prison. They were never charged with a crime, and the police officer who fatally shot their friend was never brought up for charges. The Young Lords would be politically transformed by the campaign they would mount to bring Officer James Lamb to justice.

In the weeks and months that followed, and in consultation with Panther leaders Fred Hampton, Bobby Lee, and Henry "Poison" Gaddis, Jimenez proceeded to turn the Young Lords into the Panthers' Puerto Rican counterpart.<sup>21</sup> Because of the YLO's established gang network, hundreds of young men and women joined the organization and took part in its militant neighborhood protests against urban displacement under the guise of urban renewal.

The example set by the BPP provided a compelling model of protest that was instrumental to the evolution of the Young Lords. Following the first wave of urban upheavals that began in Harlem in 1964, the BPP's founding members resolved to organize the radicalized sections of poor and working-class African Americans. To this end, the BPP initiated a series of "survival programs," aimed at addressing the systemic causes of the riots. The first of these was a civilian patrol unit to monitor police arrests and defend community residents against police aggression in East Oakland, California. Later, the Panthers added a children's breakfast program, an ambulance service, and a lead-poisoning detection program to their compendium of activities.

Between 1968 and 1970, the Chicago YLO led a series of militant campaigns with a community-service aspect akin to the BPP's survival programs. In Chicago, a city targeted by the Johnson administration's War on Poverty initiative, the YLO established tactical alliances with social-service organizations, community advocates, and government anti-poverty programs. The Young Lords' protest actions included the occupation of the Armitage Street Church in Chicago following several failed attempts at convincing the church leadership to allow the group to use space to set up a day-care program and a health clinic. Collaborating with other radical organizations and social-service groups, the Chicago YLO succeeded in stopping an urban renewal plan for construction of middle-income homes in the city's West Lincoln Park neighborhood, which would have displaced Puerto Ricans and other Latinos.<sup>22</sup>

The Puerto Rican radicals inspired the formation of sister organizations in other cities, the most influential of which was based in New York City. The New York Young Lords subsequently duplicated the organizing efforts of the Chicago group in Puerto Rican neighborhoods, including East Harlem and the South Bronx. In New York, where college education became widely accessible to racial minorities in the 1960s through pioneering programs at the City University of New York, the Young Lords Organization—later renamed the Young Lords Party (YLP)—was initiated by politicized students in 1969. It flourished amid the conflagrations of New York's city and labor politics in the late 1960s. These passionate young men and women came of age during the racially divisive New York City teachers' strike of 1968, the school-decentralization movements in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, recurrent housing struggles, the welfare-rights movement, the prison rebellions at the Tombs and Attica, local street riots, and the rise of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos as an electoral force in the city.

In New York, the Young Lords' most famous protest was their audacious garbage-dumping campaign, which forced the city to conduct regu-

lar neighborhood garbage pickups. A quieter but more significant victory was their campaign against lead poisoning, which the *American Journal of Public Health* deemed instrumental in the passage of anti-lead poisoning legislation in New York during the early 1970s. At Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx, the Young Lords were among the first activists to challenge the advent of draconian spending cuts and privatization policies in the public sector. In the spring and summer of 1970, the YLP's efforts advanced swiftly from one-on-one talks with patients and employees concerning hospital conditions to a dramatic twelve-hour occupation of one of the hospital's buildings—the nurses' residence, which in an earlier era had housed the first nursing school for African American women in the United States and had been a stop on the Underground Railroad. In addition to carrying on a long tradition of struggle at Lincoln, the Young Lords were continuing the work of the BPP and other activists who in the winter of 1969 spearheaded a battle over control of the Community Mental Health Clinic affiliated with Lincoln.

The Young Lords' occupation of the hospital in July 1970 brought attention to Lincoln's deplorable conditions. As a result, the crisis at the hospital became a major issue in the city's political debates. The whirlwind of controversy that gripped the medical facility following the YLP's actions was recorded in hundreds of mainstream and alternative news articles, and government officials were forced to find ways to improve care in the public hospitals of New York. The Young Lords' protests also led to the creation at Lincoln Hospital of one of the primary drug-treatment centers using acupuncture in the Western world.

The Young Lords' campaign at Lincoln was strengthened by the opening of a South Bronx YLP office on Cypress Avenue in 1970, which allowed them to develop political ties in the neighborhood that the hospital serviced. Concerned with the plight of the poor and in particular Puerto Ricans among them, the Lords expanded their influence into what came to be known as the Puerto Rican borough. This was a logical progression of the organization's development and a product of its continued growth and appeal.<sup>23</sup>

The Bronx was home to the largest conglomeration of Puerto Ricans in New York, the majority of whom were concentrated in the borough's southernmost section.<sup>24</sup> Though East Harlem remained in many ways the cultural home of New York's Puerto Ricans, by 1960 thousands of Puerto Ricans had settled in the Bronx, eclipsing East Harlem's population. In addition to the growing Puerto Rican population, more than one-third of the Bronx's residents in 1970 were African American. Aware of the district's demographics, its chronic social problems, and ongoing local grassroots efforts toward

improvement of patient services at Lincoln, the Young Lords chose the hospital as the site of a major organizing campaign. As one of the major institutions in the South Bronx where activists had secured concrete reforms, the aging hospital illustrated both the district's blight and its possibilities for transformation.<sup>25</sup>

At Lincoln and other hospitals, low salaries and poor working conditions had become the focal point of the workplace struggles led in the 1950s and 1960s by Local 1199 of the Drug, Hospital, and Health Care Employees Union, which demanded pay standards comparable to those in other industries. Still in the process of transformation from charitable foundations to public institutions, hospitals routinely underpaid the nonprofessional employees they hired. In many instances, the wages of hospital workers were as paltry as hospital conditions were deplorable. In New York, the wages that hospitals paid were so low that large percentages of their unskilled, predominantly black and Puerto Rican workers were eligible for public assistance.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, hospital administrators treated their nonmedical staff in the same paternalistic way that they treated their patients, a holdover from the paternalism of the hospital's philanthropic origins. By challenging hospitals to raise their standards and improve wages and working conditions, unions in the 1950s and 1960s accelerated the progressive evolution of hospitals into effective institutions.<sup>27</sup>

In the winter of 1969, nonprofessional workers in the Lincoln Hospital-affiliated Community Mental Health Clinic, an experimental program funded by federal anti-poverty legislation, spearheaded a battle for what they called "community-worker control" of the clinic. The struggle reached a turning point when more than one hundred nonmedical workers, including orderlies, administrative staff, and janitorial staff, seized the facility and took over the operation of the clinic for several days. Supported by a number of psychiatrists, psychologists, and other health professionals, the team of African American and Puerto Rican community mental health workers, some of whom were members of the BPP, attempted to implement administrative changes that would further democratize the program's administrative structure and meet its stated objective of making the community a partner in its own care. In the course of this action, twenty-three people were arrested, and nineteen professionals—including three psychiatrists—and forty-four nonprofessionals were fired before eventually being reinstated.<sup>28</sup>

The nonmedical workers and their community allies—among them members of the BPP—called for a policy and review board that fairly represented all staff and that had the authority to make and implement decisions. The goal of the campaign was to utilize political action to create a more

politically sensitive and aware health-care provider, and to give patients a sense of control over their fate. This approach was also meant to address the manifold social problems of urban life, which, according to an increasing number of specialists and health professionals at the time, contributed significantly to the psychological breakdown of individuals in society.<sup>29</sup> The mental health workers' preoccupation with the hospital's administrative structure, as well as with disease and the socio-environmental conditions that fueled disease in poor urban settings, represented a radical approach to, and philosophy about, health concerns. Unfortunately, these calls to transform health care went largely unheeded, setting the stage for the Young Lords' more radical efforts.

The crisis over governance at Lincoln Hospital was a continuation—albeit in a different aspect of public life—of the movement for community control that generated support among a number of racial minorities, public-sector professionals, and local leaders during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville school-decentralization crisis of 1967–68. At the heart of the movement for community control was a demand for full participation in determining the structure of administration and the delivery of public services in local communities. The call for minority control over community institutions in local urban developments reflected the radicalization of the northern civil rights and Black Power movements. There was a growing effort among activists to extend the meaning of democracy and enhance the fight for racial equality by rooting it in economic and political power at the local level. To this end, they sought greater influence and power over local institutions and raised issues of economic equality and wealth redistribution in their struggles.

In the spring of 1970, a coalition was formed at Lincoln Hospital to challenge the newly created Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC). This new citywide governing body for New York's public hospitals proposed budgetary cuts, scheduled for July of that year, which would further deteriorate an already desperate situation. The Think Lincoln Committee (TLC), as the coalition called itself, included hospital employees, neighborhood residents, and activists, some of whom were also Lincoln patients. The Health Revolutionary Unity Movement (HRUM)—a group of militant, predominantly African American and Latino hospital workers throughout the city—and the Young Lords Party also figured prominently in the coalition.

Although the struggles were local, the organizers employed tactics used nationally. HRUM, for example, borrowed its acronym from the revolutionary union movements (RUMs) launched by black autoworkers in Detroit's automobile plants in 1968 against what they termed "niggermatation," which

included work speedups in union shops and racial discrimination by union and company management.

Health organizations led primarily by people of color, such as HRUM, endeavored to broaden the parameters of struggle to include issues directly concerning patients and the hospital's surrounding community, such as opposition to privatization, as well as traditional union issues and improved working conditions. In the view of these activists, this broad approach to health care and the health industry was necessary in a context in which issues of race and class were intertwined. Their experience suggested that there was continuity between the workplace and the community; they reasoned that the class struggle and the fight against racial inequality could not be separated. In spirit, their campaigns had much in common with those initiated by Communists in their organizing drives in Harlem in the 1930s.

Organized independent of the Drug, Hospital, and Health Care Employees Union, the TLC campaigns were vehemently opposed by the union. Though Local 1199 was conceived as a "soul power" union—wedded to the political and economic concerns of working people of color—and supported the controversial community-control battle in the schools, it did not support the same efforts in the hospitals.<sup>30</sup> By the late 1960s, a small but influential group of young workers across the city were beginning to challenge what they perceived as the growing complacency of Local 1199, which only a few years earlier had launched major unionizing drives in public and voluntary hospitals. Influenced by the Black Power and Brown Power movements, radicalized by the Vietnam War, and frustrated by work speedups and budget cuts brought on by economic stagnation in the late sixties, large sectors of the American workforce began to organize independent of union leaderships. In a few instances, the new labor militants made overtly political demands, such as worker control of workplaces, and in many instances they organized around their opposition to the Vietnam War. Many other progressive groups were organized by young black and Latino workers hoping to capitalize on the political mood that existed in society at large. These groups challenged union conservatism in general and the failure of union leadership to address issues of racism within its membership and on the shop floor.<sup>31</sup>

Of all the municipal hospitals facing budget cutbacks, the impoverished Lincoln was slated for the steepest cuts. Galvanized by the threat of budget reductions, the TLC proceeded to gather information and raise awareness concerning the impact of the impending cuts on hospital services. The planned cuts had precipitated a six-month hiring freeze in the Department of Medicine, blocking the replacement of five doctors who had resigned—

among them cardiac and kidney specialists, whose services were vital to the functioning of the hospital. The budget cuts were also expected to limit the operating hours of Section K, a screening clinic for patient diagnoses and referrals, and to increase the number of intakes in the emergency room—already ranked fourth busiest in the nation—which would result in patients' being rerouted on evenings and weekends, when Section K was expected to be shut down.<sup>32</sup>

By distributing leaflets, posting flyers, and talking to Lincoln Hospital workers and community residents about the cutbacks, the TLC activists became aware of other concerns of workers and patients. In response, they set up a complaint table in the emergency room in order to document the many grievances of the hospital's predominantly African American and Puerto Rican patients. In this capacity, TLC activists functioned as champions of patient and worker rights. The day-to-day work of fact-finding and documentation of the complaints by countless patients and workers transformed the hospital's policies. By bringing these grievances into the open, the activists helped establish a hospital code of ethics that challenged the rigid hierarchy of an institution founded on paternalism. Patients who were previously treated with condescension, disregard, or contempt by the hospital hierarchy began to receive more respectful treatment. Grievances were often successfully addressed by discussing the issue with the appropriate staff person and in the presence of the patient.<sup>33</sup>

The hospital administration complied quickly with some of the TLC's demands. For example, in response to one of the many complaints they received about the lack of privacy in the emergency room bathroom cubicles, the TLC easily obtained screens. When discussion and mediation failed to obtain the desired results, however, the committee adopted more confrontational strategies.<sup>34</sup> When their request that garbage be removed from the corner of 142nd Street and Cortlandt Avenue just outside the hospital wasn't addressed, the group was successful after a pile of garbage wound up in, ironically, the office of Dr. Antero Lacot, a Puerto Rican gynecologist and the first member of a racial minority group to occupy the position of director at the hospital. According to the TLC, the garbage protest was a last resort: "We complained, we petitioned, we called the mayor's office. Nothing was done."<sup>35</sup> Dr. Lacot had recently become Lincoln's director, following a sit-in protesting the Commissioner of Hospitals' decision to appoint yet another white professional for the job. The sit-in was organized by a group of Puerto Rican community organizations and political clubs influenced by Ramon Velez, an old-style local political operator with considerable influence and access to resources. Responding to community pressure, New York City



mayor John Lindsay overruled the commissioner and appointed Dr. Lacot to the position.<sup>36</sup> The continued protests at Lincoln even after Lacot's appointment were a sign that the various social forces activated in the South Bronx were determined to achieve meaningful reforms beyond the symbolic appointment of a Puerto Rican to a high administrative post.

Although the TLC was heavily involved with issues concerning patient treatment, it also rallied for improved working conditions. For example, with the coalition's involvement, cafeteria workers, who had long complained of the ninety-degree heat they suffered in the hospital's unventilated kitchen, were finally provided with the fan they had long ago requested.

During this first phase of protests, the TLC established a set of demands that reflected primarily concerns about community control and to a lesser extent union-negotiation issues. These demands tried to address the needs of an impoverished community and the lack of agency exercised by the hospital's nonprofessional workforce. The TLC declared the following:

1. Doctors must give humane treatment to patients
2. Free food must be given to patients who spend hours in the hospital waiting to be seen
3. Construction on the new Lincoln Hospital must start immediately
4. There must be no cutbacks in services or in jobs in any part of Lincoln Hospital
5. The immediate formation of a community-worker board which has control over the policies and practices of the hospital<sup>37</sup>

After months of intense organizing efforts that yielded limited results, the Young Lords and the Think Lincoln Committee adopted a more militant strategy, which they believed would jolt the hospital administration into initiating reforms. Led primarily by the Young Lords, the activists orchestrated a dramatic and well-organized occupation of the nurses' residence on July 14, 1970. The occupation coincided roughly with the onset of the new budgetary cycle, when reductions in hospital services were scheduled to begin. Only days earlier, *Palante*, the Young Lords' newspaper, had run a major article on Lincoln Hospital that reported on the imminent budget cuts and foreshadowed the YLP's action. The article began, "In July 1970, Lincoln Hospital will be the victim of the greedy businessmen who make money from the illnesses of the people of the South Bronx."<sup>38</sup>

With the hospital takeover, the Young Lords reenacted a stunt that had first brought them notoriety a year earlier, during their "church offensive"—their occupation of an East Harlem church, which they transformed into

a social-service sanctuary for the poor. At the hospital, the Young Lords, equipped mainly with chukka sticks (a pair of eight-inch wooden batons held together with an elastic band and used in martial arts), worked quickly and with confidence. The group, numbering between 150 and 200, entered the nurses' residence at five o'clock in the morning, wearing white lab coats—a display of the YLP's trademark mischievousness and earnestness. Once inside, they secured key positions on the building's ground floor, barricaded windows and entrances, and announced a press conference for ten o'clock that morning. They deployed messengers to the upper floors to inform doctors, nurses, and other hospital employees of the occupation and to request their assistance in "running the hospital for the people."<sup>39</sup> Then the militants began instituting their community programs: in the auditorium, a provisional screening clinic for anemia, lead poisoning, iron deficiency, and tuberculosis; in the basement, a day-care center and a classroom for political and health education. All the while, they invited volunteers to help staff the programs.

Throughout the day, hundreds of community residents who had learned of the takeover and the free services made their way through the occupied building or stood watch outside amid a sea of armed police officers. Above them fluttered the Puerto Rican flag and banners that read "Seize the Hospital to Serve the People," "Welcome to the People's Hospital," and "Bienvenidos al Hospital del Pueblo." According to a firsthand account by a resident doctor at Lincoln,

the Lords never requested formal backing in advance since to do so would have jeopardized the secrecy surrounding the planned action. In all likelihood, though, they counted on a fair amount of support from the hospital staff. And they got it. . . . [The] Collective members visited the occupied areas frequently, helped staff the day care and health care programs, and let it be known to the press and the police that physicians backed the Lords. I for one couldn't stay away. The Nurses' Residence suddenly had the fantastic, intoxicating air of a liberated zone. The press was listening; the city was listening; and the Lords had risen up and were telling the stories of the women and children waiting endlessly in the clinic, the old folks dying for lack of a Cardiac Care Unit, the humiliation of the Emergency Room, the flies, the pain, the degradation. It felt good, it felt right, it felt righteous. It was why we had come to Lincoln.<sup>40</sup>

At the press conference, the group's representatives described in detail the hospital's deplorable conditions. That day, radio and television news

broadcasts captured the crisis at Lincoln Hospital—the inhumane physical conditions under which service was routinely rendered. Even Dr. Lacot, the hospital director, admitted that day that although he preferred that the Young Lords leave, their actions were “helpful” in “dramatiz[ing] a situation, which is critical.”<sup>41</sup>

The political repercussions of the events at the hospital were rather significant for city officials, who were planning to implement austerity measures in services in response to the city’s fiscal crisis. The Young Lords’ protest established a precedent in its challenge to city governance. The fear that a prolonged and hostile conflict would spark similar actions by other discontented groups across the city afforded the YLP a measure of bargaining power with city officials. Ever confident, the Young Lords outlined the following demands:

1. No cutbacks in services or jobs, specifically in the Section K screening clinic, the Emergency Room, of translators, doctors, or any other personnel.
2. We want immediate funds from the NYC Health Services Administration to complete the building and fully staff the new Lincoln Hospital.
3. Door-to-door health services for preventative care emphasizing environment and sanitation control, nutrition, drug addiction, maternal and child care, and senior citizen services.
4. We want a permanent 24 hour-a-day grievance table staffed by patients and workers with the power to redress grievances.
5. We want a \$140.00 a week minimum wage for all workers.
6. We want a day care center for patients and workers at Lincoln Hospital.
7. We want self-determination of all health services through a community-worker board to operate Lincoln Hospital. This group of people must have shown their commitment to sincerely serve the people of this community.<sup>42</sup>

As the political and economic character of the demands suggests, the preoccupations of the Think Lincoln Committee had evolved from its initial focus on humane treatment of patients to demands that, reflecting the involvement of hospital workers in HRUM, indicate a stronger set of traditionally working-class concerns.

After their press conference, the militants entered into negotiations with Lincoln’s Dr. Lacot; Mayor Lindsay’s chief assistant, Sid Davidoff; and

representatives from the newly formed Health and Hospitals Corporation, which had taken over the administration and allocation of expenditures for municipal hospitals in July. After more than four hours of talks, the fragile balance at the bargaining table was suddenly upset just as an agreement was about to be reached. According to the YLP, the compromise would have called on the police to withdraw their forces from the hospital's surrounding area and would have allowed the group to run a series of programs in the hospital in return for the immediate evacuation of the premises. But when TLC delegates received word that a Young Lord positioned at the central checkpoint had been manhandled by an undercover police officer, they called off the negotiations, concluding that "it was apparent that the administration had no control of what was going on and that Mayor Lindsay, through his mouthpieces, was trying to double-deal."<sup>43</sup>

At approximately five o'clock, in an auditorium brimming with reporters and supporters, Young Lord Pablo Guzman reported on what had transpired at the negotiation table. As he spoke, reinforcements of special-unit police positioned themselves at every entrance of the building. Guzman exhorted the audience to defend the hospital. But the group had already decided to avoid a confrontation. Believing that they had "won a political victory" and that they risked a bloody confrontation with the waiting officers, the group decided against risking mass arrests. While Guzman continued to speak, the Young Lords in their white lab coats began to slip out of the building, a few at a time, escorted by resident doctors.

From July until December of 1970, the crisis at Lincoln Hospital was a major issue in the city's political debates. Government officials were forced to find ways to improve care in the public hospitals. The effects of the occupation were also felt at Lincoln, as a succession of internal struggles erupted involving three departments in the hospital. On several occasions, court orders restraining activists from operating in the hospital were used to mediate the conflict between the hospital's administration and radical hospital workers, doctors, and community activists.

The whirlwind of controversy that gripped the medical facility was recorded in numerous news articles. The first and most controversial crisis erupted just days after the July 14 action, when a woman died in the aftermath of a medically questionable abortion procedure at Lincoln. The death of Carmen Rodriguez, a Puerto Rican woman, was the first fatality due to complications from an abortion after *Abramowicz v. Lefkowitz* challenged the New York state law that restricted the procedure.<sup>44</sup> Although the medical circumstances surrounding Rodriguez's death were not clear, especially since her preexisting conditions complicated a normally simple

procedure, there was widespread evidence of negligence on the part of the operating doctor. Rodriguez had at one time been addicted to drugs, and she had rheumatic heart disease, asthma, and anemia. According to a writer in *Palante*, "she suffered from many of the diseases that afflict all oppressed people."<sup>45</sup>

Carmen Rodriguez was admitted to Lincoln's gynecology service for an abortion following the recommendations of hospital doctors who determined that her heart could not withstand the stresses of labor. Yet despite the complicated medical conditions, there was no consultation with other doctors to ascertain the safest procedural alternative. The young woman was admitted as a routine elective-abortion patient, and thus her sensitive medical history was carelessly overlooked by the gynecologist.<sup>46</sup> She died within four days of the abortion.

The tragedy of Carmen Rodriguez's case raised further concerns about medical care in public hospitals and fueled protests across the city. The incident called into question the methods of care that had become institutionalized in the public hospitals as a result of the medical-school affiliation contracts, whereby medical schools received funds from the city to provide city hospitals with physicians. Although the affiliation contract had been praised for giving the poor access to the best university-trained specialists, public hospitals continued to be provisional way stations for the diseased. Ultimately, the affiliation system provided no continuity in medical care for patients.

The activists, doctors, and community residents who organized around Rodriguez's death were concerned with highlighting the careless, inhumane, and potentially harmful ways in which care is administered to poor people. Led by the Young Lords, activists pressured the hospital administration to consent to a public hearing in which the circumstances leading to the death would be investigated. This public hearing, in which a lay audience was allowed to cross-examine a team of doctors, was perhaps the first of its kind. The meeting turned out to be contentious, but according to one of the doctors in the TLC, "the fact of the meeting was an important event. It was a troubled, even tortured example of community control of medical services. At the least, it was a real and significant instance of physicians being called to account by community people. The agenda did not flow easily but the very meeting of the two sides to discuss a medical event stood as a victory for community participation in the hospital."<sup>47</sup>

In the aftermath of the hearing, the TLC lobbied (without success) for reparations for the victim's family and for the creation of a humane abortion clinic named after Carmen Rodriguez.<sup>48</sup> Later, HRUM, one of the mem-

ber organizations of Think Lincoln and now a subsidiary organization of the YLP, worked with the South Bronx Drug Coalition to obtain institutional backing from Lincoln for a drug detoxification center. In November of 1970, employing the community-control strategy, activists occupied the sixth floor of the nurses' residence and proceeded to implement their own drug-treatment program. With the help of doctors, the group conducted physicals, assigned beds, and began to administer treatment, while representatives of the coalition negotiated with Dr. Lacot. At the end of the day, the police were called in, and fifteen people were arrested.<sup>49</sup>

The Young Lords and the other activists involved in this takeover envisioned a program that would introduce Eastern medicine as the primary treatment method for addiction and that would seek to understand the relationship between individual behavior and the social context and structure of society. They proposed a program that involved doctors, activists, and patients as partners in the treatment and rehabilitation of drug abusers. The identification of drug abuse as a social, rather than a purely individual, phenomenon was considered a radically different approach to the rehabilitation process. Through education, the program introduced its participants to ideas that explored the sociology of drug abuse and the intersection between drug addiction, drug trafficking, and American foreign policy. As a result of the occupation, the program was eventually funded by Lincoln Hospital (in 1972), and it became one of the principal drug-treatment centers using acupuncture in the Western world.<sup>50</sup>

The Young Lords' campaign at Lincoln Hospital had been inspired by widespread calls for community control. The narrow political orientation of activists notwithstanding, the movements for community control reflected a desire among racial minority groups in northern cities to exercise authority over the major institutions governing community life, such as schools, hospitals, and the police. At Lincoln, the Young Lords broadened the definition of community control. They and their supporters exposed the racist practices of the hospital, as well as the growing desire among urban residents for meaningful participation in their lives through direct involvement in the governance of local institutions. The campaign also revealed the limits of activism in effecting social change of institutions governed by economic interests. The YLP's actions took the call for community control a step further, beyond a critique of form to a critique of content. The struggle at Lincoln evolved politically from one that emphasized the ways in which racism colored health-care services in the Bronx to one that raised considerations of race in the context of an economic order inclined to perpetuate a system of disparities in wealth and access to services.

The dramatic actions of the Young Lords and their supporters at Lincoln Hospital were driven by the urgency produced by the accelerating social and economic decline of urban communities at the time. Operating between two different political eras—the civil rights movement and the Great Society on the one hand, and the new era of social conservatism that emerged in the late 1970s on the other—the Young Lords were among the first activists to challenge the economic retrenchment and privatization policies of the federal government. In the 1970s, the “Puerto Rican borough,” as the Bronx was known, would suffer the most extensive destruction and abandonment of housing “in the history of civilized urban life.”<sup>51</sup> With the political decline of the left in the 1970s and 1980s, the story of how a community fought to contain the deepening urban crisis was buried.



The Young Lords Party formed part of a broader radical social movement in American cities. Both advanced an internationalist perspective and an extensive critique of capitalism. This radicalism grew out of postwar expectations of political freedom among racial minority groups in American cities. The war fostered optimism about economic opportunities for people of color and transformed their standing in American society, while encouraging them to continue to press for full political and social equality. But the postwar period in fact produced limited possibilities for racial minorities with the rise of McCarthyism, deindustrialization, competition from global labor markets, suburbanization, and federal housing policy. Against the backdrop of the civil rights struggle in the South, growing frustration with conditions in the North led to urban rebellion. Combined, these developments set the stage for new social movements in the latter half of the 1960s, movements whose diverse membership reflected the racial and ethnic changes under way in American cities. As the struggles at Lincoln Hospital suggest, those activists who, like the Young Lords, rooted their struggles locally entered into collaborations with people of different ethnic and racial groups, which often contradicted the formal ideological nationalism that was dominant during the period.

The struggles and aspirations of urban movement-builders provide a window onto the changing structure and demographic composition of American cities. Motivated by a greater understanding of the consequences of global restructuring and the economic dimensions of racial oppression, many urban dwellers began to organize along class lines and in so doing

challenged the nation's traditional patterns of racial separatism. One of the first attempts at cross-racial mobilization in northern centers was the original Rainbow Coalition, a class-based activist alliance led by Chicago Black Panther Fred Hampton that included the Young Patriots—a Chicago group of politicized white migrants from Appalachia—and the Young Lords Organization, which in Chicago was composed of Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans. It was from this earlier radical attempt at cross-racial organizing along class lines that Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition drew its name. At Lincoln Hospital, the New York Young Lords were involved in a community struggle involving white doctors, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and non-Puerto Rican Latinos. Yet despite the attempts by various organizations to attract adherents on the basis of shared class interests, nationalism remained hegemonic in the politics and strategies of the urban movements built by racial minorities. The dominance of nationalism was a consequence, in part, of the growing social isolation of black and Latino urban communities, of the growing pessimism about the viability of a traditional multiracial coalition in the face of white reaction to black protests for racial and economic equality, and of the equivocal support received by the northern movements from northern liberals and the federal government.

The history of the Young Lords, together with that of other urban activists, suggests that, concurrent with the structural decline of the cities, there emerged a critique of and organized challenge to the worsening conditions of the city led *not* by elite policymakers, but by urban dwellers themselves. Increasingly, movement activists were concerned with working on issues as pedestrian as garbage collection and removal of lead paint from tenement walls, and issues as far-reaching as the crisis of health care and its delivery, social-welfare programs, child-care services for poor and working-class mothers, unemployment, and fighting urban renewal. Thus, however inchoately, radicals of the late 1960s articulated and struggled around issues pertaining to a social democratic polity.

Among the innumerable movements that emerged in the post-1968 era, the rise of the Young Lords is poignant and unique because of what it foreshadowed. The group built a local urban movement around social issues that would become central in public-policy debates during the 1980s and 1990s. These include an increasingly intractable health-care crisis, the neighborhood consequences of deindustrialization and municipal budget cuts, the growing disrepair of American cities, the swelling incarceration of people who could not be employed by urban economies, and an overtly self-interested American hegemony and foreign policy. In many ways, the



Young Lords' politics and preoccupations, especially those concerning issues of employment and class stratification, foretold the end of the American dream—which had always been an illusive prospect for most minorities, but which also began to unravel for working-class and middle-class white Americans with the long-term economic decline of the late twentieth century.

## Great Expectations: African American and Latino Relations in Phoenix since World War II

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African Americans led the way in fighting racial discrimination against people of color in Phoenix, Arizona, throughout the peak years of the civil rights and Black Power eras. Civil rights activists formed interracial alliances, but, as in other regions of the country, African Americans ultimately shouldered the responsibility of dramatizing their oppression. The most visible interracial coalitions in Phoenix were largely alliances between progressive black and white citizens. Despite the fact that Mexican Americans have always constituted the largest racial minority group in Phoenix, and have also experienced the negative effects of white racism, Mexican Americans and African Americans were not able to form a sustained partnership in their respective quests for racial equality. Only a small number of Mexican American leaders supported the efforts of black leaders such as George Brooks, Opal Ellis, Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale, and Cloves Campbell, Sr., between 1950 and 1968. In 1957, the black-owned and -operated *Arizona Sun* reported that some Mexican American leaders had told their supporters to avoid contributing too openly to the efforts of black activists and had stated that “though they sympathized with the plight of the blacks,” they believed that “the black problem was a black problem.”<sup>1</sup> The views reported in this editorial fly in the face of the popular assumption that racial minorities were somehow inherently suited for, and willing to participate in, cross-cultural collaboration. During their crusade for race justice, in fact, black Phoenician leaders and their Mexican American counterparts came to understand that their shared racial subordination was not enough to unite them in a common struggle for freedom.<sup>2</sup>

Not until the Chicano movement hit the city of Phoenix in 1968 did black and Chicano activists make common cause, and even then cooperation was usually limited to individual acts of solidarity. Their collective

oppression occasionally brought African and Mexican Americans together, but exigencies of race, ethnicity, culture, and class undermined their ability to register a sustained, consolidated liberation movement on behalf of both groups. Few Mexican Americans participated in local sit-ins or marches headed by black activists or spoke out in support of African Americans' calls for desegregation, access to public accommodations, and an end to racial discrimination in the workplace.<sup>3</sup>

The *Arizona Sun* saw this as a result of the "divide and conquer" approach employed by powerful white Phoenicians. Some European Americans in Phoenix played each group against the other. African and Mexican Americans, therefore, fought for the few resources that were made available. Neither group was able to make considerable gains as a result. Nevertheless, the two groups were partly responsible for their inability to collaborate. African and Mexican Americans rarely attempted to forge lasting coalitions. This "lack of cooperation," posits historian Bradford Luckingham, "encouraged deterioration and distrust in the relationship between the two groups."<sup>4</sup> Early on, the *Sun* had stated that African and Mexican Americans "made a great mistake not to work together for the benefit of both [groups]."<sup>5</sup> This failure to find common ground would lead to poor communication and cooperation among the majority of the two groups for decades to come.

During the early years of the 1960s, the black liberation struggle was reaching its peak, while the Chicano movement had yet to emerge. African Americans, therefore, constituted the most vocal and organized group of oppressed minorities in the country who challenged inequality and white supremacy. Federal, state, and local government agencies in Phoenix, and across the country, responded to black insurgency by creating agencies and programs to address the socioeconomic needs of black people. This allocation of resources for the advancement of black Phoenicians caused some Mexican Americans to question the fairness of such appropriations. For instance, when African Americans secured the majority of the leading positions in Phoenix's Leadership Enrichment Arts Program (LEAP), Mexican Americans argued that they had many of "the same problems" and desired a more equitable distribution of assignments.<sup>6</sup>

The inability of African Americans and Mexican Americans to cooperate carried over to other arenas as well. Although one black leader, Lincoln Ragsdale, stated flatly in a 1990 interview that "Mexicans did not discriminate against us [African Americans]," he and other black leaders stated otherwise at times. Some Mexican American businesses in the "Valley of the Sun" had refused to serve black people in Phoenix since the late nineteenth century and continued to do so into the 1960s. Lincoln Ragsdale's brother-

in-law, William Dickey, led a series of protests between 1960 and 1964 at the El Rey Café, notorious for its refusal to accommodate black people, in downtown Phoenix on South Central Avenue.<sup>7</sup>

Black activists such as Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale devoted a great deal of time working to close the political gap between African and Mexican Americans and create a strong multiracial coalition for civil rights. Lincoln Ragsdale believed it was in the best interest of both groups to market themselves as partners in a struggle against an oppressive white majority. Like many black activists, he did not believe that the tensions between blacks and Chicanos were analogous to those between blacks and whites. He suggested that some of the mistreatment that African Americans experienced at the hands of Mexican Americans was caused by white racism. When some restaurants owned by Mexican Americans were primarily serving Mexican Americans, he suggested, African Americans were treated fairly. But when white Phoenicians began patronizing the same businesses in large numbers, owners would adopt the prevailing racial mores and customs of their white clientele.<sup>8</sup>

The distinct relationship between African Americans and Chicanos in Phoenix has a long history. Both African and Mexican Americans had already settled in the area when the city was founded in 1870. Mexican Americans, largely a mestizo people, can trace their origins in the region back thousands of years, to the arrival of the first Native Americans in the area now known as the American Southwest. Beginning with Esteban De Dorantes in 1528, the first person of African descent to arrive in the region, and continuing through the Reconstruction, late-nineteenth-century migration, settlement, black community-building, and Great Migration experiences in Phoenix to 1939, blacks wove themselves into the fabric of a complex and burgeoning city and state. By 1940, the African American population in Phoenix stood at 4,263, or 7 percent of the total population of 65,414. The Phoenician Mexican American population in 1940 was 9,740, or 15 percent of the total population.<sup>9</sup> World War II, and the industries that arose to support it, greatly improved the prospect of good jobs and a freer life for everyone in Arizona, particularly black people. As a result, a relatively large migration ensued that increased the black Phoenician population significantly and intensified the city's civil rights movement. These changes brought a dynamic new black leadership to Arizona and paved the way for much of the success that people of color are experiencing in today's Southwestern politics, and for the surging interest in multiculturalism.

Unlike black Phoenicians, however, Americans of Mexican descent can trace their lineage in the Southwest to at least AD 300. Through a process

called *mestizaje*, indigenous populations of the American Southwest and Mexico, through sexual liaisons with Spanish colonizers and Africans and through cultural exchange, produced persons of Spanish-Indian descent, as well as Indians who adopted the language, religion, and customs of the Spanish. By the late 1530s, these people were referred to as *mestizos* in "New Spain." *Mestizos* constituted the majority population of what was by then the Mexican and the American Southwestern populations by the late nineteenth century. Mexican Americans in early Phoenix, therefore, were largely a *mestizo* people: acculturated, Spanish-speaking Indians and persons with both Indian and Spanish ancestry.

Phoenix's ruling white elite spared neither African nor Mexican Americans from their racism. In addition, Mexican American workers were exploited, underpaid, and restricted to the most menial labor, like black Phoenicians. Unlike black people, however, Mexican Americans with fair skin and "European features" were often deemed white by the dominant society. This racial dynamic afforded some Mexican Americans more socioeconomic mobility than their black counterparts. White former southerners, the founders and early boosters of Phoenix, embraced many of the anti-black attitudes that dominated race relations in the South. To them, blacks represented the antithesis of whiteness, while Mexican Americans, although deemed subordinate and inferior, were also viewed as partially European and exotic as early as the first decade of the twentieth century. Some Mexican Americans thought of themselves as, and were viewed as, a white ethnic group similar to the Irish or Italians. The fact that some Mexican Americans considered themselves to be a kind of white ethnic group would be the cause of much tension between African and Mexican American Phoenicians throughout the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, few Mexican Americans were saved from the indignities of Jim Crow segregation in Phoenix. Most whites in the Valley discriminated against them and let it be known that they did not desire their presence in the city. Signs at the entrance to businesses declared, "No Mexicans Allowed" or "No Negroes, Mexicans or Dogs Allowed." When Mexican Americans were permitted to enter certain establishments, they were limited to entering only on certain days. Local swimming pools hosted "Mexican Day," and there were "Mexican nights" at the Riverside Ballroom. Like black Phoenicians, Mexican Americans in the city were segregated in schools, churches, theaters, and parks. Most Mexican Americans in Phoenix's neighborhoods lived apart from white Phoenicians by constraint as well as by choice.<sup>11</sup>

African and Mexican Americans each created vibrant communities. Segregated in local theaters, African Americans attended films with all-black

casts at the Ramona and Westside theaters. Radio station KPHO presented black programs, and the Miss Bronze Arizona pageant and similar contests attracted large crowds. Zeta Phi Beta and other black sororities awarded "outstanding women" of the community awards; black softball and baseball teams competed against each other; and several black fraternities sponsored social gatherings, cultural events, and charitable functions. African Americans created mutual-aid societies such as the Civic Welfare League, and black churches, as they have always done, served as the epicenter of the black community—framing, supporting, and helping to facilitate all black efforts to build community, fight racial discrimination, and give meaning to their freedom. Mexican Americans likewise developed communities that would serve their needs as they chose to thrive in Phoenix while also struggling against racism. Mexican American churches, schools, voluntary associations, and parks emerged to promote the community's advancement. As Bradford Luckingham has indicated, the Mexican American community "cultivated a cultural identity and a cultural agenda," beginning with family activities. Mexican families and friends intermingled at birthday parties, dances, weddings, and funerals. There were Mexican American musical and theater performances. Spanish-language newspapers emerged, and by 1950 Phoenix hosted a Mexican American community as developed as that of any city in the Southwest.<sup>12</sup>

As Mexican Americans began to make modest improvements in job status, a small Mexican American middle class developed in Phoenix. By 1940, this group began to call for better opportunities for themselves in the Valley. These leaders laid the foundation for the more intense Mexican American freedom struggle that would commence in the years to come. As these leaders became more politically active, moved up the socioeconomic ladder, and worked more closely with the white establishment, many black leaders became suspicious; they worried that the few resources available to minorities might go disproportionately to Mexican Americans. They also knew that many Mexican Americans did not want to share some of the resources they had secured. For instance, in 1935 the Latin American Club of Arizona presented a resolution to the Phoenix City Commission requesting the exclusion of black people from Southside Park, a predominantly Mexican American neighborhood located at Second Avenue and Grant Street. Mexican Americans, some black observers noted, viewed themselves as superior to black people and saw the two racial groups as potential adversaries.<sup>13</sup>

African Americans were encouraged to adopt this competitive outlook by a racial order that often reserved its most disparaging attacks for people of African descent. Black leaders such as Madge Copeland, an entrepreneur

and grassroots organizer for Arizona's Democratic Party during the 1950s and 1960s, have suggested that the discrimination that Mexican Americans experienced during that period, though capricious and damaging, was not as rigid as that experienced by blacks. There is evidence to support this observation. Mexican American leaders were able to overcome discrimination and segregation in some socioeconomic areas in Phoenix long before black people secured such freedoms. The segregation of Mexican Americans in places of public accommodation such as restaurants, schools, theaters, and swimming pools abated during the 1940s and 1950s. With the exception of schools, African Americans would not be able to access these venues until the 1960s. The fact that Mexican Americans, like European Americans in Phoenix, would conspire to bar blacks from their neighborhoods reveals the extent to which both groups discriminated against people of African descent.<sup>14</sup>

The oppressive treatment of African Americans was based upon a construction of race that placed black people, by virtue of their dark skin and African origins, at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. Mexican Americans were "cast as undesirable because of their Indian features," F. Arturo Rosales posits, but discrimination against them, like that against white ethnic groups such as the Irish, had more to do with stereotypes that portrayed Mexicans and Mexican Americans as poor, culturally divergent from the mainstream, and lazy. These racial constructions greatly influenced the courses of the Mexican American and African American freedom struggles. The more elastic construction of race that was applied to Mexican Americans caused many to believe that their problems were largely cultural and economic, rather than racial.<sup>15</sup>

Mexican Americans who were not directly influenced by intense racial bigotry, because of their color or class, were able to disregard the condition of their more tyrannized black brothers and sisters. By the late 1960s and 1970s, however, young individuals from the more oppressed Mexican classes in America, particularly recent Mexican immigrants, became educated and began to identify with their Indian heritage and the salience of race. Although the concept of race is a social construction, it has had real, detrimental social, economic, and political effects on all Americans. As a result, young, more radical Mexican Americans during the late 1960s and 1970s, like their black counterparts, realized that race could not be treated simply as a specious theoretical phenomenon, but was a genuine reality that must be denounced to be truly rendered immaterial. By the late 1960s, Mexican American activists began to call attention to the ways in which racism adversely affected them as an oppressed racial group. They initiated

a grassroots quest for civil rights and "Brown Power" that would evolve into the Chicano movement.<sup>16</sup>

During the early 1960s, individual African and Mexican American leaders began to collaborate in efforts to bring attention to the poor socioeconomic state of minorities in Phoenix. Both Mexican and African American communities continued to suffer from economic and political isolation and inadequate housing, schooling, and employment. Although they did not form a substantive coalition, individual Mexican and African American leaders addressed problems between 1960 and 1968 that were common to both groups, such as voter participation and poverty.<sup>17</sup>

By the late 1960s, Mexican Americans were very impressed with the "success" of the black liberation struggle and its leaders, and they consciously or unconsciously emulated many of its strategies. Mexican Americans in Phoenix witnessed the victories black leaders were helping to win by employing boycotts, sit-ins, and political pressure and by directly charging white Phoenixians with racism. As Mexican American leaders such as Manuel Pena championed these methods, they opened the door for an entire generation of militant young Chicanos, such as Alfredo Gutierrez, to become influential players in state and national politics by the 1990s. African American leadership in Phoenix, therefore, proved to be critical not only to the black freedom struggle in the city, but to the Chicano movement in the area as well.<sup>18</sup>

In the early 1960s, Lincoln Ragsdale worked with members of the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) and other activist organizations to promote increased voter registration and political activism. He worked closely with Manuel Pena, Jr., future Arizona legislator, in the Citizens Action (ACT) campaign for Phoenix City Council in 1963. Pena, owner of the Pena Realty and Insurance Company, was born in the agricultural community of Cashion, Arizona, in 1924. From 1953 to 1956, he served as president of the Phoenix Community Service Organization. From 1956 through 1960, along with Ragsdale, he was a member of the Phoenix Urban League. When Pena and Ragsdale helped launch the ACT campaign, they were both members of the Greater Phoenix Council for Civic Unity, an interracial group that sponsored multiracial educational programming and lobbied for the abolition of Jim Crow laws and practices. Ragsdale and Pena bemoaned the lack of black and brown representation on the city council, and Pena worked with Ragsdale and other leaders to improve educational opportunities for minorities in Phoenix. He argued that the problems of Mexican Americans and other minorities "lies in education, and it is our great hope



that as more and more youngsters and adults become educated they will be able to take their rightful place within the larger community."<sup>19</sup>

Other activists also worked together across racial lines. Eleanor Ragsdale collaborated with Grace Gill-Olivarez, a Mexican American radio broadcaster in Phoenix who spoke against racial discrimination. Gill-Olivarez championed better educational opportunities and increased political participation for Mexican Americans, and she cited white fear as the cause of many of the problems of minorities. "That small but vociferous group of Anglos that dislike us undoubtedly base their dislike on fear. They fear us because they don't know us, and they don't know us because they haven't bothered to find out what we are really like." Eleanor Ragsdale helped Gill-Olivarez solicit funds to defray the cost for a number of Mexican American high school students to attend evening job-training workshops, and she also worked with administrators at Arizona State University to establish financial-aid programs for both African and Mexican American incoming students.<sup>20</sup>

More-militant Mexican American leaders emerged in the late 1960s. Mexican American students at Arizona State University followed the lead of California activists and brought the Chicano *movimiento* to the Valley. These young Chicano activists soon organized under the banner of the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO) and helped establish organizations such as Chicanos por la Causa (CPLC) in Phoenician barrios to combat the racial discrimination in the city.<sup>21</sup>

Although the Chicano movement was inspired by the black liberation struggle, these two movements never formed an alliance. Chicano activists, having a more sophisticated race consciousness than their predecessors, understood that the white supremacy that terrorized and oppressed African Americans was in many ways the same white supremacy that subjugated them. Nevertheless, Chicano activists, like the more radical black leaders of the 1960s and early 1970s, were primarily interested in justice for *their* people, not integration with white or black Phoenicians. This approach helped usher in positive change in the short term, but it continued to undermine the ability of these two groups to work together effectively over the long run.<sup>22</sup>

Tensions between black and Chicano Phoenicians erupted in the fall of 1970, after competition over representation and resources at Phoenix Union High School (PUHS), located at First Street and Van Buren in downtown Phoenix, reached a fever pitch. Mexican American activists and some CPLC leaders, as well as the parents of a number of Mexican American students at the school, argued that PUHS did not respond appropriately to the needs

of the expanding population of primarily black and Mexican American students. The school boasted few black and Mexican American teachers, and its predominantly white teachers and administrators were accused of running a school that was "full of discrimination and exploitation." One observer noted that the school's leaders "have failed miserably to provide equality and equitable education" for students of color. The school counselors were also known to lead Mexican and African American students "toward manual rather than intellectual development, without consideration of the fact that such a choice produces and perpetuates economic-racial discrimination."<sup>23</sup>

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregation ruling triggered the beginning of white flight, and the number of white students at PUHS declined steadily following the landmark decision. By 1967, whites were abandoning the area and the school in large numbers. Between 1967 and 1970, the number of white students at PUHS dropped from 35.1 to 19.3 percent, and many observers had begun to refer to PUHS as a "minorities" school. Although racial segregation in schools had been ruled illegal, the relatively poor economic status and immobility of African and Mexican Americans locked them into inner-city schools, such as PUHS, that were by now predominantly black and Chicano. Mexican and African Americans had virtually no power, however, to shape the schools' curriculum, hiring, structure, and administration. This segregated, unequal, and unstable environment exacerbated the already tense relationship between Mexican and African American students—and their parents—by forcing them to compete for mediocre resources. Fistfights and other violent confrontations between blacks and Chicanos became almost daily events at PUHS. Each side blamed the other for the altercations. Mexican American students claimed that they were routinely abused by black students. Chicano leaders "protested harassment of their children by black students and the school system's failure to cope with the high drop-out rate of Mexican American students."<sup>24</sup>

Chicano leaders initiated a boycott of PUHS on October 9, 1970, saying that they would not end the boycott until the "unlawful activity by black students [was] addressed by authorities." These events disturbed and saddened some black activists. Black antiracists, with their white supporters, had managed to help desegregate the city's schools—only to have whites flee these previously racially restricted institutions, leaving black and Chicano students in what became poorly administered schools that discriminated against them and placed them in adversarial positions that were destined for conflict. The tension between Chicano students and black students, together with the lack of security at PUHS, was a major problem, but it was

one of many in the eyes of Chicano leaders. Protesters also desired a more demanding and culturally sensitive curriculum. The impasse was eventually settled, and PUHS officials promised to hire more Latino employees and to execute programs that were more mindful of the instructional needs of Chicano students. Although the crisis at PUHS was officially resolved, it intensified alienation and anger between African Americans and Chicanos in Phoenix. Black leaders and their Mexican American counterparts had worked hard to form a substantive coalition, but the standoff at PUHS seriously undermined their efforts.<sup>25</sup>

The educational and employment opportunities that developed in the wake of the civil rights movement provided new openings for African and Mexican Americans in Phoenix. With the support of their respective constituencies, Chicano and black leaders made progress in the political arena. The black leader Calvin Goode and the Mexican American Rosendo Gutierrez won seats on the Phoenix city council. Similarly, the Mexican American Alfredo Gutierrez and the African American Art Hamilton were elected to the Arizona legislature.<sup>26</sup>

The percentage of Mexican Americans in the Phoenixian population increased during the 1970s and 1980s, and they remained the largest racial minority group in Phoenix. This increase greatly affected the African American community. Black neighborhoods hosted large influxes of Mexican Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, and other people of Latin American descent, who put pressure on local services that were previously geared toward African Americans. One report observed that "African Americans complain that Hispanics are taking a bigger piece of that tiny slice of economic pie left for minorities." Leaders of the city's Latino population answered by indicating that African Americans "don't have an exclusive on the legacy of suffering, and that civil rights in this country, through programs like Affirmative Action, have favored African Americans." The rising Latino and Chicano populations resulted in greater economic and political power, which outpaced that of the much smaller black population. Many whites feared that this growing Latino population, coupled with the ongoing activist influence of an expanding black middle class, would pose a more serious threat to the overall white socioeconomic and political order. Others cited historical precedent and argued that there remained those in the city "who would rather see"—and work to make—"the Hispanics and blacks divide and fight against themselves."<sup>27</sup>

Between 1970 and 1990, more Latinos and blacks enjoyed professional and financial success. Eventually, those who could afford it scattered throughout the city, leaving predominantly poor African American and

Latino communities. Despite fair-housing laws, however, it was easier for middle-class Mexican Americans to move into predominantly middle-class white neighborhoods than it was for African Americans. The successes of the Chicano and civil rights movements, coupled with economic expansion, made it easier for Mexican Americans to benefit from new opportunities. In spite of this, a majority of both African Americans and Mexican Americans, and other Latinos, continued to be mired in poverty.<sup>28</sup>

Yet the two groups continued to have a difficult time building coalitions amid competition for resources and cultural distinction. Continued competition promoted bitter conflicts between them in the last decade of the twentieth century. In September 1990, for example, African American parents called for the firing of Superintendent Alexander Perez of the Roosevelt School District, which was predominantly Mexican American and African American. The parents accused Perez of being "insensitive" to the needs of black students and African American personnel. Leaders of the African American Parents for Quality Education (AAPQE) also accused him of favoritism, charging him with hiring more Mexican Americans than African Americans in the school district. The controversy lingered for months as African American leaders, including George Brooks, and a number of Mexican American leaders participated in "educational politics."<sup>29</sup>

Competition for jobs in the school district, the largest employer in South Phoenix, was formidable. The predominantly Chicano and black neighborhoods of South Phoenix suffered from economic isolation and deprivation, and high unemployment. Jobs were precious, and each group wanted them. Ultimately, the Roosevelt district board, headed by Brooks, purchased the contract of Perez and initiated a search for a new superintendent. The vote to buy out his contract was three to two; the three African American board members voted in favor of his departure, and the two Mexican American board members voted for his retention.<sup>30</sup>

Mexican and African Americans have never been monolithic groups. Conflicts within the two communities, therefore, have also contributed to the inability of black and Chicano Phoenicians to form lasting alliances. By the 1980s and 1990s, African Americans were debating new strategies to obtain socioeconomic equality. A new cadre of black conservatives such as Ward Connerly, Thomas Sowell, and Shelby Steele emerged nationally, standing in opposition to the traditional liberal politics of many African American activists. These new black conservatives, or "negrocons," as historian Robin D. G. Kelley has called them, placed much of the blame for the poor status of most African Americans during the 1980s and 1990s on "racial preferences" rather than racism. Black neoconservatives have argued that

race-conscious remedies and civil rights legislation are virtually meaningless, as the socioeconomic woes of poor black people are the product of retrograde cultural practices, fragmented families, and black irresponsibility. Despite the outward acceptance of such thinkers by the white conservative establishment, most African Americans have rejected the anti-black overtones embedded in their message. The political philosophies of these leaders are rooted in a capitalist ethos that privileges individual attainment, competition, and hubris.<sup>31</sup>

Mexican Americans faced a similar shift in politics. By the 1980s and 1990s, many people believed that Mexican Americans' individual aspirations for political power and enhanced material wealth wore away the "one-for-all" sense of unity that they thought had formed the foundation of Mexican American communities in the past. Competing ambitions—although no doubt existing in the past, as Mexican Americans have never been a monolithic group—had finally emerged from the realm of intraracial obscurity to the larger matrix of interracial relations. During this period, many Mexican American activists became part of the Phoenician establishment; their politics now reflected their economic status. They became less involved in CPLC and similar groups. Bradford Luckingham posited that during this era, the Chicano leadership, in many ways a product of the more activist 1960s and 1970s, may have been the "victim of its own earlier success." He maintains that "the prevailing mood among the leaders appeared to be one of 'middle-class malaise,' with too few flashes of 'minority' concern. The 'good life' seemed to have carried them away from 'the struggle.' . . . Splits fragmented the Hispanic community and made it tougher to solve common problems."<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, the conflicts that developed between individuals and groups within the African and Mexican American communities in Phoenix demonstrated the heterogeneity of each group. Despite the fact that the majority of their respective communities demonstrated solidarity in the face of sometimes overwhelming adversity, the 1980s and 1990s brought fragmentation and a heightened ideological separatism to African and Mexican American communities in Phoenix.<sup>33</sup>

Although black and Chicano Phoenicians were unable to form a sustained alliance, Phoenix did benefit from the development of two distinct racial liberation movements in the region. "In terms of strategy, tactics, and objectives," argues Quintard Taylor, Jr., "most western protests paralleled those waged east of the Mississippi River. However, many of these protests occurred in a milieu where African Americans were only one of a number of groups of color." As a result, Taylor maintains, "the region's multira-

cial population moved civil rights beyond 'black and white.'" Perhaps unwittingly, African and Mexican Americans, and their respective liberation movements, forced the region's white population to address race in ways that other parts of the country had not.<sup>34</sup>

Local leaders continued to press white city officials to address the many ills of black and Mexican American neighborhoods. Both groups occupied various sections of central and South Phoenix, where de facto segregation limited their mobility and access to vital social and educational services. The Ragsdales and Alfredo Gutierrez argued that the socioeconomic status of both African and Mexican Americans was directly related to racial discrimination. These leaders continued to work in the 1970s, arguing that racial inequality contributed to the creation and maintenance of segregated neighborhoods, housing, and schools. This spatial segregation, coupled with employment segregation, created a vicious cycle of poverty and hopelessness in African and Mexican American neighborhoods.<sup>35</sup>

The closing of PUHS in 1982 led to further dislocations in the school district. In 1987, the district remained under federal court order to desegregate. Nevertheless, it was difficult for officials to observe the order amid the growing racial segregation patterns in housing in the predominantly African and Mexican American neighborhoods that formed the district. In response, the district created "magnet schools" to retain and recruit white students, and it revised enrollment requirements to thwart white flight. However, the success of these efforts was, at best, marginal. Given the low socioeconomic status, high dropout rate, and poor educational circumstances of most African American and Chicano students in the Valley, few enrolled in Arizona State University, the area's chief institution of higher learning. Moreover, many who did enroll dropped out. In 1984, for example, the *Arizona Republic* wrote that "only 2 to 3 percent of the more than 40,000 students at ASU are Hispanic and the percentage of faculty members is even smaller." Critics such as Eleanor Ragsdale complained that "too few minority children receive the education they need to succeed in metropolitan Phoenix." The percentage of African Americans attending ASU was around half the percentage of the black Phoenician population. Latino students at ASU represented just one-third of the Latino population in the greater Phoenix area.<sup>36</sup>

At least one ASU administrator argued that "attempts to increase the college enrollment and graduation rates need to begin in elementary school," and that these attempts "need to consist of a combined effort by many community organizations, including business, churches and public schools." Many of the city's most active leaders, particularly Eleanor Ragsdale, argued

that it was in the best interest of all Phoenicians to “provide opportunities for all children, regardless of race, to have a quality education.” Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale donated a great deal of money to the ASU Alumni Association and to other organizations and programs that worked to increase the number of racial minorities who entered and graduated from the university. The Ragsdales’ service and their ability to raise funds for various programs at the university led to Lincoln’s being elected president of the Alumni Association. Despite their efforts, the diversification of ASU was a slow process. Many Latino leaders throughout the city also lamented the low number of racial minorities among high-ranking ASU officials and the university’s apparent unwillingness to address that issue. In 1990, for example, Edward Valenzuela, leader of the Arizona Hispanic Community Forum, declared that “it is unacceptable for ASU officials to claim that there are ‘no qualified’ candidates. That ruse is old hat.”<sup>37</sup>

Although African and Mexican American leaders and activists such as the Ragsdales, Manuel Pena, and Alfredo Gutierrez produced spirited and articulate calls for racial equality during the 1970s and 1980s, their efforts could not bring together a critical mass of African Americans and Chicanos to effectively challenge the racial status quo. Nonetheless, black Phoenicians, and the fight for racial equality in Phoenix, did benefit intellectually and strategically from the presence of two major racial liberation movements in the Valley. The Chicano population in Phoenix challenged African Americans in ways that their southern and East Coast counterparts did not have to contemplate. The Chicano population in Phoenix, and throughout the West, “represented a paradox to black activists,” Taylor writes. The presence of Mexican Americans in Phoenix “deflected prejudice from African Americans” at times, but “because they suffered less discrimination than blacks, most Chicanos remained silent on discrimination.” Some even participated in such discrimination. These facts inspired San Antonio NAACP leader Claude Black to state that “it’s like having a brother violate [your] rights. You can hate the brother much more than you would the outsider because you expected more from the brother.” The vital contributions of individual Chicano leaders to the civil rights movement, however, may have been the best that leaders such as the Ragsdales could have expected. For African Americans and Chicanos, race, culture, and class were difficult to transcend, even in the face of an overwhelmingly oppressive white establishment.<sup>38</sup>

In this competitive atmosphere, a sustained coalition of African and Mexican American activists continued to be difficult to build. Despite the efforts of Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale and their Mexican American counterparts, African and Mexican Americans found it very difficult to break out

of the cycle of racial polarization and fragmentation. Many local observers assumed, incorrectly, that simply because the two groups chafed under the omnipresent corporeality of racial discrimination, they would be “natural” allies in the fight against white supremacy. Both groups would have had to make a radical shift in the way they viewed their most fundamental relationship as human beings in order to overcome the racial divide that separated them. They would have had to, according to historian Richard W. Thomas, first “recognize the organic unity of the human race” and their shared experiences as peoples who suffered under the yoke of racial discrimination. This, Thomas maintains, “cannot occur unless a person is deeply committed to a core set of values and principles” that include unqualified demands for the equal treatment of all persons before the law and in the areas of education, housing, employment, and health care. If a critical mass of blacks and Chicanos, and any other group, had been able to “reach this stage of commitment,” argues Thomas, they would have been able to “break free of the cycle of racial polarization and fragmentation and move into a cycle of racial unity” based upon similarities rather than differences.<sup>39</sup>

Given the heterogeneity of the black and Chicano populations in Phoenix, it is not surprising that the two groups generally failed to “recognize the organic unity of the human race,” overcome their differences, and build an alliance based upon similarities. Individual leaders such as Manuel Pena and Grace Gill-Olivarez, however, did support the local civil rights movement and leaders such as Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale. Pena, who was the lone Latino running in the 1963–64 ACT campaign, aided the black freedom struggle and became one of a handful of Mexican Americans on the Greater Phoenix Council for Civic Unity. Rosendo Gutierrez, who served on the Phoenix city council during the 1970s, advocated early childhood education for Mexican American and African American children and fought against racial discrimination in government and in the private sector. These Mexican Americans, like many white activists, truly identified with black calls for change and their indisputable critiques of the burdensome effects of racism and white supremacy. They also, however, believed that the success of the civil rights movement would lead to the eradication of anti-Mexican American discrimination as well. Although these individuals worked tirelessly in the interest of racial equality, Mexican Americans and African Americans largely fought racism and white supremacy on two fronts. A sustained African and Mexican American coalition of civil rights activists and race workers has yet to emerge in the Valley.<sup>40</sup>



## Citizens and Workers: African Americans and Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia's Regional Economy since World War II

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Thousands of southern African Americans and Puerto Ricans came to the Philadelphia area as labor migrants during and after World War II. These U.S. citizens were recruited by government agencies and employers at a time when, because of labor shortages, patriotism, and anticommunism, citizens were deemed preferable to foreign workers. Often portrayed as a hiatus in immigration history, this was an era when the large-scale migration of African American and Puerto Rican citizens was used to meet labor needs. Despite these labor migrants' status as U.S. citizens, policymakers and employers emphasized the seasonal nature of food processing and agricultural work and expected these workers to return "home" when their labor was no longer needed. They viewed African American and Puerto Rican migrants as low-paid, seasonal laborers, not as permanent community members. For African Americans and Puerto Ricans, however, seasonal migration was viewed as either a source of income or as a stepping-stone for permanent settlement.

Citizenship encouraged and facilitated their labor migration and meant that, unlike foreign workers, they could not be deported when their labor was no longer needed. Yet citizenship did not translate into decent employment or treatment. Instead, African Americans and Puerto Ricans found Philadelphia's economy segmented by race and gender, and they became concentrated in particular sectors of the economy. As the city's economy shifted during the 1970s, African Americans and Puerto Ricans became displaced labor migrants. By the 1990s, economic change and residential segregation had created conditions of concentrated poverty for many of them. Employment and housing policies had lasting implications for the African American and Puerto Rican citizens who made Philadelphia their home.

As African Americans and Puerto Ricans confronted changing conditions in the city, policymakers, social scientists, and public opinion interpreted their experiences through remarkably resilient racial ideologies. The “culture of poverty” and the “underclass” are racial ideologies that point to particular groups of people, emphasize their “problems,” and hold them culpable for their own poverty. Both paradigms focus on the assumed behavior of individuals while downplaying migration histories and labor recruitment, as well as the roles of economic change, residential segregation, and government policies. The limited analysis of government policies indicts “welfare” for creating “dependency.” This chapter explores, instead, the government policies that fostered labor recruitment, deindustrialization, and residential segregation in Philadelphia from World War II to 2000. Few historical works have compared the World War II-era migrations of African Americans and Puerto Ricans or the evolution of racial ideologies from the culture of poverty to the underclass.<sup>1</sup> Yet there are important parallels in the migration histories of these two groups, in the contemporary conditions they confront in the inner cities, and in the convergence of racial ideologies that define them.

### Recruited Laborers and Citizen Workers

During World War II, employers and government agencies recruited southern African Americans and Puerto Ricans to southern New Jersey for seasonal food processing, one of the lowest-paid war industry jobs. The War Manpower Commission (WMC), the government agency most directly involved with labor recruitment, made food-processing plants in southern New Jersey a priority and called for “full cooperation between the canning industry and the Field Representatives of the War Manpower Commission.” Such cooperative efforts were necessary because food production was central to the war effort, yet it paid less than other war industry jobs and was seasonal. The WMC conceded, “It is difficult for canneries to compete with other industries in wage scales.”<sup>2</sup> At the war’s end, the labor recruitment of African Americans and Puerto Ricans, as well as the cooperation between the government and employers, continued.<sup>3</sup> Still recruited as cheap labor but now for seasonal agricultural work, African American and Puerto Rican citizens sought to make the best of difficult work—and sometimes sought alternatives in nearby Philadelphia.

Food processors accepted seasonal labor shortages and to migration from the southern states to meet them. The war, however, magnified these

shortages. The Campbell Soup Company, a large food-processing firm in Camden, New Jersey, exemplified labor recruitment and cooperation between employers and government agencies. The company was willing to use all laborers recruited by the WMC—Puerto Ricans, African Americans from the southern states, foreign workers, prisoners of war, local women—and was relentless in its own recruitment. Although migrants came from Virginia, West Virginia, Florida, South Carolina, Washington, D.C., and Tennessee in 1943, they had not fulfilled New Jersey's labor needs, and they were not expected to in 1944. The WMC and Campbell intensified their efforts. To encourage migration, the WMC requested gasoline ration coupons for workers and improved its procedures for approving and facilitating the movement of workers, because in 1943, "employer representatives were able to discover labor pools in the same areas where public agency recruiting methods failed." The WMC and food processors returned to labor sources that had been effective in 1943—soldiers on furloughs, released war industry workers, civilians on vacation, and "housewives who do not normally work in any industry." Still anticipating a shortage, however, they looked for new sources of labor, including prisoners of war, "the surplus labor reported to be in the Island of Jamaica," and "the supply reported from Puerto Rico."<sup>4</sup>

With the support of the WMC, the Campbell Soup Company actively pursued the "supply" from Puerto Rico. Personnel managers held meetings with other canners and the WMC, and they went to Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. The WMC noted that "Porto [*sic*] Ricans are considered to be excellent workers. The importance of this labor pool, maintained by the government and allocated by the War Manpower Commission cannot be underestimated."<sup>5</sup> Discouraged by the slow progress in recruiting, Campbell reminded the WMC of the magnitude of their need for labor and of their contribution to the war effort.

Yet labor migrants were wanted only on a seasonal basis. Puerto Ricans' status as U.S. citizens meant that, unlike foreign workers, they could remain in the United States—a concern that outweighed the WMC's assessment that they were "excellent workers." As the *Washington Post* explained in stark terms, "Heretofore, Puerto Ricans have been bypassed in the farm labor importation program because of the fear they might want to remain in this country when the war is over." The benefit of employing Jamaicans, Mexicans, and workers from Newfoundland, the article continued, was that they "could be returned because they are not American citizens."<sup>6</sup> Puerto Ricans were not recruited as agricultural workers but rather, in limited numbers, to work in food processing and on the railroads. Between May

and July 1944, nearly two thousand Puerto Ricans were brought to the continental United States. The Campbell Soup Company received five hundred workers, who joined the southern migrants and the foreign workers already employed.<sup>7</sup>

The WMC encouraged African American and Puerto Rican migrants to return home when their labor was no longer needed. In contrast to foreign workers, who could be deported, the WMC had little enforcement power over these U.S. citizens. In the case of southern migrants, food processors signed an agreement with the WMC stating, "I will use all reasonable efforts to insure the return to their homes, upon the agreed upon dates, of all workers recruited for me under this program." Employers also agreed to notify the WMC if a worker was discharged or quit, sever the worker on the specified date, provide workers with free transportation home, and deny them information about other jobs. The WMC criticized the canneries for high employee turnover, fearing that its expenses in recruiting laborers were not being recouped and that migrants were seeking better-paying, permanent jobs in the region instead of making their way home.<sup>8</sup>

For the WMC, one of the "typical problems" was Puerto Ricans breaking their labor contracts, which stipulated the duration and terms of employment. The WMC instructed its local offices to try to "dissuade" workers by reminding them of "the legal nature of . . . obligations under the contract." Workers were informed that if they broke their contracts, they would forfeit free transportation and Selective Service deferment, and they would face restricted options due to employment-stabilization plans and become subject to an increase in tax withholding. Although local offices were required to report individuals who left, the WMC reminded them, "Puerto Ricans, as you know, are citizens of this country and have the same rights and privileges in regard to employment that obtain for other citizens."<sup>9</sup> The WMC knew it had little control over the migration patterns and employment choices of African American and Puerto Rican citizens. Such active recruitment of Puerto Ricans was short-lived. For the duration of the war, foreign workers, who came with the possibility of deportation, were preferred and were recruited instead.<sup>10</sup>

After the war, the continuing demand for seasonal agricultural labor and increasing anticommunist sentiment fostered a shift from foreign to domestic labor recruitment. The March 19, 1952, issue of the *Employment Security Review*, published by the Labor Department's Bureau of Employment Security, made explicit the connection between the "defense" of the United States and the use of domestic labor, proclaiming as its title, "Farm Work Is Defense Work: Maximum Utilization of the Domestic Labor Force." As

a result, southern African Americans and Puerto Ricans were recruited for seasonal agricultural work on Pennsylvania's farms. As during the war, labor recruitment was for the least desirable jobs—seasonal work with low wages and harsh conditions. The cooperation between employers and government agencies continued, as the U.S. Employment Service (USES) took over where the WMC left off. The labor recruitment of southern African Americans continued, and that of Puerto Ricans increased dramatically.

Although Pennsylvania's farmers expressed a preference for local laborers, they turned increasingly to southern African American and Puerto Rican migrants. They regarded local adults "as good workers who presented no housing problems, no language barriers and who created no social or other tension in the community." The availability of manufacturing jobs, however, had reduced the local labor pool to school youth, "idle industrial workers, housewives and other persons not generally considered to be in the labor market."<sup>11</sup> The USES instructed farmers to use local labor first and then Puerto Ricans, before foreign workers.<sup>12</sup> Puerto Ricans replaced Jamaicans, Bahamians, and German prisoners of war from the World War II labor camp in Glassboro, New Jersey. Southern African Americans continued their northward migration. By the late 1950s, Pennsylvania farmers relied on approximately forty-five thousand seasonal workers annually and a labor force that was 80 percent local, just over 10 percent southern African American, and just under 10 percent Puerto Rican.<sup>13</sup>

The Pennsylvania State Employment Service oversaw the entire labor-recruitment program. It stressed recruiting local workers, but also arranged for crews of southern African Americans to travel north. Representatives from the employment service made annual trips to Florida to orchestrate the migration of crews. Crew leaders recruited, organized, and often supervised the migrant workers, and they were paid by deductions in the workers' pay. To obtain Puerto Rican workers, the employment service also sent farmers' requests to the appropriate Puerto Rico government offices, which recruited and screened workers and monitored labor contracts that were signed by the employer and the worker and approved by Puerto Rico's commissioner of labor.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to the situation during the war, African Americans and Puerto Ricans could no longer secure food-processing jobs. Instead, local labor dominated these jobs, and African Americans and Puerto Ricans were concentrated in field work. Food processing offered higher wages, workers' compensation, Social Security benefits, and better working conditions than field labor. In 1951, locals provided 79 percent, Puerto Ricans 3 percent, and southern African Americans only 1 percent of the "man-days" of

work at twenty-two processor plants in Pennsylvania. The 17 percent not reported were assumed to be mostly local workers, with some white workers transported daily from the surrounding areas.<sup>15</sup> Employers preferred local workers and seemed to honor local workers' preferences for food processing over field work and for work in some crops over others.

Working and living conditions exploited seasonal farmworkers, despite the government contracts that were supposed to protect Puerto Ricans. In 1953, economist Morrison Handsaker found that Puerto Ricans "are not subject to some of the abuses, petty or major, to which an undetermined proportion of Negro workers are subject under the crew leader system." Yet Puerto Rican workers had been stranded and "victimised in other ways," and hardships extended to all migrant laborers: "Persons are in many instances virtually compelled to live in places hardly fit for human habitation."<sup>16</sup> By 1958, the Pennsylvania Farm Placement Program confessed, "Experience shows that the migratory farm worker and his family is perhaps the most easily exploited, the lowest paid and lives and works under more substandard conditions than any other single group in the labor force."<sup>17</sup> Employers and state agencies continued to recruit African Americans and Puerto Ricans for the least desirable of jobs.

Given the harsh conditions, migrants sometimes left the jobs for which they had been recruited, in search of better options. During the war, the WMC and food processors often complained of workers' leaving before their terms expired, but they seemed unable to slow the tide. The competing interests of migrants and recruiters surfaced in the debate over transportation costs. The government covered these costs for agricultural field workers, but the "canners have the privilege of deducting transportation and maintenance from the worker's wage." The WMC noted that these "workers demand the same free transportation permitted agricultural workers and, secondly, many workers disappear before full deduction can be made."<sup>18</sup> African American and Puerto Rican migrants, it seemed, had agendas of their own. While some earned seasonal income and returned home, others confirmed the WMC's fears and used labor recruitment as a vehicle for permanent settlement. In the postwar era, complaints about workers' not fulfilling their obligations under their contracts continued, and social-service workers expressed concern over farm laborers settling in the city. Although social-service agencies reacted with alarm, the local economy provided jobs and sustained the in-migration.

Thus, labor recruitment contributed to the growth of both the African American and Puerto Rican populations in Philadelphia, and to the city's shifting racial composition. During the 1940s, the African American

community grew by 50 percent, with the arrival of 90,000 migrants. Another 65,000 migrants arrived during the 1950s, increasing the resident population by 41 percent. Puerto Ricans living in the city, who numbered fewer than 2,000 in 1950, increased to more than 14,000 by 1960. As these groups came to the city, whites moved to the suburbs: 92,000 left during the 1940s, and another 340,000 during the 1950s. In 1950, African Americans were 18 percent of the city's total; by 1970 they constituted 34 percent, and Puerto Ricans slightly over 1 percent.<sup>19</sup> Facilitated by government policies and agencies, labor recruitment intersected with migrants' own agendas and with the availability of jobs in the city. Philadelphia provided economic opportunities and living conditions that surpassed those available to seasonal farmworkers. These recruited labor migrants joined long-term African American and Puerto Rican residents of Philadelphia, as well as recent migrants who followed different routes to the city.

### Displaced Labor Migrants

In the postwar era, federal, state, and local policies fostered conditions of concentrated poverty that affected both African American and Puerto Rican communities in Philadelphia. In addition to labor recruitment for low-paid, seasonal jobs, government policies facilitated the shift to a postindustrial economy and segregation. As historian Michael B. Katz argues, the "underclass did not just happen; its emergence was not inevitable; like the postindustrial city of which it is a part, it is the product of actions and decisions over a very long span of time."<sup>20</sup> Economic shifts and residential segregation displaced African Americans and Puerto Ricans economically and concentrated them in deteriorating neighborhoods devoid of economic opportunities. As sociologist Douglas Massey notes, "In the nation's largest urban areas, these groups are the only ones that have *simultaneously* experienced high levels of residential segregation and sharp increases in poverty."<sup>21</sup> Employment and housing patterns originating in the immediate postwar era and peak periods of African American and Puerto Rican migration persisted into later decades.

Employment patterns shaped the impact of government policies and economic change after 1945. As they came to Philadelphia, African Americans and Puerto Ricans encountered a labor market segmented by race and gender. They became concentrated in certain sectors of the economy, especially the women. By 1950, African American women were overwhelmingly service workers—53 percent, in contrast to 19 percent of all women workers in the city. Puerto Rican women were overwhelmingly concentrated in manu-

**Table 5.1** Female Occupations by Race, Philadelphia, 1950 and 1970

	1950			1970		
	Puerto Rican	Black	All workers	Puerto Rican	Black	All workers
Number employed	34	53,973	274,532	1,907	106,929	313,718
<b>Percentage</b>						
Professional/ managerial	20.6	5.1	12.8	11.4	11.3	16.1
Sales/clerical	11.7	6.8	36.3	22.1	31.0	44.7
Crafts	2.9	1.1	2.1	3.5	2.6	2.4
Service	8.8	53.2	19.3	11.0	32.3	18.9
Operatives/ laborers	55.9	32.3	27.9	51.9	22.3	17.7
Farmwork	—	—	0.1	—	0.5	0.2
Not reported	0.2	1.6	1.6	—	—	—

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census statistics as compiled in Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, *Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia: A Study of Their Demographic Characteristics, Problems and Attitudes* (April 1954; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), 126; Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population: 1950*, vol. 3, *Census Tract Statistics*, pt. 42, Philadelphia (Washington, DC: GPO, 1952), 205–11; Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population: 1950*, vol. 2, *Characteristics of the Population*, pt. 38, Pennsylvania (Washington, DC: GPO, 1952), 205–11, 135; Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population: 1970*, vol. 1, *Characteristics of the Population*, pt. 40, Pennsylvania (Washington, DC: GPO, 1973), 500, 452, 396.

Note: For 1950, data are for the “nonwhite” population living in census tracts with 250 or more “nonwhite” persons. Most of the “nonwhite” population was African American, and these census tracts included 53,973 of 55,810 employed “nonwhite” women. Not all columns total exactly 100 percent due to rounding.

facturing; 56 percent worked as operatives, in contrast to 28 percent of all women (see table 5.1). Like African American women, African American men were primarily service workers: 49 percent, in stark contrast to 9 percent of all men. Puerto Rican men were also overrepresented among service workers at 37 percent, as well as slightly overrepresented as operatives and laborers—36 percent, in contrast to 32 percent of all men (see table 5.2).

Between 1950 and 1970, Philadelphia’s economy shifted from manufacturing to financial and professional services. As geographer Peter Muller and his colleagues observed in 1976, “Since Philadelphia was perhaps the most overindustrialized of the nation’s large old cities, it is suffering more than others as its manufacturing plants continue to die or emigrate.”<sup>22</sup> Factories left the city for the suburbs, for other regions of the United States, and for overseas. The federal government’s procurement policies during World War II had shifted the growth of industry from the Northeast to the southern and



**Table 5.2** Male Occupations by Race, Philadelphia, 1950 and 1970

	1950			1970		
	Puerto Rican	Black	All workers	Puerto Rican	Black	All workers
Number employed	90	80,732	552,711	4,363	125,263	449,802
<b>Percentage</b>						
Professional/managerial	10.0	5.7	18.4	5.8	10.2	18.3
Sales/clerical	6.7	9.0	17.3	14.7	21.6	29.2
Crafts	7.8	11.5	22.0	12.2	9.8	12.5
Service	36.7	49.0	9.1	14.6	24.5	14.8
Operatives/laborers	35.5	22.7	31.9	51.8	33.4	24.9
Farmwork	1.1	—	0.2	0.8	0.6	0.2
Not reported	2.2	2.0	1.2	—	—	—

Source: See table 5.1.

Note: For 1950, data are for the "nonwhite" population living in census tracts with 250 or more "nonwhite" persons. Most of the "nonwhite" population was African American, and these census tracts included 80,732 of 81,195 employed "nonwhite" men. Not all columns total exactly 100 percent due to rounding.

western United States. The Highway Acts of 1944 and 1956 created more than 160 miles of federally funded highway in the Delaware Valley region between 1950 and 1973, facilitating the suburbanization of industry and people. State, county, and municipal governments issued tax-free bonds to fund the acquisition of land and its development by industry.<sup>23</sup>

Within the city, redevelopment programs created more professional service jobs, determined their downtown location, and continued the trend toward increasingly polarized incomes, at the top and bottom of the pay scale. City officials formed public-private partnerships with business leaders in the expanding service sector. One such alliance, the Greater Philadelphia Movement, established in 1949, challenged the earlier dominance of the Chamber of Commerce, which represented manufacturing interests. The 1950s became known as the "reform era," as civic and business leaders forged links with city government and began downtown renewal programs that dictated Philadelphia's economic development. Reformers organized an electoral coalition, comprising the city's business leaders, trade unionists, African Americans, and Democratic Party ward leaders, and defeated the entrenched Republican machine in the mayoral elections of 1951.<sup>24</sup> Yet rather than mitigating the negative consequences of economic shifts, as Carolyn Adams and her colleagues argue, "redevelopment can be seen to

have helped to reinforce the existing dichotomy between the haves and the have-nots in Philadelphia."<sup>25</sup>

Aggravating the local economic situation, plant closings and job loss began by the 1960s and accelerated in the 1970s. The city claimed 61 percent of the jobs in the metropolitan area in 1960, but only 48 percent in 1972. The industries that remained in the city were those with older plants that "because of long term plant investments and the need for cheap unskilled labor not available in the suburbs would simply find it too costly to move."<sup>26</sup> In their study of 173 firms that closed between 1976 and 1979, Arthur Hochner and Daniel Zibman found that multinational and conglomerate firms "were responsible for the overwhelming majority of jobs lost." These were the largest and most successful firms that relocated in search of higher corporate growth rates. These authors concluded, "The decisions are the outcome not of the free market but of economic and political concentration which gives these enterprises great power and of federal and state government policies on taxes, subsidies, loans, defense spending, labor law, and economic development which favor the multinational and conglomerate firms."<sup>27</sup> The textile and clothing industries were among the hardest hit by plant closings. Changes in clothing styles, relocation of industry, the increase in clothing imports, and the growth of conglomerates all played a role. Between 1950 and 1979, the number of textile workers decreased from 42,000 to 18,000, and the number of garment workers in the union fell from 20,000 to 8,000.<sup>28</sup>

Between 1950 and 1970, manufacturing jobs decreased dramatically, while employment in professional services grew. These trends continued during the next twenty years.<sup>29</sup> In 1968, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Employment Security claimed that despite manufacturing losses, the "area managed to recoup its position because of heavy representation in the fast-growing service sector."<sup>30</sup> Yet the new professional services did not employ those most affected by manufacturing's decline. Instead, professional jobs were filled by the new suburbanites, while manufacturing jobs in the suburbs were out of reach for African Americans and Puerto Ricans living in the city.

For African Americans, the suburbanization of industry continued earlier patterns of exclusion. For Puerto Ricans, manufacturing provided a brief period of employment followed by the loss of jobs. As manufacturing declined, Puerto Rican women became displaced workers. Between 1950 and 1970, their labor-force participation decreased from 36 to 31 percent, while the labor-force participation for all women increased from 34 to 43 percent (see table 5.3). Personal services remained a stable, albeit low-paid,

**Table 5.3** Labor-Force Participation by Race and Gender, Philadelphia, 1950–2000

	1950	1970	1990	2000
<b>Percentage in labor force, females</b>				
Puerto Rican	36.3	30.8	36.4	42.9
Black	40.3	48.6	54.2	54.0
All workers	33.8	43.3	51.5	52.1
<b>Percentage in labor force, males</b>				
Puerto Rican	74.0	73.8	62.2	52.9
Black	72.8	72.2	63.1	56.8
All workers	77.8	74.1	66.7	60.6

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census statistics as compiled in Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, *Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia: A Study of Their Demographic Characteristics, Problems and Attitudes* (April 1954; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), 124; Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population: 1950*, vol. 2, *Characteristics of the Population*, pt. 38, Pennsylvania (Washington, DC: GPO, 1952), 293; Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population: 1970*, vol. 1, *Characteristics of the Population*, pt. 40, Pennsylvania (Washington, DC: GPO, 1973), 492, 444, 388; Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population: 1990, Social and Economic Characteristics*, Pennsylvania (Washington, DC: GPO, 1993), 1136, 1014, 789; Bureau of the Census, *Census 2000 Summary File 4 (SF 4)—Sample Data*, table PCT 79, <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

Note: Labor-force participation is for those age 14 and older in 1950, and for those 16 and older in 1970, 1990, and 2000.

employer, and African American women continued to enter the workforce, with their participation increasing from 40 to 49 percent. For men citywide, labor-force participation decreased from 78 to 74 percent between 1950 and 1970, when 72 percent of African American men and 74 percent of Puerto Rican men were in the labor force. The impact of deindustrialization was most evident among workers who had been most concentrated in the manufacturing sector—Puerto Rican women.<sup>31</sup>

As the economy shifted, African Americans and Puerto Ricans remained concentrated in declining sectors of the economy and were left at the bottom of the occupational structure. While professional services grew, African Americans and Puerto Ricans remained in low-paying jobs with little room for advancement. In 1970, African American men were still service workers, at 25 percent, and a larger proportion were now operatives and laborers: 33 percent, in contrast to 15 and 25 percent, respectively, for all men (see table 5.2). Puerto Rican men were now overwhelmingly operatives, at 52 percent, more than double the rate for men citywide. African Americans found jobs in this declining manufacturing sector, and Puerto Ricans remained over-represented. Like African American men, African American women were service workers, at 32 percent, and operatives, at 22 percent, compared to 19

and 18 percent, respectively, of women citywide (see table 5.1). Like Puerto Rican men, Puerto Rican women remained overwhelmingly concentrated as operatives, at 52 percent. As sales and clerical work became the largest occupations of Philadelphia's women, African American and Puerto Rican women were left by the wayside.

Meanwhile, government policies and the actions of private investors fostered residential segregation. Postwar federal housing policies focused on home ownership, public housing, and urban renewal. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) promoted home ownership through mortgage programs, but it limited mortgage loans to new housing, creating a housing boom in the suburbs and denying mortgages in the city. In addition, the FHA relied on the 1930s guidelines for the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, which appraised housing in racial and ethnic terms and had restrictions against providing loans to African Americans in white areas. Mortgages were denied in the city's older industrial and streetcar neighborhoods, which were "redlined" on the basis of explicitly anti-black and anti-ethnic criteria. According to David Bartelt, these policies "ensured that the FHA subsidized segregation." Similarly, public housing policies, both large project construction and "scattered site" (or Section 8) placements in properties leased by the city, increased segregation, as African Americans were placed in "black areas." Summarizing the impact of federal policies, Bartelt concludes that "housing policies prior to the 1970s supported a predominantly white movement to the suburbs and a disproportionate allocation of home-ownership options to white families. At the same time, urban renewal and public housing policies hurt predominantly black communities by displacing their residents and reinforcing de facto segregation."<sup>32</sup> Although the scholarship focuses on African Americans, government policies had a similar impact on Puerto Ricans who were settling in the city.

Rather than improving low-income housing, urban renewal programs sought to attract private investment and led to gentrification and the redevelopment of commercial and business centers. According to Carolyn Adams and her colleagues, for Philadelphia's redevelopment officials, "making the transition to a corporate service economy implied remaking the city to attract and retain the professional white-collar classes as residents and to downplay the presence of the poor and working classes."<sup>33</sup> In the 1960 Plan for Center City, policymakers focused on housing for white middle-class professionals. Gentrification was facilitated by federal tax policies, including the 1976 historic-preservation tax credits and the 1986 tax reform, which reduced interest deductions except for those on mortgages and home equity loans. Other neighborhoods were crippled by disinvestment. As fed-

eral agencies disinvested, so did banks and individual owners—through building abandonment or deterioration. African Americans became concentrated in the city's older industrial neighborhoods and streetcar suburbs, areas north and west of Center City. Puerto Ricans lived in a narrow strip running north and south between black and white Philadelphia. It was a settlement pattern shaped by racial discrimination, "white flight," and government policies.

The combined impact of economic change, residential segregation, and government policies was evident. By 1960, Puerto Ricans earned only 59 percent and African Americans 73 percent of the total population's mean family income. In spite of modest improvements in economic status during the 1960s, African Americans and Puerto Ricans remained poorer than their counterparts citywide, as Puerto Ricans still earned only 62 percent and African Americans 79 percent of the total family income in 1970.<sup>34</sup> In the "City of Homes," where row houses facilitated home ownership, 60 percent of Philadelphians owned their homes in 1970. African Americans and Puerto Ricans lagged behind, with 47 percent of African Americans and 32 percent of Puerto Ricans owning their homes. Even more striking were the disparities in the values of those homes—the median value was \$10,600 for all homes but \$8,500 for African Americans' homes and \$6,700 for Puerto Ricans' homes. For African Americans and Puerto Ricans, the homes they owned and those they rented were less likely to have the full range of plumbing facilities and were more likely to be overcrowded, further indicators of overall housing conditions.<sup>35</sup>

During the 1980s, living conditions deteriorated for African Americans and Puerto Ricans. As economists Janice Madden and William Stull note, "the region's income distribution became more unequal," and "the metropolitan area's poor became increasingly concentrated in the city."<sup>36</sup> In 1988, the poverty rate was 8 percent for the metropolitan area and 16 percent for the city. While the decade witnessed increases in average family incomes and per capita incomes, significant gaps remained not only between the suburbs and the city, but also among racial groups. Average annual household income for African Americans was 61 percent and for Latinos 53 percent of that for white households. Although employment increased for all groups during the second half of the decade, it remained lower for African Americans and Puerto Ricans. In short, "the incomes of the poorest quintile of families . . . substantially decreased relative to the incomes of the richest quintile." Put another way, the rich got richer and the poor fell further behind. As Madden and Stull conclude, "the most prosperous residents of the metropolitan area became increasingly isolated, both physically and

economically, from the least prosperous over the decade."<sup>37</sup> By 1990, Philadelphia was ranked the worst of the fifty largest cities in terms of the number of census tracts with high concentrations of the very poor.<sup>38</sup>

Segregation within the city intensified, even as immigration and racial and ethnic diversity increased. By 1990, the city's population was 52 percent white, 39 percent African American, 6 percent Latino, and 3 percent Asian and Pacific Islander. Puerto Ricans were 4 percent of the total population and 76 percent of the Latino population. During the 1980s, the Asian population increased by 145 percent and the Spanish-speaking population by 40 percent, reflecting the impact of the 1965 immigration reforms. Yet, as the fifth-largest U.S. city, Philadelphia ranked only sixteenth as the destination of new immigrants. By 1990, 72 percent of African Americans still resided in census tracts that were 90 percent or more African American. Similarly, 80 percent of Puerto Ricans resided in fifteen of the city's 364 census tracts.<sup>39</sup> African Americans and Puerto Ricans lived in areas of the city that experienced the loss of manufacturing jobs, that were not aided by public redevelopment funds, and that remained largely segregated.

Government policies and Philadelphia's segmented labor market shaped employment patterns in the postwar era and had lasting repercussions. Between 1970 and 1990, women's labor-force participation increased from 43 to 52 percent (see table 5.3). Slightly more African American women were in the labor force—54 percent—but only 36 percent of Puerto Rican women were. Economic restructuring continued to mean fewer manufacturing jobs and more professional service jobs. By the 2000 census, manufacturing employed just 9 percent of the workforce, while professional services employed 44 percent.<sup>40</sup> African American women were still more likely to be in the labor force than their counterparts citywide, while African American men were still less likely to be in the labor force than their counterparts citywide (see table 5.3). Puerto Rican women and men still had lower labor-force participation rates, with the gap for women narrowing slightly and that for men increasing. Those who worked remained concentrated in particular sectors of the economy (see table 5.4). African American women and men worked disproportionately as service workers. Puerto Rican women and men continued to work overwhelmingly in the declining manufacturing sector. Although African American and Puerto Rican women were increasingly working in the sales and clerical fields, African Americans and Puerto Ricans, women and men, all remained underrepresented in professional and managerial work.

African Americans and Puerto Ricans also remained poorer than other Philadelphians. By 2000, the median household income in the city was

**Table 5.4.** Occupations by Race and Sex, Philadelphia, 2000

	Male			Female		
	Puerto Rican	Black	All workers	Puerto Rican	Black	All workers
Number employed	11,422	95,131	284,615	10,965	126,577	300,342
<b>Percentage</b>						
Professional/managerial	14.3	18.7	28.1	25.6	29.4	34.8
Sales/clerical	15.0	20.3	20.1	38.5	38.3	38.6
Service	21.7	28.5	19.6	18.2	26.0	19.8
Operatives/laborers	47.9	32.5	32.1	17.2	6.2	6.7
Farmwork	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census 2000 Summary File 4 (SF 4)—Sample Data*, table PCT 86, <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

Note: Not all columns total exactly 100 percent due to rounding.

\$30,746, but it was just \$26,217 for African Americans and \$18,831 for Puerto Ricans. As a result, 28 percent of African American households and fully 45 percent of Puerto Rican households lived below the poverty line, in contrast to just 22 percent citywide. More African Americans and Puerto Ricans owned their homes than in 1970; home ownership reached 55 percent among African Americans and 53 percent among Puerto Ricans in 2000, compared to 59 percent citywide. The gap persisted, however, in the value of those homes. While the median value was \$59,700 citywide, African Americans' homes averaged only \$45,300, and Puerto Ricans' just \$37,500.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, African Americans and Puerto Ricans recruited to the Philadelphia area became displaced labor migrants in the post-World War II era. As recent arrivals and people of color, they bore the brunt of the transition to a postindustrial economy. As Theodore Hershberg and colleagues contended in 1981, "Today's blacks inherit the oldest stock of deteriorated housing once inhabited by two earlier waves of immigrants, but the jobs that once were located nearby and that provided previous newcomers with avenues for upward mobility are gone."<sup>42</sup> African Americans and Puerto Ricans also bore the brunt of residential segregation and white flight, which transformed the racial composition of urban areas and eroded their economic foundations. These migrants-turned-residents became concentrated in urban areas that were devoid of economic opportunities. It was the combined

impact of economic change and residential segregation that created conditions of concentrated poverty.

### Marginalized Citizens: The “Culture of Poverty” and “Underclass” Paradigms

From the World War II era to the present, African Americans and Puerto Ricans have been perceived not as displaced labor migrants, but as people with problems, who create problems for the community. As they settled in Philadelphia, social-service workers reacted with alarm. In 1949, one social worker contacted the Glassboro farm labor-camp director, who assured her that he was “well aware of the problems that might be created by Puerto Ricans coming to cities like Philadelphia” and would cooperate to “prevent the creation of a Puerto Rican problem in Philadelphia.”<sup>43</sup> In its 1962 study, the Pennsylvania Economy League wanted to provide information to “underprivileged newcomers”—African Americans and Puerto Ricans—but feared it “might make Philadelphia more attractive to such persons and that they would migrate here in increasing numbers.” That, according to the league, would “be undesirable because Philadelphia has a surplus of unskilled labor,” and because the majority of “nonwhite” and Puerto Rican immigrants “fall in the underprivileged category.”<sup>44</sup> Increasingly treated together in the same studies, African Americans’ and Puerto Ricans’ settlement in the city was perceived and discussed as a problem. Seeking to explain the assumed “problems” of African Americans and Puerto Ricans, scholars and policymakers relied on the “culture of poverty” paradigm, which encapsulated a set of assumptions underlying public perceptions and scholarly works that explained their poverty by blaming their cultures. More recently, some scholars and policymakers have labeled those living in conditions of concentrated poverty as “the underclass.” These discourses have national and local dimensions.<sup>45</sup>

In the postwar era, scholars frequently interpreted the experiences of African Americans and Puerto Ricans through the lens of the culture of poverty. Writing in 1965, anthropologist Oscar Lewis articulated the culture of poverty and applied the concept to Puerto Ricans. Lewis considered “poverty and its associated traits as a culture . . . with its own structure and rationale, as a way of life which is passed down from generation to generation along family lines.” He severed the culture of poverty from the conditions of poverty and presented it as a self-perpetuating culture. Migrating Puerto Ricans carried their culture of poverty with them, so that



"many of the problems of Puerto Ricans in New York have their origin in the slums of Puerto Rico." For Lewis, Puerto Ricans had a "relatively thin" culture marked by little integration with the larger society, little organization in the ethnic community beyond the level of the family, families that verbally emphasized unity but rarely achieved it, and individuals with a high level of tolerance for pathologies.<sup>46</sup> The same attitudes were ascribed to African Americans and termed "pathologies."<sup>47</sup> From this perspective, African Americans and Puerto Ricans were deficient in their cultures, their families, and their communal life.<sup>48</sup> Proponents of the "culture of poverty" paradigm nonetheless advocated social programs to ameliorate the "problems" of these groups.

In Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Economy League's 1962 study revealed "culture of poverty" perspectives, viewing African Americans and Puerto Ricans as "underprivileged" migrants with a distinct set of "problems" stemming from their cultures. The league attributed their problems to migration and to migrants' "rural or slum background." Yet by emphasizing "cultural" explanations for social problems, rather than the disruptions of migration or the challenges of resettlement, the league saw little distinction between migrants and "some native Philadelphians [who] display a similar ignorance," stemming only from "poverty, ignorance or color." There were, the league concluded, "those problems which arise from poverty, ignorance or color and which are common to both migrants and natives in the 'underprivileged' class." As a solution, it proposed "assimilation," which it defined as "the adjustment by the immigrants to the laws of Philadelphia and to the social mores generally accepted by the majority of Philadelphians." Using "majority of Philadelphians" to imply a white, middle-class standard, the league stressed that it did not want the migrant to assimilate to "the standards which appear to prevail or do prevail in the neighborhood where he resides"—neighborhoods marked by "high degrees of social disorganization and consequent lawlessness and dependency." Revealing its fears of welfare dependency and criminalizing the migrants, the league wanted to make migrants "self-supporting and law-abiding."<sup>49</sup> This emphasis on "assimilation" suggested that the migrants' "problems" stemmed from their own cultures and could be remedied by modifying individual and group behavior.

A 1960 study by the Philadelphia District Health and Welfare Council revealed similar attitudes toward African Americans and Puerto Ricans. The council attributed the differences in the two neighborhoods that it assessed to the characteristics of the residents. Kensington, a white ethnic area, was praised for its "strong community pride," "parochialism," and "stability." "Parochialism" and "stability" were viewed positively, even as

the boundaries maintained by the local council served “not only to confine the Council’s efforts geographically but deter communication with adjoining communities or with minority groups within its boundaries.” The study found that “residents . . . fear possible racial change more than they do redevelopment and reportedly would rather have their houses torn down than to sell it [*sic*] to Negroes or Puerto Ricans—and anticipate ‘real trouble’ should such a move-in occur.” White residents of Kensington moved out and, when necessary, redefined their western boundary, “which coincides with the drifting color and Spanish language line.” In contrast, the study described East of Ninth, an area of first settlement “for Philadelphia bound southern Negro families and for new Puerto Ricans,” as an area that “never seemed to have had any distinctive neighborhood identity.” Here, problems were caused, in part, by “rapid changes and inevitable social disorganization.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, for the council, community “problems” came with the migrants and stemmed from racial change.

On the basis of its perceptions of the residents, the council defined solutions differently for the two areas. For Kensington, the study recommended a “neighborhood conservation program” and “above all, community organization techniques to bring residents into full participation in the program,” with “block organizations and community councils.” The council assumed that these methods would fail in East of Ninth. Here, the “problems” were “fortified by the high proportion of people not yet accustomed to family and community life in Philadelphia and who have a minimum of the community-social skills that are required for fruitful life here.” Instead of residents’ “full participation,” the study advocated the intervention of those thought more capable—“community ‘troubleshooters,’” a youth worker, social workers better trained in human relations, and business owners who no longer lived there. The council was confident in “the right kind of service,” and it recommended a focus on “immediate goals” rather than a “long-range effort.” Social workers lacked faith in the abilities of “Negro and Puerto Rican” newcomers but retained faith in social programs.<sup>51</sup>

By the late 1970s, the national discourse no longer defined African Americans and Puerto Ricans as “newcomers” but rather as static minority groups that constituted the underclass. For adherents of the underclass paradigm, “a new social stratum, identified by a set of interlocking behaviors, not primarily by poverty, dominated the wastelands that were all that remained of America’s urban-industrial heartland.” While some used the term “underclass” as synonymous with conditions of concentrated poverty, others used it to imply “pathological” behaviors.<sup>52</sup> The criteria for the latter definition of the underclass mirrored Lewis’s criteria for the culture of poverty,

including pathological behavior and a lack of integration with the larger society or social isolation. The underclass paradigm explained concentrated poverty by emphasizing the problematic behavior of those living in poverty, by blaming social programs for fostering dependency and pathologies in these groups, or sometimes by claiming biological and genetic inferiority.

By the early 1990s, underclass perspectives permeated many writings about African Americans and Puerto Ricans. For example, in his 1990 ethnographic study *Streetwise*, Elijah Anderson interpreted the conditions of concentrated poverty in the “black ghetto of Northtown” in ways that echoed the culture of poverty argument. Despite mentioning deindustrialization and the loss of jobs, he ultimately focused on individual behavior and the demise of the “community” as the central causes of poverty in the “ghetto.” The problems, according to Anderson, arise as young African American men “lose perspective and lack an outlook and sensibility that would allow them to negotiate the wider system of employment and society in general.” These youth scorn subsistence jobs, and unemployment results, in part, from “their inability or unwillingness to follow basic rules of middle-class propriety with respect to dress and comportment.” Like the culture of poverty, this underclass is marked by “antisocial behavior,” “family disorganization,” and the fact that residents are “only loosely anchored to conventional institutions.” For Anderson, there are “at least two distinct but overlapping cultures.” The “middle-class culture” comprises “middle-class whites, along with a small number of middle-class blacks and others,” whose “values are those associated with the ‘great tradition’ of Western culture.” The second culture is that of the “large black ghetto.” This second culture fosters the “view of the area as an urban jungle,” an area “thought to embody a ‘little tradition’ and [that] has the reputation of being economically depressed and beset by classic urban ills.”<sup>53</sup>

As with the culture of poverty, the definition of the “problem” shaped the recommended solution. As for the “large black ghetto,” Anderson agreed that “many characteristics of the jungle can indeed be found there.” He blamed the black middle class for contributing, “however unintentionally, to the construction of a local underclass” by moving out of the neighborhood and leaving “the poorer, uneducated blacks without tangible role models or instructive agents of social control.” For Anderson, the “poorer, uneducated blacks” could not be “role models,” and the residents of the “jungle” appeared incapable of improving their lives or their community. Hence, the black middle class—not segregation, gentrification, or economic decline—was responsible for the increasing isolation of the underclass. Anderson’s solution was for the federal government “to enact policies that will

give young people a serious stake in conventional society" through education, job training, and drug treatment, and to encourage the private sector to provide employment. Anderson's solution was, in large part, to change individual behavior.<sup>54</sup>

In his 1991 discussion of Philadelphia's underclass, Roger Lane explicitly linked the underclass with the culture of poverty, referring to "the behavior associated with an underclass 'culture of poverty.'" He defined the underclass as people with no legitimate jobs, who lack the ability to connect with the world of work due to handicaps such as lack of education and knowledge of modern employers' requirements. Defining "culture" as "a widely shared set not only of formal values but of attitudes, habits, and priorities," he concluded that the attitudes, habits, and priorities of the underclass prevented people from living "up to these ideals." Hence, "in addition to poverty itself, . . . the African-American experience has created a large number of people who are easily discouraged, unrealistic about the relation of ends to means, lacking pride in themselves and trust in others." Crime, drug addiction, and family instability may stem from long-term structural unemployment, but they become behaviors that are obstacles for advancement. In contrast to Anderson, Lane devoted more attention to economic restructuring and the role of racism in excluding urban blacks, "in Philadelphia and elsewhere, from the urban-industrial revolution." For Lane, the underclass was thus the result of both "structural conditions which simply deny its members the chance to work," and "other 'cultural' factors within the group, which make its members unable or unwilling to take advantage of opportunities even when offered."<sup>55</sup>

Lane's view of the "underclass" shaped his proposed solutions. He did not turn to those he described as "the great pool of 300,000 undereducated, sometimes hostile, poor Philadelphians who constitute the underclass." Instead, like Anderson, he pointed to the black middle class. As middle-class African Americans moved out of the poorest areas, leaving "no 'old heads,' no role models, no one to help in any way," Lane called for "formal voluntary action" to replace "the old neighborhoods and natural networks" and to provide "role modeling." Because of his greater attention to "structural conditions," Lane also advocated the involvement of all levels of government and the corporate business community to increase jobs and improve education.<sup>56</sup>

The continuities between the culture of poverty and the underclass paradigms lie in the targets of these labels—World War II migrants of color who were never considered labor migrants—and in their focus on the presumed "problems" of these groups. Although many Europeans were unwell-

come during their own immigration, they have, in retrospect, appeared in the scholarship and in the public imagination as hardworking, determined individuals who migrated to work and improve their lives and who succeeded in the “American dream.” Similarly, as historian Jacqueline Jones has suggested, white Appalachian migrants encountered fewer obstacles in their new environments than did African Americans—whose obstacles were compounded by racism and discrimination—and have not been stigmatized with the “underclass” label, despite experiencing urban poverty.<sup>57</sup> Although the “underclass” paradigm came under sharp criticism and use of the term has waned, the perspectives and assumptions embedded in “culture of poverty” and “underclass” interpretations continue to stigmatize African Americans and Puerto Ricans and blame them for their poverty.



With their focus on “deficient” cultures and “pathological” behaviors, culture of poverty and underclass perspectives have shaped public policies. Even though most culture of poverty proponents called for social programs and most underclass proponents call for their elimination, both have assumed the need to transform individual and group behaviors, with little attention paid to the larger forces that shape and impinge on those behaviors. Both paradigms ignore the history of migration, the role of the state and employers in recruiting migrants as cheap laborers, the structural changes accompanying the transition to a postindustrial economy, and the impact of residential segregation. In short, government policies, structural inequalities, and racism are not viewed as central to the challenges confronting African Americans and Puerto Ricans. Perhaps these paradigms reflect the demise, in the World War II era, of biological racism, but they have operated as more “culturally” based ideologies in marginalizing those who were wanted as laborers but not as community members. Instead of being viewed as displaced labor migrants, African Americans and Puerto Ricans are too often still perceived as a “community problem.”

At the same time, the negative perceptions of poor people of color embedded in the culture of poverty and underclass paradigms have influenced ideas about who is capable of addressing the issues confronting the urban poor. As Thomas Jackson suggests, there has been historical continuity, as “reformist experts and policy makers debate and design programs that can be sold to the overwhelmingly middle-class electorate, without seeking to redress the class bias in the electorate itself, and without more directly involving the poor in transforming the conditions of their own lives.”<sup>58</sup> Both

the culture of poverty and the underclass concepts consider their subjects—African Americans and Puerto Ricans—incapable of intelligently shaping their own futures. As a result, these groups confront structural conditions of concentrated poverty and racial ideologies that render them responsible for, yet incapable of improving, those conditions.



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PART 2

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*The Second Ghetto and the Suburb*





## Realtors and Racism in Working-Class Philadelphia, 1945–1970

DAVID MCALLISTER

On February 17, 1960, Edward G. Zepp, president of the Philadelphia Board of Realtors, testified at a hearing on the unethical soliciting practices of the city's real estate brokers. Zepp had the difficult job of defending brokers and agents against the charge of blockbusting—causing panic selling in racially changing neighborhoods. Above all, his testimony argued for analyzing realty transfers strictly on a market basis. "A property has a certain value," he explained to the Commission on Human Relations, the agency charged with combating and preventing employment and housing discrimination in Philadelphia. "We go to the market place and what is happening in the market place, regardless of race, creed or color, is the basis on which value is developed." Yet later in his testimony, he contradicted himself when discussing a block that he had personally assessed. "I can find no good earthly reason why the first Negro gentleman who bought had to pay as much as he did." In fact, the price "frightened" him, because it was so much higher than the market value of surrounding houses.<sup>1</sup>

Try as he might to argue for a real estate industry dictated solely by the market, Zepp could not divorce racial issues from realty transactions. Other professionals willingly highlighted this connection. Oscar I. Stern, a respected Realtor and president of Central Mortgage Company, argued that "the excess prices paid by negro [*sic*] home buyers represent a form of economic exploitation." A former president of the Philadelphia Real Estate Board also acknowledged that most people "when purchasing or renting homes place great value on exclusiveness in terms of religion and ancestry and, particularly to color. These desires are in conflict with the basic concept of the open market." The market limited the residential options for African Americans in Philadelphia; segregation was not an anomaly of realty transactions, it was a product of them.<sup>2</sup>

The market did not promote segregated housing in a straightforward way. It couldn't, in part because it was an aggregation of thousands of individuals entering into separate transactions. Behind the thousands of homeowners buying, selling, and renting was a vast commercial network that included real estate agents, builders, developers, lending institutions, insurance agencies, local regulations, and federal agencies. Some of these people and institutions refused to sell properties, lend money, show available houses, or provide insurance to African Americans, but others did so willingly. Remarkably, despite this variability, segregation was never in jeopardy. While the specific areas of black and white residence changed over time, the possibility of an integrated Philadelphia was as distant in 1970 as it was before World War II. How, then, did the market do this?

The market was able to maintain segregation in postwar Philadelphia because parties interested in enforcing racial exclusion guided it. Real estate agents and brokers played the largest role in this process, because they held a strategic position within the housing market. The local realty board did not draft a sweeping policy of exclusion, nor did its leaders authorize a covert program to discriminate against blacks seeking housing. Rather, individual Realtors promoted segregation in one of two ways: through implementing blockbusting tactics, or by completely excluding African Americans from white neighborhoods. They accomplished this despite considerable dissension among agents, for those advocating exclusion were often vehemently opposed to blockbusting, and some agents, to be fair, engaged in neither activity. The combination of these often contradictory actions produced an uneven advancement of segregation in postwar Philadelphia. Some neighborhoods transitioned quickly from all-white to all-black, while others took more than a decade to complete the process. Some areas managed to exclude all African American residents, while others became racially mixed and others quickly transitioned to all-black. By 1970, however, the bulk of the African American community in Philadelphia remained ghettoized, while surrounding urban and suburban neighborhoods remained predominantly white.

Realtors were only one of the many forces contributing to segregation in the postwar city. Since the Great Depression, federal housing policy had created numerous obstructions to the development of interracial communities. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) refused to invest in racially mixed neighborhoods, channeling most of its funding to predominantly white areas. Likewise, the United States Housing Authority, which oversaw the financing and construction of public housing alongside local authorities, built separate projects for black and white residents. By 1949, how-

ever, federal housing programs had ostensibly eliminated racial segregation from their policies. These changes produced significant but limited results. Subsequently, the FHA and its corollary housing program in the Veterans Administration (VA) invested millions of dollars in African American and mixed neighborhoods, but failed to enforce its new regulations in all-white neighborhoods. Many public housing projects were open to both blacks and whites, but the placement of these buildings in already segregated areas obviated the possibility of sustained integration. While federal agencies and officials failed to challenge segregated public housing and discriminatory lending practices, after 1949 they could no longer direct the paths and patterns of housing exclusion. This task would fall to real estate agents and others within the housing market.<sup>3</sup>

Another factor contributing to continued segregation was the white community itself. On occasion, white residents displayed violence when confronted with new African American neighbors. Historians have highlighted the role of neighborhood "improvement associations" in thwarting black purchasers, using actions ranging from buying vacant houses themselves to mob violence. Suburban residents reacted similarly to their urban counterparts: from Kensington to Levittown, white residents used threats and intimidation and, when those failed, terror campaigns in an attempt to scare African American newcomers into leaving. These are the best-documented and most sensational aspect of the housing wars of these decades. But how representative was this reaction by the white community?<sup>4</sup>

The question is important, for it goes to the heart of the role that the real estate industry played in shaping postwar segregation. Real estate agents defended themselves against accusations of blockbusting and refusal to sell to African Americans by focusing on their role as interlocutors for both the black and white communities. According to this theory, blockbusters were not exploiting white fear but were agents of integration, attempting to open more housing for the crowded black community. By this same logic, those agents who refused to sell to black families did so on behalf of the community they served; their business depended on maintaining good relations with local white residents. If, as a national survey suggested in 1963, only 25 percent of whites objected to black neighbors, the white community was clearly not monolithic in its antipathy to integration. The incidents of racial violence, while well documented, paled in comparison to the proportion of blocks that underwent transition peacefully. As we will see, white residents played an important role in promoting segregation, but it was real estate agents themselves who wielded the most power to shape Philadelphia's postwar housing market.<sup>5</sup>

## The "White Noose"

Housing segregation was not new to postwar Philadelphia. It developed first in South Philadelphia after World War I, and all-black blocks slowly spread north of Center City in the 1930s. The growth of the African American population, however, placed great stress on existing segregated neighborhoods. Between 1940 and 1970, the black population of Philadelphia rose from 250,000 to 650,000. At the same time, the white population decreased slightly, increasing the proportion of black residents to more than one-third of the population. Already crowded African American residential areas in North, West, and South Philadelphia could not absorb this increase, and the black population pushed into previously all-white neighborhoods.<sup>6</sup>

The black population did not spread evenly across Philadelphia's neighborhoods; it became concentrated in new ghettos contiguous to the older areas of black residence. African American residents could not move out of these areas because of what Philadelphia mayor Richardson Dilworth, in 1958, called the "white noose"—a barrier that prevented them from relocating in certain white neighborhoods. The barrier was not fixed, for it was not a physical wall but a collection of written and unwritten rules enforcing segregation. The neighborhoods constricted by it and the mechanisms used to implement it changed with the demographics of the city and with statutes governing the housing market. This noose, however, ensured that many areas remained all-white well into the 1970s.<sup>7</sup>

Before 1948, racial restrictive covenants effectively kept minority residents out of certain neighborhoods. Covenants, sometimes applied to Jews and Italians but predominantly to African Americans, took two forms, which together had the ability to cover an entire urban area with legally binding restrictions. The original landowner or developer initiated the first type, and as new housing construction boomed in the 1920s, blacks became excluded from whole subdivisions. The second type, the retroactive covenant, enabled deed holders to apply racial restrictions to their properties at any time. When coordinated en masse by homeowners, these covenants insulated large swaths of housing from the expanding black population. In 1926, the Supreme Court validated the use of racial restrictive covenants in *Corrigan v. Buckley*.<sup>8</sup>

The federal government also constricted the possible areas of African American residency through its housing policy. The FHA's mandate was to insure privately held home mortgages as a way to bolster the housing market during the Depression. Using color-coded maps developed by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, the FHA expanded and rationalized the

process of redlining—refusing to insure loans in certain urban neighborhoods. The racial composition of a neighborhood determined the amount of FHA investment; mixed neighborhoods received virtually no insured loans, and segregated black areas only slightly more. The areas receiving the most FHA-secured loans were those with racial restrictive covenants in place, leading sociologist Charles Abrams to conclude in 1955 that the “FHA has set itself up as the protector of the all-white neighborhood.” Combined with the equally discriminatory VA housing program, this policy ensured that African Americans were left out of the initial wave of new housing construction after World War II.<sup>9</sup>

In 1948 the Supreme Court, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, ruled that restrictive covenants violated the Fourteenth Amendment’s due process clause, invalidating their use across the country and shaking the legal foundation of segregated neighborhoods. After 1948, the decision of whether to sell to black home buyers rested in the hands of individual white homeowners. If an African American offered the most money for their house, sellers were placed in the unenviable position of either upsetting their neighbors or receiving less money for the property. The ruling also changed FHA policy, albeit not immediately. By 1949, the FHA no longer used race as a factor in deciding whether to insure loans, and it quickly opened up new urban neighborhoods for federal investment. University of Pennsylvania sociologists Chester Rapkin and William G. Grigsby, in a study of real estate transactions in four racially mixed areas in Philadelphia in the mid-1950s, found that FHA and VA investment greatly aided urban home buyers of all races in purchasing an affordable first house.<sup>10</sup>

If communities were to remain segregated, a new mechanism was needed to enforce it. Real estate agents stepped into this void created by the Supreme Court. To be sure, as Kevin Fox Gotham makes clear, the real estate industry had been associated with racial segregation for decades before 1948. It was Realtors and the local boards they formed that had initiated disinvestment in racially mixed areas before the FHA instituted redlining, and they had been instrumental in establishing retroactive restrictive covenants in cities across the country. After 1948, however, real estate agents became a critical force in the now decentralized attempt to create and maintain all-white neighborhoods. Although by no means all agents willingly enforced segregation, those that did were remarkably successful in maintaining the “white noose.”<sup>11</sup>

The most visible areas off-limits to black residents were in new housing construction, stretching from William Levitt’s massive projects in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and Burlington County, New Jersey, to the

suburban-like developments in Northeast Philadelphia. The FHA insured the overwhelming majority of these projects, and the agency willfully ignored its new racial policy by not ensuring that these projects were open to all races. Its failure to police its own regulations, however, was not nearly as important as the real estate agents who—through lies, intimidation, or obfuscation—steered potential black customers away.

In the new developments in Northeast Philadelphia, real estate agents formed the front line against integration. In July 1959, when the black mortician Andrew Nix and his wife visited the office of Morrell Park Homes interested in buying, James Scully, a selling agent at the 3,200-house project under construction at Frankford Avenue and Knights Road, coolly rebuffed them. Even though the project had FHA financing (and thus could not legally exclude blacks), Scully bluntly told Nix, "We are not accepting any colored applicants." Another prospective black resident, Calvin Hall, encountered the same opposition. In an investigation by the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations in 1959, Scully claimed that this policy protected the financial investment in the project. A mixed-race development would take five times longer to sell, he argued, a situation that for him and the developer was "nearly impossible economically. They would go into bankruptcy." According to this logic, since the market for integrated housing was small, it was not feasible for developers to open projects to blacks; and because the number of potential African American homeowners who could afford such new construction was small, developers would not undertake an all-black project.<sup>12</sup>

The boom in new housing after the war almost completely excluded African Americans. The Philadelphia Housing Association, a community organization dedicated to fair housing, conducted two studies of new housing in the postwar years. Their results were shocking. Between 1946 and 1953, private developers built 1,044 housing units available for black residents, less than 1 percent of the total dwelling units built in this period! By 1955, the situation had not changed at all.<sup>13</sup>

An exception was Morris Milgram, a developer whose belief in racial equality pushed him into the vanguard of interracial housing construction. The son of Russian Orthodox Jews who fled the tsarist regime in the early twentieth century, Milgram challenged the segregated model of other builders: "I wanted," he said, "to try and end the unwritten law that says all new and decent housing must be for white people only." He demonstrated that interracial developments did indeed pay—turning a 6 percent profit for the investors in his Concord Park development just outside Philadelphia in Trevoise, Bucks County. Milgram built 139 moderately priced three- and

four-bedroom ranch units. The interracial nature of the project made funding problematic. Although the FHA agreed to insure the loans, twenty-four institutions turned Milgram down before he finally secured financing from the Bowery Bank of New York. Advertising in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Trenton Times*, he did not have difficulty finding white or black applicants to invest. Concord Park maintained a 55 percent white population to ensure the project would remain integrated.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, the largest producer of suburban housing in the area, William Levitt, maintained racially exclusive communities. Developed on farmland, using Levitt's technique for mass-producing tract housing, the fifteen thousand single-family homes built in Levittown, Pennsylvania, represented a large portion of the new housing stock of the region. Levitt sold attractive, affordable models of the suburban dream: single-family homes with lawns, garages, and driveways. To retain this image, though, the community needed to maintain racial unity. It was the selling agents, under the orders of Levitt himself, who prevented black home buyers from purchasing these houses. The same restrictions did not apply to resale houses. By 1957, some homes in Levittown were ten years old; they were much smaller than the new units and sold for significantly less. One such home remained on the market so long that the selling agent accepted the offer of an African American doctor. The result was violence in the community.<sup>15</sup>

The Levittown case demonstrates that many white suburban residents had an underlying fear of African American neighbors. Urban historians have focused on the antagonism and violence used by white residents in resisting the influxes of blacks. Their studies have documented the intense opposition of white residents to having black families move into their neighborhoods. On some occasions, Philadelphia's white population, too, exhibited violent behavior toward "encroaching" black families.<sup>16</sup>

In September 1960, when a black family attempted to move into a house in the Kensington section of the city, a large crowd gathered, intimidating them and breaking windows on the property. Interestingly, Ernest and Gery Harris were not purposely trying to be the first blacks in an all-white block. Rather, the owner of the house on the 3100 block of C Street had called Ernest Harris over to fix a broken pipe. A plumber, Harris had a working relationship with the white owner. Finding the house vacant and looking for a new rental, Harris contracted with the homeowner to rent the house at a discount in exchange for the repair work. Ernest and Gery visited the house twice to clean it before moving in. On the first visit, the Harrises needed police escorts to safely leave the house and return to their apartment. When they came back that Saturday night, police officers guarded the house, and



three officers of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (CHR), including executive director George Schermer, assisted Gery in cleaning the broken glass from the previous visit. At a CHR hearing, Gery testified that that night, the crowd had yelled various remarks as she cleaned: "Go home, niggers," and "where are your tomtom drums?" After this incident, Gery decided not to move in, concluding, "If I had been buying, I would have stayed; but renting the house, I didn't think it was worth subjecting my children to that sort of thing."<sup>17</sup>

Did the actions of the white residents who confronted Gery and Ernest Harris represent the most common response to black neighbors? According to journalist Peter Binzen, the reaction on C Street was expected for the residents of Kensington. In his 1970 study of this section of the city, *Whitetown*, Binzen analyzed the social and psychological composition of Kensington that fostered such militant racism. It was a product of poverty, he suggested.

Kensington's intolerance is so savage because its people are so insecure. Just to the west, the huge black North Philadelphia ghetto is slowly, inexorably inching eastward. . . . There seems to be no stopping it. Kensingtonians look at North Philadelphia. They see housing that is shabbier than their own. They see more crime, more gangs, more broken homes, more joblessness, more poverty of mind, poverty of spirit. The causes of these abominable conditions don't concern them. They simply write off Negroes as hopeless and ask to be left alone.<sup>18</sup>

According to George Schermer, however, Kensington residents rarely acted on this hatred. In an evaluation of five other violent racial incidents that occurred in 1960 in Philadelphia, he concluded bluntly, "These are not typical of what has been going on for the last several years." In fact, the CHR knew of only three other similar violent incidents occurring in the city over the previous eight years.<sup>19</sup>

This pattern of racial exclusion and limited racial violence across the metropolitan area engendered a powerful response by local civil rights agencies. Led by the Philadelphia Housing Association and the American Friends Service Committee, groups took the problem of housing discrimination to the highest levels of state government. The outcome of two years of political maneuvering and public appeals was legislation that outlawed housing discrimination in the state in 1961. The legislation did not alter the overall problem in the real estate market, however. It enlarged the scope of the state Fair Employment Commission to include housing discrimination. Nathan

Agran, general counsel for the commission, assured real estate agents that the new legislation would function "by means of persuasion and conciliation," a method that Philadelphia's civil rights organizations had discovered did not yield results. Historically, only an extremely small fraction of the cases brought before the commission required hearings and court intervention. Terry Chisholm, supervisor of the CHR's housing division, told a *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* reporter a year later, "The law has not yet significantly altered the house-seeking and buying progress of the Negroes in Philadelphia." Communities could alter the state code to fit local conditions, and in 1963 the Philadelphia city council passed an ordinance that made only the sale of non-occupied houses subject to the antidiscrimination statute.<sup>20</sup>

In November 1965, the CHR held a public hearing on racial discrimination in the housing market. The driving question in the hearing was whether the existing discrimination statutes adequately opened all neighborhoods to black residents. The commissioners echoed a concern voiced by Clarence L. Cave of the Philadelphia Fellowship Commission prior to the passage of the 1961 Fair Housing Act: had the law made "the housing market [a] truly free enterprise—free of the hindrance of racial restrictions on property exchange?" The answer given by a long list of expert witnesses was that it had not. Robert N. C. Nix, Jr., Philadelphia's only black congressman, argued that existing legislation was "totally inadequate." The 1963 ordinance, he noted, "does not cover 62 per cent of the housing market that falls in the category of owner-occupied dwellings."<sup>21</sup>

To highlight the continued inequity in the housing market, the CHR's new housing chairman, Nancy Stroebel, organized a series of test cases across the city to demonstrate resistance to black buyers. The targets were real estate offices, agents, and brokers. Both white and black field representatives separately visited targeted offices, asking for information about available houses in the same area. In neighborhoods across the city, the result was the same: the list of houses shown to the white testers differed markedly from that given to the African American testers. Stroebel and her staff proved that real estate agents were the bulwarks against integration.

Taken together, these test cases demonstrated not only that the housing market remained racially separated even in 1965, but the influence that real estate agents had in creating this separation. On October 25, 1965, James A. Brown, an African American CHR field representative, visited the Hartley Realty Company in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. He asked about available apartments or houses, but Gil Wasserman of the agency informed him that the only available listings were in an area with a sizable black population. Two days later, a white field representative called on Hartley

and received a list of five houses in the Kensington area, including one on the 3900 block of North Ninth Street. Armed with this information, Brown returned to the company, inquiring specifically about the house on North Ninth Street. The sales manager, he said, a Mr. Hutchinson, informed him "that trying to sell me that house or any other house in that block would create problems and, being an intelligent man, I know what the problems are." Brown and other field representatives repeated this exercise in the Frankford, Olney, Torresdale, Mount Airy, and Northeast, West, and South Philadelphia sections of the city, with the same results.<sup>22</sup>

Most agents insisted they were not themselves discriminating against blacks; rather, they were upholding the wishes of the white sellers. Jack H. Vishab, an agent in Torresdale, told the commission that his white sellers "imply one way or the other, or they tell you outright. They tell you right away that they are afraid, and they tell you they don't want to sell to colored because of neighbors." In another instance, when James Brown inquired about a list of houses on the wall of the office of John J. McIlhinney in Frankford, Albert Ausura, the agent there, informed him "that the owners will not sell to nonwhites." Ausura stated that in order to prevent problems from arising during the sale, "this is one of the first questions they are asked."<sup>23</sup>

One Realtor, Noel Smorto, implicated himself and the profession in the process of discrimination. Four CHR testers visited Smorto's office separately in late October 1965. The employees at the agency informed the white testers about one set of houses for sale and the African American testers about another set. When questioned by commissioners at the hearing, Smorto did not conceal his ire at the CHR testers or his prejudice toward blacks. He complained, "Our time is taxed enough with duties that we have to perform instead of taking these boys around for a joy ride," referring specifically to the two black field representatives. Later in his testimony, he objected to black residents because "they do not want to do what they should do as civilized human beings." It was, he claimed, his job as a real estate agent to protect the white homeowners: "These are people who I have talked to who have put all their life's savings, their money, and worked hard to build and improve a house, and they expect to remain there in their remaining years in comfort and in close proximity to their friends and relatives. Now this invasion that they have suffered has chased them out—not because these people are easy to get along with. They tried it. They found that it was impossible to live with them."<sup>24</sup>

The exclusionary policies of real estate brokers and agents resulted in constriction of the residential areas in which the African American popula-

tion could live. Thomas McBride, president of the Philadelphia Fellowship Commission, wrote, "Real estate brokers—with a small number of courageous and praiseworthy exceptions—have not condemned discrimination by real estate brokers and builders; have not set up any internal machinery to stop discrimination by members of their own profession; have done little or nothing on a regular basis to educate their clients in all neighborhoods to sell or rent to qualified persons without regard to race, religion or national origin." Richard K. Taylor, executive director of the Fair Housing Council of the Delaware Valley, went further in a letter to a Kensington real estate agent, arguing that agents acted "as more than a neutral intermediary between buyer and seller and are taking an active role in maintaining a discriminatory market." It was real estate agents across the city who restricted African American home buyers from moving into all-white neighborhoods.<sup>25</sup>

### Integration or Ghettoization?

Racial transition became an overriding concern of real estate agents, homeowners, and community groups in part because of the rapid expansion of the black population in Philadelphia during and after the war. Within a preexisting segregated residential setting, this massive increase in minority residents put stress upon the local housing market. Wartime conditions demonstrated that areas with a heavy concentration of blacks could not absorb any more migrants. A survey of the city's black population conducted at the end of the war by the *Philadelphia Afro-American* recorded enormously crowded conditions for residents. All parts of the black community worked to ease the wartime housing shortage by taking in roomers—even the households that had little need for the extra income. Yet many black residents still had difficulty finding accommodations. After the war, but especially in the 1950s, North Philadelphia became a favored destination for black residents seeking to move away from the crowded conditions.<sup>26</sup>

As African Americans migrated, neighborhoods became racially mixed for a period. Part of North Philadelphia west of Germantown Avenue was one place where the two racial groups often lived side by side without violent confrontations. Between 1940 and 1960, the black population of this area quintupled, from 15,000 to 80,000. At the same time, the white population declined by one-third, from 240,000 to 160,000. In this period, whites and blacks often lived in close proximity to each other. In the Twenty-eighth Ward, for instance, there were 20,000 black and 30,000 white residents in 1950. In tract 28-A, one of four census tracts in this ward, the overwhelming

majority of blocks had more than 20 percent of each race. Areas such as these provided evidence that interracial housing existed, at least for certain periods, during the process of racial transition. By 1960, however, areas that had transitioned from all-white to mixed housing had become virtually all-black. There were 46,000 black but only 4,000 white residents in the Twenty-eighth Ward in that year. Tract 28-A had only four blocks (less than 5 percent) with black populations less than 80 percent, and those four were above 70 percent. In 1970, only 1 percent of the residents were white. What for a brief time held the possibility of becoming the model interracial community would become part of the expanding North Philadelphia ghetto.<sup>27</sup>

A 1960 study of four Philadelphia neighborhoods undergoing racial change by the sociologists Chester Rapkin and William G. Grigsby revealed that racial transition often occurred in an uneven manner. In a remarkable finding, they discovered that not only did whites continue to reside in an area after the first black moved in, but whites continued to buy homes there. "Although three and one-half times as many Negroes as whites purchased houses in the areas, the number of whites who did so is impressive. This sheds doubt on the premise that once Negroes enter a neighborhood, no white will purchase in the area thereafter." Their subsequent interviews with black and white residents entering these integrated areas suggest that race played only a limited role in housing selection. They found that white families with children were just as likely to move into a mixed area as black families. Whites did not "blunder into" the area, not realizing its changing racial nature. Most knew the racial composition of the neighborhood when they entered but decided to reside there because of "convenience to work, school, friends, and relatives, or they gave general responses such as 'I am accustomed to the neighborhood and I like to live here.' . . . The lack of compelling reason is less astonishing than the fact that at least three-fourths of the respondents did not bother to look for a house in any other area and that an additional 5 percent, though they did look elsewhere, considered the racially mixed areas to be their first choice."<sup>28</sup>

Contrary to the conclusions of many recent "whiteness" studies, working-class whites were well represented among those buying and residing in homes in these neighborhoods. Rapkin and Grigsby noted, in fact, that most of the white heads of household worked as craftsmen, operatives, or laborers. Those moving into these neighborhoods were not highly educated, professional workers, nor were they activists dedicated to advancing racial integration. Writing of Philadelphia's interracial housing market, Eunice and George Grier concurred: "There is no definable package of socioeconomic characteristics which distinguished white occupants of interracial

housing from the white housing market at large. The kind of housing offered appears to be the most important determinant of the socioeconomic characteristics of the white market."<sup>29</sup>

Although by 1960 the Twenty-eighth Ward was overwhelmingly African American, racial transition took more than a decade to complete. In 1957, the average length of home ownership in this ward was twelve years. The entrance of blacks into the area did not cause an immediate, rapid transition to complete racial segregation. By comparison, in the all-white Kensington section of the city, the average residency was thirteen years. One difference between the two areas was the greater percentage of rental units in the Twenty-eighth Ward, so that the overall rates of transition may have been more divergent. In sections of North Philadelphia with fewer rental units, however, racial transition also took decades to complete. In the Thirty-seventh and Thirty-eighth Wards, for instance, it took until 1970 for blacks to become the majority population. Likewise, a 1958 CHR study found that in Tioga-Nicetown, another section of North Philadelphia, "racial change occurred gradually."<sup>30</sup>

While the racial transition may not have succeeded in producing permanent mixed neighborhoods, it showed that whites and blacks not only could but did live together amicably. This is the main thesis of Ernest and Helen Butler in their 1986 fictional account of interracial housing in Philadelphia, *Neighbors of the 2100 Block*. Their story chronicles one black family and its relationships with its white and black neighbors in the 1940s and 1950s. Without regard to race, the block formed a supportive community—white children played with black children; black women aided and confided in white women; and racial differences were less important than the shared experiences of the block. Although fictional, the Butlers' account was based on their own experience living in Philadelphia during and after World War II. Their findings concur with Judith Goode and Jo Anne Schneider's assessment of interracial and interethnic relations in the 1990s in Philadelphia.<sup>31</sup>

For all the goodwill generated in these mixed neighborhoods, white residents eventually decided to leave these areas. Racism played a role in this transition. While some whites felt comfortable living in a mixed neighborhood where whites still composed the majority, they often were not willing to live in a predominantly black neighborhood. Amanda Seligman found that even community groups in Chicago that were formed on an interracial basis in predominantly white neighborhoods abhorred continued black in-migration and fought to maintain a white majority. A Gallup poll conducted in 1963 demonstrated a similar disparity. While 20 percent of white

respondents nationwide said they would definitely move if “colored people came to live next door,” half indicated they would want to sell if their neighborhood became “predominantly black.” Other factors included the reluctance of whites to purchase homes in mixed areas. Real estate agents played an essential part in forging this transition.<sup>32</sup>

The Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations opened a hearing on the unethical soliciting practices of real estate agents and brokers in February 1960. In question was the practice of blockbusting—the sale or rental of houses to black residents in an all-white neighborhood, with the expectation that white residents would quickly sell their houses out of fear. From the perspective of the agents and brokers, there were extremely lucrative rewards for engaging in this activity. Ostensibly, those rewards had little to do with race. Realtors hoped to profit from commissions on the sale of the houses: more sellers resulted in more commissions. In many cases, real estate agents themselves bought the properties from fleeing white residents at reduced prices and quickly sold or rented them at inflated prices to incoming African Americans. Residents would not sell their homes en masse, however, without the fear of racial succession, and agents stoked the fire of panic in these areas.<sup>33</sup>

The main method Realtors used to incite panic selling was advertising. Using sophisticated marketing techniques, they canvassed all-white blocks near expanding black neighborhoods, flooding local residents with information about selling their houses. Some realty agencies employed large office staffs to run their advertising departments. Through mass mailings and telephone solicitation, each agency contacted all of the homeowners in the area. Claire Nameroff, a resident of the East Oak Lane section of the city, told the CHR commissioners in 1960, “Since 1958, some Negro families have purchased homes in this block. From the summer of 1958 on, we have been harassed by telephone calls, personal calls, material left at the door and mail from a large number of real estate firms, urging us to sell our home. I have found this annoying and time consuming.” Even “For Sale” signs in racial border areas reminded white owners of the possibility of transition, prompting the city council to outlaw them in 1960. Yet did this solicitation create panic? The CHR had already formulated and disseminated an opinion on the topic a year earlier, when its executive director, George Schermer, advised the Pennsylvania Real Estate Licensing Commission that realty offices “should carefully refrain from intensive or extraordinary solicitation, advertising, or canvassing by phone, mail or personal contact in racially changing areas.” In this public forum, the CHR let real estate brokers defend their practice.<sup>34</sup>

For their part, the agents questioned by the commission claimed that their role was an ancillary product of panic, not a cause of it. David Kline, a broker with offices in West and North Philadelphia who avidly solicited in transitioning areas, argued that he had little impact on the frequency of sales in a neighborhood: "Do I influence people's thinking? I? I don't influence people's thinking. What do I do to the public, or what does any real estate broker do to the public that is wrong in soliciting listings? He is not doing anything at all that is not within the human being. All they are doing, see, is helping to consummate a sale when a person or any individual sees fit no longer to live in a racially integrating neighborhood." It was not real estate agents who inflamed panic, he argued, but the unwillingness of white residents to live near blacks. He and other agents, said Kline, were meeting the housing needs of the black population, rather than accelerating racial transition. One Baltimore Realtor concurred: "We have attempted to operate our business in a nondiscriminatory manner and in a democratic fashion, without excluding any would-be purchasers from any property on our list." Even Schermer agreed, telling the Fair Housing Council of the Delaware Valley that "it is white persons in general who discriminate and 'the bad old real estate broker becomes the scapegoat.'"<sup>35</sup>

David Kline, though, was not a broker who served the white community in areas not likely to experience transition. Like many real estate agents across the city, he researched which areas were the likely candidates for racial change and then deluged them with invitations to sell. In an exchange with Schermer, Kline candidly explained the logic of his profession:

[A] real estate broker knows that the white person—most white people [—] do not care to live in the same neighborhood with a colored family, and each real estate broker is trying to get the list—

Schermer: He is trying to make the most of it?

Kline: That's right—of human frailties.

. . . Schermer: Would you agree that, if a lot of different real estate men do the same thing innocently—I think it is perfectly innocent—

Kline: Let us not play with words. Innocently? We are intelligent people. We do things knowingly, with pre-thought.<sup>36</sup>

These real estate agents did not simply target possible future transition areas; they also fanned the flames of panic after black residents had moved into the neighborhood. In one instance, agent Max Moses telephoned resident Wesley Cherry and urged him to sell quickly, since "people don't generally get their price once a neighborhood turns more than 50 per cent



Negro." Moses further counseled—not realizing that Cherry himself was black—"I wouldn't let your children go to school with them if I were you." Bernard Barkan, a white resident of West Philadelphia who was frequently called by Kline's agency, testified that solicitors often mentioned the influx of black residents in appeals to potential sellers. Kline and Moses' lawyer responded that the two agents did not approve of such behavior, and he blamed their associates. In both cases, the realty agency produced the desired effect: through augmenting the fear of having black neighbors or falling property values, they forced white homeowners to sell.<sup>37</sup>

As black real estate agent I. Maximilian Martin concluded, "The end result of such pressures is to demoralize a neighborhood and in effect to intimidate many owners to sell who otherwise would be satisfied to remain in their present location." Journalist Jack Rothman was not as kind in his description. These "ghetto makers," as he called them, specialized in "panic salesmanship—the rumor, the racial argument, the prejudicial insinuation." And the result of their actions, argued John Tsucalas in an otherwise industry-friendly examination of the realty market and black housing in Philadelphia, was the quick racial transition of the areas they worked.<sup>38</sup>

The key to these campaigns was the fear of falling property values. Most agents in Philadelphia held that the introduction of African Americans into a neighborhood dramatically reduced the value of the homes in that area. The black CHR tester James Brown, looking to buy in an all-white neighborhood, heard from a real estate agent that the value of "the rest of the properties on that street would go down" if he bought there. In 1958, *U.S. News & World Report* stated (without qualification) that black residential influx produced "declining property values" in a neighborhood. The most important example of the connection between value and racial change came from Edward Zepp, president of the Philadelphia Board of Realtors. In 1957, on Eleventh Street, just north of Lehigh Avenue, a black family moved into what was previously an all-white block. A year and a half later, when Zepp assessed houses on the block, property values had decreased by 35 percent, and more than 40 percent of the previous residents had left. This confirmed Zepp's understanding of racial change: the introduction of a black homeowner lowered property values, which in turn induced a swift exodus of white homeowners. The market, he concluded, dictated the alacrity of this transition. Zepp presented this case to the CHR as a prime example of the inevitability of falling property values in racial-transition areas.<sup>39</sup>

Although real estate agents often cited declining value as a reason for white homeowners to sell, scholarly studies at the time reached no firm conclusions about this. In 1957, following a racial incident in Levittown,

Pennsylvania, *Business Week* published an intriguing article about housing value. It found that after the incident, there was no clear direction of housing values. In fact, the magazine reported, the value of property after racial integration changed according to several factors, including several that were nonracial in nature: tenancy of families, the location of the neighborhood vis-à-vis the main center of black population, the relative affluence of residents, and the number and character of in-migrant black residents.<sup>40</sup>

In an extremely detailed study of property values in Philadelphia and five other cities, sociologist Luigi Laurenti found the opposite of what agents were telling white clients: values actually rose after racial transition. Unlike studies that looked at changing property values in racial-transition areas only, Laurenti's book also examined "control" blocks (areas not experiencing transition) in order to compare the rise or fall in value. Laurenti expressed property value as a ratio between racial-transition areas and control blocks—a method that factored in regional market levels. For Philadelphia, Laurenti compared part of the Twenty-eighth Ward to a nearby all-white section east of Broad Street. He found that initially, after the first black homeowner entered a block, property values escalated in the neighborhood. This practice of charging the first black residents on a white block more than the real value of the property was what "frightened" Edward Zepp. Slowly, as more black residents entered the block, property values fell, but never below the rate of the control group. Even when the majority of the white residents moved out, the now predominantly African American block retained more property value per house than the similar block not undergoing transition.<sup>41</sup>

If property values did not decrease, why did white families move? The answer, argued sociologist Eleanor Wolf, was that whether value actually declined or rose, the pervasive fear of its reduction prompted white homeowners to sell. One block in Germantown attempted to halt the blockbusting by combating the panic over values incited by real estate agents. The coalition of white and black families "found that some white families are still under the mistaken impression that a community or block must remain all white or 'go all colored' [and] that property values decline when colored families move in. . . . Values do not decline except during panic selling." These residents understood that it was not the introduction of blacks that lowered property values, but rather the introduction of panic. It was this panic that the Minority Housing Committee of the Philadelphia Board of Realtors, in a 1960 press release, said should immediately stop.<sup>42</sup>

Eventually, the neighborhoods in North Philadelphia changed from integrated communities to predominantly black ones. Although Realtors

initiated the process of racial transition, the Philadelphia Housing Authority and its redevelopment efforts reinforced racial separation and poverty. Because Congress mandated that the number of public housing units built must equal the number of slum units destroyed, postwar redevelopment in Philadelphia focused on impoverished, predominantly black areas. John Bauman makes clear that the housing projects constructed in North Philadelphia in the 1950s exacerbated the housing problems for the larger neighborhood, even as they provided an affordable alternative to new residents. The residents displaced from slum housing stressed an already tight housing market, extending poverty to surrounding blocks. The Housing Authority also failed to keep these apartment complexes integrated, letting them mirror the racial composition of the surrounding community rather than adhering to the Housing Act of 1949, which ostensibly eliminated segregation from public housing. The construction of these apartments was the final act in what C. Kenneth Proefrock, a Lutheran minister in North Philadelphia, viewed as the "rapid progress of deterioration and condemnation" that occurred in his neighborhood.<sup>43</sup>

By 1970 in North Philadelphia, the population was almost evenly split between African Americans and whites, with, for the first time, black residents forming a narrow majority. In the thirty years since 1940, when the black population represented only 6 percent of the total, enormous changes had occurred in the racial demographics of these neighborhoods. The transition occurred house by house with the selling or renting of units to African Americans. The first black residents were pioneers, breaking the rules of segregation set up in the city, but they were not alone for long. In every neighborhood, the entrance of one black resident initiated complete racial transition—whether it occurred quickly, with fear-induced panic selling, or slowly, over decades. This process inevitably produced segregation in neighborhoods across Philadelphia. It is not surprising, then, that even though federal housing agencies had stopped promoting racial separation, and state and local governments had enacted antidiscriminatory housing laws, the level of segregation in Philadelphia remained about the same between 1940 and 1970. The slight decrease in the index of segregation (from 89 to 83 percent) was, in part, a function of the high level of racial transition still occurring in Philadelphia in the later period.<sup>44</sup>

Segregation was the outcome for more than just urban black neighborhoods. Real estate agents and the housing industry made sure that both urban and suburban neighborhoods remained all-white. As the Twenty-eighth Ward transitioned to nearly all-black between 1940 and 1960, in the adjoining Kensington section directly to the east, there were only a handful of

nonwhite residents. In the new subdivisions within the Northeast Philadelphia section of the city and across the suburban region, the situation was similar through the 1960s, as nonwhite residents only rarely entered these areas.<sup>45</sup> Certainly, much of the white population in these areas desired to keep the racial exclusivity of their neighborhoods. They relied on real estate agents to perform this function, and, as we have seen, many agents shared the racism of white residents.

In the private housing market of the postwar decades, Realtors' influential hands guided much of the racial transition in Philadelphia. The refusal by many real estate agents to sell, or even show, houses to African Americans created a barrier that prevented racial mixing in certain communities. Helping to erect that barrier, other agents channeled the growing black population into neighborhoods adjacent to existing segregated areas. Through blockbusting, they forcefully opened neighborhoods to African Americans, but in a manner that ensured swift and total racial transition. After 1949, when the federal government no longer endorsed racial separation in housing, Realtors stepped forward with the tools of the market to keep Philadelphia a segregated city.

## Deadly Inequalities: Race, Illness, and Poverty in Washington, D.C., since 1945

BRETT WILLIAMS

Shameful health disparities are widespread in the United States, nowhere more so than in the nation's capital. The city's history shows the complex ways in which these disparities are entangled with other inequalities as they strike African Americans in the poorest urban neighborhoods. Using Washington, D.C., as a case study, this essay will address how gendered inequalities have intersected racial and class inequalities with often disastrous effects on the lives of inner-city residents. Health inequalities show specifically how over the decades, particular laws and practices have built a series of screens limiting health care for African Americans.

During the years I have lived and worked in Washington, I have come to know many people with health problems. In the 1980s I grew close to a large, extended family I called the Harpers. I incorporated information about this family in my ethnographic study *Upscaling Downtown* (1988) because I thought their experiences mirrored those of many D.C. residents: they came to Washington after World War II, often following kin who helped them find jobs and places to stay. The gentrification occurring at that time scattered many of the Harpers to neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River and into the inner D.C. suburbs. By 2000 almost everyone in the Harper family, except for those who were small children in 1988, had died. At first I thought they were just unlucky; but I later learned that their experiences are more typical than rare.

During the winter of 2007–8, health educator Sue Barnes and I interviewed twenty elderly African American women and men in a public housing development for senior citizens whose families had been ravaged by illness and whose own health required complex coping, courage, and resourcefulness. Our small ethnographic study confirms most survey data on health and illness in D.C., as well as my own research over time. It also points to the

ways that race-based health statistics mask the role of both poverty and race in making people sick.

Dramatic disparities in health have made medical research a key site for claiming fixed differences between the “races.”<sup>1</sup> These differences were once deemed biological, racial, or genetic—calling upon “tropical lung,” a “salt retention gene,” or a “thrifty gene” to explain African American people’s disproportionate suffering from tuberculosis, hypertension, and diabetes.<sup>2</sup> Genetic explanations have not gone away, but some analysts have put forward cultural explanations as well: African American women suffer high infant mortality because of their perverse adherence to douching. Sedentary lifestyles produce obesity. Injection-drug users practice exotic rituals. Poor patients do not comply with or adhere to treatment regimens.<sup>3</sup>

Social history points to other explanations, tracing the larger contours of inequality in urban history. Health and illness reflect many factors: a burst of postwar scientific progress in conquering disease; the migration of African Americans to cities where they were confined to segregated areas and low-wage jobs; urban renewal and the construction of second ghettos; waves of investment and abandonment in urban real estate that have spurred displacement; and federal policies regarding public housing and the war on drugs. In Washington, the achievement of limited home rule in 1973 and continuing oversight by Congress exacerbate these more widely experienced processes. African American health in poor urban neighborhoods continues to be sacrificed to the accumulation of wealth by others, including developers, insurance providers, retailers, and the food and prison industries.

Diseases are neither bounded nor discrete, and they do not transcend history or the social conditions that construct, shape, create, diagnose, and heal them. Diseases often come in twos or threes, interacting and reinforcing each other in complex ways.<sup>4</sup> This essay examines some of D.C.’s major killers: heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS, as well as the problem of infant mortality and low birth weight, which can exacerbate health problems in adulthood. Impoverished African American residents of the city have literally embodied changing inequalities, as they suffer and die from these killer diseases in vastly disproportionate numbers compared to white residents.

The District of Columbia poverty rate was 20 percent in the year 2000. Limited and inaccurate as the government-defined poverty line is, it still paints an alarming picture of poverty in the capital, especially when broken down by wards. In 2000, Ward 8 had the highest poverty rate: 36 percent, compared to 27 percent in 1990. Historical evidence is even more alarming, for it shows that while the poverty rate fell from 75 percent in 1949 to 30

percent in 1974, in the poorest wards poverty remained stuck at the rates of 1961, holding at 34 percent beginning in 1981 and continuing to grow deeper and more concentrated.<sup>5</sup>

### Cradle to Grave

Infant mortality indexes the health of a community, and the United States ranks thirty-seventh in the world in infant health. Infant mortality in Washington strikes at a rate even higher than that for the nation.<sup>6</sup> In trying to defend the United States' embarrassing international standing, some researchers have noted that when African Americans were excluded, U.S. infant-mortality rates were not much higher than those of other nations.<sup>7</sup> Too often, policymakers and researchers have blamed teenage mothers for the high rates of infant mortality and low birth weight: if girls just postponed childbearing, they argue, the social problems they cause would disappear. The truth is more complex, however. Among African Americans, mothers in their twenties already have more low-birth-weight babies or dead babies than mothers in their late teens. Moreover, babies born to mothers aged fifteen are only half as likely to be low birth weight as babies born to women who are twenty-five, and only one-third as likely as if their mothers are thirty-five. African American women in their twenties can expect their health to deteriorate quickly over the course of their lives. For example, between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, African Americans and whites suffer similar rates of hypertension. But by the time they are twenty-five to twenty-nine, African Americans' rates of anemia, pneumonia, and heart disease are six times those of whites. These trends by age and race are similar for every cause of disease. The life trajectories that many impoverished African American women face of premature aging, abbreviated lives, and extended periods of life with disabling conditions may be rooted in their own health problems during infancy or childhood: low birth weight, inadequate nutrition, childhood poverty, and childhood illnesses. In turn, their babies' low birth weight can lead to the heart disease that plagues so many African American adults later in life.<sup>8</sup>

People often cope with poverty by combining the incomes of household members who work in both the formal and informal economy or receive some (shrinking) form of government assistance. Pooling low wages from spotty employment helps to manage homelessness, disability, and child care in the face of often inflexible work schedules, incarceration, premature death, displacement, lost custody, and fosterage. A family member's illness, medical expenses, and hospitalization, however, can put a family deeply in debt.

Countless kinds of expenses and emergencies can push the poor over the edge they live on: new shoes and winter coats for children, complications in pregnancy and childbirth, the arrival of a relative in need.

When should a woman bear children if she lives under such adverse conditions? If she wants her children to be healthy, and wants to raise them while she and her kin are still in good health, and if she knows that adults in her network might not survive through middle age and will likely suffer from a chronic disease or disability even before then, she might see early childbearing as her best option. She will have to work outside the home in a low-wage, unreliable labor market where she will not have paid maternity leave or affordable, accessible child care. She will most likely help care for her kin as their health falters, when her young children will need her, too. Her best chance of long-term work coincides with her children's preschool years, when her kin are still healthy enough to care for them. Under such circumstances, teenage childbearing seems to make sense, not only because the woman is most likely to give birth to a healthy baby then, but also because she will be best able to manage childcare, elder care, and a job or two. Often, of course, she is simply a vulnerable and misguided young woman who does not mean to get pregnant. But to blame teen mothers for infant mortality is both counterfactual and dismissive, charging young women rather than the disparities that shorten their lives.<sup>9</sup>

### Diabetes, Heart Disease, and Hypertension

For most of the nineteenth century, diabetes was misdiagnosed and treated somewhat whimsically. Entrepreneurs hawked potions, and doctors suggested that patients fast, eat oatmeal, drink gin, or eat only meat. Many members of the Washington elite died from diabetes. The introduction of insulin in 1921 transformed diabetes from an acute illness into a chronic condition with many complications. Since World War II, diabetes, along with other chronic diseases, has edged past infectious disease to become a major cause of death and disability,<sup>10</sup> and it has moved like wildfire into the neighborhoods of the poor. For example, in 2000, Washington's wealthy Ward 3 had the lowest mortality rate from diabetes in the city, at 17.6 per 100,000, while in Ward 7 the death rate was 64.9 (see table 7.1).

By 1945, a lasting debate had emerged asking whether diabetes could be controlled through scrupulous management or was just genetically inevitable for some people. Washington's newspaper physicians vied for explanations: "You are training for diabetes, I believe, if you get most of your calories from refined white flour and refined white sugar—as so many overweight,



Table 7.1 District of Columbia Deaths from the Five Leading Causes of Death and Diabetes, 2000, by Ward

Cause	Total	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Ward 5	Ward 6	Ward 7	Ward 8
<b>All causes</b>									
Number	5,945	613	681	661	986	924	707	835	521
Rate*	1,039.2	766.1	822.0	830.8	1,381.1	1,388.5	1,080.1	1,290.5	846.7
<b>1. Heart disease</b>									
Number	1,566	162	192	203	259	227	164	240	118
Rate	273.7	202.5	231.8	255.1	362.8	341.1	250.5	370.9	191.8
<b>2. Cancer</b>									
Number	1,329	127	152	159	257	235	153	152	91
Rate	232.3	158.7	183.5	199.8	360.0	353.1	233.7	234.9	147.9
<b>3. Hypertension</b>									
Number	236	19	28	18	47	40	28	36	20
Rate	41.3	23.7	33.8	22.6	65.8	60.1	42.8	55.6	32.5
<b>4. Cerebrovascular diseases</b>									
Number	226	20	16	45	32	31	27	32	23
Rate	39.5	25.0	19.3	56.6	44.8	46.6	41.2	49.5	37.4
<b>5. HIV/AIDS</b>									
Number	225	35	31	2	27	26	35	41	27
Rate	39.3	43.7	37.4	2.5	37.8	39.1	53.5	63.4	43.9
<b>8. Diabetes</b>									
Number	196	16	15	14	33	32	22	42	22
Rate	34.3	20.0	18.1	17.6	46.2	48.1	33.6	64.9	35.8

Source: District of Columbia, Department of Health, State Center for Health Statistics Administration, District of Columbia State Health Profile, 2003, [http://app.doh.dc.gov/services/administration\\_offices/schs/pdf/SHPFinal.shm](http://app.doh.dc.gov/services/administration_offices/schs/pdf/SHPFinal.shm) (accessed December 3, 2008).

\*Crude death rates are per 100,000 population.

undernourished people do nowadays"; "When people are 'burned up' with indignation yet cannot express their feelings directly perhaps this tension seeks an outlet in the circulatory system"; and "The rise of such illnesses as diabetes and some of the heart ailments are due to the assumption that because there is abundance, one must gorge."<sup>11</sup>

However, in the 1950s, city health officials felt optimistic that they could control or even cure diabetes through free urine tests, artificial-kidney machines, new drugs, and "little pieces of glands from unborn babies." By the 1980s diabetics lived longer, for the home glucose meter allowed them to monitor their disease by trying to balance "insulin and food, food and insulin, like armies in the night battling in a diabetic's body."<sup>12</sup> When a diabetic's blood sugar falls too low, the brain spews forth a foggy netherworld, in which the patient must grope for an orange or a candy bar, or even remember to try. Sometimes diabetic patients are arrested as drunks because they become so disoriented.<sup>13</sup> I first learned of the depredations of diabetes through the suffering of my friend Will Harper, a hardworking florist who had gone deep into debt to open his own shop. He had little time to take care of himself, and when he died in 1999 he was just a torso, having lost one limb after another to diabetes. His uncle and two of his first cousins died of strokes. Many people that Sue Barnes and I interviewed were diabetic, and they wrestled with that illness, the complications it involved, and the multiple, entangled illnesses of their families. Ms. Hill is one of those patients.

Ms. Hill is sixty-three. She worked at Giant Food for thirty-six years, starting right after her school years. She has high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Her twin sister has high blood pressure, diabetes, and arthritis. Her younger sister, mother, and father died of heart attacks, and her brother died of lung cancer. Her husband died of cirrhosis. Her daughter "suffers with a muscle disorder. She is not able to do physical activities." Getting medical care is hard: "I don't attend after they closed D.C. General. It's such a long way for doctor's appointments, and then they schedule three people at the same time. They overload; doctors are overwhelmed with patients now."

In Washington, diabetes coexists with hunger—which was declared an emergency in 1970 by a federal panel, alarmed that one-third of the city's residents were hungry and malnourished, subsisting on incomes below the poverty level.<sup>14</sup> This widespread hunger holds steady in poor neighborhoods today. One in ten households experience food insecurity, one out of three

children live on the edge of hunger, and 175,000 residents depend on emergency food from food banks, pantries, and soup kitchens.<sup>15</sup> Poor neighborhoods in D.C. starve for grocery stores. East of the Anacostia River, there is only one. Grim Plexiglas-protected carry-outs groan with pork rinds, mountains of chips and cheese puffs, small cans of fruits and vegetables, and nasty-looking faux meats. Alternatively, poor people use food banks to eat, figuring out which ones are open when, and how to get there. Every day I see shoppers struggling home from collecting food, on foot or on the bus, with flimsy bags, drooping shoulders, fragile grips, and heavy loads, promising more health problems. Adding to the residents' nutritional problems are school lunches that are, as elsewhere in the United States, often loaded with sugar, salt, and fat.<sup>16</sup>

These problems of hunger and diabetes are embedded in the postwar history of Washington. In the 1950s and 1960s, responding to the ideological pressures of the Cold War, Washington's dream to become a showcase of capitalism and democracy, the prospect of home rule, and a last fling at profiteering from real estate, the District commissioners sponsored wrenching urban renewal. This project created Bantustan-like, segregated public and private complexes in Wards 7 and 8 east of the Anacostia River. Before then, these neighborhoods had been semirural, including historic African American communities in Barry Farms, Marshall Heights, and Deanwood and white communities in Congress Heights and old Anacostia. The citizens of these white communities felt beleaguered, even more so after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down restrictive covenants in housing, and the 1954 *Bolling v. Sharpe* school-integration case allowed black students to attend Anacostia High and the state-of-the-art Sousa Middle School. After violent resistance to black youth who entered white schools or swam in white pools, many whites moved to the suburbs.

By 1960, the District had undergone a sea change in population. From its founding in 1801, the city's population had been at least one-quarter African Americans, and their numbers grew steadily until they became the majority in 1960. During the 1960s, the population of the city began to drop, and by 2005 the number of African Americans had fallen by almost half compared to 1970. Massive white flight and the hasty, for-profit construction of housing and highways has created a whole new urban environment that is difficult to negotiate and skewed by commuter traffic that allows the burgeoning suburban population access to city jobs (see table 7.2).<sup>17</sup> Thus, urban renewal and suburban development left behind food deserts for the poor.

Like diabetes, heart disease is a disease of modernity—once afflicting the affluent, now harming disproportionately the poor, who die from heart

**Table 7.2** District of Columbia Population by Racial/Ethnic Group, 1800–2005 (rounded to nearest hundred)

Year	Total pop.	White	Black
1800	8,100	5,700	2,500
1840	34,000	24,000	10,000
1860	75,000	60,000	14,000
1870	132,000	88,000	43,000
1880	178,000	118,000	60,000
1890	230,000	155,000	76,000
1900	279,000	192,000	87,000
1910	331,000	236,000	94,000
1920	438,000	327,000	110,000
1930	487,000	354,000	110,000
1940	663,000	474,000	187,000
1950	802,000	518,000	281,000
1960	764,000	345,000	412,000
1970	757,000	210,000	538,000
1980	638,000	172,000	449,000
1990	607,000	180,000	400,000
2000	572,000	184,000	350,000
2005	507,000	167,000	292,000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Table 23, District of Columbia—Race and Hispanic Origin: 1800 to 1990*, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/tab23.pdf> (accessed December 3, 2008).

disease at a rate 25 percent higher than for the overall population. The District of Columbia experiences high rates of heart disease and stroke (see table 7.1). Following are just two examples of people trying to manage a constellation of heart-related illnesses, amid a welter of health complications endured by them and their kin.

Mr. Washington, a sixty-six-year-old African American resident of public housing, has had three heart attacks. He also has respiratory problems and has been intubated six times. One brother was a diabetic, his older brother “died of a heart valve,” and his grandmother had problems with her heart, too. The “brother next to me died of an overdose.” Mr. Washington retired from construction work in 1999. “I stay by myself. When I feel myself getting sick, I start feeling bad, I get my oxygen backpack on, call an ambulance, and get myself out there. I meet the ambulance outside.”

His neighbor Ms. Johnson is seventy-six, also African American, widowed and living with her son—who is schizophrenic, diagnosed in 2004. “He would go outside with no clothes on. He couldn’t talk. He was breaking up furniture. He ain’t got nowhere else to go, so I let him come on back” (after he was discharged from St. Elizabeths psychiatric hospital). Her first and second husbands died of cancer, as did her daughter: “She was a workaholic. She wouldn’t ask nobody for help, she had to do everything herself. She had surgery on her back—they took out something. I stayed in the hospital with her. She died with a smile on her face.” Her other son contracted tuberculosis in jail, where he went for failing to pay child support. Ms. Johnson suffers from hypertension. She sees a specialist for this condition: “Something wasn’t right with my blood, the pills. He told me what was wrong but I can’t call the name. . . . If I’m feeling all right, I don’t go [to see the doctor for a checkup]. I think, ‘I’m gonna save the money this month.’” She saves money by eating one meal a day—“string beans, chicken, turkey, something like that.” She takes the bus with her son when they need medical care. “He goes to his clinic and I go to mine.”

Hypertension is most likely to strike people who were poor as children, especially if they remain disadvantaged as adults.<sup>18</sup> The networks of kin that support them also, paradoxically, burden them. Stress from work and family obligations and limited health care can exacerbate heart disease and hypertension.<sup>19</sup>

Waiting is another source of stress. Waiting assaults our sense of entitlement, frazzles us and increases our anxiety about wasting time when we have so many other things to do. It is hard to comprehend how much of their lives poor people spend waiting: in the emergency room; dealing with indifferent bureaucracies that are supposed to address basic needs; in the laundromat, where people must scramble for available machines and keep a close eye on their laundry. Waiting adds yet more pressure and pain on feet that may already be swollen, especially for homeless persons. Many poor people spend years of their lives on waiting lists: for a public housing unit, a Section 8 voucher, a bed in rehab, a hearing in landlord-tenant court. They wait for erratic buses, food at a food pantry, or a bed in a shelter. Their names fill long lists of people in dire need. They wait and wait for building repairs: trudging up long flights of stairs while the elevator is out of service, managing extreme heat or cold, worried that the fire-alarm system is out.

Stress also festers in low-wage work. Heavy lifting, deep fat frying, scrubbing floors, and delivering giant vats of private water do not relieve

stress like walks in the park and trips to the gym. Working two or more of these jobs also constricts the time available for seeking health care. Families in poverty may seek care only when persistent symptoms make their daily lives impossible to navigate. People who are poor may find it particularly difficult to manage chronic conditions such as heart disease, for many reasons: they may need to stretch out or stagger taking medicines; they may skimp on their own care because they are caring for others; they may not be able to miss work to take long bus rides and wait all day in a clinic; they may go from one health crisis to another because they are uninsured and lack ongoing primary care; they may fear being disrespected or not taken seriously by doctors. Their strategies are often ineffective, and they live with uncertainty and distress. Low-wage jobs limit sick and personal leave, and workers must choose to stay at work sick with worry or leave their jobs without permission, or pay for others to care for sick relatives or friends. Any family problem—a divorce, a child in court, an issue at school, a broken-down car, a late bus—can jeopardize a job and pile on stress. Hardship can mean the loss of home, living on the streets or in shelters, doing without showers and meals, being too cold or too hot or too wet.

Hypertension and heart disease also result from natural aging processes, as the soft parts of our bodies harden with deposits of calcium shed by our softening bones and teeth. Our blood vessels and heart valves stiffen, and the heart must work harder to keep blood flowing through the narrowed vessels, and the result is higher blood pressure. More than half of Americans develop hypertension by the age of sixty-five. Atul Gawande writes of the gaps in American health care—a serious lack of interest in geriatrics, for example, even as our life spans shoot upward.<sup>20</sup> These gaps affect the poor most harshly, for many of them will need treatment for hypertension and heart disease early on. Are poor people the canaries in the coal mine with respect to the problems of aging? And why is it that their early aging, the stark decline in their health reflected at the beginning of life in infant-mortality data, does not engage medical research and interest, or political concern and action? The pattern expressed in all of D.C.'s major killers traces the same trajectory: diseases move from more middle-class populations into poor neighborhoods, where they fester while outsiders have lost interest in them.

### HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis

A slowly developing chronic infection, tuberculosis can cause incessant coughing, painful breathing, relentless fever and fatigue, debilitating joint

pain, emaciation, and pallor. In tight quarters, its spread is deadly. In the early twentieth century, tuberculosis infection slowed among whites but began spreading among African Americans, when they moved from the rural South into crowded, segregated urban quarters. The U.S. census of 1940 showed that half of the blacks in the North occupied densely populated, deteriorating dwellings in need of plumbing and other major repairs. Tuberculosis was still a grave problem in Washington, D.C., in 1941, when 969 new cases were registered. In 1942, only one city had a higher death rate from tuberculosis than Washington. The first effective tuberculosis drugs, developed in the 1940s, began to reduce the national death rate, and by the mid-1950s tuberculosis had become a poor person's disease. The deaths from tuberculosis ranged from 200 per 100,000 in Washington to 10–15 per 100,000 in the metropolitan area. Tuberculosis also became racialized. White residents were concerned about the African American women who might bring infection into the homes where they cooked, cleaned, and provided care for white families. In 1967 Washington ranked third in rates of tuberculosis infection, behind Newark and Baltimore, with a familiar twist: 85 percent of new cases struck African Americans. After a while, tuberculosis seemed to go away, but it began to rise again in 1985, and in 1998 cases in D.C. occurred at three times the national rate. In 2000 alone, eighty-five new cases of tuberculosis were reported in the District.<sup>21</sup> To understand why tuberculosis has come back, we must understand its sister sickness, AIDS.

During the Reagan administration, AIDS spread rapidly among the urban poor, striking those burdened by unemployment, racial discrimination, crowded and inadequate housing, malnutrition, inadequate medical care, and stress caused by all of the other problems. Like many other diseases, AIDS follows the contours of inequality, but its dramatic leap from the community of not-necessarily-poor gay men into poor minority communities has been calamitous. Again, the Harper family's experiences are telling: Will Harper's son Kevin has been living with HIV for fifteen years, and Will's first cousin Cedric died of AIDS, wasting away at Howard University Hospital. Neither man was certain how he contracted the virus, although Kevin had spent time in prison, and both had used some drugs.<sup>22</sup>

Like diabetes and heart disease, HIV/AIDS has become a disease of managing details. Medications are complicated to take and cause significant side effects. AIDS treatment places the burden of responsibility and blame on the patient, not the drugs. After the mid-1990s, when comprehensive anti-retroviral therapy appeared to render AIDS just another chronic disease, doctors seemed to lose some of the sense of urgency and mission that characterized the epidemic's early years. AIDS care now involves managing

technical combinations of doses, which does not move or challenge physicians the way it used to—especially as HIV grows more concentrated among marginalized people.

It may surprise many to learn that in 2007, Washington, D.C., led all American cities (even New York and San Francisco) in rates of HIV/AIDS infections, with a thousand new cases reported each year, 75 percent of those among African Americans. The rate of infection in the District is ten times the national average, and one in twenty Washingtonians is living with AIDS. At least half of these people receive no care, and many navigate a strained safety net of services from nonprofit agencies to make up their own regimes, to barter the scrip like bus tokens and groceries that they receive, and to buy and sell their antibiotics on the street.<sup>23</sup>

Most new cases of HIV/AIDS among men track directly (and indirectly through unprotected sex) to intravenous drug use. IV drug users must share needles, and must do so in a hurry to avoid detection and arrest. The problems faced by needle users illustrate some of the problems plaguing health policy research, which misuses the concept of culture—sometimes to distance other people, sometimes to muddle the causes and consequences of illness. When epidemiologists draw boundaries around a population considered distinctive, contagious, and dysfunctional, they cannot help blaming patients and their families for their suffering, rather than unemployment, housing shortages, or racism in medical care.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for example, identifies two types of people at risk: those in the general population, who might engage in a risky act with a risky partner, and AIDS *others*, whose risk is embedded in their identities and channeled through their strange culture. For example, injection drug users were thought to be doomed because they shared a deeply rooted subculture with bizarre values. Needle sharing was thought to be a thick cultural symbol of social bonding, rather than an adaptive strategy in impoverished neighborhoods. Drug injectors know they take risks as they share and reuse syringes, cookers, needle rinse water, and cotton filters, but they also know the benefits of sharing equipment: access to scarce resources, protection from police surveillance, shared costs, help in case of an overdose. This is coping behavior, not an exotic bonding ritual. Street addicts, writes Alise Waterston, are useful scapegoats who divert attention away from structural problems of unemployment, poverty, and the lack of health care. Medical anthropologist Merrill Singer calls for more and deeper ethnographic attention to injection drug users across the life course as they cycle on and off the street. Constructing them as frozen there in exotic, primitive cults not only stigmatizes and silences them, but



sends the wrong message to everybody else: that they are not in that group and therefore safe, and that behavior causes the disease, which is free from social context. While the D.C. government provides insurance for every resident living below the poverty line, it does not cover mental health or substance abuse. Drug use is a crime, not a public health problem, and the depression that is often part of the synergism of plagues affecting the poor goes untreated.<sup>24</sup>

Heterosexual African American women are at particularly high risk for infection, and the single most common experience that infected women share is a sexual partner who has been incarcerated. E. J. Sobo's research has begun to illuminate the quandaries facing women in neighborhoods where many black men end up in prison. Bucking a serious gender imbalance and a trying economy, women are emotionally torn: condoms are harder to initiate in a long-term relationship because they connote distrust, which might in turn make men suspicious and defensive and thus might jeopardize those relationships. While women depend on men for financial and *emotional* support in a long-term relationship, male jealousy may limit women's social circles; and socially isolated women who are most invested in their lovers and least sure that friends and relatives will take care of them are most likely to engage in unsafe sex.<sup>25</sup>

Just as segregated, substandard living and working conditions nurtured tuberculosis among African Americans, and just as concentration in the second ghetto feeds diabetes, government and business policies have exacerbated AIDS in the black community. For example, beginning in 1993 the Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOPE VI project targeted the twenty-six most devastated public housing projects in the country for creative destruction: blowing up, bulldozing, or emptying public housing. Almost all of the public housing in Washington was eliminated by the HOPE VI program. Bolstered by arguments that residents live in a torrent of violence or drug- and despair-induced comas, the program destroyed their buildings and shattered their networks. The predominantly African American residents were dispersed to other projects, homeless shelters, their cars, or the homes of kin. Residents were guaranteed the right to return to remodeled, architecturally pleasing, unobtrusive homes, but this promise has rarely been realized. Often, the former residents cannot even be found.

As the Department of Housing and Urban Development has first privatized public housing and then gone out of the public housing business altogether, residents have scattered to other public housing units, the homes of kin, the rural South, the impoverished inner suburbs, and shelters for the homeless. Studies tracking them express astonishment at their alarmingly

bad health.<sup>26</sup> A quarter of working-age adults saw their health as fair or poor, and this seems to be accurate, as they suffer from high rates of diabetes, obesity, and depression. Even after relocation was complete, African American women residents in the HOPE VI projects experienced arthritis, asthma, obesity, depression, diabetes, hypertension, and stroke at twice the level of all black women nationally. They suffered from multiple, serious, debilitating health problems. Finally, their death rates also far exceeded the national average for all black women. The highest mortality occurred in Washington's East Capitol Dwellings, on the border between Ward 7 and Ward 8.<sup>27</sup>

The housing crisis in D.C. during the last ten years, then, has made poor people more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS while making it more difficult for them to manage it. Extreme cuts in public and affordable housing often cost them the support systems of kin. Incarceration of African Americans for nonviolent crimes, the difficulties former prisoners face in finding work, and the likelihood that they may be homeless all make them more likely to contract the virus and spread it in their communities. Close living quarters (crowded housing, prisons, and homeless shelters) exacerbate tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, and residents of those crowded places carry them back into poor communities. With the growth of harsh inequality, the liquidation of low-paying jobs, and the instability of living on the edge, the boundaries between the housed and the unhoused grow ever more fluid and blurry, as poor people cycle in and out of public housing, small apartments, abandoned buildings, friends' and relatives' homes, shelters, and other precarious living arrangements.

Evictions and displacement have ravaged the city as landlords convert rental buildings to condominiums or upscale rental properties. Some of the displaced people have moved into homeless shelters or onto the street. Extended families and community networks have been scattered. The displaced suffer exile from public life and a tightening financial squeeze, leaving them without the cushion for emergencies that they once found in their neighborhoods. Large, complex families provide services—caretaking, problem-solving, rehabilitation, hospice care, life lessons—that poor people cannot find elsewhere. Rather than support these families, urban policies have spread them out, sliced them into fragile, isolated, nuclear units and dispersed them throughout metropolitan areas or to other states. The best example of the “family penalty” may be the material evidence of HOPE VI, where units allegedly set aside for the poor are too small to hold more than one person, or possibly two people who do not need closet space.

Drug use is not treated as a public health problem, but rather punished through the prison system. If an injection drug user is arrested AIDS-free,

chances are he will emerge infected from prison. America has twenty-three million prisoners (many of whom are nonviolent drug users and sellers), one-fourth of the world's prison population. One in ten African American men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five are locked up, and half are under correctional supervision. In D.C., sixteen thousand young African American men are locked up, and thousands more are elsewhere in the correctional system. The arrested come from the poorest black communities, and half report some form of mental illness, as jails increasingly warehouse the mentally ill. Prisons mask unemployment and poverty; prisoners are not counted as unemployed. The growing inequality in the 1990s might have increased the measures of unemployment and poverty substantially during those years if not for incarceration. Once released from prison, former inmates often find it almost impossible to readjust or find work. As a homeless-shelter worker remarked to me during a conversation about displacement, "They're not misplaced: they're over here where I'm at. They drop people off right from the jail."

Washington's drug laws are by necessity federal laws (since the District is not a state), and thus residents have experienced the worst of harsh and mandatory sentences that began in 1984. By 2004, African American men in D.C. between the ages of nineteen and thirty-five were incarcerated at a rate more than seven times that of white men. Black men were more likely to be arrested, held without bail, and sentenced to longer jail terms.

Neighborhoods are decimated by the shanghaiing of young men who are also members of families and communities. Incarceration robs a household of an earner and turns him into an expense; it may strain the links through which he gave his children supportive kin.<sup>28</sup> If relatives want to visit a man in prison, they often have to wait in long lines to travel long distances by bus. Because Washington is not a state, all of the city's prisoners are sent to federal prisons, even for minor offenses. Since the closing of Lorton Penitentiary in suburban Virginia, they are sent all over the country, sometimes to the maximum-security prisons that warehouse and abuse the mentally ill. Incarceration reverberates and reverberates, families are stretched and strained, and other family members get in trouble, too. When ex-cons come home, they return to families and neighborhoods wounded by their absence, and they rarely get help in staying clean or finding jobs. Employers shun them. They do not receive boutique celebrity rehab or individualized care. They make do with twelve-step groups, part of the strained safety net of health care in the city.

Tuberculosis, like HIV/AIDS, festers in prisons. Patients then take it back into the community, into crowded homes or shelters, where it is easily

spread. Cells for women in the D.C. city jail are only half the size of a bedroom in public housing, but each one houses two women on metal bunks and one in a sleeping bag. Crowding at the men's jail is legendary as well.<sup>29</sup> Increasingly, AIDS is linked to tuberculosis, through poverty, congestion, and weakened immune systems. In the 1990s, tuberculosis took a harsh turn with the outbreak of new, multidrug-resistant strains stemming from half-baked treatment strategies and limited access. These strains struck the poor, homeless, and incarcerated first. Washington's lone tuberculosis clinic sits in the shuttered D.C. General Hospital with a seventeen-year-old X-ray machine that rarely works. When the machine breaks down, or the staff runs out of film or chemicals, the office closes. Doctors do not and cannot supervise these patients, or ensure that they follow drug regimens that might cure them. Thus, multidrug-resistant superbugs emerge and spread, practically unstoppable even with complicated and expensive second-line drugs.

Like many other black families, Rose McLeod's is riddled with the illnesses that each make the others harder to manage.

Ms. McLeod is fifty-seven years old. Before retiring because of bad health, she worked as a cashier, a chain-saw operator, and a lawn-mower operator. Her husband died in 1999 after suffering several heart attacks and a stroke. Her father died of a massive heart attack and stroke when he was sixty-two, and her mother died of "every type of cancer" when she was seventy-eight. Her oldest sister suffers from hypertension, "heart trouble," and diabetes; her "baby sister drank herself to death." One of her sons is dead, her oldest son is diabetic, and her middle boy and daughter experience crippling migraines, which elevate their blood pressure. "My little granddaughter keeps me busy. She's with me all the time. She's my baby daughter's child, but I have had her since day one."

Her brother has had AIDS for twenty years, but he does not take medications or see a doctor. He was in prison for ten years on a drug offense, "for drugs they never could prove that he had." Ms. McLeod has had two knee replacements, but her knees are still painful and swollen. She suffers from heart palpitations and takes many medications. She has high blood pressure, which goes up with headaches, chocolate, and seafood. She can't drink dark sodas, tea, or coffee. A car accident in 1969 damaged the right side of her face beyond repair and left her with headaches. She has had distressing encounters with doctors, who she feels haven't respected her or listened to her. One said, "Let me be the doctor, and you be the patient." She speaks at length about the long, long waits to get medical care.

The problems of both the insured and the uninsured are heightened by a glaring gap in both primary and hospital care. Since D.C. General Hospital closed in 2001, ambulances have had to drive much farther to transport patients, and the remaining hospitals in the area resist the strain on their emergency rooms. Nightly, these hospitals issue red or yellow “blackouts,” which send medics in ambulances scrambling to find a place to take their patients. Greater Southeast Community Hospital, far out on Southern Avenue at the border with Prince George’s County, was supposed to take up the slack in care. But this for-profit hospital has long been financially unstable and plagued with charges of corruption and fraud. Soon after the closing of D.C. General, the parent company of Greater Southeast Community Hospital, Doctors Community Healthcare, filed for bankruptcy for the second time and remained under bankruptcy protection for fifteen months, all the while cutting back staff and services, most notably for maternal and child health. By 2007 the new parent company, Envision Hospital Corporation, faced receivership. In Ward 7, which has more than fifteen thousand senior citizens, there are fewer than a dozen primary care doctors; and in neighborhoods east of the river, travel is difficult.

Health activists have challenged the lack of access to healthy foods in poor, mostly black neighborhoods and have constructed alternatives, such as the urban farm on the grounds of St. Elizabeths hospital, the Ward 8 Farmers Market, and numerous food banks and anti-hunger programs. Other activists challenged the 1996 welfare reform, which pushed recipients off Medicaid coverage and into low-wage jobs without insurance. They fought hard against the closing of D.C. General Hospital, and they have organized alternatives ranging from volunteer ambulances to the steadfast AIDS programs at the Max Robinson Clinic. In 2001 the D.C. Health Care Alliance began to offer full medical coverage to people living below the poverty line. In 2005 an alliance of residents east of the river tried to fund a “doctor on a boat” who would travel the Anacostia River, docking in neighborhoods to offer free testing for blood sugar and blood pressure. But those creative ideas, though they offer some help, do not solve the ongoing problems of unspeakable poverty and inequality in the nation’s capital.

The poor have paid the price for overdevelopment, high levels of incarceration, skyrocketing housing prices, the decline of public housing, the fetishizing of automobiles, toxic water, and toxic air. They have also paid the price for a consumerist approach to health problems: manage them yourself, take the blame if you’re ill, exercise. Riding buses, trudging, standing, cleaning, moving, and lifting do not count as “exercise,” but they exhaust people beyond their ability to walk or swim thirty minutes a day—even if they

had the space to do so, which they usually do not. Simply riding the bus in Washington is to be deluged with sickness: people hack, remove their shoes to ease their swollen legs and feet, and rub at their backs and necks.

During the transition to the postindustrial era, the city government has failed the poor, even as an energetic civil rights movement opened up opportunities for many African American residents to move into once all-white neighborhoods lying north of the congested downtown area—where they had been trapped by restrictive covenants but unable to find jobs in the public sector or elsewhere. Since the institution of limited home rule in 1973, Congress has blocked numerous progressive health initiatives, such as syringe exchange, medical marijuana, and publicly funded abortions.

In addition to suffering the assaults and discrimination of a for-profit health-care system, the residents of Washington, D.C., suffer the additional indignity of colonial status. Statehood would allow this progressive city to address health-care disparities without constant congressional intrusion. But the tragedy of health inequalities runs deep. The legacy of racial segregation in the postindustrial era and the harsh turns of newer forms of discrimination have brought race, class, and gender into a toxic, embodied mix that makes it harder for African Americans in the capital to experience good health, care for their families, and organize for social change. Against all odds, many do, despite dubious claims that they are promiscuous drug users, self-indulgent overeaters, and noncompliant patients. A public policy grounded in a historical understanding of the discriminatory roots of inequality and an understanding of the institutions and processes that make people sick is needed to reverse this unacceptable situation, and universal health care is a good place to begin.

“The House I Live In”:  
Race, Class, and African American Suburban  
Dreams in the Postwar United States

ANDREW WIESE

It took Jim and Ann Braithewaite two years to find a home in the suburbs.<sup>1</sup> After transferring to Philadelphia in 1957, the family began looking for a house almost immediately. Meanwhile, they rented in “a predominantly Negro neighborhood” in the city. They dreamed of owning a detached, split-level house with a big yard in the suburbs, which was common enough for couples with children in postwar Philadelphia. Yet, like thousands of African Americans, they searched in vain, while white families moved to new suburban homes with relative ease.

The Braithewaites’ struggle exemplified the experience of many African Americans after World War II. Although the couple was plainly middle class—she was a schoolteacher, he a mechanical engineer—with a combined income well above the metropolitan average, their race made them outcasts in the housing market. They answered newspaper ads, contacted real estate brokers, attended auctions, and made an estimated three hundred phone calls, but they met a “stone wall” of resistance. “We don’t have any split-levels,” or “That’s already spoken for,” brokers told them. Others were more straightforward: “You’re colored, aren’t you? I can’t do anything for you,” said one.<sup>2</sup> Whatever the reaction, the results were the same. As African Americans, they were not welcome in any part of Philadelphia’s white suburbia.

In “desperation,” the Braithewaites recalled, they shifted strategies. With the help of a local fair-housing organization, they found a vacant lot whose owner was willing to sell. Though they had reservations about the location because it was “very close to a public school” and near an existing “Negro neighborhood,” they hired a contractor and built a new home, inspecting progress at night, “hoping to prevent the accumulation of resentment” among their new neighbors. The family took occupancy in October

1959, remaining fearful that "something cataclysmic" might happen. For "some time" they even avoided standing in front of the picture window. But the neighborhood remained quiet, thanks in part to the efforts of local Quakers who hosted a meeting to calm the neighbors and stayed with the family on their first night in the house. After months of frustration, the Braithewaites were suburbanites at last.

As a white-collar family, the Braithewaites symbolized a new wave of black suburbanization after World War II. During the 1940s and 1950s, the number of black suburbanites rose from one and a half to two and a half million.<sup>3</sup> Whereas working-class families had dominated the prewar migration to the suburbs, middle-class African Americans—wealthier, better educated, and more likely to hold white-collar jobs than the earlier suburbanites—began moving to suburbs in growing numbers after the war. Bolstered by national economic expansion and the opening of new occupations to African Americans, black family incomes rose. By the mid-fifties, the United States was home to a growing black bourgeoisie and a cohort of economically stable industrial workers whose members had the means to purchase comfortable suburban housing on a greater scale than ever before. As their numbers increased, middle-class families became the predominant suburban migrants by the mid-1950s. These decades represented a period of transition in a century-long process of black suburbanization. Working-class households and communities remained a majority through the mid-1960s, but the momentum had shifted perceptibly toward the nascent middle class.<sup>4</sup>

The Braithewaites' struggle for a suburban home also points to the links between black suburbanization and the making of race and class in the postwar United States. As upwardly mobile African Americans achieved middle-class incomes, occupations, and education, they also expressed a sense of class status through choices about how and where to live. Like millions of postwar Americans, many sought to own modern homes in recognizably middle-class neighborhoods. Their suburban dreams emphasized opportunities for children, proximity to jobs and services, leisure-time pursuits, and architecturally uniform residential landscapes. Contrasting in subtle and not-so-subtle ways with the ethic of prewar suburbanites, postwar suburbanization became a means for members of a rising middle class to express and reinforce their newly won social position.

Nonetheless, changes in the palette of black suburban preferences did not connote a lessening of racial distinctions or a "whitening" of the middle class. As racial outsiders in a predominantly white society, families like the Braithewaites could not be ordinary suburbanites even if they wanted. Their



unique public experience indelibly shaped the meaning of private places, such as homes and neighborhoods, and it nurtured a distinctive politics related to housing. By achieving widespread suburban living patterns, African Americans asserted their equality and consciously minimized the social distance that whites sought to maintain as a privilege of race. In so doing, they challenged and subverted a central element of the dominant suburban ethos, which was white supremacy.<sup>5</sup> In these ways, suburbanization tended to strengthen migrants' identities as black people even as it reinforced patterns of class stratification among African Americans themselves.

With respect to the wider literature, including the stories of suburbanites like the Braithwaites not only fills out the universe of places in which African Americans made history, it encourages attention to aspects of black life that scholars have not sufficiently explored.<sup>6</sup> Changing the spatial context of analysis from city to suburbs makes it essential to ask, for instance, about African Americans' ideals for home and landscape—questions that have long been the focus of suburban history, but that few scholars have asked about African Americans.<sup>7</sup> The history of black suburbia, too, suggests the importance of housing as an arena of black politics, linking African American social and political history through the politics of housing. Likewise, attention to African American migration and community-building in suburbia demands a fuller accounting of African Americans' relation to space more generally. Their struggles to control it, define it, and reap its advantages were a crucial terrain of black agency, politics, and identity-making throughout the twentieth century. The persistent efforts of whites to deny the same—systematic discrimination against black-occupied space—remained perhaps the most significant barrier to racial equality into the twenty-first century. In making places of their own on the margins of the city, African American suburbanites negotiated not only the hurdles of building homes and communities, but lines of color, class, and power embedded in the world around them.

### Images of Home

A closer look at African Americans' ideas about housing and landscape after World War II reveals both persistence and change. The clearest indication of continuity between pre- and postwar suburban values was the unwavering appeal of home ownership among African Americans of every social class. Attitude surveys uncovered a widespread inclination among African Americans to own homes of their own and, for many, the wish to buy in the suburbs. A nationwide survey of black veterans in 1947 disclosed that

one-third to one-half of veterans in cities such as Philadelphia, Detroit, Indianapolis, Atlanta, Houston, and Baton Rouge hoped to buy or build a home of their own within the next twelve months.<sup>8</sup> A 1948 study of six hundred "middle-income Negro families" in New York City revealed that three-quarters "would like to move to suburban areas and nine-tenths of them preferred to buy their own homes."<sup>9</sup> Approaching the question from a different angle, researchers in Philadelphia asked some fifteen hundred African Americans in 1960 how they would spend a "windfall" of \$5,000. More than half reported that they would use the money to buy a new house or pay off an existing mortgage.<sup>10</sup>

Evidence of African Americans' tenacious "demand for home ownership" was apparent in everyday behavior as well.<sup>11</sup> Supported by gains in income and civil liberties, as well as marginal assistance from the federal government, rates of nonfarm home ownership among African Americans climbed from 24 to 39 percent between 1940 and 1960. In the most populous suburban areas, however, the proportion of owners rose from 32 to 51 percent.<sup>12</sup> Home ownership, which had long been a goal among African Americans, remained a fundamental aspiration among black suburbanites after the war.

What home ownership meant to suburbanites, of course, remained a complex matter. As was common before the war, many suburbanites viewed home ownership as the basis for economic security through thrift and domestic production. Prewar patterns of black suburban life endured in a range of working-class suburbs. Suburbanites relished their gardens and fruit trees, and many insisted on keeping livestock. In places such as Chagrin Falls Park, Ohio, the war did little to change the disposition of residents like Clydie Smith, who fondly remembered gardens lush with "pinto beans and collards and black-eyed peas and cabbage and beets and squash and peppers," as well as the sow, called Sookie, that her father kept.<sup>13</sup> Across the continent in Pasadena, California, city officials fought a running battle with black householders who kept chickens and ducks in violation of a local ordinance.<sup>14</sup> In Mt. Vernon, New York, David Doles, who had prospered as a laundry owner in Harlem before moving to the suburbs, extolled self-provisioning as part of an ethic of thrift that included other productive uses of property as well. Recalling that "we used to eat off our place down home" in Virginia, Doles boasted that he planted "more fruit right here in my place in the back yard than some people with a great big place."<sup>15</sup>

This vision was also evident in the popular culture of the period. In her 1958 drama *A Raisin in the Sun*, playwright Lorraine Hansberry used this rustic ethic to symbolize both the endurance and the violation of African

Americans' hopes for the urban North. The character Mama, a southerner living in a Chicago tenement, dreams of buying "a little place" with "a patch of dirt," explaining that "[I] always wanted me a garden like I used to see sometimes at the back of the houses down home." The sun-starved plant on her windowsill is as close as she was able to come.<sup>16</sup> In fiction and in real life, the echoes of rural and working-class upbringings reverberated in the choices that migrants made. For as long as they lived, lifeways such as these would shape the environment of hundreds of suburban communities.

Many postwar suburbanites also used their homes as a source of income and an anchor for continued migration by renting rooms to recent migrants and sharing space with kin. Older suburbs, in particular, witnessed intensified multifamily occupancy during the period. In Evanston, Illinois, scores of homeowners converted houses to include rental units. In the streets off Emerson Avenue on the suburb's west side, the number of owners and renters rose simultaneously despite little new construction, indicating that African Americans were buying and converting their own homes to multifamily use. Similar practices affected neighborhoods in East Orange, New Jersey; New Rochelle, New York; and Pasadena and Berkeley, California, where black homeowners capitalized on continued migration by becoming landlords.<sup>17</sup> Though some residents expressed a more restrictive view of domestic space, charging that "overcrowding" would lead to "possible neighborhood deterioration," old settlers offered a foothold for migrants in established communities, while the newcomers provided rental incomes that supported home ownership and upward mobility for a rising class of black proprietors.<sup>18</sup>

Advertisements in the black press indicate that a vision of economic independence through productive use of property remained a marketable option in urban communities through at least the late 1940s. As the war ended, realty companies in Detroit, New York, Chicago, and other cities dusted off old subdivisions and began selling low-cost building lots, much as they had before the war. The *Chicago Defender* advertised homesites for as little as "\$10 down" in suburbs such as Robbins, Phoenix, East Chicago Heights, and Maywood, as well as in predominantly black subdivisions within the city such as Morgan Park and Lilydale. New York's *Amsterdam News* pitched building lots in Westbury, Hempstead, Amityville, Hauppauge, and other suburbs where African Americans had lived since the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> A 1947 advertisement for "Farm Homesites" in Farmingdale, Long Island, for instance, depicted a small house and outbuildings surrounded by tilled fields and fruit trees, while the text stressed links to the urban economy, highlighting "easy commuting, close to large airplane factory,

plenty of employment."<sup>20</sup> Like advertisements published during the Great Migration, these appealed to a working-class, southern aesthetic, describing semirural landscapes, open space, and low-cost property ownership, plus "the opportunity to grow your own food" in proximity to established communities and urban jobs.<sup>21</sup>

Owner-building and other informal construction practices also persisted in blue-collar subdivisions. In Chagrin Falls Park, Ohio, the families of Clydie Smith, William Hagler, and Clara Adams built homes after the war.<sup>22</sup> So, too, did families in suburbs such as Inkster, Michigan; the American Addition near Columbus, Ohio; and North Richmond, California, where lot owners went "to the lumberyard and bought what they could without access to mortgage loans, and . . . put up what they called their home."<sup>23</sup> Advertisements for do-it-yourself house kits, Quonset buildings, and other nontraditional shelters—such as the prefabricated "Port-o-Cottage, the house you have been waiting for"—were common fare in the black press through the late 1940s.<sup>24</sup> As this evidence indicates, home ownership for many black families remained a productive enterprise rooted in the working-class experience; and to the extent that middle-class status was fleeting or uncertain, such practices remained attractive, representing continuity in African American values and lifeways in the postwar suburbs.

In contrast to the thrift-oriented ethos that prevailed in older suburban areas, an increasing number of new suburbanites articulated preferences for housing that reflected norms prevalent across the wider middle class. In a study of black professionals and technical employees in upstate New York, Eunice and George Grier concluded that "little if anything . . . distinguishes the requirements of these Negro home seekers from criteria one would expect to find among their middle-class white counterparts." They sought "adequate play space for children, good schools, safety and quiet, good property maintenance, and congenial neighbors of roughly equivalent income and educational background." Not surprisingly, most were "looking for a house of post-World War II vintage in a suburban area."<sup>25</sup> Researcher Dorothy Jayne encountered similar attitudes in 1960 among pioneer families in suburban Philadelphia. Two-thirds of her respondents hoped to buy a single-family home in a "desirable" suburban neighborhood—a third were looking for ranch or split-level models. They described their ideal neighborhoods as "quiet, clean, with well-kept properties," convenient to shopping, with good schools and services and an abundance of "fresh air and green grass." Many indicated that they were willing to pay more to attain these amenities.<sup>26</sup>

Among the expectations of suburban life that many middle-class African Americans shared with their white counterparts was an emphasis on a

materially abundant family life in a residential setting removed from the "grind" of paid labor.<sup>27</sup> A glimpse of the ideal lifestyle circulating among middle-class blacks after the war can be seen in the pages of *Ebony* magazine, which appeared on newsstands in 1945 and targeted readers in the aspirant black bourgeoisie. During its first few years, *Ebony* ran regular features publicizing the housing and domestic lifestyles of the nation's black elite. Reporters fawned over "big impressive home[s]," "sumptuous" furnishings, stylish house parties, and the financial success and style that these implied. Many stories featured families who lived in elegant central-city apartments, reflecting the continued concentration of black elites in neighborhoods such as Harlem's Sugar Hill; but an equal number highlighted the owners of detached, single-family homes in suburban or suburban-style neighborhoods.<sup>28</sup>

An *Ebony* feature on the Addisleigh Park neighborhood of St. Albans, Queens, New York, reveals the physical and social environment that many middle-class African Americans idealized in the postwar decades. With its two-story Tudor and Colonial Revival houses, green lawns, and canopy of mature trees, the place merited its description as a "swank suburban neighborhood" or a "suburban Sugar Hill," even though it was located inside the municipal limits of New York City.<sup>29</sup>

Reflecting the importance of landscape as a status marker, the writer highlighted residents' richly appointed housing and abundant greenery. The essay featured more than twenty photographs of tree-shaded homes belonging to such celebrities as Ella Fitzgerald, Roy Campanella, Billie Holiday, Jackie Robinson, and Count Basie, underscoring the affluent surroundings and amenities they enjoyed. "Many home owners have two cars," including "more Cadillacs per block . . . than any other like community in the country," the reporter enthused. Captions listed the dollar value of almost every home pictured, suggesting none too subtly the connection between home ownership and wealth, not to mention good taste.

If few *Ebony* readers could afford such luxuries, the article took pains to emphasize Addisleigh Park's down-to-earth social life, which the writer described as "swank without snobbery." According to the reporter, Mercer Ellington mowed his own yard and preferred to "romp with his children on the front lawn," while Illinois Jacquet spent his leisure time in "bull sessions with famous neighbors." When Count Basie wasn't getting his "kicks" playing the organ in his living room, he could be found engaged in "marathon poker games . . . famed . . . for their high stakes and salty talk."

Though many of its residents were household names in black America, the writer pictured Addisleigh Park as a "typical . . . suburban community,

with its civic association, women's clubs, Boy Scout troops and Saturday night pinochle games . . . lavish lawn parties and hearty cocktail sessions in pine-walled rumpus rooms." Thus, *Ebony* portrayed a vision of suburban life that many middle-class African Americans could appreciate and to which they might aspire. In its emphasis on comfort and an expressive, consumption-oriented social life, the magazine impressed upon, and no doubt reinforced among, its readers a distinctly middle- or upper-middle-class vision of suburban life. In a suburbanizing nation, *Ebony* signaled, middle-class African Americans were gaining equality as citizens through equality in their tastes and acquisitions as consumers, not least of which was their consumption of housing.<sup>30</sup>

Advertisements for new tract homes aimed at black home buyers appealed to a cluster of similar values, further suggesting the strength of this vision among the new black middle class, as well as the pressures for conformity that shaped it. A 1947 ad for the Hempstead Park subdivision in West Hempstead, Long Island, was typical. It pictured a modest, saltbox-style home in a background of trees, while the text extolled the virtues of the house and neighborhood. For just \$9,900, no cash down, black veterans and their families could own "4 1/2 spacious, sun-filled rooms" with "large picture windows," on a "large landscaped plot" just a "short walk" from schools, shopping, and Hempstead Lake State Park. With the exception of the ad's placement in a black newspaper, there was nothing to distinguish it from hundreds of advertisements aimed at white veterans. Hempstead Park's amenities, emphasizing children, leisure, home ownership, and a picturesque residential setting, fit squarely within the mass suburban ethos of the period.<sup>31</sup>

Ten years later, an advertisement for three subdivisions in the San Fernando Valley, north of Los Angeles, appealed to the same suburban imagery. The ad in the black-owned *Crown City Press* of Pasadena featured a sleek, garage-dominant ranch house framed by tall trees and text that urged, "Give your family the pleasure of living in Pacoima's Quality Circle." A map indicated the "desirable San Fernando Valley location," marking such features as Hansen Dam recreation area, the San Gabriel Mountains, a school, a public park, and a pool, as well as the highway to downtown Los Angeles. In addition to situating these developments in a recreation-filled landscape that had already become synonymous with middle-class suburban living, the ad emphasized the "exquisitely modern" but cozy amenities of the houses themselves, including "sliding-glass walls," "large, cheerful kitchens," and "brick fireplaces," plus a choice of nine "exciting exteriors."<sup>32</sup> Like advertisements for thousands of white subdivisions after World War II, these ads

could not have evoked a more distant imagery from that of the chicken coops, "second handed lumber," and upstairs renters that characterized working-class suburban life at the time.<sup>33</sup> They marketed modern, affordable comfort in an environment oriented toward nuclear families and leisure, just a short commute from the central city—a suburban dream firmly anchored in the postwar mainstream.

As these examples indicate, another important feature of postwar black suburbia was an emphasis on the suburbs as a "better place for children" to live.<sup>34</sup> In the early years of the baby boom, children gained prominence in suburban advertising for African Americans, much as they did in ads designed for middle-class whites. "Here is the safety of suburban living for your children," boasted the developer of Ronek Park, a thousand-home subdivision in North Amityville, New York. "Yes, here, the entire family can enjoy the pleasures and advantages of a wonderful new community offering everything you ever dreamed of." Another broker, who specialized in "high class neighborhoods" of Westchester County, New York, encouraged urbanites to "bring up your children in this suburban paradise."<sup>35</sup> The increasing incorporation of children in developers' advertisements also reflected a shift in the class composition of black suburban migration after the war. Though prewar ads often mentioned schools and parks among a list of community facilities, subdividers rarely mentioned children directly—certainly less often than they referred to chickens or vegetable gardens.

Even ads for homes in unplanned suburbs such as Robbins, Illinois, which had attracted working-class blacks since World War I, were not exempt from the national celebration of child-rearing that succeeded the war. A 1946 campaign for "homesites" in the Lincoln Manor subdivision depicted children playing in the front yard of a new home while a woman sat on the front steps watching them, and perhaps waiting for a breadwinning father to return up the front walk. Blending elements of old and new, the ad portrayed a square, brick-faced bungalow typical of Chicago's southwest suburbs, plus a large garden plot—tilled for row crops, no less—at the back of the lot.<sup>36</sup> The image of a stay-at-home mother belied economic reality for millions of African American families, but through such advertisements, suburban developers reinforced a vision of middle-class domesticity even in suburbs that had long been home to the black working class.

Suburbanites themselves were also more likely to mention children as the basis for residential choice, often doing so in class-specific ways. Discussing his search for housing, a black professional from upstate New York reported that "locality would take precedence over price for me because I have a family to bring up and want them to grow up in an area which will

aid in their development." Another described his preferred place of residence as "an area where the schools provide opportunities to give my children a good education, and where they could skate, bike ride, and keep pets."<sup>37</sup> The musician Milt Hinton explained that he and his wife moved to the leafy environs of St. Albans from an apartment in Manhattan because they were expecting a baby and "we wanted a nice, clean place to raise a child."<sup>38</sup> In contrast to the emphasis that working-class suburbanites had placed on extended families, children and nuclear families loomed large for the postwar middle class, and suburbs appeared the ideal place to raise them.<sup>39</sup>

The centrality of children in middle-class ideology emerged in discussions of other preferences as well. For African Americans who valued racial integration as the antithesis of segregation, children were an important justification. Celebrity couples such as Jackie and Rachel Robinson and Sidney and Juanita Poitier justified their decisions to look for housing in mostly-white neighborhoods in just such terms. "We feel if our children have an opportunity to know people of all races and creeds at a very early age, their opportunities in life will be greater," Jackie Robinson explained.<sup>40</sup> For the Poitiers, it was the lack of such opportunities in Los Angeles that caused them to rethink their move to that city in 1960. After having difficulty finding a house in West Los Angeles, Sidney Poitier stated, "Our children are established in a multi-racial community in Mount Vernon [New York]. They attend multi-racial schools. The difference in color is no longer a curiosity to our children. We don't want to barter that kind of atmosphere for something that is hostile."<sup>41</sup> Likewise, Winston Richie, a dentist who moved to Shaker Heights, Ohio, in 1956, explained that he wanted his children to learn that they "could compete with all people at all levels if they are prepared themselves. Living in an all- black community," he argued, "makes this lesson a bit harder to learn, or at best, it comes later in life."<sup>42</sup> For parents such as these, the decision to select a suburban neighborhood rested heavily on the opportunity they perceived for their children to grow up as equal citizens.

### Race, Class, and Suburbanization

If many new suburbanites aspired to goals and amenities that they shared with middle-class whites, they also approached homes and neighborhoods as people with a distinct history and with experiences that distinguished them from whites. "Being middle class," sociologist Mary Pattillo-McCoy notes, "did not annul the fact of being black."<sup>43</sup> Discrimination blocked African Americans' most ordinary aspirations, forging from their individual



choices a politics of housing linked to the quest for racial equality. Suburbanization underlined racial cohesion in a practical sense, too, by forcing house hunters to rely on black social and institutional networks, especially if they sought housing beyond established black areas.

Direct confrontations with racism also shaped the experience and understanding of suburban life. For thousands of families, the search for housing was a struggle that left economic as well as emotional scars. Legal activist Loren Miller explained:

Those who cannot buy in the open market in a free-enterprise economy are subject to obvious disadvantages. The special market to which they are forced to resort tends to become and remain a seller's market. Supply is limited. In the ordinary situation that supply will consist of those items that cannot be sold or will not bring satisfactory prices for one reason or another in the open market. The disadvantaged buyer is in no position to reject shoddy merchandise or haggle over prices. He must take what he can get and pay what he is asked.<sup>44</sup>

The struggle for housing could be emotionally trying as well. Black home seekers described their experiences in the housing market as "difficult," "degrading," "nerve-racking," or "like knocking your head against a wall."<sup>45</sup> After numerous unsuccessful attempts to find a home in upstate New York, a black engineer admitted to researchers that "in all my life I have never felt so completely shut out." A doctor's wife in San Francisco suggested that repeated rejection in the housing market had left her feeling "like a leper and a criminal." A psychologist recalled the search for housing with equal poignancy: "Having worked my way up to a responsible position, I had gained a certain amount of self respect. Then I moved to this town and had to find housing, and once again found myself viewed as something less than human. This problem is more than economic—there's a great deal more involved." A black physician concluded, "Any kind of move for a Negro family today is expensive in terms of dollars and ruinous in terms of mental happiness."<sup>46</sup>

Jim and Ann Braithewaite's experience in suburban Philadelphia illustrates the emotional repercussions that many couples felt in trying to move to the suburbs. Repeated encounters with racism put a strain on their marriage and family, affecting how they viewed themselves and the people around them. When discrimination "happens to *you* it hurts more," Jim Braithewaite explained. He had difficulty sleeping. His mind wandered at work. Resentments welled up inside. "I just kept thinking about it," he

said. "I was tired twenty-four hours of the day." Moreover, he felt bitter, alienated, and prone to "explosion," all of which "made for a very unhappy family life."<sup>47</sup>

In addition, the experience led him to focus his anger outward, questioning his job with a Cold War defense contractor and even his "allegiance to society." He asked himself, "Why am I defending this kind of people—people who have so great a desire for personal satisfaction that they place this above all other convictions they may have—religious, national, and sociological?" A year after their move, the Braithewaites' three children were adapting well to their new schools, and they counted white friends among their circle of playmates; yet the scars remained. "What does it cost me to be a Negro?" Braithewaite asked rhetorically.<sup>48</sup> For upwardly mobile African Americans, such questions perhaps never seemed so real nor the answers so disheartening as during the search for suburban homes.

African American suburbanites were also more likely than whites to express ambivalence about their present home. Many families moved where they did because it was the only place available. More than half of families in Dorothy Jayne's 1960 study "had no choice" in the home they bought, and a number expressed dissatisfaction with their neighborhoods, for reasons ranging from the proximity of taverns or busy thoroughfares to poor transportation and shopping, distance from schools, and subsequent changes in the racial and socioeconomic character of the neighborhood. In several instances, the family's arrival touched off panic selling by whites. "It's like the black plague," said one couple. "Everyone wants to escape." Others felt isolated or intensely scrutinized, like "goldfish in a bowl." One woman reported poignantly, "I don't want to be intimate with my neighbors, but I had hoped they would be friendly." Another lamented that the neighbors "are killing us with silence."<sup>49</sup>

For black pioneers, especially, the desire for equal amenities and opportunities for children often ran at cross-purposes with their desires for safety and a sense of belonging. For those who moved to mostly white areas, moving day was often the prelude to hostility, vandalism, and even violence. The William Myers family, who broke the color bar in Levittown, Pennsylvania, endured two months of organized harassment. Local whites paraded in cars at all hours, the phone rang constantly, and a white group rented an adjoining house from which they blared songs such as "Dixie" and "Old Black Joe" throughout the day. With the help of a group of supportive white neighbors, the Myers family chose to hang on. Nonetheless, they longed for black company. "They used to say about Levittown, 'You never have to live in Levittown and look at a black face,'" William Myers said. "I'd like to

look out and see a black face."<sup>50</sup> Even under the best circumstances, many pioneers found it difficult to "feel completely comfortable" or to escape the gnawing awareness that "there are people within a quarter mile who don't want me here." If suburbanization reflected a fruition of black economic success and civil rights activism, it was an uncertain and often painful harvest.<sup>51</sup>

As these examples suggest, the meaning and experience of suburbanization was bound up in African Americans' experience as racial outsiders in white-dominated space and society. In a world where public places were routinely hostile and whites behaved as though the greater part of metropolitan territory belonged to them, private spaces such as homes and neighborhoods became places of refuge from, and sites of resistance to, the wider white world.

In many suburbs, black pioneers sought to create racial communities that transcended place by maintaining and reinforcing contacts with other African Americans. Suburban pioneers often worshipped, shopped, and purchased services such as hairstyling in black neighborhoods "back in the city" or in black communities nearby. They maintained ties with black peers through active involvement in sororities, fraternities, and other social or civic organizations, and they made special efforts to find black peers for their children. One family in southern New Jersey recounted the miles they and other parents logged in order to maintain a black peer group for their teenage children via "the biggest car pool you ever saw."<sup>52</sup>

In addition to reaching outward for social contacts, African Americans turned inward on their homes to create safe, private places that shielded them from the worst abuses of public space. Though many pioneers were joiners by nature, participating in community activities such as parent-teacher and neighborhood associations, most nurtured what sociologists St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton described as "home-centered" social lives based on family, relatives, and close friends.<sup>53</sup> A family who designed their own house "planned [the] living room with the idea of entertaining church groups here." One suburbanite remarked archly that he hadn't moved to Westchester County, New York, to "eat and drink" with his white neighbors. Families entertained "professional groups, church groups, wives' clubs, [and] bridge clubs," as well as "children's and international groups."<sup>54</sup>

The largest number of postwar suburbanites avoided the hazards of racial isolation altogether by settling in neighborhoods where a significant number of blacks already lived. Racial discrimination and fears of "having a cross burned on my lawn" acted as weighty constraints on choice. But African Americans also made decisions that magnified racial concentration

because, as a respondent told researchers in Philadelphia, they simply felt "more at home" with other black people.<sup>55</sup> The actress Ruby Dee gave voice to this sentiment, recalling why she and her husband, the actor Ossie Davis, selected an "already well integrated" neighborhood of New Rochelle, New York, when they moved from a smaller house in nearby Mount Vernon. Though a white acquaintance urged them to strike a blow for open housing by buying in one of the suburb's all-white areas, they declined. Dee explained:

I want my children to feel safe. I want to feel safe. I'm away so much, I want to be friends with my neighbors. I don't want to be tolerated, on my best behavior, always seeking my neighbor's approval. I want to be able to knock on a door, assured that my neighbor would more likely welcome any one of the family. Or if I should need help . . . I admire the pioneers who risk so much in the process of integration, but I cannot break that ice. . . . Thanks, but no thanks. We just don't choose to struggle on this front.<sup>56</sup>

Surveys suggest that Dee and Davis were in good company. In the late 1950s, anywhere from 45 to 65 percent of African American home seekers expressed a preference for neighborhoods that were at least one-half black.<sup>57</sup> For the majority of African Americans who indicated preferences for interracial living, racial isolation was apparently something they hoped to avoid. Most upwardly mobile African Americans—black people with the greatest latitude of personal choice—simply preferred areas where an appreciable number of black families already lived.

Suburban racial congregation also reflected the conduits of information and association available to African American families. Like most Americans, blacks trusted their social networks—friends, neighbors, relatives, church members, co-workers, and other associates—for information and assistance in finding places to live.<sup>58</sup> Because of their exclusion from conventional real estate channels, however, the legacy of past segregation reinforced the concentration of home seekers in just a handful of suburban areas. One study of middle-class families in Philadelphia, for example, revealed that 80 percent of respondents had "no Negro friends who lived in predominantly white areas outside the city limits."<sup>59</sup> In such circumstances, media reports of white resistance and stories of racial hostility that passed through the grapevine gained weight in black perceptions of suburban opportunity. Lacking firsthand knowledge or positive experiences with white suburban areas, many families preferred to avoid the unknown, a fact

that tended to funnel black suburban migrants to just a handful of already integrated or mostly black suburbs.

Emphasis on homes and neighborhoods as safe space was not unique to African Americans, of course. As historian Elaine Tyler May demonstrates, many postwar parents perceived suburban homes as "a secure private nest removed from the dangers of the outside world," a "warm hearth" in the midst of the Cold War.<sup>60</sup> But for African Americans, who experienced not only the international anxieties of the era but the palpable dangers of domestic racism, the vision of home as a refuge had special resonance. As sociologist Bart Landry points out, because middle-class blacks were "denied ready access to the recreational and cultural facilities in the community," they "developed a lifestyle centered around home and clubs. The home grew in importance not only as a comfortable, secure place that shielded them from the stings of white society but was also the center of their social life."<sup>61</sup>

Black-oriented publications reinforced this connection, celebrating hospitality and conviviality focused on black homes and neighborhoods. *Ebony's* "home" columns dwelled on such features as "pine-walled rumpus rooms," "informal redwood den[s]," "spacious" patios "fac[ing] a big swimming pool," "expensive oak wood" bars "with matching chairs, phonograph radio combination and two large sofas," "lavish lawn parties," and "expensively equipped kitchen[s]."<sup>62</sup> To be sure, tasteful entertaining was a staple of home-oriented magazines targeted at whites, but this emphasis had special resonance among African Americans, who were excluded from or faced harassment in public spaces frequented by middle-class whites. In the postwar era, *Ebony* portrayed an idealized domestic life, reflecting the exceptional value that middle-class blacks placed on their ability to entertain well at home. Not surprisingly, *Ebony's* 1951 article on St. Albans evoked an image of the neighborhood as "self contained," a "refuge" and a "happy haven," applauding it as a place where residents found "comfort, relaxation, and breathing space." Early residents had overcome white attempts to restrict the area, the writer pointed out, but by the 1950s the neighborhood was the site of not racial activism but "placid privacy," where celebrities "come home to rest."<sup>63</sup> Just as many working-class African Americans had used their homes as shelter from the insecurities of wage labor under industrial capitalism, members of the rising middle class valued their homes and neighborhoods as places of shelter from the racial hostility they experienced in public life. Whether they created spatially separate black enclaves or dispersed racial communities centered on private homes, they sought safe black spaces in the suburbs.

In these ways, race shaped the process of suburbanization, even as growing numbers of African Americans entered the middle class. These markers were not primarily governmental nor imprints of the state, but were rooted in localized struggles between black families and communities and the white people around them. By the same token, African Americans' attempts to attain and control suburban space contributed to a continuing conversation about class in black communities. Given the pervasiveness of race as an organizing feature of postwar society, however, even the process of class stratification tended to reinforce a sense of racial solidarity among African Americans.

### "A Better Class of People"

Since the nineteenth century, class had been an important feature of African American social life, but within the racialized society of the United States, class strata in black communities rested largely on distinctions that African Americans drew "relative to other blacks."<sup>64</sup> Based in part on objective characteristics such as occupation, income, and wealth, which situate people within the wider political economy, class distinctions also reflect values and behavior related to work, education, leisure, consumption, and place of residence. Just as important, class implies a relationship among differently situated individuals and groups in a given society. For African Americans, who were barred from the achievement of stable occupational and income markers that were essential to class standing among whites, class distinctions had traditionally relied on patterns of behavior—what historian Willard Gatewood describes as "performance"—that people developed as a means of identifying their peers and distinguishing themselves from others.<sup>65</sup> Even as a larger cohort of African Americans attained economic positions comparable to those of middle-class whites in the postwar period, class remained a distinction that African Americans drew largely with reference to other blacks.

Of course, class was a spatial as well as social distinction. For the urban black middle class, in particular, physical separation from poor and working-class blacks was an important emblem of class status. Writing in the 1940s, St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton argued that socioeconomic divisions within black communities produced a process of "sifting and sorting" by neighborhood.<sup>66</sup> More recently, Mary Pattillo-McCoy concluded that "like other groups, African Americans . . . always tried to translate upward class mobility into geographic mobility."<sup>67</sup> In this view, class was not merely a

measure of what one did for a living or how one behaved, but also how and where one chose to live. In the postwar period, suburbanization represented a continuation of this process across the city limits.

The comments of middle-class suburbanites reveal that concerns about class and distance from poorer blacks were thoroughly intertwined with other residential preferences. In various contexts, middle-class blacks drew implicit contrasts between the types of neighborhoods to which they aspired and those in which they had been "bottled up" with other African Americans before the war. As the housing activists George and Eunice Grier reported, middle-class blacks sought the "freedom to choose an environment in accord with middle-class standards, instead of housing restricted to the overcrowded, run-down neighborhoods generally available to Negroes." However, the contrasts that families drew focused on the social environment as often as the physical. "I would be very satisfied with an all-Negro neighborhood if it were a decent neighborhood," one black professional told the Griers. "I do not see why I, because I am a Negro, should be forced to live in a neighborhood where I have nothing in common with others around me."<sup>68</sup> A black attorney in San Francisco expressed a similar recognition of class difference when he commented that the "thing that struck me when I moved out of the ghetto was that for the first time I was friendly with my immediate neighbors. They have the same interests that we do."<sup>69</sup> Reinforcing this impression, leading black real estate brokers in Westchester County, New York, reported screening clients on the basis of their "social and cultural qualifications" in order to protect the "character" of suburban neighborhoods and ensure that their customers were a "credit . . . to the race." Referring to people he called "Negro trash," one broker exclaimed, "I wouldn't damage a neighborhood with people who don't know how to live in it. I put them in their place."<sup>70</sup>

The same emphasis on class separation was evident in suburbanites' descriptions of their ideal neighborhood. Middle-class respondents said that they preferred environments "where the neighborhood would be congenial and stimulating—a middle-middle neighborhood"; "an area where the general income level was equal to my own"; "an area which will aid in [children's] training and development . . . [and] where people are interested in the surroundings they live in"; or, simply, "a quiet, well-kept middle-class neighborhood."<sup>71</sup> Correspondingly, middle-class references to "respectable," "clean," "quiet," "well-kept," or "decent" neighborhoods betrayed an obvious class consciousness, if not antagonism toward working-class and poor blacks. The musician Nat "King" Cole made the point as clearly as anyone. When white neighbors opposed his purchase of a house in 1948, on

the grounds that they didn't "want any undesirable people moving into the neighborhood," Cole shot back, "Neither do I. If I see anybody undesirable coming in, I'll be the first to complain."<sup>72</sup>

Several studies of upwardly mobile African Americans in metropolitan Philadelphia during the 1950s revealed that the desire to live among a "higher" or "better class of people" played a role in families' choice of neighborhoods. Dorothy Jayne's study of black pioneers found that more than half had initiated their search for new housing when "a poorer class moved in[to]" the neighborhoods where they were living. Class concerns also surfaced in respondents' observations about their new neighborhoods. One couple expressed disdain for their "small-time snobbish" white neighbors, lamenting that they had "underbought." Another, recalling harassment by whites, pointed to their class status vis-à-vis other African Americans as well as their new neighbors. They were "annoyed," they said, because "we're not trash . . . our status is so much above theirs."<sup>73</sup> By implication, it was not their citizenship nor their humanity that earned them the right to move where they pleased, but their membership in a particular social class, a status they had achieved and learned to express through everyday behavior. Having drawn boundaries between themselves and other blacks, moreover, they resented their neighbors' inability or unwillingness to recognize the distinction. Another couple declared their "philosophy" as the ability of "decent folks to be able to live decently without regard to religion or race."<sup>74</sup> In the view of these pioneers, class made a difference not only in who was "decent" and who was not, but in the rights that each group should enjoy.

By emphasizing their rights as citizens and their membership in a particular socioeconomic class, middle-class black suburbanites articulated a vision of racial equality that largely ignored or evaded class inequalities. Political scientist Preston Smith points out that most approached the problem of race with a class bias, defending a brand of "racial democracy" in which "affluent blacks should have access to the same housing as affluent whites. Likewise working-class and poor blacks would have the same quality of housing as working-class and poor whites." Hence, open-housing advocates such as Carl Fuqua, the executive secretary of the Chicago NAACP, could argue that "the goal is to let a man live where he wants to live, if he can assume the proper responsibilities." In Smith's view, "embracing racial democracy meant black civic elites accepted class privileges and the distribution of social goods according to conventional political economy." This adequately summarized their vision of space as well.<sup>75</sup>

African Americans' expressed preferences for racially mixed neighborhoods also reflected concerns rooted in class as much as race. Quite unlike



the majority of white suburbanites, many middle-class African Americans said they were willing to live in racially integrated settings.<sup>76</sup> For most, integrated neighborhoods were a means to an end: better schools and services, proximity to work, and other environmental factors. As George and Eunice Grier noted, "racial composition was not in itself an essential criterion, however, most felt that areas generally open to Negroes . . . did not meet their standards of a 'good neighborhood.'"<sup>77</sup> For these families, living in integrated neighborhoods was not only a means to a higher living standard but also an assertion of their right to share equally in the benefits of suburban location. Even so, some "Negro professionals insist[ed] on looking outside 'Negro areas'" as a means of distinguishing themselves from poorer blacks. The Council for Civic Unity of San Francisco spoke for many when it asserted that "individual people of Negro . . . or other non-white ancestry may feel more at home with people not of their own race but of their socio-economic level." For many middle-class African Americans, the desire to live in integrated settings may have been as much a means of achieving social distance from the black working class as securing social intimacy with middle-class whites.<sup>78</sup>

By the 1950s, a new generation of middle-class blacks had begun moving to the suburbs in greater numbers than ever before. Their efforts, prefaced by the struggles of working-class black suburbanites and firmly resisted by whites, reinforced the salience of both race and class in postwar life. By transgressing racial boundaries, they redefined the racial ownership of suburban space and also extended the geographic continuity of black residential areas. On the cusp of the civil rights movement, too, suburban pioneers carved out a distinctive race and class politics—resisting segregation and imputed inequality, as well as negotiating class distinctions within black communities. If by enjoying the privileges of middle-class life they sought to close the social distance that whites had established, they also took steps to distinguish themselves from less fortunate blacks, using space as an important measure of difference.

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PART 3

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*Class, Race, and Politics*



## All Across the Nation: Urban Black Activism, North and South, 1965–1975

HEATHER ANN THOMPSON

In recent decades, an array of scholarly books and articles have deepened our understanding of the African American struggles for racial justice that shaped the United States after 1945.<sup>1</sup> Taylor Branch, Barbara Ransby, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Glenda Gilmore, and many others have contributed to a rich and growing literature on the civil rights movement that spread across the Jim Crow South in the 1950s and early 1960s. Although the literature on black activism in the urban North is much smaller and more recent, the northern civil rights story is also becoming better understood.<sup>2</sup> Yet our knowledge of the struggles of African Americans in the postwar United States still remains regionally bound, leaving us wanting a more synthetic analysis of black resistance.

This essay approaches the civil rights movement as a national phenomenon—one that did not lose impetus or direction after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 or the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., but in fact gained a new kind of momentum. Not only did a reinvigorated civil rights movement flourish in every area of the country after 1965, but the activism that shaped each otherwise diverse region had much more in common than scholars have recognized. This essay will illustrate how, after 1965, African Americans from widely varying locales simultaneously became more militant in their demand for racial equality and began articulating their new struggles in the language of “Black Power.”<sup>3</sup> From America’s midwestern workplaces to its prisons tucked away in the rural northeast, to its racially “progressive” New South cities, African Americans came to seek equality by “any means necessary.” Notably, it was the urban born and bred among them who led the quest.

By offering a deeper understanding of the American civil rights movement, this essay will also shed new light on the ways in which northern

as well as southern whites reacted to this movement, thus complicating traditional narratives of the hurdles that the movement faced. Interestingly, as the American civil rights movement increasingly adopted the language of Black Power and articulated its struggle in much less conciliatory and polite ways, the reaction of the nation's whites was not at all uniform—it depended mightily upon where in the country African Americans were raising their fists in a militant salute and whom they targeted. Whereas politically conservative whites were suspicious of black militancy no matter where it surfaced and no matter where they themselves resided, white racial liberals tended to support it—at least, it is important to note, insofar as such rabble-rousing stayed on the southern side of the Mason-Dixon line. As this essay illustrates, when the black impatience, anger, frustration, and determination that increasingly surfaced in southern cities also began erupting in northern urban locales after 1965, and northern institutions as well as political institutions also came under fire, not a few white liberals grew alienated from and hostile to the American civil rights movement. It made sense to them that greater militancy might be necessary in the South, a region so deeply stained by its slavery past. But the North had no such tainted legacy. It was, in their eyes, still the “promised land” for blacks—by no means a perfect place, but certainly not a region in need of such militancy in order for African Americans to achieve meaningful racial equity.

This essay will look specifically at the ways in which the African American struggle for racial equality played out on the shop floors of Detroit's auto plants after 1967, behind the walls of New York's Attica State Correctional Facility in 1971, and, finally, inside the courtrooms of one of the New South's most cosmopolitan cities, Charlotte, in the mid-1970s.<sup>4</sup> Taking a closer look at the more militant civil rights activism that erupted across the nation in the wake of the civil rights acts of 1964 and 1965 not only allows scholars to expand their civil rights movement chronology and suggest a reconsideration of the movement's long-term relationship to white America, but it also makes clear that in spite of the tremendous opposition that it faced in the North, this later phase of the movement had important successes and thus left an important legacy for future generations of black urbanites. Finally, this essay provides a new vantage point from which to consider the impact of the civil rights movement on the post-1965 evolution of American politics writ large. To a degree few have appreciated, the way that white liberals often responded to the increasingly outspoken civil rights activism that came of age in the North after 1965 served to divide the very biracial coalition upon which the politics of postwar liberalism itself depended.

### “Our Thing Is DRUM”

The civil rights narrative most familiar to Americans is that of the activism that swept southern cities such as Montgomery, Alabama, and Greensboro, North Carolina, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In these iconic locales, ordinary people took some of their most dramatic and courageous stands against segregation and racism. As historians such as James Ralph and others remind us, however, while many black southerners were contemplating the best strategies for desegregating their schools or challenging Jim Crow laws in the realms of transportation and politics, so were their counterparts in midwestern cities such as Wichita, Kansas, and Chicago, Illinois.<sup>5</sup> And just as southern African Americans spent much of the postwar period challenging inequality in the places where they labored, so did midwestern blacks challenge the discrimination that they faced in the job sites where they, too, were seeking to make a decent living.

During and after World War II, a mass exodus from the South, in combination with an expanding economy, brought scores of African Americans to the North and in particular to Detroit.<sup>6</sup> Although it was by no means easy for blacks to land decent jobs in the Motor City, because white resistance to sharing the job market was as strong in this midwestern city as it was in the South, by the mid-1950s they had managed to enter the unionized labor force in noticeable numbers. It quickly became clear to them, however, that just getting a job, even a union job, did not ensure either racial or economic equality. Urban black midwesterners responded to this disappointment by immediately making it clear to industrial employers that they would not accept second-class citizenship in either their workplaces or in civic institutions.

In 1957, for example, those who had managed to find employment in the auto industry came together to form a powerful, NAACP-like organization called the Trade Union Leadership Conference (TULC) in order to assist their efforts to desegregate the national autoworkers union (the UAW) as well as the Big Three automakers (Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler).<sup>7</sup> Eventually, the TULC succeeded in getting an African American elected to the twenty-seven-man International Executive Board of the UAW, which made it easier for blacks to get more numerous and better jobs in that industry over time. By 1970, blacks composed 60 to 70 percent of the workers on many urban assembly lines, and almost 25 percent of the UAW was African American as well.<sup>8</sup>

Still, the TULC faced an uphill battle. One auto giant whom it felt compelled to pressure continuously on matters related to discrimination and

segregation was the Chrysler Corporation. Chrysler had come out of World War II with the highest proportion of black workers in the auto industry, yet the jobs it provided them were the lowest paid and the most hazardous.<sup>9</sup> A key problem was that at most Chrysler plants, "99 percent of all General Foremen were white, 100 percent of all superintendents were white, 90 percent of all skilled tradesmen were white, and 90 percent of all skilled apprentices were white."<sup>10</sup> And yet the UAW leadership, virtually all-white as well, seemed unable to eliminate this obvious discrimination. After 1965, African Americans' frustration with the UAW's effectiveness in representing their needs, and their suspicion that the TULC just wasn't pushing the UAW hard enough on their behalf, ushered in a period of tremendous civil rights activism on the shop floors of midwestern Detroit.

Black workers had particularly lost patience with what they felt was the UAW's slighting of shop-floor racism at Chrysler's Eldon Avenue Gear and Axle plant. And when a series of incidents unfolded at this plant that seemed to point to the company's unusual callousness toward black employees, as well as the union's utter lack of interest in their needs, African American workers came to articulate their own challenge to discrimination on the shop floors of Detroit in the much more militant language of Black Power. First, in May of 1970, two black female employees at Eldon died after Chrysler forced them back to work against their doctors' wishes. Shortly thereafter, company negligence killed another black worker, twenty-two-year-old Gary Thompson. Thompson's foreman had instructed him to drive a forklift jitney over to another part of the plant to empty a hopper of scrap steel weighing three to five tons into a railroad car, rather than work his regular job as a crane operator for maintenance.<sup>11</sup> Along with the rest of the workers on his shift, Thompson knew that this forklift needed servicing, but he also knew that he needed his job too much to disobey orders. That forklift buried Thompson under five tons of steel.

The deaths of these three black workers touched a particular nerve with Chrysler's black workforce. For years they had followed the rules by filing grievances and launching official complaints, and they had waited patiently for the TULC to effect some more substantial reforms on their behalf. Somehow, though, African Americans were still languishing in the auto industry. Most still believed in working through the system, but they now felt they needed to do so much more forcefully. Inspired by the civil rights activism of urban blacks in the city proper, a number of autoworkers began to form their own grassroots organizations in order to combat the safety hazards and the racism on the shop floor, with or without the union's help. These

groups expressly intended to push the labor movement harder on questions of racial justice, and their very existence indicated to the company and the union alike that urban black line workers were now demanding, rather than waiting patiently for, real changes.

The first civil rights group that came together in the plants of Detroit was the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM). It was started in 1968 at Chrysler's Dodge Main plant soon after workers there initiated a huge unauthorized, or wildcat, strike in protest of some racially motivated firings. DRUM founders were motivated by the belief that it was high time for blacks to stand together and to stand firm, just as they had so effectively done in places such as Selma and Montgomery. This time, however, not only would they stand firm, they would also talk tough and make it clear that there would be no compromising on their needs. They were staunchly committed to their cause: "Our Thing Is DRUM," proclaimed a 1968 headline from the movement's in-plant newspaper.

Notably, there was always a great deal of overlap between plant activists in DRUM and the Black Power activists in the city proper. All were urbanites, and all had been deeply affected by the conflagration that was the Detroit rebellion of 1967—an explosion of African American anger at police brutality and entrenched discrimination in the city as a whole—and all sought to channel that intense black anger into meaningful change.<sup>12</sup>

Almost overnight, DRUM-style activism spread to several other plants in Detroit. The members of these other revolutionary union movements (RUMs) shared the original DRUM's belief that there must be a sustained and unrelenting campaign to eradicate racism from the plants of Detroit—one that went far beyond what either the UAW or the TULC seemed willing to launch. More damningly, the RUMs believed that the white liberals who ran the UAW were actually a reason *why* racism was so prevalent in the plant. Although the UAW had taken a strong stand for civil rights in the South—and indeed, its former president, Walter Reuther, had counted Martin Luther King, Jr., among his friends—many urban black autoworkers felt that their union turned a blind eye to the need for civil rights in its own backyard. Every issue of a RUM newspaper eventually included some reference to the union leadership's alleged complicity in the continued existence of in-plant racism or substandard working conditions. As 1970 dawned, all of Detroit's RUMs, in plants across the city, decided to unite to form an umbrella organization called the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, or simply "the League." League members agreed that their line "is the hard line" and explained that such militancy was necessary because



they were "in a life and death struggle . . . as the struggle between master and slave, rich and poor, black and white, beast and prey, management and worker."<sup>13</sup>

Of all the RUMs under the League, the one at the Eldon plant, ELRUM, soon became one of the most vocal and visible. Like all of the other RUMs, it never minced words or bowed to social conventions when it espoused its critique of everything from working conditions and the racism of management personnel to the perceived timidity of the UAW. When Gary Thompson was killed on the job, ELRUM reported in its newspaper that "Gary Thompson a 22 year old veteran of Vietnam, who had a pregnant wife and a son, was murdered May 26, 1970 at approximately six o'clock a.m. by Chrysler Corporation."<sup>14</sup> ELRUM also initiated a dramatic wildcat strike in response to this death that not only cost Chrysler a great deal of money, but also made it clear that black workers were watching the company closely and would now demand—rather than ask—that it take the health and safety of African American workers seriously.

That the RUMs were each so uncompromising and willing to defy rules that they felt were unjust—such as the mandate that they could not strike without the permission of the union—terrified company and union officials alike. On March 19, 1969, the international UAW actually took the time to send a four-page letter to its 350,000 members about these groups. The letter began by acknowledging the existence of American racism, but continued with a "vehement denunciation" of those in-plant organizations that had criticized the union, accusing the RUMs of "creating racial conflicts in the plants."<sup>15</sup> But the UAW failed to neutralize its challengers. In fact, despite their often virulent and always revolutionary rhetoric, the RUMs had managed to win a noticeable degree of sympathy and support from politically moderate African Americans on the shop floor. Thus, by 1970 the union hierarchy in Detroit felt it was at war with the RUMs for the hearts and minds of the city's autoworkers. In September 1969, March 1970, and finally in May 1971, the UAW engaged in a series of important battles with the RUMs—fights that would test the liberal ethos of the white union leaders and cost the militant civil rights activists on Detroit's shop floors dearly.

In September 1969, the union local representing Dodge Main was scheduled to hold its elections, and DRUM decided that it would run a slate out of the Dodge Main plant. Historically, Dodge Main had been composed primarily of Polish American workers, but by 1969, 63 percent of its active workforce was black, so DRUM activists believed they had a serious chance of winning power.<sup>16</sup> Even though they had come to wrap themselves in the

mantle of Black Power and had chosen to adopt a much more militant tone and posture—just like those who had come before them in the earlier years of the civil rights struggle—these midwestern workplace activists were in fact willing to seek change through the ballot box, as well as in more direct battles with their enemy. Thus, when DRUM candidate Ron March ran for the local presidency against the Polish American incumbent Ed Liska, it was a tense moment for the established union leadership: Liska no longer had a Polish American majority in the plant to guarantee his victory. But the union leadership of Local 3 did everything it could to mobilize its Polish American retirees to vote against the DRUM candidates, and this prevented March from winning. However, even with the enormous retiree turnout, as well as a company layoff that most affected the young DRUM voters, March did manage to receive 563 votes, which created the need for a runoff election the following spring.

In the runoff election in March 1970 the UAW successfully defeated all DRUM candidates once and for all, but controversy surrounded the way it did so. After the election, black workers at Dodge Main sent a spate of complaints to the credentials committee of the UAW reporting numerous problems with the runoff election. Workers claimed that many retirees had been allowed to vote without proper identification and that only two to three balloting machines were working, so that many active workers never had the chance to vote. Further, they maintained, the machines that *were* working were regularly tampered with by union election officials and repairmen without the required challengers present. They also suggested that there was improper campaigning by Local 3 leadership candidates who were illegally present on the election floor.<sup>17</sup> But since the UAW “found insufficient evidence to order a new election,” the DRUM defeat stood.<sup>18</sup> As member John Watson saw it, “The UAW would risk outright scandal rather than let blacks assume any power.”<sup>19</sup> After the union prevented DRUM from taking power, Chrysler fired several key DRUM leaders, including Ron March. By 1971, DRUM was all but gone from the Dodge Main plant.

But there were still other RUM chapters in Detroit for the union to contend with. After defeating DRUM at Local 3, the UAW leadership geared up for the Local 961 election in May 1971 at the Eldon Avenue Plant, home of ELRUM. Given that tensions between the UAW and ELRUM were unusually high, the upcoming election was sure to be a showdown.<sup>20</sup> And, as at Dodge Main, the outcome of this contest was not easily predicted. Although 60 percent of Eldon’s four thousand workers were African American, there were two African American candidates for the union presidency: Jordan Sims, a shop-floor activist whom ELRUM supported, and the more

moderate Elroy Richardson, who had the advantage of incumbency. But even though Richardson was black—one of the few blacks to have won a UAW office—the union suspected that the younger African Americans in the plant wanted a far more militant platform than he had to offer. And even though Sims wasn't actually in a RUM, the union feared that he could win this election, because ELRUM activists supported him. There was, however, one more candidate for the presidency—a white union steward named Frank McKinnon—and the UAW leadership pinned its hopes on him.

The election at Local 961 took place on May 12, 1971. As in the earlier race at Dodge Main, there were armed guards on the premises at the union leadership's request, to "prevent extremists and outsiders from disrupting the election process."<sup>21</sup> Also, as at Dodge Main, the votes in the first Local 961 election were split in such a way that a runoff election was required. In the original election, Sims and McKinnon had finished first and second, but Sims would ultimately be defeated in the May 28 runoff, thanks to a most zealous UAW campaign to ensure McKinnon's victory. So outraged was Sims by the flyers that the union had printed to discredit him before the runoff that he filed a complaint with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission charging that the election process at Local 961 had been jeopardized by red-baiting and race-baiting. His grievance changed nothing.

By May 1971, UAW officials could look at both Eldon and Dodge Main and breathe a sigh of relief. Many RUM members had been fired or black-listed from the industry, and both March and Sims had been defeated. Although a Black Power-articulated civil rights sentiment still existed on Detroit's shop floors, it no longer had an organizational base. Still, despite having been neutralized by the liberal white leadership of the union, who saw them as threatening and unreasonable, the urban civil rights activists of midwestern Detroit had actually accomplished much more than their opponents gave them credit for.

For example, prodding by RUMs forced the American auto industry to hire more blacks into management and to treat black workers more equitably within the system. RUM vigilance also meant that the Big Three had to take health and safety issues much more seriously, which, of course, benefited all workers on the shop floor. The UAW as well was forced to take up the cause of racial justice in the workplace to a greater extent than it had before, once the RUMs took it upon themselves to expose all of the abuse and discrimination that had still flourished on the union's watch. Not only did the UAW become more willing to use the grievance procedure to ensure racial equity in hiring, promotion, and job classification because of its dealings with the RUMs, it also became more self-conscious about supporting

African American candidates for important union offices. While the TULC clearly had begun the process of desegregating the shop floors of Detroit, and did its part to push both union and company along in that direction, it was not until the RUMs levied Black Power pressure that such change became quantifiable and meaningful.

### “Attica, Attica, Attica”

While DRUM and ELRUM were gearing up for their big battles with the white liberal leadership of the UAW in Detroit, much farther north, in the sleepy village of Attica, New York, African Americans were preparing for their own battle to improve the conditions under which they labored and lived. Even though the hamlet of Attica was itself all-white, it housed one of New York state’s largest prisons—which, given the disproportionate degree to which nonwhites found themselves in the criminal-justice system as the twentieth century unfolded, meant that a large African American population lived there as well.

In the early 1970s, the Attica State Correctional Facility held more than twenty-four hundred men, who came from the poorest inner-city neighborhoods of New York state. A large percentage of these men were urban African Americans who had experienced the frustrations of stalled civil rights progress in their home communities long before they found themselves locked up in rural New York. Arriving at Attica only confirmed their already strong belief that blacks in America still did not enjoy equal treatment with whites, either under the law or as individuals who were just trying to get by on a day-to-day basis in prison. Indeed, even though the whites, blacks, and Puerto Ricans who had ended up at Attica shared a criminal conviction, the treatment they received while incarcerated there was by no means equal. Although Attica had not been officially segregated for some years, there was no question that the black and Puerto Rican inmates were relegated to the most dangerous and degrading of prison jobs, and it was common for them to be singled out for punishment by the all-white guard staff far more frequently than were their white cellmates.<sup>22</sup>

But just as urban African Americans in the Midwest were increasingly unwilling to accept such treatment, so were the urbanites from New York City, the Bronx, and Buffalo who had wound up at Attica. In the fall of 1971, Attica’s black inmates were unexpectedly given the opportunity to speak out about the discrimination they endured at the prison, as well as the chance to demand change. On September 9, 1971, a riot erupted at this maximum-security facility. Within hours of its start, twelve hundred men

decided to stand together in one of the prison's four exercise yards. "We are men! We are not beasts and we do not intend to be driven as such!" shouted twenty-one-year-old L. D. Barkley into the megaphone that inmates had placed on a table in the corner of D Yard.<sup>23</sup> And as he and the other inmates began to articulate specific reforms that they desperately hoped to see, they found, at least initially, an official willing to hear them out. Within hours, the men in D Yard were able to persuade Russell Oswald, the commissioner of corrections himself, to let the media into the yard and even to bring in a group of observers including the likes of Black Panther Bobby Seale, radical activist lawyer William Kunstler, and liberal *New York Times* reporter Tom Wicker, among others. For the next four tension-filled days, millions of Americans, from Saratoga to San Francisco, sat riveted before the television set in their living room watching an incredible drama unfold. At stake was not only what sort of living conditions and medical care inmates at Attica would have, but also how many of their civil liberties would be honored while they were locked up.

Notably, Attica's inmates had chosen to voice their grievances as demands only *after* they had made several attempts to work through the system politely and peacefully, by writing to various officials both within and outside of the prison system.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, so eager were the prisoners to have their concerns addressed that they made sure to send a letter to Commissioner Oswald as well as to New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller himself. But this effort to have their needs met "through the system" got them nowhere. In short order, simple frustration and anger led Attica inmates to a protest language that was much more uncompromising and determined. A state commission investigating all that eventually took place at Attica during the summer and fall of 1971 observed that prison officials had not even come through with "such simple changes as clean trays from which to eat in the mess hall, or more than one shower a week during the hot summer months."<sup>25</sup>

Still, no matter how vitriolic their complaints became, Attica's inmates—even those who were self-identified members of the Black Panther Party or the Five Percenters, or who were Black Muslims—did not plan the explosion that rocked the prison on September 9. Contrary to what prison officials thought, the Attica riot of 1971 began completely spontaneously. But after only a few chaotic hours during which inmates were running around and settling scores with particularly hated guards, Attica's Black Panthers, Black Muslims, and other militant groups took the initiative in trying to establish some order. Only after they insisted that all of the inmates congregate in D Yard, and after they arranged protection for the forty-two guards

who had been grabbed as hostages in the earliest hours of the takeover, did these leaders realize that a perfect opportunity had presented itself to tell the world of all that they endured behind Attica's walls.

After days of negotiation in D Yard, it looked, for a moment, as if the Attica rebellion might end not only peacefully, but with inmates' having persuaded the state to meet almost every one of their demands. Ultimately, however, state officials refused to grant their most crucial demand: that they be given full amnesty for participating in this uprising. As the men who had gathered in D Yard well knew, from what had happened after other prison riots across the nation in recent years, the physical, administrative, and legal reprisals that prisoners—particularly those who identified themselves as Black Panthers or Muslims—could suffer after they ended their protest could be vicious. At all costs, they wanted assurances against this happening at Attica.<sup>26</sup>

But the state refused even to discuss amnesty. Governor Rockefeller—despite being approached by numerous observers who begged him to grant amnesty or, if not that, at least to come to the prison to assure inmates that they could safely surrender—took a most hard-line position. The governor refused amnesty and would not visit Attica, and this refusal to do either greatly alarmed all of the observers. As they could see, but the inmates could not, by the morning of September 12, when the observers finally reached Rockefeller by telephone, the grass around Attica had become jammed with New York state troopers, county sheriffs and their deputies, off-duty prison guards, and other members of law-enforcement agencies who were armed, furious, and by their own admission itching to get at the protesting inmates inside the facility. The wife of one corrections officer explained their frustration: "The decent American has taken enough from this rebellious, unproductive segment of our society. . . . We've catered to rioters and lawbreakers long enough."<sup>27</sup> Even though the hostages held in D Yard themselves tried desperately to convey their belief that a massacre was certain if the governor failed to grant amnesty and instead took the facility by force, Rockefeller was unmoved. He saw Attica as his Alamo—the place where he had to make a stand in front of his party to show that he was indeed tough on law-and-order issues.<sup>28</sup>

As the inmates and hostages in D Yard fell asleep in the wee hours of September 13, hoping that the dawn would bring another round of discussion with state officials, outside of Attica's walls Captain Hank Williams was readying his state troopers for a retaking. And there were hundreds to ready. As Williams explained to the men assembled, on the governor's okay a helicopter would fly over D Yard dropping canisters of debilitating "CS"

tear gas. At that point, troopers would move out over Attica's four catwalks toward D Yard; once there, they would rappel down into the yard, rescue the hostages, and subdue the inmates. No corrections officers were to be involved in the retaking, and no guns were to be fired unless a trooper's life was in imminent danger.<sup>29</sup> It seemed of little concern to any of the officials in charge of the retaking that none of the New York state trooper units had been trained in riot control, that there was no record indicating which troopers were carrying which guns, and that corrections officers were indeed lining up to participate in the assault with their own personal weapons.

When Attica's inmates were awakened by the sound of helicopters revving up nearby, sheer panic set in, and they began arming themselves with anything they could find—pieces of wood, sharpened sticks, anything. In a last-ditch effort to dissuade the state from retaking Attica by force, the inmate leaders decided that some of the hostages should be taken up onto the four catwalks that overlooked the prison's four exercise yards, and each would be surrounded by inmates very obviously wielding homemade knives or spears. Their hope was that even if Rockefeller's troopers did decide to come in, they would immediately believe that such a move would trigger the killing of their own men. They would then retreat in favor of further negotiation.

But nothing could have deterred men as emotionally inflamed as were the more than five hundred troopers who stood ready for the storming of the Attica State Correctional Facility, which took place at 9:46 a.m. on September 13. Within minutes of being given the green light, these men, who had already donned heavy gas masks, headed out onto the four catwalks and began shooting at anyone they could see. For ten solid minutes, the sound of gunfire was deafening, and inmates and hostages alike could make only feeble attempts at diving for cover. Through the fog of gas that had brought down many of the men in D yard, more than twenty-four hundred bullets rained down into the fifty-by-fifty-yard enclosure. Much of this ammunition was actually intended for hunting large game, and some of it had been outlawed by the Geneva Convention. Meanwhile, as men's heads were exploding and limbs were shattering from the gunfire, a megaphone from one of the helicopters hovering over the yard repeatedly intoned, "Surrender with your hands up and you won't be harmed . . . Surrender with your hands up and you won't be harmed . . ." By 10:05 a.m., almost forty men, including ten hostages, lay dead or dying, and so many others had been severely wounded that the National Guard medics who were eventually called to the scene were completely overwhelmed and woefully unprepared.

And yet, with their own eyes tearing up from the noxious gas that still polluted the air around Attica, state officials stood in front of the prison and announced not that state troopers had killed and wounded so many, but rather that all of the dead hostages had had their throats slit by the inmates. What is more, they reported, some of the hostages had been killed well before the retaking, and one inmate had actually cut off one hostage's penis and stuffed it into the man's mouth. An hour or so later, Rockefeller called President Nixon personally and told him this very version of what had happened at Attica on the morning of September 13, 1971.<sup>30</sup> Although the truth began to seep out only a day after the state's version made headlines across the nation, the damage had already been done.<sup>31</sup> Even after state officials amended their account of what had actually taken place during the retaking of Attica, Americans from across the nation continued to flood Attica itself with telegrams and kept sending hundreds of letters to their local newspapers expressing outrage at the inmates and a great appreciation for the fact that state officials had taken the prison back from these animals.<sup>32</sup> Not only had the Rockefeller administration managed to eliminate the threat posed by the Black Power activists at Attica, but by misrepresenting the events as it did, the government seriously damaged the credibility of the larger Black Power movement in America.

Although the way in which liberal officials such as Russell Oswald spun Attica ultimately did not allow mainstream America to embrace this rebellion as a legitimate civil rights struggle, and only confirmed its worst fears about black activism and fueled a suspicion that calls for greater civil rights in the North had no legitimacy, the fight that urban black New Yorkers had waged still mattered. The men in D Yard had shown conclusively that African American battles for greater equality were still a critical part of the American political landscape well after they had enjoyed critically important and headline-making legal victories. What is more, inmates' lives did improve in real ways after the rebellion. Some of these were small advances, such as the securing of sufficient toilet paper and soap and being allowed to shower more than once a week. Other gains were more significant, such as earning the right to read uncensored mail and to see one's children whether married to their mother or not. Post-Attica prisons also saw more rehabilitative programs, as well as fewer inmate hours spent in cells.

Notably, as American justice policy grew ever more conservative in the 1980s and 1990s, many of these gains were eventually eroded, and numerous penal institutions began eschewing rehabilitation and inmate needs altogether. Still, even these reversals, which were immeasurably bolstered



and hastened along by the mistruths told about civil rights actions such as Attica, do not diminish the tangible benefits that inmates were able to enjoy thanks to those struggles.

### The Lazy B and the Charlotte Three

While it may appear logical that northern whites saw the actions taken by urban black autoworkers in Detroit and urban New Yorkers at Attica as outrageous and illegitimate, since those African Americans were so angry, impatient, and militant in their approach to change, they reacted very differently to the same expressions of anger, impatience, and militancy that they simultaneously saw exploding in the South. Had they been paying attention, northern whites might have noticed that in fact, some black southerners had been questioning, well before 1965, whether the “ask, don’t demand” posture of the church-based civil rights movement in their region was sufficient to get them what they needed.<sup>33</sup> In that sense, African Americans in the South really *pioneered*, and thus *modeled*, the very sort of militant activism that northern blacks flocked to after 1965, and white northerners might well have found southern blacks to blame for this. But instead, they made exceptions for the black militancy that came of age in the South, exceptions that they never made for the militancy in their own backyards.

Charlotte, North Carolina, was a so-called New South city, but its whites had nevertheless embraced slavery for generations and had subsequently clung to Jim Crow segregation as readily as did whites in Jackson, Mississippi, or Mobile, Alabama. Response to discrimination in the city were strong. Not only did one of the original *Brown v. Board of Education* cases originate from a school district very near Charlotte, but in the early 1960s local civil rights leaders such as Reginald Hawkins led powerful protests against segregation in many of the city’s public and private institutions. Over time, black Charlotteans won a number of important battles in the war they were waging. Still, as was the case all over the South, real change was slow to materialize in Charlotte.<sup>34</sup> For example, in January 1965, the same month that black Charlotteans filed *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*—one of the most important school-desegregation cases of the century—the car of local black civil rights lawyer Julius Chambers was blown to bits. Almost a year later, bombs exploded at the homes of four more civil rights leaders.

In 1967 T. J. Reddy, a student at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, was quite familiar with the racial discrimination that still haunted

African Americans in that city.<sup>35</sup> Reddy was a gifted writer and poet, as well as a dedicated urban activist. He was involved in several civil rights protests in Charlotte, and, thanks to him, UNCC would eventually have its own Black Student Union.<sup>36</sup> It was in the company of his white girlfriend Vicky Minar, a VISTA volunteer whom he had met at a youth center where he volunteered, that Reddy happened upon a particularly humiliating experience of racial injustice—one that reminded him once again that all was not fine in the Queen City.

One balmy day in September 1967, Reddy and Minar, along with a small group of their friends, decided they wanted to go horseback riding, so they headed out to the Lazy B Stables on the outskirts of town. When they arrived, however, the owners of the stable refused to let them ride.<sup>37</sup> Reddy and Minar decided not to cause a scene and left peacefully—but, following traditional protest strategies, they came back the next day with a larger group of both whites and blacks to again ask if they could all ride. The group was victorious. And, “as far as Reddy was concerned, the matter was forgotten because the management had apparently had a change of heart and was willing to allow black people, as well as white people, to ride the horses.”<sup>38</sup>

For the African Americans who lived in rural Oxford, North Carolina, about three hours away from Charlotte, it was much harder to have such faith that everything would work out for them. Even though Oxford was a tiny town tucked away in the Carolina countryside, the African Americans who lived there were even more aware than many of their urban neighbors just how little progress had been made on the civil rights front as the 1970s began. When three white men murdered a black father of three, Henry Marrow, on May 11, 1970, Oxford’s black community was outraged; along with other African Americans who had traveled the world and lived in nearby cities such as Charlotte, they acted on that anger.<sup>39</sup> Some began agitating for justice through the legal system. Others, however—a group of black Vietnam veterans—began bombing the white-owned businesses in town. When all-white juries acquitted the three white men accused of killing Marrow, such acts of arson only escalated. But there would be some serious fallout from this militant civil rights campaign in Oxford. Numerous African Americans would find themselves standing trial, including a completely unsuspecting T. J. Reddy.

By 1970, Reddy and Minar had married. Reddy was still at UNCC, where he had almost completed his bachelor’s degree and was writing a book of poems, to be published by Random House. Since 1967, he had involved himself in many a civil rights protest and had inspired many other activists in the city. One of these was a man named James Grant. Like Reddy’s wife,

Grant was a VISTA volunteer. He hailed from Hartford, Connecticut, and was completing a doctorate in organic chemistry at Penn State University. Not only had Grant been actively promoting civil rights in Charlotte, but in 1970 he was one of the urban blacks who had gone to Oxford to help organize the protests against the killing of Henry Marrow. Unbeknownst to Grant or Reddy, on May 15, 1970, an arrest went down just outside of Oxford that would forever change both their lives.

On that spring night, state troopers pulled over a car as it drove out of Oxford. In it they found two African American men, Alfred Hood and David Washington, and seven sticks of dynamite, two rifles, and a pistol.<sup>40</sup> They were arrested immediately for carrying such deadly weapons and on suspicion of using these items for radical protests in Oxford, but after quickly making bail, they jumped bail and completely disappeared, to the judge's fury. Authorities did not locate Washington until December 27 of that year, and they did not find Hood until two months after that, when he was arrested on completely new charges in Charlotte. This time, the men were detained without bond while awaiting their trial. In July of 1971, they tried to bargain their way out of jail by helping prosecutors indict a number of visible civil rights activists in North Carolina. Chief among these was Oxford civil rights leader Ben Chavis, who had led a boycott of white businesses after Marrow's murder, and James Grant.<sup>41</sup>

Hood and Washington secured an agreement with the government in which they would be paid for living expenses, as well as given armed protection, until their testimony was needed. Then they would be permanently relocated at the government's expense.<sup>42</sup> In exchange, the two men came to federal court in April 1972 and testified that Chavis and Grant had encouraged them to skip out on their bond and had even arranged for them to cross the border into Canada so that they couldn't be brought back to jail by U.S. authorities.<sup>43</sup> Although the jury acquitted Ben Chavis, it found James Grant guilty of aiding and abetting the fugitives, as well as of conspiracy. It gave this VISTA worker a ten-year sentence, to be served in a federal penitentiary.<sup>44</sup>

But that wasn't the end of the story. Even though David Washington was known by the governmental officials who bargained with him to have "received a military discharge on 100% disability on the basis of a diagnosis that he was schizophrenic," and even though he was also considered "a prime suspect in five murders in the Charlotte area," they wanted a bit more for their money than simply the Grant conviction.<sup>45</sup> Picking up on this, and beginning to worry about the security of the previous deals they had struck, Hood and Washington hinted that they might have something

else for prosecutors—this time something related to another case, one that Charlotte authorities had been unable to solve since 1968. Apparently, on September 24 of that year, the Lazy B Stables had burned to the ground with horses inside, and Hood and Washington now claimed that they knew who did it.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the fact that only one year earlier Hood “had told a federal agent ‘that he did not see who actually threw the bomb,’” prosecutors were completely comfortable with his claim that he could identify the culprits in a four-year-old crime.<sup>47</sup> As Hood now told it, he had seen “Reddy and Parker throw fire bombs at the stable.” Officials already knew that Reddy was a friend of Grant, and by 1972 Reddy, as well as his friend Charles Parker, had become well known in their own right for the uncompromising stand that they took on civil rights, as well as against the war in Vietnam. The government could easily imagine that Reddy and his friends would indeed engage in violent or illegal acts, such as arson, if that furthered their radical agenda.

Thus, on January 6, 1972, the state of North Carolina indicted T. J. Reddy, Charles Parker, and James Grant for the burning of the Lazy B Stables.<sup>48</sup> Using Hood’s “eyewitness” account, as well as some testimony that Washington had agreed to provide, prosecutors sought to prove that there had been a meeting of civil rights activists on East Tenth Street in Charlotte, where Reddy worked in 1968. Not only did Reddy and Parker attend this meeting, prosecutors contended, but so did Grant. According to Washington, it was Grant who had put together a Molotov cocktail, which he then helped transport to the stables.<sup>49</sup>

Reddy, Parker, and Grant had an uphill fight from the moment they went to trial. During jury selection, for example, “the State’s attorneys systematically dismissed every Black and Jewish juror, with the exception of one very elderly Black woman who had difficulty hearing and understanding the court procedures.”<sup>50</sup> Then, when a series of protests erupted outside the courtroom in response to the overwhelmingly white composition of the jury, Judge James Snapp publicly accused the defendants of instigating this disorder, ordered all picketing stopped, and remanded the defendants to jail so that they couldn’t cause more trouble out on bail. As one outspoken civil rights group observed, “Judge Snapp kept a tightly controlled courtroom, threatening to expel anyone who made any facial expression or noise of any sort.”<sup>51</sup>

Even more disturbing than the obvious bias that the judge demonstrated against the defendants was the weak case that the prosecution had been allowed to bring before him. As the *Charlotte Observer* noted later, “At

their 1972 trial in Mecklenburg Superior Court, no physical evidence was presented to link them to the stable burning four years earlier. Officers who investigated the fire had misplaced the firebombs the three were accused of using to burn the Lazy B barns and 15 horses.<sup>52</sup> In addition to the lack of physical evidence, a spate of defense witnesses made it clear that James Grant "was visiting four friends at Penn State during the entire month of September 1968 when the burning occurred." Grant's whereabouts were apparently confirmed by "a Republican Philatelist (stamp collector), an undergraduate at Penn State while Grant was in graduate school, a friend who had been discharged from the Army one month before the trial who recalled Grant's rooming with witness number two, and finally, a former economics professor at Penn State, now at Rutgers University (the latter had a recorded appointment with Grant on his appointment calendar from 1968 and recalled his meeting with Grant that afternoon of September 24, 1968)."<sup>53</sup>

But on July 15, 1972, Reddy, Parker, and Grant were nevertheless convicted of burning the Lazy B Stables. Notably, they had only been charged with "unlawful burning," because, as the *Charlotte Observer* pointed out, no evidence of arson had been provided by the prosecution, so arson could not be charged.<sup>54</sup> It only took the jury two hours to hand down a guilty verdict, and when it did, the judge loudly opined that the defendants were indeed guilty of "one of the most inhumane crimes I had ever heard of."<sup>55</sup> As courtroom observer Joan Scott wrote to the *Observer*, "That Judge Snepp was part of the prosecution was apparent to those of us who attended the trial. His nearly two hour charge to the jury was clearly prejudiced against the defendants."<sup>56</sup>

The guilty verdicts shocked the black community of Charlotte, but the harsh sentences handed down to Reddy, Parker, and Grant shocked the nation. Explaining to the *Washington Post* why he had sent one of these men to prison for twenty-five years, Judge Snepp said, "I thought they were dangerous to the community and I gave them the maximum sentence."<sup>57</sup> Given that these men had not been convicted of arson, handing down sentences ranging from ten to twenty-five years was severe by anyone's estimation. As an editorial in the *Charlotte Observer* pointed out, "Fifteen horses died in the fire, representing a considerable loss in property and a blow to horse-lovers sentiment." But, the newspaper continued, "are those 15 horses worth 25, 20 and 10 years of three men's lives?" In the view of not a few Charlotteans, such a sentence could be explained only by the fact that the defendants "all were black militants."<sup>58</sup>

Without a doubt, Reddy, Parker, and Grant had become scathing critics of the racism that continued to scar the South in the late 1960s and early

1970s. And although the evidence was scant that they had in fact burned down the Lazy B Stables, they were unapologetic in their belief that racism needed severe censure. There were many more urban African Americans in Charlotte who shared this militant view. In the wake of the trial of the Charlotte Three, as Reddy, Parker, and Grant had been dubbed, these local civil rights activists formed the North Carolina Political Prisoners Committee (NCPPEC) to do something about the convictions, as well as the bail of \$50,000 each that was preventing these men from leaving prison while their case was appealed. Almost one hundred people came to the organizing meeting of the NCPPEC in the first week after the trial. Although those who came had "differing political perspectives," all of them "were ready to go to work."<sup>59</sup>

Through a variety of subcommittees, the NCPPEC publicized the case of the Charlotte Three outside the South. According to the committee, every American needed to realize that "the Charlotte Three are Political Prisoners."<sup>60</sup> T. J. Reddy, Charles Parker, and James Grant benefited a great deal from the hard work that the NCPPEC did on their behalf. But their argument for getting out of jail was perhaps most strengthened when, unbeknownst to them, two reporters for the *Charlotte Observer*, Mark Ethridge and Michael Schwartz, took it upon themselves to investigate the various backroom deals that had led to a case being filed against them in the first place. After the reporters' eight-week probe, even the lawyers for the Charlotte Three were stunned to learn the lengths to which the government had been willing to go in order to secure testimony against their clients: the attorneys had had no idea that the government had paid for testimony. In addition, even though they already knew how weak the government's case was, based on what it brought into court, the defense attorneys had not known just how sketchy Hood and Washington were as witnesses.<sup>61</sup> Not surprisingly, they drew heavily from the *Observer's* exposé when filing motions to get the Charlotte Three out of jail.<sup>62</sup> To the dismay of Reddy, Parker, and Grant, however, even with the ammunition provided by the investigative reporters, they remained behind bars.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, the three men remained hopeful. Unlike so many of the urban black civil rights activists jailed in the Midwest and the North for fighting discrimination so uncompromisingly, these men were seen as heroes by whites all over the country. When politically moderate whites, and even a few conservatives, heard about the Charlotte Three, they rallied to their defense and hounded North Carolina's governor, James Holshouser, to grant them clemency. Not only had the governor gotten the predictable letter from family members of the defendants,<sup>64</sup> but he also heard from

numerous other parties.<sup>65</sup> The chairman of the history department at UNCC wrote to the governor, "I have been a registered Republican for years. . . . I classify myself as a moderate conservative. . . . Only on a rare occasion do I write to public officials. I do so today because of my deep concern over what I consider a miscarriage of justice."<sup>66</sup> Holshouser even heard from members of "the Charlotte business community." Some white southerners felt so strongly that the Charlotte Three had been legally lynched that they put their own personal finances on the line to help them.<sup>67</sup> UNCC professors put their houses up as collateral for Reddy and Parker's bond, and Alice Lindsay Tate, an extremely wealthy white Charlotte native who had befriended Reddy, threatened the governor with not giving "the remainder of my inheritance (quite a sum) to a University in a State whose system of justice in this trial resembles that of the most sinister police states in the world. . . . I assure you, should true justice fail in this crucial case, there exists a group of affluent North Carolinians, residing both inside and outside the State, who will then realize that North Carolina is a lost cause, and give their money elsewhere."<sup>68</sup>

Not only did the Charlotte Three get a great deal of support from liberal whites in the South, but liberal whites from the Midwest and North also came out in droves for these black activists from North Carolina. Even though the Black Power activists outside of the South found it hard to count on the support of any whites who did not consider themselves radicals, mainstream white liberals found it easy to stand up for those who fought aggressively against the racial injustices that still occurred in the South. The *New York Times*, for example, expressed outrage over "the severity of the sentences" that had been meted out to the Charlotte Three, arguing that they were "far in excess of the average prison terms for similar offenses."<sup>69</sup> Notably, however, the paper expressed no such dismay that African American militant George Jackson had been given a sentence of one year to *life* for stealing seventy-five dollars in California. As yet another *New York Times* headline explained, "justice in North Carolina is once more Old South."<sup>70</sup> Echoing this perspective, *Washington Post* writer Coleman McCarthy remarked that "in the context of North Carolina's judicial practices, [the Charlotte Three's] treatment is perhaps not so strange."<sup>71</sup>

Thanks to the unwavering determination of urban African Americans in Charlotte and to the support that the Charlotte Three received from powerful white allies, the campaign to free the men was ultimately successful. They had been able to appeal to the nation's conscience in a way that activists in the North never could. It would not be until James Hunt became governor of North Carolina in 1977, but T. J. Reddy, Charles Parker, and

James Grant eventually received clemency and thus vindication for their struggle.



The case of the Charlotte Three, the rebellion of urban black prisoners at Attica, and the audacious organizing of urban black autoworkers in Detroit reveal a great deal about the American civil rights movement in the period following the famed legislative and judicial accomplishments of 1954–65. These snapshots of civil rights agitation across the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s illustrate clearly that African Americans—and particularly urban African Americans—saw key victories such as the passage of the civil rights acts of 1964 and 1965 as not the conclusion but the beginning of their struggle for true equality.

Just as important, these tales from midwestern Detroit, upstate New York, and a city in the New South also show that after 1965, urban African Americans in diverse locales across the nation came to reject the “polite” civil rights activism of the previous decade and to demand change rather than ask for it. From Detroit to New York to North Carolina, African Americans decided that they needed to adopt a much more militant posture if they were ever going to persuade white America that full citizenship was not negotiable. Such a decision was largely acceptable to white liberals, and even some white conservatives, when it was made by southern African Americans. But in both the Midwest and the North, as these same whites increasingly found themselves having to answer for the racially discriminatory practices and policies that continued to flourish there, things looked very different. White liberals did not come to revile and to combat *all* Black Power activism; their reaction depended greatly on where such militancy erupted. In the South, it made sense. In the North, it did not. There, Black Power seemed unreasonable, dangerous, and threatening. The fact was that even though prison officials such as Russell Oswald were known as reformers, and officials in the UAW were similarly seen as sympathetic to the struggles of the dispossessed, they could not understand why northern African Americans were so suspicious of whites’ commitment to racial progress. Even they knew that the North was by no means “promised land” for blacks, but, compared to the South, it seemed to them a racial paradise.

But clinging to the notion that southern racism was the exception and that the North was doing all it could or should do to address the remaining concerns of its African American population had an unexpected cost for America’s liberals, no matter what color their skin or where they resided.



From the moment that any white liberal began to draw distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate militancy in the civil rights realm, the coalition of whites and African Americans that had allowed liberals to define politics and policy since the New Deal was severely weakened. When white liberals turned against the greater African American militancy that was surfacing in the North after 1965, African Americans who still experienced second-class status naturally became hostile to the promises of liberalism. And as whites who had always been hostile to liberalism stepped up their attacks as the 1970s wound down, the nation's political pendulum swung inevitably, and seemingly irrevocably, rightward.<sup>72</sup>

## Harvesting the Crisis: The Newark Uprising, the Kerner Commission, and Writings on Riots

KEVIN MUMFORD

At dusk on July 12, 1967, two Newark police officers stopped John Smith's yellow taxi. The officers were white; Smith was black. Bystanders later testified that the officers injured the taxi driver without any provocation, but nevertheless they charged Smith with resisting arrest and battery. Taxi drivers radioed news of the incident across town, fueling rumors that Smith was dead, though in truth he had sustained a broken rib on the right side of his chest but had survived. The assault on Smith sparked the most destructive and lethal riots in New Jersey history, shocking the nation. Over five days, twenty-four African Americans and two whites died from law-enforcement maneuvers, crossfire and stray bullets, and accidents. According to estimates from the state of New Jersey, more than 1,100 people sustained injuries, 1,400 were arrested, more than 350 incidents of arson (none fatal) damaged private and public structures, and millions of dollars worth of stock was destroyed or stolen. The national media created the image of a black sniper holed up in public housing towers, but law enforcement expended 13,326 rounds of ammunition.<sup>1</sup> That summer, a commission appointed by the New Jersey governor convened hearings, and in 1968 it published the *Report for Action*, a remarkably comprehensive summary of the riots that emphasized three major causes: lack of political representation, police brutality, and worsening social conditions, especially substandard housing and unemployment.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, a new generation of social scientists developed more and more elaborate and empirical studies of deprivation and psychological dysfunction to explain the crisis of urban unrest.

Drawing on academic and popular writing on riots, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Papers, and the work of the U.S. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (known as the Kerner Commission), as well

as my research on Newark, this essay explores how various observers and experts described the motivation of “riot participants” and how they interpreted the nature of the conflict. It illustrates the ways in which elites produced a set of discourses that potentially undermined African American political agency, contributing to the future decline of civil disorders and civic engagement. Michael B. Katz formulates the problem as counterfactual—why didn’t black communities continue to riot after the 1960s? Among several factors, Katz emphasizes the social distress of black men in urban areas that diminished their capacity for political participation.<sup>3</sup> This essay focuses instead on the very discourses and knowledge that have come to represent the riots, suggesting the ways in which official explanations and claims structured the longer historical memory. It also suggests that these discourses fostered misunderstanding and resentment between whites and blacks, exacerbating white distrust of black political actions. Finally, it compares this elite discourse to that of the Black Power movement by exploring first-person accounts of local black activists in Newark. These testimonies diverged from the official explanations of the government and the empirical studies of the academics, yet they proved to be equally ideological and politically interested. Here, my method is to group the variety of evidence into cohorts that exhibit similar patterns and to compare and contrast each group with the others. To deploy this argument, the narrative is structured around an investigation into three categories of discourse: riots as a crisis; riots as racism; and riots as rebellion.<sup>4</sup>

### Riots as a Crisis

The disorders of the 1960s signaled a major change in the dynamics of urban conflict. As black ghettos swelled to greater percentages of the population in many cities, black rioters confronted not the vicious white crowds of the Red Summer of 1919 (in which at least twenty-five cities reported white attacks on black migrants), but rather the government in the form of armed law enforcement. The disorders in Watts, Newark, and Detroit were initiated by incidents of police brutality and were fueled by resisting arrest, disobeying curfew, looting, and assaults on law enforcement. Participants also protested inequality in municipal services, the quality of retail establishments, and the persistence of racial discrimination.<sup>5</sup> They called for a change in leadership, constructed oppositional identities, and advanced nationalist agendas in what they renamed the “rebellion.” One of the most astute social scientists to study these conflicts, Robert Fogelson, declared that “the American tradition of interracial violence is waning,” and that “most social

scientists have seen in the riots a protest against conditions of ghetto life."<sup>6</sup> In 1968, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., unleashed a wave of disorders—North and South, large and small—resulting in great destruction but also prompting federal housing legislation and local reforms.<sup>7</sup>

In 1968, the National Institute of Mental Health published a draft form of *Bibliography on the Urban Crisis*, which directed scholars on the study of a possible solution to the crisis.<sup>8</sup> The more than twenty-seven hundred entries cover ghettos, collective violence, and mental illness, but not the problem of corrupt governments and white law enforcement that actually underlay the disorders. Like much of the scholarship, it denoted the crisis as a problem of black people. In the university, some social scientists conducted research into "whether liberalism has the capacity to resolve the racial crisis," implying an inevitable connection between crisis and blackness.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, in a book review one social scientist spoke of a crisis of faith in the university, of "the young professor who is experiencing a falling out of values" because of the riots.<sup>10</sup> Even forty years later, many urban historians refer negatively to the period, following the powerful book by Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, published in 1996.<sup>11</sup>

One of the original key descriptors of urban crisis was the concept of violence. In 1968, the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* introduced an entry for violence that included the rioting in urban ghettos, along with disruptions on campus, crime rates, and assassination. Academic studies featured forums and collections of articles entitled, for example, "Turn to Violence"—as if the previous decade had not witnessed official retaliation against southern black demonstrators—while in 1971 President Richard Nixon appointed the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Hugh Graham published a volume of essays, *Violence: The Crisis of American Confidence*, linking the term *violence* to *crisis*, and these to the perceived cause of the riots, deprivation, and black politics.<sup>13</sup> By the 1970s, a book entitled *The Violent Society* explained that individuals turn to rioting because "they are backed to the wall and . . . there is no escape, [and] they become violent."<sup>14</sup> Such psychological theories invoked the breakdown of the African American family to explain what was at base a form of suicide. They dismissed the rioter's objectives of mobilizing a community against an unjust government by treating such attempts "as a danger signal to others, to warn those in power or authority that the individual or group engaged in violence is in need of help."<sup>15</sup>

Even the most intelligent observers focused on violence to the detriment of recognizing African American dissent. In essays written in the 1960s and collected in *Crises of the Republic*, the philosopher Hannah Arendt argued

that violence canceled out the political legitimacy of a riot, which supposedly sprang from black rage that inappropriately targeted substitutes (the retailer or warehouse) rather than the real problems of social inequality. When black resistance involved rhetoric and deeds of armed conflict, the crisis discourses proved unable to distinguish police violence from black self-defense, or black political arson from the retaliatory shootings by the state police and the National Guard. By reducing the riots to individual acts of violence, the crisis discourse not only eviscerated the broader political intentions, but in the process obscured the drastic imbalance in power relations between the government and ghetto residents.<sup>16</sup>

Another component of the crisis discourse was the assumption that riots erupted because of a generic state of deprivation, disadvantage, and cultural malaise. Thus the experts understood rioting primarily as a reaction to economic deprivation, but deployed this analysis through the language of personal frustration. One book acknowledged that Newark had the "highest rates for crime, tuberculosis, syphilis, gonorrhea, maternal mortality, and daytime population turnover in the nation," but this status seemed to preclude legitimate dissent. The author continued, "With our highly affluent society, there exist countless numbers of people who are powerless and subject to feelings of alienation from the accepted norms and standards."<sup>17</sup> The apotheosis of this deprivation-and-frustration component of the crisis discourse appeared in the best-selling treatise *Black Rage*, by social psychologists William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs. The book utilized a black-nationalist framework that invoked a long memory—that the "whip of the plantation was replaced by the boundaries of the ghetto"—to explain the graveness of the crisis. Yet rather than collective mobilization in black communities, Grier and Cobbs described the accumulation of so many individual emotional breakdowns. Some of this crisis discourse recapitulated ideas from the "culture of poverty" school, in which the urban poor suffered from alienation, lack of participation in institutions, and the insecurities of an informal economy. According to a leading scholar of this viewpoint, Oscar Lewis, inhabitants of "the culture of poverty [showed] a high potential for protest and for being used in political movements." When they were not "being used," the underemployed ghetto dwellers were promiscuous, violent, and excessive. According to Grier and Cobbs, "the regular Saturday-night brawls that have been characteristic of the black ghetto, are the short bursts of rage which find broader expression in Watts, Newark, and Detroit."<sup>18</sup>

If these theories pathologized and stigmatized the civil disobedience, at least some scholars alerted the government to the need to implement better

urban policies.<sup>19</sup> In 1966, New Jersey governor Richard Hughes appointed Paul Ylvisaker to head the newly created cabinet post of Community Relations Adviser, with responsibility for race relations and urban issues. Ylvisaker had gained a national reputation and advised leaders on the crisis in the ghetto. In his communications and public lectures, he eloquently spoke of the consequences of deprivation, or, in his words, the “build up of human energy that was being dissipated in rage, blinding rage at society that couldn’t deal with all the power that was there.”<sup>20</sup> He urged the government to implement a massive redistribution through income taxes, income-maintenance welfare, direct relief, health insurance, and job training.<sup>21</sup> Ylvisaker cited the shortage of housing—writing that “20 million people live in 5,000,000 substandard and deteriorating slum dwellings throughout America”—and seriously advocated the relocation of half a million residents of the inner city to the suburbs.<sup>22</sup> In one letter, he lectured the White House on the white “iron ring of suburbia” that necessitated more urban renewal. Yet after the riots, Ylvisaker felt a sense of crisis, in part because the black community, he believed, was indecipherable, estranged, and seemingly inassimilable.<sup>23</sup>

Not only academic advocates of reform in New Jersey but the federal government as well viewed the disorders as the culmination of crisis. For President Lyndon Johnson, a racial crisis now loomed over his administration, one just as urgently in need of management as the faltering War on Poverty and the deceptive war in Vietnam.<sup>24</sup> The ghetto seemed, to some, a threat to national security and a drain on national unity and spirit.<sup>25</sup> It led to a questioning of the American Creed, the belief that all citizens aspired to the ideals of full equality. Mae Ngai has traced an analogy in the work of the Harvard University historian Oscar Handlin between race and ethnicity in the larger construction of a national myth that all newcomers underwent a struggle for inclusion. But Handlin viewed the riots as a departure from the American Creed and a betrayal of the civil rights movement’s objective of pluralism.<sup>26</sup> The Newark and Detroit riots had exposed the rise of American pluralism to be an “impossible revolution,” to quote the title of Lewis M. Killian’s 1967 book.<sup>27</sup> Along these lines, Michael Flamm and others argue that the riots caused new axes of black-white conflict, which resulted in yet another crisis—the crisis of liberalism. In locales hit by the riots and in response to the media frenzy, many whites joined the movement for a supposed return to law and order and bolted from the liberal coalition of civil rights supporters.<sup>28</sup>

In Newark, whites formed ethnic-nationalist vigilante groups to defend their neighborhoods during the post-riot cleanup and mobilized to exact revenge for the destruction and the deaths of white law enforcement. After

winning the election in 1968, Richard M. Nixon felt justified in further denouncing the actions of black rioters as criminal. The overarching crisis discourse held that black riots were caused by economic failure and frustration, but whites responded with alienation.<sup>29</sup> On the left, some intellectuals reported that they felt inspired by black civil disobedience, which was seen as connected to antiwar dissent.<sup>30</sup> From the perspective of conservatives, irrational malcontents fomented the riots, suggesting the slippage in the crisis discourse from liberal to conservative. The *National Review* ran an article that dismissed "Negro Militants," who stampeded to support black electoral candidates "only because of race." If liberal social scientists developed a psychological theory for riots, conservatives caricatured black political action. They assumed that, like the rioters, black politicians were self-destructive. "If City Hall, 'Whitey,' social workers, and the Federal Government willfully or inadvertently have been the enemies of the Negro, the worst enemy that the Negro had [is] the Negro himself," declared the *National Review*.<sup>31</sup> The crisis discourse frequently misrepresented the motivations and legitimacy of black rioters—and, not surprisingly, so did the conservative opponents of black political empowerment.

### Riots as Racism

Under increasing pressure from Congress, civil rights and liberal leaders, and the press, in July 1967 President Lyndon Johnson announced the formation of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (NACCD), charged with investigating and explaining the riots and preventing future disorders. Like a half dozen other presidential task forces, the Kerner Commission (referring to the chair of the NACCD, Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois) reflected Johnson's habit of studying the social impact of proposed legislation or policy initiatives. The White House privately and publicly spoke of the rioters as criminal elements and attempted to block more-liberal commentary that legitimized them. Because the Kerner Commission appeared to condone black civil disobedience, as well as for reasons explored in greater depth below, Johnson decreased its budget, ignored its findings, and refused to receive commissioners at the White House, allowing their term to expire.<sup>32</sup> Only a month after the release of the report, the president decided not to seek reelection to a second term.<sup>33</sup> Letters from the public to Governor Kerner warned the president to reject the notion that rioters deserved rewards for their ingratitude, greed, and destructiveness. Letters against the commission and its report ran about three to one, with

quite a few racially inflamed voices. On the one hand, some congratulated the president on the “superb and accurate” report, urging him to “plan an orderly withdrawal from the quagmire of Viet Nam to release funds for this program.” On the other hand, a telegram registered the “outrage at the implicit blackmail contained in the riot committee report,” and another letter advised the president that “this weakness on your part has hurt you more than anything.”<sup>34</sup>

Yet the Kerner Report took on a life of its own, selling hundreds of thousands of copies and introducing into American memory a historic phrase: “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.” This sentence became controversial, in part because of a corollary that appeared several paragraphs later: “White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto.”<sup>35</sup> Paul Ylvisaker, the New Jersey urban affairs adviser, had criticized this emphasis on white racism, and in an oral history he blamed its prominence in the final report on the vice president of the commission, New York mayor John Lindsay. Ylvisaker recalled that Lindsay threatened to withhold his signature unless the other members agreed to include such language.<sup>36</sup> It is clear that at one point Lindsay reaffirmed his support of the Kerner Report—even after critics charged that it rewarded rioters and blamed innocent white Americans—in an article having to do with the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>37</sup> To speak of crisis and frustration struck a neutral chord and permitted whites to express sympathy and condemnation at the same time. To speak of racism implicated whites and required an admission of culpability, and this the silent majority adamantly rejected.

One of the origins of the emphasis on racism was a report titled “Harvest of American Racism” that circulated within the Kerner Commission and the White House. Within its more than two hundred double-spaced typed pages, the most important section was titled “America on the Brink: White Racism and Black Rebellion,” which argued that whites must change. The authors included Robert Shellow, a social psychologist and assistant director of research at the National Institute of Health, and noted social scientists David Boesel, Gary Marx, David Sears, and Louis Goldberg. An original copy in the commission’s archives has the word “Destroy” across the front page and the statement that “this document has neither been submitted to nor approved by the national advisory commission of the civil disorders.”<sup>38</sup> When a draft ended up in the hands of Johnson’s White House staffers, they supposedly cut the commission’s budget and called for Shellow’s resignation. A well-researched 1980 dissertation by Donald Lee Scruggs claimed that the White House sent an appointee, or a so-called consultant, who was



instructed to "re-work Harvest into an acceptable form."<sup>39</sup> But the racism analysis defined the tone of the Kerner Report, a development that, according to Ellen Herman, reflected the larger impact of "psychological perspectives in key domestic policy-making arenas."<sup>40</sup> In the short run, the Kerner Commission avoided the theory of black rage and culture of poverty, subtly transferring the blame for the tragedy of the riots from the black rioters to the problem of American inequality.

For all the progressiveness demonstrated by the authors of the report, one can argue that it was the inclusion of black intellectuals that brought about the emphasis on white racism. President Johnson appointed only two black commissioners; he reportedly wanted the establishment figure Whitney Young, but he named Roy Wilkins, the moderate head of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), and the black Republican senator from Massachusetts, Edward Brooke.<sup>41</sup> The Kerner Commission, however, invited testimony from leading black intellectuals, including the editor of *Ebony* magazine, Lerone Bennett, Jr.; the noted social psychologist Kenneth Clark; and historians John Hope Franklin and Benjamin Quarles. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave testimony that attracted notice in the press and comment in the White House. Not surprisingly, the historians located the riots in the experience of black enslavement, Jim Crow, and second-class citizenship. But some of the most moving black testimony examined the experience of racism and the consequences of white neglect. Lerone Bennett identified whites as a distinctive group with their own racial worldview, making racism a white problem. In an exchange with Roy Wilkins, Bennett testified that we "need to do a great deal of study about what is wrong with white people."<sup>42</sup>

Bennett also modestly recounted his luck and good fortune, his admiration for his relatives, and his abiding faith in the American dream, defining it as opportunity for every individual regardless of status or color. But as a historian, Bennett prophesied intractable conflict, testifying that "huge masses of discontent have been accumulated for almost 400 years now." He also spoke personally of the burdens of racism and confessed that "every day, I meet pin-pricks and, from time to time, sledge-hammer blows."<sup>43</sup> In a moving passage, Bennett speculated that "the rebellions in Newark, Detroit, Milwaukee, and so on were, I suggest, a bitter harvest of the history we have made."<sup>44</sup> It seems likely that Bennett's use of the term "harvest" was the inspiration for the title of the "Harvest of American Racism" report.

A second important theme of the black testimony was to question the gains of the civil rights movement, echoing a major viewpoint of the actual riot participants. Although critics of the movement argued for the need for

advancement in the economy, they continued to stress the problems of racism. On the one hand, Martin Luther King testified to the emergence of a new struggle for opportunity to assist those "left jobless and ignorant." A commissioner asked King whether he still believed in the necessity of passing federal civil rights laws, and now King insisted on effective implementation. He proposed a national agency to "give employment to everyone needing it" and invoked a recurrent motif of the role of history in the attainment of freedom, of the ways in which the longevity of oppression served to heighten blacks' sense of the urgency for relief. He called for more than equality before the law, because "giving a pair of shoes to a man who has not learned to walk is a cruel jest."<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, King had not abandoned his commitment to integration nor eased his criticism of the Black Power movement. Like the other black witnesses, he reiterated the idea that the nation must change its racial attitudes as much as reconstruct the ghettos. In fact, he predicted that the reshaping of racial attitudes "will take longer." If Bennett continually returned to the idea of the death or failure of the American dream, King concluded his remarks by affirming his faith in unity: "We have to work together in this."<sup>46</sup> Several memos that staffers intended for the "president's night reading" noted King's public statements on full employment and criticized his proposals as "dangerous over-simplification."<sup>47</sup> The fact was that King articulated a more economic-based policy, and the riots had driven King and Johnson further apart. Yet even as the president ignored the Kerner Report, King called a press conference and declared its stress on white racism to be a "harsh truth."<sup>48</sup>

The testimony that diverged sharply from the others' emphasis on white racism came from Kenneth Clark, a leading social psychologist who helped to invent the culture-of-poverty analysis, in which isolation and intolerable conditions breed deviant lifestyles. Clark testified that the ghetto was "planned," just like the Nazi concentration camps for European Jews, to "confine the Negro," and that this isolation enforced pathological behavior with which normal society became complicit. He argued that rioters represented only 5 percent of the ghetto, comprising delinquents who were dehumanized and degraded.<sup>49</sup> Clark's testimony exemplified a particular use of the conservative, and increasingly controversial, language of black pathology, comparing rioting to a "very severe" "viral" and "systematic social disease." By contrast, King spoke of the impact of ghettos but directly implicated whites, because "they created discrimination, they created the slums, they perpetuate unemployment, ignorance and poverty." King also legitimated rioting as a form of civil disobedience and refused to be pushed into prioritizing the maintenance of law and order over the achievement of

social justice. Yet to a certain extent, his condemnation of white racists and the ghetto unintentionally diminished black political agency, invoking the deterministic argument that "the slums are the handiwork of a vicious system of the white society. Negroes live in them but do not make them any more than a prisoner makes a prison." For King, whites, not blacks, were the criminals, guilty of a "discrimination that is a hound of hell that gnaws at the Negroes in every waking moment of their lives."<sup>50</sup>

Many social scientists supported the Kerner Commission's emphasis on racism, even as they pursued the interpretations that reiterated the economic and psychological slant of the crisis discourse. Several social science journals dedicated entire issues to the riots, and one author observed that "the Report correctly identified white racism as essentially responsible for the trouble."<sup>51</sup> If the younger social scientists disagreed with their elders, and some of the academics disagreed with the government, almost everybody involved in writing on the riots shared a liberal outlook that appeared to legitimize capitalist society. It is not going too far to say that if the more liberal authors of the "Harvest" report were calling for any kind of revolution, they had in mind the overthrow of white racism, so that people would be "seen as they are in daily life." Nobody proposed economic redistribution or blamed the contradictions of capitalism for the riots.<sup>52</sup> But the White House specifically rejected the racial arguments as impolitic. Although presidential aide Harry McPherson acknowledged that "the charge against white racism was true," his rejoinder was that "so was the bitterness of white families, who lived and worked among blacks, when they were told that they were responsible for the sacking of the cities."<sup>53</sup>

### Riots as Rebellion

By 1968, the new Black Power movement had achieved a major following for its program of self-determination, community empowerment, and separatism. The famous invocation of the phrase by Stokely Carmichael on June 17, 1966, hailed from the southern countryside, not the northern ghetto, but the fallout from the riots in Detroit and Newark clearly shaped the Black Power movements.<sup>54</sup> First and foremost, the rioting had polarized whites and blacks and led to vigilante patrols and more possession of weapons. As municipal police departments invested heavily in riot-control training and munitions, in Newark Italian Americans and black Americans faced off over and over again in the public sphere. Rather than conceiving of the riots as a crisis to be managed, many local black voices reconstructed the riots as a state of rebellion. Although the Kerner Commission heard from the of-

ficials of the state and academics, and failed to invite testimony from more than a few participants in the riots of Newark, it dispatched investigators to several cities to report on conditions and conduct interviews with riot participants. Unlike the white and black liberals at the hearings in Washington, these informants were less interested in talking about white racism. A minority of social scientists similarly criticized the Kerner Report's analysis, arguing that "racism is a simple answer to the question of why the riots occurred, and it is comforting to both the supporters and opponents of the Commission's recommendations."<sup>55</sup> In an essay on the black viewpoint, another scholar observed that many believe that "coming to grips with the fundamental cause of the riots, white racism, is more a task for American whites than for blacks."<sup>56</sup>

President Johnson's advisers attempted to read the political climate in the areas hit by the riots and urged the president to make a tour to disprove the suspicions that he was afraid of violent blacks. Although the authors of the "Harvest" report invoked alarmist rhetoric—"that violence will become more and more frequent; ghetto riots will, perhaps, be better organized . . . [and] considerably bloodier"—they hesitated to condemn black urban radicals as pathological, irrational, and criminal.<sup>57</sup> Rather, they proposed the opening up of the white power structure through a "massive educational effort directed toward the white community of this nation to bring home the realities of Negro life." If the authors warned that moderation in the face of such a crisis "is the stuff out of which black rebellion is made," they acknowledged the many white conservatives who intended to retaliate with the implementation of what the report termed a "Garrison State."<sup>58</sup> Advisers favored a strategy of attempting to integrate those who had rioted back into the lower echelons of the economy—as Harry McPherson argued, "to provide ways into employment for unemployed Negroes," and in that way "to restore law and order." During the riots, Joseph Califano informed the president of the need to "begin to find out what programs we have in Newark," largely to ascertain how the Great Society programs served the process of stabilizing the area.<sup>59</sup> McPherson advised Johnson that "the way to kill Rap Brown [a militant black leader] is to get these programs and put em there." Even years later, McPherson referred to radicalism as "movie-gangster rhetoric" that had "strained the patience of even 'permissive' whites."<sup>60</sup> The president was also exposed to the viewpoint that black nationalists filled a vacuum in leadership:<sup>61</sup> "The reason Rap Brown is getting any kind of support is that when he comes to a city, he goes personally to the discontented communities, and addresses himself to the real problems," wrote McPherson.<sup>62</sup> Yet he also argued that it was "ridiculous for the

President to consider meeting with the 'Black Power' people," because the movement had no real meaning or defined objectives; "they represent a lot of genuine frustration and anger, but they don't represent many people."<sup>63</sup> The president had charged the commission with the task of preventing future riots, and perhaps this explains the report's conciliatory tone of anti-racism, a way for the state to both register the dissent of and placate the black community. Yet few, if any, liberals—white or black—were prepared to go to the next step and negotiate with the emergent Black Power leaders arising from the ruins of the riots. Rather, the government correspondence sarcastically minimized their influence; for example, a strategy memo titled "Counterpoint—The Quiet Majority" advised that "it takes two to tangle. But only three to riot: Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, plus one."<sup>64</sup>

Both the social scientists and the government trivialized the political motivations of black dissidents and assumed that the economic conditions precipitated riots, but some Black Power radicals downplayed the class question. They spoke of pride and self-esteem, of racial heritage and reconstructing gender roles, and, somewhat ironically, of self-determination. C. T. Vivian's short, moving book on Black Power argued that urban rioters "sought dignity, not dollars; manhood, not money; pride, not prosperity."<sup>65</sup> The veteran black activist Bayard Rustin did not testify at the Washington hearings, perhaps because he had publicly criticized the McCone Commission report issued after the Watts riots.<sup>66</sup> Where Rustin implicitly attributed a kind of pathology and lack of discipline to the lumpenproletariat and defined Black Power as a call for economic reform, some black radicals rejected arguments for job training and unions.<sup>67</sup> Social scientists across the board discovered that black riot participants differed in their outlook from the leadership of Bennett, King, and Clark. Jeffrey Paige, a graduate student at the University of Michigan who assisted with the "Harvest" report, produced a larger study of Newark that concluded that riot participants preferred the designation *black*, not *Negro* or *colored*.<sup>68</sup> A Kerner Commission interviewer in Newark carefully crossed out the typed term "Negro" and penciled in "black," as well as writing in the phrase "black community."<sup>69</sup>

The White House prioritized the management of the crisis and the restoration of order, but the autonomy afforded the Kerner Commission and the energies of local communities complicated the operation of such a project. In Newark, the commission took detailed reports from cultural nationalists and progressive volunteers in the Great Society programs, from police officers and civic leaders, from Amiri Baraka at the Spirit House, and from a representative of the NAACP. The government encountered a terrain too complex and actors too sophisticated for the usual tactics of psychology

and statistical enumeration. On the ground, local black militants spoke of their deep resentment of the police and diminished faith in the government, and they showed a greater sense of opposition to or alienation from the nation. As a result, they were more likely to speak of analogies with colonial military struggles, to read anticolonialist Frantz Fanon's theories of violent tactics, and to identify with international struggles against domination.<sup>70</sup> A few white social scientists, such as Robert Blauner, explained the riots as a "preliminary if primitive form of mass rebellion against a colonial status."<sup>71</sup> Both black and white radicals spoke of how whites exercised power through co-optation, as well as material extraction of the wealth, in ways that paralleled the operation of colonialism.<sup>72</sup>

In reading about colonial racism and the inevitability of violence, Black Power leaders had found in the riots a louder voice of outrage, and they adopted a public posture of potential revolutionaries.<sup>73</sup> By 1969, some social scientists reported that victims of violence in the black community envisioned riots not as rage but as the hopes and actions of "substantially more militant" ghetto residents.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, in Newark, liberal interracial activists in the Congress of Racial Equality and in a group from Students for a Democratic Society had disbanded. Scholar Harlan Hahn mapped similar correlations between the incidence of riots and black separatism. In the debut issue of *The Black Scholar*, Hahn linked black conversion to racial separatism to the riots, which outweighed other possible correlations, such as socioeconomic status, social values, or general political attitudes. Drawing on data from a survey of 270 residents from the Twelfth Street area in Detroit, Hahn demonstrated that integrationists still believed in the procedures of the government, while separatists rejected legal intervention, especially by the police. One manifestation of this rejection was a belief that robbery or disorderly conduct became legitimate, even politically legitimate, behavior.<sup>75</sup>

In some neighborhoods, however, black residents worked alongside white volunteers in programs funded by the Great Society. For example, in Newark's Clinton Hill area, the black activist Jesse Allen worked in the United Community Corporation, which was funded with assistance from the federal government, suggesting the extent to which social-welfare liberalism had encouraged a certain level of rebellion against itself. A Kerner Commission investigator characterized Allen as "a very sincere individual" who spoke to key issues in the neighborhoods, such as urban renewal, retail development, and the city council races. While visible black nationalists such as Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown concentrated on the highly charged issues of racial separatism and armed self-defense, a more local

faction with Allen's orientation focused on boycotts against stores, education, and housing reform. They staffed community action projects and set up Cooperative Produce Foods.<sup>76</sup>

Yet long-unresolved issues of police brutality played into the hands of black nationalists. A representative of local nationalism was Willie Wright, the self-described president of the Afro-America Association and a worker in the anti-poverty program (probably Area Boards 2 and 3); he told the commission's interviewers that he was "very embittered over the 'murders' committed during the riot by the police department." He appeared to use the interview as a forum in which to demand that the FBI investigate cases of police brutality (which registered with the interviewer as "police brutality has become one of the major concerns of the black community"). Along those lines, Wright related the feelings of resentment in the community against a Newark police officer who became infamous in the shooting death of Lester Long, a twenty-two-year-old black man whose death sparked rallies.<sup>77</sup> One black interviewee who supported the conduct of law enforcement was a recently promoted black police officer, Captain Edward Williams. He sought to articulate a neutral position on the major issues, such as the use of police dogs, in part because the other officers heavily supported more repression. Even on what he identified as the "touchy" subject of police brutality, Williams spoke of his discomfort and talked about the multiplicity of perspectives.<sup>78</sup>

Given the apparent lack of remorse in the Newark Police Department for the deaths of black residents, Willie Wright predicted more violence, because "they are preparing to become involved in a genocide war with black people." Therefore, said Wright, "the black man must get some ammunition, must get weapons, to defend themselves."<sup>79</sup> Perhaps the most notable black nationalist whose authenticity remained in question throughout the period, Colonel Hassan, had left the city after the riots (though testimony from black leader Robert Curvin highlighted his impact on rising pre-riot politicization). Even moderates had acknowledged that Hassan "galvanized" the community with his charisma, military symbolism, and effective recruitment methods.<sup>80</sup> Yet Wright and other activists questioned the relevance of this cultural nationalism after the riots, including nationalist Amiri Baraka's cultural nationalism, instead favoring tactics of direct action. In August, Kerner Commission investigators visited Spirit House, where Baraka had built his Black Arts center, school, and theater. One investigator reported that "Mr. Jones apparently [held] a class in Arabic [that] was going on in the hall packed with 50." Baraka then took the investigator to another room, where they met Willie Wright (who had set up the meeting). He was

introduced to the group "as a person from Washington investigating the 'rebellion.'" Obsessing over "black power and black revolutionaries," the investigator jotted down notes on the "influence [of] Muslim-taught Arabic" and Baraka's "message" that the "black people of America are tired of being treated as slaves, that the black people were seeking their identity in America." At some point, in response to Baraka's proselytizing, Wright said that "he was not interested in any religious organization, or any organization based on any religion," but rather "a program for the uplift and defense of the oppressed people." The investigator believed that Baraka intended to recruit Wright into the "Muslim cause." When a shouting match broke out between religious and nonreligious nationalists, Baraka confided that this sort of conflict "showed that the black man is much more divided than he would like for the American people to believe." In this vein, the investigator reported to the commission that "the Black Nationalist type organizations have fertile ground for expansion in the Newark ghetto."<sup>81</sup>

One of the most significant black leaders before the riots, Robert Curvin, who had helped to lead the local branch of the Congress of Racial Equality and spearheaded reform of the police, recounted a number of incidents of police brutality to a commission interviewer. His memory of local conditions refuted the academic articles and best-selling books that explained the black political behavior in terms of spontaneity, irrationality, and mindless frustration. In Curvin, the Kerner Commission was presented with an example of deliberation and community participation. He had always believed in integration and nonviolence, but he also felt acutely the anger at the injustice of police brutality. Curvin reported that "there are constant insults by the police against pedestrians and motorists, and stated that the black people are the ones who suffer most." In calculated testimony, Curvin called for reform. "We didn't come here to riot, we came here for justice but we are ready." He believed that whites were plotting to harm him in turn, but he reported that he was "not fearful of this because should he be harmed in any way, he is assured that there will be mass retaliation by certain people."<sup>82</sup> Thus, among blacks ranging from the most militant nationalists to the most integrationist community leaders, the white violence in the riots had brought forward feelings of alienation and anger, and this sense of a group under siege animated an outlook of rebellion.

Each voice registered the plurality of perspectives in the black public sphere, yet each testified to the importance of the commonweal and of the Kerner Commission's investigations. In turn, as the government collected information through its public commission, it learned of the political agency of the black community and possibly repressed it, though not



with the same force as the larger academic discourse of crisis. The fact was that the crisis discourse eventually gained precedence over the local historical context and misrepresented the complexities of black protest—which it portrayed as spontaneous, irrational, and psychologically unsound to a larger and larger audience; today, this discourse stands in for the dynamics and details of the past. Although the Kerner Commission was a touchstone of liberalism, its conservative critics won the political momentum in the end. By the 1990s, in their controversial book *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible*, Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom criticized the Kerner Report as the misguided prophecy of bleeding-heart liberalism and contrasted its pessimistic tone with what they saw as the decline of urban segregation. They argued that the advisory commission had easily gained acceptance back in the 1960s,<sup>83</sup> but this essay has served to complicate such a gloss. The Kerner Report took its hits, like all liberal pronouncements, and the racism thesis probably confused and alienated many people more than it helped the process of reconstruction after the riots. Even its own supposed beneficiaries, the black poor living in the inner city, criticized it. To its credit, however, the Kerner Report's courage in confronting racism marked a significant departure from past moralizing on the black ghetto, as well as the culmination of a change in white liberal attitudes. In large part because of the democratic process and inclusion of black leaders and intellectuals in the national conversation, the white elite academics and politicians in power over the Kerner Commission created a milestone report that urged a historically white-supremacist nation to mend its ways.

Affirmative Action from Below:  
Civil Rights, the Building Trades, and the  
Politics of Racial Equality in the  
Urban North, 1945–1969

THOMAS J. SUGRUE

In April 1963 it was impossible to ignore the tragic events in Birmingham, Alabama, where civil rights protesters faced fire hoses and attack dogs. The clash between unchecked police brutality and nonviolent protest marked a watershed in the battle against Jim Crow. Television news crews and print journalists from around the world descended on Birmingham. Their reports and photographs provided indelible images of the black freedom struggle. A thousand miles to the northeast, overshadowed by events in Alabama, an equally momentous wave of protests swept through Philadelphia, as activists from local chapters of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began a two-month-long siege of city-sponsored construction projects. Beginning in early April, protesters marched in front of Mayor James Tate's modest North Philadelphia row house, staged a sit-in at city hall, shut down construction of the city's Municipal Services Building, battled with police and white unionists at the site of a partially built school, and unleashed an intense debate about racial politics, discrimination, and employment. The Philadelphia protests had national resonance. On June 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 11,114, calling for a still vaguely defined "affirmative action" in government-contracted construction employment. Later that summer, activists in Harlem and Brooklyn in New York City; Newark and Trenton, New Jersey; and Cleveland, Ohio, staged similar protests at construction sites. For the next several years, building-trades unions remained a major target of northern civil rights protesters.<sup>1</sup>

Just a little over six years after the Philadelphia protests, on June 27, 1969, the administration of Richard M. Nixon announced the Philadelphia

Plan, an administrative order designed to open jobs in the white-dominated construction industry to members of minority groups. The Philadelphia Plan, first applied to construction contractors in the City of Brotherly Love, became the blueprint for federally mandated affirmative action in employment. In a terse, jargon-laden memo, Assistant Secretary of Labor Arthur Fletcher denounced the “exclusionary practices” of several nearly all-white trades—the ironworkers, plumbers and pipe fitters, steam fitters, sheet metal workers, electrical workers, roofers, and elevator-construction workers. It would take “special measures” to open jobs in those trades to non-white workers. Specifically, the Philadelphia Plan required all contractors bidding on government-funded construction projects to submit an “affirmative action program” that included “goals” and “targets” for “minority manpower utilization.” The most controversial element of the plan, finalized in September 1969, established numerical targets, defined as a percentage range of minority workers to be employed from a particular trade on each contract. Employers were required to provide statistical evidence of their compliance. Noncompliance could lead to the loss of federal contracts or litigation and legal penalties under federal civil rights laws.<sup>2</sup>

Affirmative action has been the most fiercely contested legacy of the civil rights era. The policy has been the subject of polemical books and articles for more than thirty years. The conventional narratives about affirmative action emphasize its role in the fragmentation of an interracial New Deal coalition, its entanglement with growing black racial consciousness, and its challenge to an allegedly long-standing policy of “color blindness.” Nathan Glazer, one of the most prolific commentators on the policy, argued that with the rise of affirmative action, “we shifted from being color blind to color conscious.” Affirmative action, it is argued, led to the collapse of integrationist liberalism and the rise of identity politics, culminating in an unprecedented expansion of notions of “rights” and a substitution of the principle of equality of outcome for that of equality of opportunity. It jettisoned “merit” for the preferential hiring of historically underrepresented minority groups, regardless of their qualifications. Affirmative action, Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom have contended, was “racial engineering of a new and radical sort that grew out of a “racism implicit in the notion that blacks were too crippled to be judged on their individual merit.” Working-class whites, others argued, had to “absorb the penalties for past discrimination by other whites, ceding opportunities for employment and promotion to competing blacks.” Embittered by affirmative action, disaffected whites embraced the New Right.<sup>3</sup>

Such views of affirmative action are insufficiently historical. The best histories of affirmative action, part of a rich literature on bureaucracy and policy formation, have taken an inside-the-Beltway perspective. In these accounts, grassroots activism is a distant backdrop. Hugh Davis Graham saw affirmative action as part of “the quiet revolution in the American regulatory state,” as government bureaucrats fashioned an “equal results approach” that rested on statistical measures of group representation. In a nod to the importance of protest, John David Skrentny interpreted affirmative action as a tool for “crisis management” in the riot-torn 1960s but, like Graham, emphasized “administrative innovation” and “pragmatism” and downplayed protest. However important the role of federal bureaucrats in shaping affirmative action, policy formation is not simply a top-down process. As Steven F. Lawson has powerfully argued, we need civil rights histories that “connect the local with the national, the social with the political.”<sup>4</sup>

The history of affirmative action is part of the still-incomplete history of the northern freedom struggle. Affirmative action emerged amid a great and unresolved contest over race, employment, and civil rights that played out on the streets, in the union halls, and in the workplaces of the urban North—a conflict that began well before the 1960s and resonated long after. Turning back to the decades that preceded the development of a national policy of affirmative action complicates our understanding of this most controversial policy. Adopting a local vantage point, this chapter will trace the struggle over employment-discrimination policy from its origins in World War II through the racial liberalism of the postwar years to the militant protests and counterprotests of the 1960s. The key actors in this story were racial liberals who shaped antidiscrimination policies in the postwar years, civil rights activists who chafed at the limitations of liberalism, and white construction unionists who fought to maintain the status quo. Their stage was Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where protesters and counterprotesters set the terms of the ongoing debate about affirmative action.<sup>5</sup>

### Jobs and Freedom: From Militancy to Gradualism

The protests that rocked Philadelphia in the spring of 1963 grew out of an unfinished quest for “jobs and freedom” in the North that had begun during the Great Depression and World War II. In the 1930s, local activists led “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” campaigns to break down the barriers of workplace discrimination. The coming of World War II accelerated civil

rights protests. In 1941, facing the threat of a "march on Washington" led by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters president A. Philip Randolph, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, creating a Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), the first federal agency since Reconstruction to handle matters of civil rights. Despite the FEPC's weakness, trade union and civil rights activists used it as a tool to challenge workplace discrimination. Leading the push for equal employment opportunity in Philadelphia were left-labor activists, in the local branch of the NAACP and in key trade unions such as the National Alliance of Postal Employees, the Transport Workers Union, and the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America, who challenged discrimination in the city's post offices, shipyards, telephone company, and, in the face of violent white resistance, the Philadelphia Transit Corporation. World War II unleashed great expectations about the possibility of racial equality in the North. Black war workers and returning veterans alike demanded that the federal government live up to the rhetoric of democracy and equality that it had deployed against fascism. Increasingly, they couched their demands in a new, powerful rhetoric of "rights," drawing in particular from the conception of positive rights eloquently articulated in Roosevelt's wartime "Second Bill of Rights." The president's promise of "economic rights," such as the right to a remunerative job, security, and equality, spoke to the aspirations of blacks who demanded equal employment opportunity.<sup>6</sup>

Yet for blacks in Philadelphia and their counterparts throughout the urban North, war and the postwar economic boom had mixed results. At the end of the war, blacks' economic opportunities had improved, particularly in unskilled and semiskilled industrial work. But a 1945 state-sponsored study found that Pennsylvania's blacks continued to experience "employment marginality" and were "disproportionately concentrated in the most unremunerative and insecure occupations," where "upgrading [was] slow." Efforts to challenge that marginality moved to the forefront of the postwar civil rights agenda. But as the Cold War chill descended on Philadelphia, the militant wartime demand for jobs and freedom gave way to a restrained integrationism. Whereas wartime activists had targeted discriminatory employers with protests and walkouts, postwar activists adopted the quieter tactics of moral suasion. Radical activists were purged from trade unions and from Philadelphia's NAACP branch. In place of an economic analysis of racial inequality emerged an understanding of racism as at root an individual pathology, an anomalous feature of American society, which could be eradicated through education and persuasion. "The Negro problem," wrote Gunnar Myrdal in his pathbreaking *An American Dilemma*, the sin-

gle most influential guide for postwar integrationists, "*is a problem in the heart of the American. It is there that the interracial tension has its focus. It is there that the decisive struggle goes on.*"<sup>7</sup>

Myrdalian rhetoric pervaded the postwar struggle for black employment opportunity in the North. From the mid-1940s through the early 1960s, Philadelphia's major civil rights groups—the NAACP, the Committee on Equal Job Opportunity (CEJO), the Armstrong Association (Philadelphia's Urban League affiliate), and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)—set out, through hundreds of behind-the-scenes meetings, to persuade employers to hire blacks for "breakthrough" jobs, primarily ones involving contact with whites, such as those of department-store salesclerks, telephone operators, secretaries, and bank tellers. The presence of black pioneers in formerly all-white occupations would demonstrate that blacks were capable of work in any sector of the economy. If white co-workers or customers had face-to-face contact with blacks in non-stereotypical situations, they would face the irrationality of their prejudices and eventually jettison their belief in white superiority.<sup>8</sup>

The breakthrough job campaigns eschewed the militant tactics of Depression-era and wartime civil rights activists. When thirteen civil rights organizations launched an effort in 1953 to open department-store jobs to blacks, they kept a low profile, "avoiding all publicity and keeping clear of any coercive action such as picketing and boycotts." Activists returned their monthly bills emblazoned with stickers that read, "I should like to see qualified Negroes included in your sales force," while leaders met behind the scenes with employers and enlisted the aid of the prominent white judge Curtis Bok, who held a dinner party for department-store officials to persuade them to hire blacks. The AFSC launched merit employment projects, using the increasingly influential rhetoric of meritocracy to persuade employers that discrimination was irrational and immoral. CEJO activists reached out to business groups and churches; screened *Fair Play*, a film that depicted the travails of a frustrated black job seeker; and distributed civil rights publications to employers. The results were meager. The department-store campaign led to a few black hires, mainly in temporary positions. In 1954, a typical year, Armstrong Association conferences with eighty-nine employers yielded about 150 jobs, primarily for "those with above average skills." After hundreds of meetings with employers between 1951 and 1955, the AFSC staffer Jacques Wilmore conceded that "placements are not outstanding."<sup>9</sup>

While breakthrough employment efforts faltered, civil rights activists pushed for the creation of a permanent FEPC after Congress disbanded the

antidiscrimination agency in 1946. On the federal level, it proved impossible to pass FEPC legislation, since southern members of Congress thwarted all efforts. Increasingly, pro-FEPC forces turned to state and local governments, which they hoped would be more hospitable.<sup>10</sup> In 1948, Philadelphia's city council enacted a fair employment practices (FEP) ordinance in the context of an intense partisan struggle for the loyalty of black voters, still only tenuously attached to the Democratic Party. The revised city charter of 1951 created the Commission on Human Relations (CHR) and empowered it to investigate violations of Philadelphia's FEP law. The law, like its counterparts throughout the North, mandated nondiscrimination in all employment in the city. The CHR approached discrimination on a case-by-case basis, placing the burden of proof on individual complainants. A firm might completely exclude minorities, but unless a single worker came forward and documented his or her claim, that firm's discriminatory practices went unchallenged. The CHR lacked the staff and funding to investigate civil rights violations systematically. In addition, the commission had no enforcement powers. Its charge was to "seek to adjust all complaints of unfair employment practices." Any employer who did not comply could be fined up to one hundred dollars if successfully prosecuted by the city solicitor, which seldom occurred. The primary strategy of Philadelphia's FEP law was "the use of education to reduce prejudice and fears." In its first five years, the CHR processed 1,172 employment-discrimination complaints, but it found that only 389 cases (about 33 percent) were grounded, and it prosecuted no employers.<sup>11</sup>

On the state level, civil rights advocates battled for a decade to create an FEPC. In Pennsylvania, as in most northern states, the FEP law was the product of compromise. Fearful of a law that would interfere with managerial prerogative, Republicans thwarted efforts to pass a state FEP law five times between 1945 and 1955, before a tepid version passed in October 1955. Liberals, already inclined toward gradualism, watered down FEP legislation to win over moderate Republicans. The FEP law was passed in a non-election year (as were similar laws in most northern and western states), in a session marked by unusually high absenteeism.<sup>12</sup> Underfunded and understaffed, the state FEP program made only a small dent in the problem of workplace discrimination. Adjudication was time-consuming and difficult. Under Pennsylvania's FEP law, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) handled 1,416 employment-discrimination cases in its first seven years and ruled on behalf of the complainants in 564 cases. But the agency did not use state power to compel employers to stop discrimination. It issued no cease-and-desist orders, took no employers to court, and held only

nineteen public hearings. Instead, it “adjusted” most cases through “informal conference [with employers] and persuasion.” Under such constraints, it was virtually impossible to attack the systematic exclusion of blacks from certain jobs. At best, the PHRC accomplished the placement of a token number of blacks. But however ineffective state FEP laws were, they raised expectations that job discrimination would soon be a thing of the past. FEP made the state an ally—however weak—of civil rights groups in the struggle for equal employment opportunity.<sup>13</sup>

### The New Militants

The postwar years witnessed real gains for black workers, particularly in industrial employment. But in an increasingly affluent, suburbanizing region, they remained disproportionately poor, unemployed, and confined to the least secure jobs. Relative to their share in the population, blacks were overrepresented in unskilled industrial and service jobs and underrepresented in sales, management, and the professions—those jobs targeted by the breakthrough campaigns. The number of blacks in the skilled trades rose significantly, but most of the gain came in traditionally black crafts, such as bricklaying and roofing, and in non-unionized construction. As a result, skilled black construction workers earned on average only \$3,792 per year, whereas whites earned \$5,192. Stuck overwhelmingly in the lowest-level jobs, blacks were vulnerable to layoffs, particularly when firms moved to overwhelmingly white suburban or rural areas. The rate of black unemployment in Philadelphia mirrored a nationwide trend: it hovered at one and a half to double that of whites in the boom years from 1946 to 1953 and double that of whites from the 1954 recession through the late 1960s.<sup>14</sup>

By the late 1950s, civil rights activists in Philadelphia had grown increasingly frustrated with the limitations of gradualist liberalism and the persistence of workplace discrimination. In 1959, a newly formed group of black Philadelphia clerics, the 400 Ministers, launched a four-year “selective-patronage” campaign against discriminatory employers. Impatient with the glacial pace of racial change in the workplace, they revived the tactics of the “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” protests, using their churches as the base of operations. “We just felt that government wasn’t fast enough,” charged one campaign supporter. Their goal, recalled Rev. Leon H. Sullivan, a founder of the committee, was nothing short of “breaking down [a] company’s entire pattern of discriminatory practices.” To that end, Sullivan and the rest of the 400 defended what he called “discrimination in reverse,” that is, upgrading blacks ahead of whites with seniority. “Black men have been



waiting for a hundred years," argued Sullivan. "White men can wait for a few months."<sup>15</sup>

Their first target was the Tasty Baking Company, makers of the sugary Tastykakes. Tasty had many black employees, but mainly in inferior jobs. Rather than demanding the hiring of a token black or two, as breakthrough advocates had, the 400 demanded that sizable numbers of blacks be hired at every level in the firm, including for work as bakers, delivery people, chemists, and clerical staff. When Tasty's management refused to cooperate, the ministers launched a boycott. One newspaper estimated that 80 percent of black Philadelphians joined the campaign. Signs reading "We don't sell it and we don't buy it" replaced displays of Tasty's desserts. After six months, the Tasty Baking Company capitulated and hired two black truck drivers, two black clerical workers, and four black women production workers, the first women on a racially mixed but gender-segregated shop floor. Emboldened by their victory, the ministers launched successful boycotts of twenty-nine other firms, including Pepsi-Cola, Sun Oil, Gulf Oil, A&P, the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, and Breyers Ice Cream.<sup>16</sup>

Selective-patronage advocates repudiated gradualism. "TOKENISM IS NOT ENOUGH," read one poster at protests outside the *Bulletin's* offices. In their campaign against Philadelphia-based Sunoco, they demanded a "crash program" for hiring black workers and, stopping just short of a call for quotas, a "minimal acceptable standard" for the number of blacks hired. One boycotter argued, "We're tired of hearing times are changing. How long is long? And how gradual is gradual?" The selective-patronage boycotts were more effective than earlier breakthrough campaigns. Leon Sullivan estimated that two thousand blacks moved into new jobs as a result of the boycotts. But even more important, the Committee of 400's increasingly militant language and confrontational strategy emboldened a younger, more working-class cadre of activists to push even harder for change.<sup>17</sup>

Inspired by the selective-patronage campaign, established civil rights groups refashioned their strategies. Philadelphia's CORE chapter—started in the 1940s, dormant through most of the postwar years, and revived in 1960—was a quiet band of interracial activists, many of them Quakers, who advocated peaceful persuasion and education rather than confrontation and protest. In the wake of the selective-patronage campaign, the chapter took a more militant tack. A small organization without the connections and legitimacy of the ministers who formed the Committee of 400, CORE met with limited success at first, but the chapter became more visible when a group of predominantly working-class blacks joined. Beginning in 1961,

CORE activists picketed stores and restaurants and vocally entered the debate about workplace discrimination in the city.<sup>18</sup>

Philadelphia's NAACP branch also attracted a new generation of militants. By the late 1950s, it was a relatively conservative organization, largely committed to fund-raising for national civil rights efforts. Its middle-class leadership was steeped in 1950s-era racial liberalism, preferring behind-the-scenes negotiation to confrontation. In 1959, after the election of the lawyer A. Leon Higginbotham as president, the branch began to shift to a more activist stance. Higginbotham was barely thirty and a top Yale Law School graduate. His establishment credentials were reassuring to the old guard in Philadelphia's NAACP. But because he was too young to have taken part in the factional disputes that had cleaved the NAACP in the late 1940s and early 1950s, he was free to push Philadelphia's branch in a more militant direction, without the taint of Communism. Under Higginbotham's leadership, the branch began to repudiate the gradualism of its earlier anti-discrimination campaigns. In 1962, Higginbotham's handpicked executive director, Thomas H. Burress, expressed frustration with "past approaches" that had challenged employment discrimination on an "individual, case-by-case basis." Burress demanded "accountability" on the part of employers. The burden of responding to racial inequality should be borne by firms, he argued, not by aggrieved workers.<sup>19</sup>

Philadelphia's NAACP branch underwent even more sweeping changes in 1962, when Higginbotham resigned to take a Kennedy administration appointment. Waiting in the wings were black insurgents who had tried to wrest control of the branch from its middle-class leadership in the late 1950s. Impatient and suspicious of the cautious reformism of the city's black bourgeoisie, the insurgents staged a coup. In the fall of 1962, the irascible Cecil B. Moore, a North Philadelphia lawyer, was elected as Higginbotham's successor. Moore pledged to turn the NAACP into an aggressive, protest-oriented organization. A loquacious orator, he earned the enmity of racial liberals by his rough language (including antisemitic and antiwhite comments), his defiance of authority, and his imperious style. Moore reserved particular vitriol for black moderates. CHR members Sadie Mossell Alexander and Christopher Edley were "little Uncle Toms" and "occasional Negroes." But Moore's streetwise demeanor boosted his popularity in poor and working-class neighborhoods. A Moore supporter from North Philadelphia frankly acknowledged that the NAACP president was "an arrogant foul mouth radical" but praised Moore for his interest in the "rank-and-file negro," an approach "much needed . . . among a restless people." It was

Moore's brashness and his concern for what he fondly called his "barbecue, porkchops, and collard-green-eating people" that won the support of blacks who bore the brunt of racial discrimination and whom the cautious racial liberalism of the 1950s had only alienated.<sup>20</sup>

The newly militant civil rights organizations took a bold step in 1962 and 1963. They turned to protest in order to challenge building-trades unions and their allies in both local and federal governments. Their strategy was ingenious. They targeted an industry notorious for racial homogeneity at its most vulnerable point: its dependence on government largesse. By the late 1950s, national civil rights organizations had begun to complain about discrimination in construction work. A 1957 Urban League report documented barriers to black employment in the construction industry. In a 1960 report, the NAACP labor secretary, Herbert Hill, criticized discrimination in union-run apprenticeship programs. And in 1960, when A. Philip Randolph launched the Negro American Labor Council, he lambasted the building trades and lashed out against "tokenism and gradualism." Local activists moved a step further. They decided to tackle the problem through direct action. By protesting discrimination in government contracts, they attacked the very core of postwar Keynesian economics: businesses and unions reliant on government spending. In so doing, they unleashed what would become the affirmative action debate.<sup>21</sup>

### The Building Trades

CORE and the NAACP went after the building trades at one of the best moments in American history to be a construction worker. Historically, construction work in the United States had been insecure, sensitive to economic fluctuations, dangerous, and seasonal.<sup>22</sup> In the aftermath of the New Deal, building-trades work grew more secure. Few sectors of the economy benefited more from state support. Federal and state prevailing-wage (or Davis-Bacon) laws guaranteed high wages and benefits in government-funded construction. Beginning in the New Deal, the federal government had supported apprenticeship training programs, with the Philadelphia school district paying instructors' salaries and providing classrooms.<sup>23</sup> Above all, the construction industry profited from the New Deal's pro-growth policies. Congress created the Federal Housing Administration, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, and the Federal Public Housing Authority in large part to revitalize the flagging construction industry. Federal, state, and local tax incentives also spurred new construction. Shopping malls supported by government-built infrastructure sprawled across former farmlands, alongside new sub-

urban housing developments underwritten by government loan guarantees; both were accessible via federally funded expressways. An expansive government channeled billions of dollars into airports and military bases, federal offices, urban renewal projects, hospitals, universities, and schools. Big government was the health of the building trades.<sup>24</sup>

By the early 1960s, Philadelphia was in the midst of a federally subsidized construction boom. In Center City, several new office towers, projected to cost \$45 million, were rising, including the new Municipal Services Building that civil rights protesters would target in 1963. Federal urban renewal funds supported the new Penn Center complex and a regional IBM headquarters. As federal education spending skyrocketed under President Kennedy, new public schools went up in neighborhoods throughout the city. And that was just the beginning. In 1963, construction began on the Eastwick Project, slated to be the largest urban renewal site in the country. The city built new public housing; announced plans for the revitalization of the declining Market East shopping district; cleared a "blighted" district in Society Hill to make way for an apartment complex designed by I. M. Pei; broke ground for a new U.S. Mint; and launched several federally subsidized hospital and university expansion projects.<sup>25</sup>

Particularly galling to blacks—26 percent of the city's population in 1960—was that the work crews on Philadelphia's unionized construction sites were overwhelmingly white. Compounding black discontent at "Negro removal" (as urban renewal was derisively nicknamed), projects seldom created jobs in black neighborhoods. More than 10 percent of Philadelphia's black men had experience in construction—most in non-union jobs. From the 1940s through the 1960s, with rare exceptions, Philadelphia's black construction union members were concentrated in a few racially segregated locals of the laborers' and hod carriers' unions, confined to unskilled jobs with little opportunity for advancement. A few blacks belonged to the unions for plasterers, carpenters, roofers, or bricklayers. Even where they had a beachhead of membership, black crafts workers still faced systematic discrimination and harassment. In 1954 and 1955, for example, black carpenters complained to the NAACP that they faced arbitrary layoffs and were turned away at the hiring hall despite their union credentials. Carpenters' union officials, they contended, unhesitatingly accepted contractors' requests not to "send any Niggers to this job." Even the token hiring of blacks faced fierce resistance. William Taylor, the sole black carpenter placed at a construction site after negotiations between the union and the Armstrong Association, faced the wrath of a superintendent who told him, "You forced your way in here, I'll get you out." Even in unions with sizable black memberships,

blacks were trapped in the worst jobs. In 1963, nearly one-third of Roofers Local 160 members were black, but every black member was classified as a helper, earning two dollars per hour less than mechanic roofers, all of them white.<sup>26</sup>

Economics and culture—interest and identity—powerfully combined to keep the building trades overwhelmingly white. The key to high wages and job security in the building trades was the constriction of the labor supply through exclusionary barriers. The shape and form that exclusion took grew out of a deeply rooted culture of race, gender, ethnicity, and family. Building-trades unions practiced preferential hiring. Many skilled-trades unions perpetuated a father-son tradition, recruiting new workers through family connections. In 1964, for example, all thirty-two apprentices in International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 32 were sons or nephews of union members. Forty percent of Philadelphia's plumbers had sons in the trade. The Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons Local 8 gave first preference to sons of contractors, and second to sons of its members. When the Pennsylvania labor leader James L. McDevitt was first elected an officer of Local 8, fellow unionists joked that "his family vote was enough to elect him." McDevitt's great-grandfather, father, uncle, three cousins, and brother were all plasterers.<sup>27</sup> Some of the larger unions recruited more widely, drawing members from ethnic associations, Catholic parishes, and neighborhood social networks. Most Tile Layers' Local 6 members were Italian; most Sheet Metal Workers Local 19 unionists were of Scottish, Irish, or German descent. Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers' Local 401 required that every apprentice applicant have two sponsors from the union before screening by an interview committee made up of three union officials and three contractors.<sup>28</sup> Exclusive hiring practices reinforced the ties of ethnicity and community. Unionists strengthened their sense of exclusiveness and solidarity through elaborate hazing rituals on the job site. Friendship and kin networks in the building trades were a nearly insurmountable barrier for black workers, since blacks and whites almost never intermarried and, in the heavily segregated city, seldom lived in the same neighborhoods or belonged to the same churches and clubs.<sup>29</sup>

Philadelphia's segregated building-trades unions were invulnerable to 1950s-era racial gradualism. Craft unions and contractors simply disregarded civil rights organizations and their breakthrough campaigns. When CEJO held a conference on construction apprenticeship in 1954, only two of thirty invited unions bothered to send representatives. The same year, IBEW Local 98 officials ignored CEJO officials' calls and letters asking for a meeting. In response to mounting accusations that they practiced racial dis-

crimination, contractors and unions denied culpability. Contractors passed the blame for hiring practices to the building-trades unions, although in most trades contractors helped select apprentices and screen journeymen through joint union-contractor councils. Unions similarly disavowed discriminatory intent, arguing that their nepotistic hiring practices were race-neutral. They were not prejudiced: blacks simply did not apply.<sup>30</sup>

FEP laws barely affected the building trades. In 1963, a Philadelphia building-trades union official proudly noted that only a tiny percentage of FEP cases involved construction work. Few blacks filed grievances against exclusive craft unions because they had no access to information about union construction jobs and apprenticeship programs, not to mention connections at union hiring halls. Success in an FEP case required evidence that a contractor or union had deliberately, consciously discriminated by race. But building trades seldom resorted to overt methods of discrimination. They recruited through word of mouth rather than formal advertisement. Since craft unions and contractors tapped informal networks, their hiring policies escaped legal remedy. But in an era of growing civil rights consciousness, the lack of black faces in the construction industry did not go unnoticed. As black activists began to fashion new strategies in the struggle for racial equality, they moved inexorably toward a collision with the building trades.<sup>31</sup>

### Whose Rights?

In spring 1963, civil rights protests shattered the insular world of the building trades. The battle had been long in coming. In early 1962, as part of his campaign to refashion the NAACP as "an aggressively militant organization," Thomas Burrell called for an "all out attack on discriminatory practices in government agencies." At the same time, Philadelphia's Negro Trade Union Leadership Council, a coalition of unionists mostly from racially mixed industrial unions, demanded the inclusion of blacks in apprenticeship programs and in skilled trades. In 1962 the mainstream CEJO called for cooperation between federal officials and contractors in antidiscrimination efforts. In February 1963, *Greater Philadelphia Magazine*, a boosterish periodical targeted toward white professionals, published a searing exposé of Jim Crow in the city's building trades. Later that month, the Human Rights Committee of the Pennsylvania American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) issued a report denouncing "our failure to break the pattern of segregated locals and to change the discriminatory membership practices of certain unions." In March 1963, the CHR criticized

two electrical workers' locals, a plumbers' local, and a steam fitters' local for "Negro exclusion." In April 1963, a group of prominent black Baptist ministers, many of whom had participated in the selective-patronage campaign, demanded that the city prohibit discrimination on publicly funded construction sites.<sup>32</sup>

Philadelphia's CORE chapter became the vanguard of the struggle against construction-industry discrimination. Louis Smith, a vacuum-cleaner repairman who had become the chapter's director in 1962, accused the city of unjustly channeling "taxpayers' money to builders who hire from discriminating unions" and demanded that the city stop awarding contracts to firms with few or no black workers. The official response was tepid. Mayor James J. Tate, a stalwart of Philadelphia's Democratic machine and a resident of an all-white neighborhood that many skilled craftsmen called home, was silent. Like most northern Democrats, he supported civil rights in the South, but from the mid-1950s through the mid-1960s, as a city council member and in his first year as mayor, Tate had largely ignored race issues in his own backyard. CHR head George Schermer reported, "Never once in the seven years I had to deal with him did I get the slightest hint that he had any concern" about civil rights.<sup>33</sup>

CORE confronted the mayor in April 1963, demonstrating in the narrow street outside Tate's row house, picketing at city hall, and occupying the mayor's reception room in an hour-long sit-in. "Why do you have to do things like this?" the exasperated Tate asked Smith. However annoyed Tate was, the protests jarred him from complacency. As Schermer recalled, Tate "never did anything until the day CORE picketed his house." The sudden appearance of the civil rights movement on his doorstep forced Tate to confront an issue that he had hoped would simply go away. Tate's frustration was common to many other Democrats in the early 1960s. The demand for an end to Jim Crow on city contracts pitted two core Democratic constituencies against each other. As a Democrat in a city that was over one-quarter black, Tate could scarcely afford to ignore civil rights. Yet in a majority-white, heavily working-class city, he feared alienating his most loyal supporters. Tate faced the dilemma of resolving irreconcilable demands: African Americans sought construction jobs; white craftsmen sought to protect the security and fraternity of their trades.<sup>34</sup>

Tate moved hesitatingly toward a middle ground. Hoping to defuse the protests, he instructed the city's Board of Labor Standards and the CHR to investigate the hiring practices of contractors and trade unions working on city contracts. Barnet Lieberman, the city's commissioner of licenses and inspections, criticized civil rights advocates, claiming that Philadelphia of-

ficials "had made assiduous effort to protect equal employment opportunities for all persons in our city." To Lieberman, accusations of Jim Crow in city employment were "partisan pleading in its most reprehensible form." The CHR held hearings on employment discrimination in early May while city construction projects continued uninterrupted. Asked about the civil rights protesters, Tate told reporters, "I am in sympathy with them, but I can't do anything." Tate's equivocation and his aides' obstinacy infuriated civil rights activists. CORE accused the mayor of "inaction," charging him with "putting politics before the welfare of the Negro citizens of the city."<sup>35</sup>

In early May, civil rights protests accelerated. Cecil Moore and his NAACP branch joined (and tried to co-opt) the CORE effort. At a downtown rally in support of the victims of police brutality in Birmingham, Moore railed against discrimination in city contracts. "The only difference between Birmingham and Philadelphia is geography. . . . Like in Birmingham, we are willing to go to jail for what is right." Moore also denounced the CHR for holding hearings, voicing militants' impatience at the gradualist tactics of racial liberals. The public hearings were an "unnecessary stalling tactic," shouted Moore. "We're tired of conferring. We're not going to waste time discussing labor unions or cops who beat us up, we're going to do something about it." Moore's threat was not an idle one.<sup>36</sup>

On May 14, fifteen demonstrators from CORE occupied the mayor's offices for twenty-one hours. Singing "Freedom, Freedom" and "We Shall Overcome," they demanded an immediate end to discrimination on city-funded construction. After a meeting with Tate, the protesters left city hall. For the first time, the mayor criticized craft unions and asked them to "do their duty and meet their responsibilities as Americans to admit Negroes to membership." In a press conference, Tate again deployed patriotic rhetoric to challenge discrimination in city contracts, citing Philadelphia's "heritage of freedom and equal rights for all men" and calling on "all members of the community to support our efforts to underscore the thought that all men are created equal." Outside protests continued, led by Moore, who demanded an immediate halt to construction work until black craftsmen were hired. Backed into a corner, the reluctant Tate stopped construction on the Municipal Services Building "until all persons are offered employment opportunities." He later told reporters that the protests "made us fear another Birmingham, and that's why we shut down work on the project."<sup>37</sup>

That civil rights activists had stopped work on a construction site outraged unionists. Counterprotesters at city hall waved signs that read, "Tate puts men out of work for votes." James Jones, a black steelworker and civil



rights activist, took a middle ground, in support of the campaign against discrimination but critical of the work stoppage. He worried that "a lot of good unions" would suffer because of the shutdowns. Emotions were raw. In a dramatic moment of ill timing, building-trades workers waiting to meet with city officials faced off with Cecil Moore, fresh from a meeting with Tate, in the corridor outside the mayor's office. Fifteen tense minutes of "shouting, arm-waving, and denunciation from both sides" followed. Angry workers yelled, "Why are you shutting us down?" and "Why are you stopping us from working?" Thomas Dugan, business manager of the Steamfitters Union, confronted Moore: "Who says the unions are guilty?" Moore shot back, "Until you put black faces out there, you're guilty." Dugan replied, "You're depriving men of jobs." Moore rejoined, "You're segregated as Alabama." The "noisy confrontation" continued until police intervened.<sup>38</sup>

The day after the sit-in at the mayor's office, Moore gathered several hundred NAACP members in front of the Municipal Services Building construction site. NAACP and CORE leaders warned government officials that unless blacks were hired in the building-trades unions, they would expand their protests to other construction sites. The Committee of 400 pledged to support the protests "to the point of using their own bodies" to shut down construction sites. Ten days after the city hall sit-in, picketers organized by the NAACP surrounded a school under construction in Philadelphia's Strawberry Mansion section. They were joined by neighbors incensed at the sight of white-dominated work crews in the predominantly black community. The crowds were diverse. One rainy afternoon, housewives led "an umbrella-studded procession." A contingent of Philadelphia's most prominent black lawyers joined the protests. In a theatrical inversion of the police brutality in Birmingham, black schoolchildren marched with "fierce-looking mastiffs." The school protest turned violent. Police officers, unionists, and demonstrators clashed. White construction workers leaped over fences to avoid picketers, a teamster drew his shotgun to threaten protesters who blocked a service entrance, and, finally, 140 police officers formed a flying wedge to break the picket line. Altogether, sixteen people were injured in the clashes. Police officers slapped a black schoolgirl and "slugged" a black minister. Two members of the Revolutionary Action Movement, a fledgling Black Power organization, were arrested when they confronted bricklayers and police.<sup>39</sup>

The protesters couched their demands in an assertive language of rights and citizenship. "We pay as much taxes as everybody else," declared Delores Gordon. "We certainly deserve something for them. We'll keep marching peacefully until we get our rights." Another marcher, Aurelia O'Kedas,

was hopeful. "They've got to come around pretty soon. America is waking up to the idea that there can't be any such thing as second-class citizens." Marchers chanted, "We're tired of carrying bricks; we want to lay them," and "We want freedom now." One activist pointed out the hypocrisy of American Cold War rhetoric, a sensitive topic in the early 1960s: "Man we're just blowing Dixie to foreign countries when we tell them that this is the Land of Opportunity."<sup>40</sup>

### Toward Affirmative Action

Civil rights groups used their newfound clout to push for preferential-hiring policies. CORE demanded racial quotas for city contracts and apprenticeship programs "to make up for years and years of exclusion of Negroes from the skilled trades." The group would be satisfied with nothing less than the allocation of 15 percent of construction jobs to black workers. Moore, who had declared victory when a few black construction workers were hired, belatedly joined the call for quotas. Finally, in late June, CORE's national director, James Farmer, echoed the local demand for quotas in testimony before the House Judiciary Committee. Only the CHR refrained from calling for quotas, instead asking contractors to hire a "reasonable number" of black skilled workers.<sup>41</sup>

As the Philadelphia protests continued, Kennedy administration officials announced a new antidiscrimination initiative that targeted construction unions. From the first months of JFK's presidency, his liberal advisers had advocated issuing an executive order dealing with discrimination in the construction industry, but the president, reluctant to weaken his shaky hold over southern Democrats, had held back. But the wave of unrest in spring 1963 pushed him to act. Worried that the "successes of Birmingham, Philadelphia, and elsewhere" would spur more protests, administration officials moved decisively. On June 4, Kennedy announced his opposition to discrimination on federal construction projects, singling out "economic distress and unrest." Unnamed administration sources suggested that the president's statement was "partly in response to violence in Philadelphia."<sup>42</sup> In addition, Kennedy ordered Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz to enforce nondiscrimination in federally sponsored apprenticeship programs. Wirtz immediately created a task force to survey minority employment by federal construction contractors. He presented his findings in a memorandum to the president a week later. In twenty cities examined, blacks were wholly unrepresented in nine trades. Seven in ten black construction workers were mere laborers. In mid-June, Kennedy met with union leaders to

discuss Wirtz's findings and dispatched cabinet officials to several cities to discuss "greater employment opportunities for Negroes." The destinations included Philadelphia, one of five cities that his advisers singled out as "danger spots." On June 22 the president issued Executive Order 11,114, prohibiting discrimination against minorities on government-contracted construction projects.<sup>43</sup>

Kennedy's executive order did not, however, curb protests. Construction-site pickets continued in Philadelphia through the summer. The Philadelphia protests had a ripple effect throughout the North. On June 8, NAACP labor secretary Herbert Hill encouraged New York activists to "stage mass protest demonstrations" at construction sites, using the Philadelphia actions as a model. In June, protesters led a "mammoth demonstration" at Harlem Hospital, still under construction. NAACP activists in Trenton, New Jersey, also targeted government-funded construction projects beginning in mid-June. Inspired by its Philadelphia counterpart, the Newark, New Jersey, CORE chapter blockaded a school construction site in July. In Cleveland, Ohio, CORE and NAACP branches orchestrated a march of twenty-five thousand against building-trades discrimination. In August, spurred by the small local CORE chapter, Brooklyn ministers protested at the partially completed Downstate Medical Center.<sup>44</sup>

In Philadelphia, officials struggled mightily to defuse construction-site protests. To halt the school pickets, Mayor Tate brokered an agreement with the NAACP to put five blacks on city construction sites right away. But Tate could not keep the lid on. In late June, CORE coordinated a thousand-person march and sit-in at city hall, again demanding a shutdown of all city-funded construction sites. Over the summer, both state and city human relations officials entered into prolonged negotiations with building-trades unions. State officials examined the statistical representation of minorities in the building trades and other industries and, armed with data, bargained with union leaders over the "voluntary acceptance" of affirmative action plans. In July, Philadelphia Board of Education officials pledged to close apprenticeship programs that excluded blacks. And in August, the U.S. Department of Labor threatened to withhold its certification of union-sponsored apprenticeship programs if they were segregated.<sup>45</sup>

Even those relatively mild versions of affirmative action outraged many building-trades unionists. Thomas Dugan belligerently told his rank and file in the Steamfitters Union that he "was not going to be dictated to by any minority group." There were no blacks in Dugan's 2,200-member local, yet he claimed, "We never discriminated and never intend to. We want to do everything that is right and just"—with the qualification that "we are

not going to be badgered into placing just anybody in the union." Joseph Burke, president of Sheet Metal Workers Local 19, claimed, "I've never discriminated personally or officially against a man because of the color of his skin." But Burke drew a color line when it came to hiring. "They are asking me to say to a working white man, 'Get off the job because I want to put a Negro on.' I can never say that. Nor can I say to people out of work 'I can't put you to work because I have to put a Negro to work.'" Burke's and Dugan's claims were disingenuous. They drew lines all the time—making distinctions between workers, offering a preference to the son or brother of a current member, favoring one worker on a job over another. To tell a worker, "I can't put you to work because I have just given someone else a job" would describe the turn of events on any slow day in the hiring hall. But with the word "Negro" inserted, the ordinary act of turning away a prospective worker became, in Burke's view, an injustice he could not commit. The difference here was racial, pure and simple. At the very core of resentment of affirmative action among workers in the building trades was an unacknowledged white identity politics. White building-trades workers had so long benefited from the exclusion of African Americans that they could not conceive of their position as one that reflected patterns of racial separation and privilege. Rather, they saw the racial segregation of craft unions as the outcome of a natural process of group identification and affiliation.<sup>46</sup>

Building-trades unionists attacked antidiscrimination policies in the potent language of rights. "The established and well-earned rights of white people are being imperiled in the fight of Negro leadership against unions," argued Burke. Contractors joined in the criticism, denouncing desegregation measures as "discrimination against white persons." At the same time, building-trades unionists came to view government as their enemy and fiercely resisted its intervention in their apprenticeship and hiring programs. Plumbers denounced federal antidiscrimination measures as "undemocratic, unreasonable, unwarranted, and unworkable" and pledged that "we will accept no dictation from any government agency." In their view, antidiscrimination efforts were part of an insidious expansion of government power that threatened to overwhelm workers' cherished independence. Peter Schoemann, national president of the plumbers' union, echoed local opposition to federal demands for affirmative action: "We resent the use of the equal employment campaign as a reason for a federal takeover in an area where government does not belong." The notion of union autonomy, central to the ideology of the building trades (even if such autonomy was largely fictitious in the heavily subsidized construction sector), was put to the test by government nondiscrimination mandates. That the federal

government should regulate the employment policies of the building trades was a logical outgrowth of its already intense involvement in the construction industry. But building-trades unionists built a fire wall around their apprenticeship and hiring policies. Attempts to “force” the hiring of blacks threatened the job security that they expected the government to protect.<sup>47</sup>

After months of civil rights protests, Philadelphia’s building-trades unions made concessions—on their own terms. At the national level, the AFL-CIO encouraged construction unions to adopt antidiscrimination language in their contracts. Philadelphia locals complied. By summer’s end, all but the Sheet Metal Workers had signed an agreement with the CHR that they would “accept Negro journeymen and desegregate their apprenticeship programs.” By the following winter, a similar agreement had been reached with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. Those agreements represented a new strategy by craft unions that was imitated throughout the North from late 1963 through the adoption of the Philadelphia Plan in 1969: they pledged nondiscrimination on the basis of race, creed, or color and emphasized the right of individual, aggrieved minority applicants to appeal union hiring decisions. Belatedly, they had embraced the rhetoric of 1950s-style racial gradualism in hopes of avoiding the quotas and targets for Negro hiring that CORE and other activists demanded. Such union antidiscrimination agreements emphasized process, not outcome. They had no mechanisms for measuring progress, for ensuring that building-trades jobs were indeed open to black applicants. Adoption of antidiscrimination language allowed building-trades unions to emphasize their good intentions without being held accountable for results. Above all, they hoped that their voluntarism would keep the federal government at bay.<sup>48</sup>

In the face of growing pressure from civil rights protesters, the building trades began to support “outreach” and “pre-apprenticeship” programs that targeted minorities. Unions found allies in black social-service groups that eschewed militant protest and instead advocated programs to “uplift” the black poor through job training and education. The Urban League, for example, which had sponsored “job fairs” throughout the postwar years, hosted events where black youth could learn about apprentice opportunities. Agencies such as Philadelphia’s Opportunities Industrialization Center used federal job-training funds and foundation grants to prepare blacks for work in the skilled trades. By 1967 and 1968, many building-trades unions began to fund those programs from their own budgets in the hope that their outreach programs (which union leaders considered voluntary affirmative action) would deflect protest and dissuade federal officials from intervening in the hiring hall.<sup>49</sup>

The efficacy of union antidiscrimination policies provoked great debate. In 1966, the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Department proudly pointed to the fact that only ten complaints involving the construction industry had been filed with the federal government. Again and again, union officials asserted their innocence, snidely dismissing "discrimination" (their quotation marks) as the product of poor black education and disingenuously claiming that "THERE ARE MORE NEGROES in skilled jobs in the construction industry than in most other industries." But those claims rang hollow to most civil rights advocates, who saw union efforts as tokenism. Even with outreach in place, blacks trickled into apprenticeship programs a few at a time. In 1963, there were no black journeymen or apprentices in the unions for plumbers, steam fitters, sheet metal workers, roofers, ironworkers, and elevator constructors in Philadelphia, and only two electricians' apprentices. In 1964, two blacks gained apprenticeships in plumbing and two as electricians; the other apprenticeship programs remained all-white. In 1966 the sheet metal workers brought aboard two black apprentices. In April 1967, those seven unions, with a total membership of 9,162, had twenty black journeymen and fourteen black apprentices. Blacks remained clustered in the trowel trades and as laborers.<sup>50</sup>

### Protest and Policymaking

Union antidiscrimination efforts did not quell black discontent. Throughout the country, civil rights activists kept the issue of workplace discrimination in the limelight. In 1964, 1965, 1966, and 1967, construction-site protests erupted in Philadelphia; Newark; New York City; New Rochelle, New York; Cleveland; Cincinnati; Oakland, California; and St. Louis, Missouri, where, in a dramatic act of civil disobedience, a protester chained himself to the top of the Gateway Arch. In 1967, the NAACP announced a national campaign to open up the building trades. Federal officials took note of the protests. "The absence of non-whites among construction trades workers," wrote a Labor Department official in 1967, "has been a focal point for racial unrest" and "a prime symbol of the lack of equal employment opportunity." Officials in the newly created Equal Employment Opportunity Commission gathered volumes of statistical data to document the point. In Philadelphia, Labor Department officials accused construction unions of "dragging their feet" on minority employment.<sup>51</sup>

Protests and policy innovations reinforced each other in a feedback loop. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson issued Executive Order 11,246, which enabled the newly created Office of Federal Contract Compliance of the

Department of Labor to terminate government contracts with firms that did not practice “affirmative action” in employment. What “affirmative action” and “compliance” meant would be defined in 1966 and 1967 in policy experiments in four metropolitan areas that had been rocked by construction-site protests. In the aftermath of the Gateway Arch demonstrations, federal officials fashioned a St. Louis Plan that demanded that contractors provide “pre-award” evidence of their efforts to hire minorities—the awarding of a federal contract was contingent on the recruitment of under-represented minorities. When a St. Louis contractor hired three blacks to comply with the plan, white workers walked out, leading to years of litigation. In California’s Bay Area, in the wake of black-led protests against the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system, the 1966 San Francisco Plan obligated contractors to document their efforts to train, hire, and place minority construction workers. But Labor Department officials criticized Bay Area contractors for “paper compliance”; the plan led to nominal changes. In 1967, in another city that had been rocked by huge antidiscrimination protests, federal officials mandated a Cleveland Plan that required pre-award “manning tables” specifying how many minority workers would be hired on federally funded job sites and what positions they would hold. Finally, in March 1967, Johnson administration officials announced a Philadelphia Plan requiring “affirmative action” in hiring on all federal contracts in that city, with pre-award manning tables to be enforced by federal officials who would visit job sites and conduct head counts of minority workers.<sup>52</sup>

The Johnson administration had two goals: to stem growing black discontent and to fashion a proposal that would not alienate building-trades unionists. Straddling the fence proved difficult. Defending the Philadelphia and Cleveland plans to skeptics at the AFL-CIO, Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz stated that the government had singled out the two cities for their intense racial tension—and suggested that it would not impose such plans on other cities. The unionists were not convinced; they saw the city plans as the beginning of a federal assault on union hiring practices and continued to protest federally mandated affirmative action. Complicating the scenario was an internecine battle within the Johnson administration over the legality of the Philadelphia Plan. While Wirtz continued to defend the affirmative action proposal as a necessary tool to open construction employment to minorities, Comptroller General Elmer Staats expressed skepticism about the Philadelphia Plan and finally, in November 1968, ruled that it was illegal. The fate of affirmative action would be left to Johnson’s successor in the White House. In the meantime, the prospect of a federal affirmative action program with teeth sparked a new wave of black protests at northern

construction sites. Philadelphia's activists protested at local hospitals, the University of Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia School Board, and, in a reprise of earlier demonstrations, the U.S. Mint site. They demanded immediate remedies, not gradual change. When Richard M. Nixon took office, they pushed again and used the threat of racial unrest as a bargaining chip. In April and May 1969, a delegation of Philadelphia civil rights activists lobbied Nixon administration officials with the grim prediction of a new outbreak of riots if the government did not revive the plan.<sup>53</sup>

In June 1969, the Nixon administration resurrected the Philadelphia Plan. The key to the "revised Philadelphia Plan" was specific "goals" and "timetables," that is, percentage ranges of minority workers to be hired on construction jobs, accelerating over time. By deploying percentage ranges, the plan attempted to meet civil rights protesters' demands for quantitative evidence of minority employment while skirting the hot-button issue of quotas, which raised constitutional questions and irked trade unions. But with or without quotas, the Philadelphia Plan sparked conflict. Black activists stepped up their protests against construction discrimination in cities across the country, culminating in calls for a "nationwide black walkout" in late September. Many of the protests turned violent as hard hats and picketers clashed. Building-trades unionists continued to insist on their good intentions and claimed that they were the true victims of discrimination. AFL-CIO president George Meany (himself a plumber) bitterly denounced those who charged construction unions with discrimination.

We still find the Building Trades being singled out as being "lily white" as they say, and some fellow the other day said it was "the last bastion of discrimination." Now this is an amazing statement, when you figure how small participation of Negroes and other minorities is in, for instance, the banks in this country, the press. . . . I resent the action of government officials—no matter what department they are coming from—who are trying to make a whipping boy out of the Building Trades.

The Philadelphia Building and Construction Trades Council argued that the plan was "discriminatory against members of building trades unions" and contended that "discrimination because of race, color, religion, and ethnic origin has not existed in our trades for years past." Increasingly, white unionists saw civil rights as a zero-sum game. Sensitive to charges of racism, C. J. Haggerty, the AFL-CIO's top building-trades official, inarticulately avoided the word "whites" in addressing the union's annual convention just after Nixon administration officials had announced the Philadelphia Plan.



Haggerty charged that affirmative action “would in effect exclude others or bar others” from construction jobs. Especially unsettling to white unionists was their perception that government had unfairly “sided” with blacks. Above all, they began to view affirmative action as part of a larger cultural attack on the white working-class world, launched by protesters and abetted by “liberals” in the federal government. “We are constantly harassed by bureaucrats and so-called ‘liberals,’” lamented the head of the carpenters’ union in a speech attacking the Philadelphia Plan. In the thirty years following the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt, government had often been an ally of white workers. Affirmative action weakened that alliance.<sup>54</sup>

By the Nixon years, new, bleak economic realities had raised the stakes in the affirmative action debate. As the Vietnam War progressed, the economy soured. Under Nixon, federal spending on construction projects plummeted. The economic pinch was particularly acute in the older industrial cities of the Northeast and Midwest—places such as Philadelphia—which benefited relatively little from defense spending while struggling with capital flight, urban disinvestment, and a diminishing tax base. As they clung to their construction jobs, buffeted by inflation, federal cutbacks, and layoffs, building-trades workers blamed civil rights for their fate. Long-term economic restructuring was inscrutable to most white workers. But affirmative action was an easy target.<sup>55</sup>

There is no single explanation for Nixon’s support for the Philadelphia Plan. The newly elected president hoped to prevent a repeat of the “long hot summers” of urban riots that had plagued Johnson. Moreover, key Nixon administration officials, particularly Secretary of Labor George Shultz and Assistant Secretary Arthur Fletcher, were long-standing supporters of civil rights. Shultz argued that blacks should benefit from \$600 million in federal funds to be spent on thirty-eight projects in Philadelphia. Fletcher hoped the plan would help lift blacks from an ongoing economic “depression” and solve the problem of the “hard-core unemployment” of young blacks. Shultz, a labor economist of the Chicago school, had other motives as well: he hoped to lower construction-industry wages by increasing the supply of construction laborers. The exclusion of blacks, he believed, inflated labor costs on government-funded projects. Shultz and Fletcher also shared a suspicion of unions, which they blamed for inflation. Many Nixon aides also saw electoral benefits to the plan: it would mortally wound the New Deal coalition by dividing working-class whites and blacks—a division that had been foreshadowed in the acrimonious construction-site protests. When federal courts upheld the constitutionality of the Philadelphia Plan,

Nixon's administration, in the words of his aide Laurence Silberman, sowed Philadelphia Plans "across the country like Johnny Appleseed." In January 1970, Order 4 extended the principles of the Philadelphia Plan to all government contracts of \$50,000 or more; in December 1971, it was amended to incorporate women. Affirmative action, Philadelphia Plan-style, now covered a large swath of the American economy.<sup>56</sup>

Affirmative action was the distinctive product of Johnson and Nixon administration policymakers. But local civil rights activists and construction unionists had thrust the battle over employment discrimination onto the national stage, with lasting consequences. Looking backward and situating affirmative action in the postwar struggle for civil rights helps make sense out of this controversial policy. Affirmative action grew out of the unfinished struggle for racial equality in the workplace after World War II. To cast the history of affirmative action as the story of a radical shift from color blindness to color consciousness effaces the complex lived reality of race in the urban North. There was nothing *de facto* color-blind about the exclusion of African Americans from Philadelphia's building trades. That the construction industry remained a bastion of white privilege was the consequence of the separation of blacks and whites in nearly every arena of everyday life in the postwar city. Civil rights activists demanded policies that broke open the closed circle of nepotism, friendship, and race that kept blacks out of one key sector of the urban economy. The threat to that closed world sparked a powerful reaction from building-trades unionists and their supporters, who belatedly adopted the rhetoric and strategies of postwar racial gradualism to defend their position. Although they lost their battle to thwart the Philadelphia Plan, their arguments—particularly their insistence on their racial innocence, their critique of affirmative action's "discrimination" against whites, and their resentment of government—continue to shape the affirmative action debate.<sup>57</sup>

This account of Philadelphia's battle over affirmative action aims to offer a model for still-to-be-written histories of policymaking from the bottom up. It is impossible to explain the timing, the form, and the target of early affirmative action programs without attention to grassroots politics. Local civil rights activists—Leon Sullivan of the Committee of 400, Cecil B. Moore of the Philadelphia branch of the NAACP, and Louis Smith of CORE—did much to unravel the gradualist racial liberalism of the 1940s and 1950s. They demanded that racial equality in the workplace be measured by results—the number of minority workers on a job site. They would not be satisfied with antidiscrimination statements or token hiring. The protesters

who blockaded Philadelphia's construction sites in the 1960s and their counterparts in St. Louis, Oakland, Cleveland, and elsewhere were not, in a strict sense, the architects of affirmative action. They did not draft executive orders and federal regulations. But by taking their grievances to the streets and construction sites, they fundamentally reoriented the civil rights debate. The legacy of their protests continues to shape America's unfinished struggle over race, rights, and politics.

## “Trouble Won’t Last”: Black Church Activism in Postwar Philadelphia

KARL ELLIS JOHNSON

In postwar African American communities, the black church continued to be the most influential black institution in America well into the early 1960s, although it no longer held sway over its “flock” as it had before World War II, when most African Americans still lived in southern rural areas or small towns. The “promised land” for the black migrant in the northern city offered a paradox of enhanced opportunities coupled with persistent white racism. The harsh realities of urban life forced black-migrant churches and their members to make adjustments in order to survive.<sup>1</sup>

The African American church as an institution is both old and new to the urban setting.<sup>2</sup> In Philadelphia, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church (Bethel), established in 1794 on South Sixth Street as one of the first independent black churches in America, had its origins in a protest against racism when founder Richard Allen and his followers objected to the ill treatment of blacks by the white Methodist Church congregation.<sup>3</sup> The AME church soon spread to the South; but as Ira Berlin has noted, its growth was “abruptly halted during the first years of the nineteenth century” because of whites’ fear of slave insurrections, and the denomination would not be an important presence in the region until after the Civil War.<sup>4</sup> Generations later, southern black migrants would bring their experiences and a plethora of churches to the urban North.

The black church in the post–World War II city was one of the few institutions that had access to large numbers of African Americans on a regular basis. Moreover, it could claim a great degree of independence from white mainstream influence.<sup>5</sup> The black church’s social-protest legacy, along with its traditional “community outreach” programs, was revived in postwar America and carried over into the civil rights era. Scholars have acknowledged the role that activist black churches and leaders played in the civil

rights movement, but studies of black religious activism still focus too exclusively on the South, where such organizations as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference took the lead in the struggle against Jim Crow practices. In the postwar urban setting, however, church activism played a key role in fighting racism in the North as well. In Philadelphia, community and civil rights activism among black churches and their leaders reached a high point during the post-World War II period, but their efforts were more often directed against discrimination in housing and jobs than segregation in (or exclusion from) public accommodations.

Although the passage of Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) laws in the 1940s and mid-1950s opened up some opportunities for minorities in federal jobs, blacks were still blatantly discriminated against in the private sector. Opponents of civil rights had organized both formally and informally to keep African Americans "in their place," but black church leaders led a widespread grassroots movement to open up more job opportunities. Church activism reached a zenith when four hundred black ministers in Philadelphia called for boycotts in late 1959 and the early 1960s. This grassroots movement began what was called the "selective patronage" campaign, when ministers asked their members not to buy the products of Philadelphia companies that discriminated against blacks. The campaign would be led by Zion Baptist Church in North Central Philadelphia, a church with a long history of community service. Its pastor, Rev. Leon H. Sullivan, would emerge as the leader of this campaign.<sup>6</sup>

This essay will examine the black church in postwar Philadelphia, its community service and civil rights activism, and the role that African American women played in the institution. In studying black religious institutions, it is a mistake to separate civil rights activities from the church's community-service role. Community service was often closely linked to social protest, because it displayed the ability of black institutions to provide some of the human and social services to their people that were often denied or unequally allocated by mainstream private, state, and local institutions. For example, some of the larger, more established black churches developed community building and loan associations, enabling some members to borrow money to buy homes. This community service was a vital contribution to the struggle against racism in the postwar era because blacks were often denied loans from the white-owned banks that distributed Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans, due to widespread discrimination in the housing market and redlining activities.<sup>7</sup> At such times, community service became indistinguishable from civil rights activism.<sup>8</sup>

## Wartime Prosperity and the Rise of the Black Church

The post–World War II black church in Philadelphia was well positioned to push for civil rights because of a number of positive factors. Occupational opportunities during the war had given church members more disposable income to donate to their churches, which rescued many institutions from the financial difficulties of the Great Depression. This newfound financial stability allowed established churches to worry less about the internal problem of members' becoming destitute and to focus more on extending community service and fighting for civil rights. By 1945, there were more than four hundred black churches in the city, including megachurches (with 1,000 or more members), large churches (500–999 members), medium-size churches (200–499 members), and small or storefront churches (fewer than 200 members). Average congregation sizes ranged from two to three hundred members. More than half of these churches were of the small or storefront variety in the beginning, but increased black migration coupled with wartime prosperity led to a surge in medium-size, large, and megachurches as well.<sup>9</sup> As the war brought more southern black migrants, who were able to get jobs in the city, storefront churches expanded in number. But membership in many already established, modest-size institutions grew exponentially, leading to the purchase of larger edifices that brought them into the ranks of "respectable" churches (see fig. 12.1). Not surprisingly, this growth increased the church's influence in the black community.

The larger mainline churches often looked down upon storefront churches because the latter attracted more of the less well-educated, working-poor southern migrants, who maintained their distinctive cultural and religious traditions through these churches. Equally important, the storefront churches took potential members away from the larger ones. Although most of the mainline churches started off as small or storefront churches, it mattered little.<sup>10</sup>

Black churches were very diverse in Philadelphia; they were often divided not only by denomination, but also along cultural and class lines.<sup>11</sup> In order to properly analyze the "state of health" of the black church in Philadelphia, then, an array of different churches must be analyzed. Historian Robert Gregg has pointed out that from the turn of the twentieth century until World War II, many of Philadelphia's black churches struggled to maintain their buildings because of debt. During the Depression, even the long-established, elite black churches had difficulty keeping up with their mortgages, which curtailed their community outreach. In postwar Philadelphia,

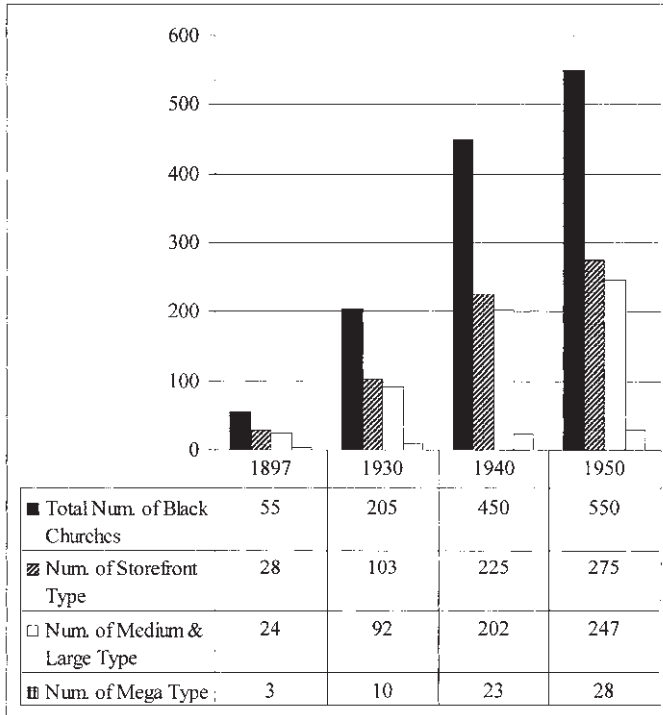


Fig. 12.1. Growth of black churches in Philadelphia, 1897–1950. Sources: Robert Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression: Philadelphia's African Methodists and Southern Migrants, 1890–1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 214; *The Bulletin Almanac and Year Book, 1955* (Philadelphia), 371.

however, the alleviation of such insecurities gave black religious institutions independence from banking institutions and allowed them to provide more community services for their neighborhoods, and in some cases beyond their localities.<sup>12</sup>

Many smaller black churches have not left archival records. Fortunately, a valuable alternative source of information on these institutions in Philadelphia does exist. Ruby Smith and J. W. Woods, columnists for the *Philadelphia Afro-American* newspaper, wrote hundreds of profiles on the city's black churches in the postwar period. They found that, despite earlier difficulties, many churches emerged vibrant and strong after 1945. They pointed out, for example, that St. Thomas Methodist Church in Frankford, on Margaret and Tackawanna streets, rebounded from financial ruin in the five years from 1942 to 1947, benefiting from the wartime economic boom. Pastor H. H. Nichols was hired in 1941 and reported that the church had

a yearly income of \$940 at that time. By 1946, St. Thomas had an income of \$12,000—a more than 1,000 percent increase—enabling it to pay off its \$13,000 mortgage, which left the church debt-free for the first time in its history. More amazing was that St. Thomas had only 156 members in 1947, so it did not benefit so much by adding new members as through the increasing financial contributions of existing members who were able to find steady work during the war. St. Thomas was a small church, but it provided a valuable community service through its renowned Summer Church School, which was open to anyone in the community and had six teachers and 118 pupils. Since the school furthered the education of black children while keeping them off the street and out of trouble during the summer, it had the support of a nearby Second Baptist church and an AME church.<sup>13</sup>

The St. Matthews AME Church in West Philadelphia on Fifty-seventh and Summer streets epitomized how this trend impacted well-established black churches. From 1940 to 1946, Rev. Mahlon M. Lewis and his 3,000-member congregation were able to erect a church building worth \$350,000 at a cost of \$115,500—an enormous sum at the time. During the same period, St. Matthews's annual income increased dramatically, from \$22,000 to \$100,000. The church's huge structure contained several auditoriums in two adjoining buildings, one housing the church and the other a community center. The community center was available for a variety of athletic and recreational activities. The church employed twenty-one people, and the center also contained a dental office. A large gymnasium was maintained by church members, along with a library of eight hundred volumes, a game room, and a room for training on mechanical tools. An important part of the church's community mission was to reduce juvenile crime by providing programs and recreational activities for black youngsters. It took in five hundred teenagers who were referred to the church by the juvenile courts for rehabilitation.<sup>14</sup>

### The Black Baptist Church's Postwar Rise to Prominence

The AME congregations were not the only black churches that expanded in size and number during the postwar period in Philadelphia; black Baptist congregations also did so, and at a much faster rate. St. Paul Baptist Church on Tenth and Wallace streets was one such congregation that benefited from the wartime and postwar prosperity. Established in 1890, it was led by Rev. E. Luther Cunningham, a thirty-seven-year-old activist preacher who had been educated at Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania. His congregation was active and rapidly expanding after the war because of black migration, and that aided him in carrying out the institution's missions.



During one month of church services in January 1946, for example, more than a hundred people joined the church. As a consequence, St. Paul became debt-free and retired an \$11,000 mortgage in only two years. The congregation was then able to purchase, early in the postwar period, the Gothic edifice that was formerly owned by the First Reform Church during the wartime boom. The church members' community service was substantial. The congregation provided children's day care for its sixteen hundred members.<sup>15</sup> In addition, it epitomized the growing ability of black churches in postwar Philadelphia to provide community services beyond their immediate neighborhoods. Baptist preachers had to receive permission from their congregations or a board of elected deacons or elders in order to pursue activities outside the sphere of the church and locality. The church members paid the pastor's salary and housed him and his family. So it was difficult for a minister to be an activist unless his church members were activists as well. The members of St. Paul's allowed Rev. Cunningham to represent them on the boards of nineteen civic and religious organizations throughout the city. These included the Philadelphia Federation of Churches, Downingtown Industrial School, Friends Neighborhood Guild Settlement House, Home for the Aged and Infirm Colored Persons, Douglass Hospital, and the Fellowship House.<sup>16</sup>

Ruby Smith and J. W. Woods's profiles of black churches in Philadelphia provide a solid assessment of the "state of health" of the most important institution in the community. Churches saddled with heavy debt and slow growth were more prone to internal dissension and tended to provide less community service. The good health and positive outlook of the black church after the war demonstrated the ability of the black working class and working poor to pool their resources for self-help and community improvement. Equally important, however, these additional resources would help the black church to fight the battle for civil rights in the postwar period.

Vine Memorial Baptist Church epitomized the meteoric rise of black Baptist churches and their increased influence in Philadelphia's postwar African American community. Fueled by its attractiveness to black migrants, Vine Memorial in just fifteen years grew from obscurity to become a megachurch, with more than a thousand members. In that short time, the congregation moved from three different locations, a pattern that was fairly typical for black churches undergoing rapid expansion. In June 1945, Vine Memorial's members bought a Gothic-style church structure at Fifty-sixth Street and Girard Avenue from Palatinate Reformed Church, which had followed its white congregation to the suburbs.<sup>17</sup>

In his classic 1899 study *The Philadelphia Negro*, W. E. B. Du Bois pointed out that right after the Civil War, there were more black Methodist

churches in Philadelphia than black Baptist churches, and that AME church leaders clearly had the most influence and prestige within and outside the black community.<sup>18</sup> Philadelphia was the place where the AME church had begun in 1794, as the first independent black church in America. Black migration between the Civil War and World War I gave rise to the proliferation of Baptist churches and larger congregations. By 1897, a few Baptist churches, such as Union and Shiloh Baptist, already had congregations with memberships of one thousand.<sup>19</sup>

By the time of World War II, black Baptist churches had many more edifices and members than AME churches in Philadelphia and had gained considerable influence in the black community. Vine Memorial Baptist, for example, demonstrated that the Baptist churches in general were more inclusive than other black denominations and had fewer bureaucratic roadblocks to forming a church than did black Methodist, Episcopalian, or Presbyterian churches.<sup>20</sup> As a result, black Baptists created many large churches and some megachurches (a few with more than three thousand members by 1946) that provided community and social services throughout the city. Vine Memorial, in a short time, was able to have two doctors and a nurse on staff to provide free health care to its members. It also had twelve paid workers and was in the process of building a gym in 1947. In a number of respects, then, it performed important social-welfare functions for its membership.<sup>21</sup>

### Overcoming Divisions: Prosperity and Black Activism in Church and Community

W. E. B. Du Bois argued that in addition to their purely religious function, black churches also served as ways that African Americans could differentiate themselves by social class, education, skin color, culture, ideology, or even sometimes the area of the South from which they migrated. Dividing the black churches by denomination, he claimed that the black elite—many of them longtime Philadelphia residents—usually joined Presbyterian or Episcopal churches. The “respectable” black working class tended to join the AME churches, while the black working poor flocked to the Baptist churches.<sup>22</sup> Robert Gregg argues that to focus on or stereotype denominations in this manner is too simplistic, since within each denomination exceptions could be found. He points out that the Baptists had their own church that catered to a black elite, while on the other hand a few Episcopal churches had poorer congregations. He also notes that many of the differences could be traced to the southern states from which the congregations

migrated. The increased isolation of blacks due to racism in Philadelphia up to 1940 led to exacerbated divisions within the community, not solidarity among the people. In fact, black institutions such as churches became battlegrounds over power and prestige for people who could not look outside their community for these things.<sup>23</sup> The divisions within the black community that Du Bois and Gregg identified did not disappear in the early postwar period. Growth and financial security among the churches helped to lessen their impact, however. In addition, with the passage of time, black church leaders played a key role in mitigating the differences on race issues, so that most African Americans came to understand that they could get tangible benefits by unifying around a growing civil rights movement.

The positive effects of migration and financial security were experienced by all types of black religious institutions in the early postwar period. African American churches of every denomination were paying off their debts, expanding or renovating their church edifices, and purchasing larger buildings from white churches fleeing to the suburbs. This gave rise to a degree of optimism among black churchgoers and reduced tensions within the community as a whole. Furthermore, a number of high-profile racial events during World War II and the postwar period tended to galvanize Philadelphia's black community around civil rights issues: the March on Washington Movement (MOWM) and the fight for a city and state FEPC, the Philadelphia transit strike of 1944, the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Little Rock, Martin Luther King, Jr., the ongoing local Girard College battle, police brutality in the black community, and the increased incarceration of blacks. Moreover, the refusal of many whites to recognize class differences within the black community and treat educated or wealthier African Americans differently from the black working poor made race more salient than class for black Philadelphians. Despite some improvement in the economic realm, all African Americans in the city continued to face discrimination in the private employment sector, as well as in housing and recreational facilities, and denial of access to city social services. These postwar circumstances served to lessen the divisions that had plagued Philadelphia's black community before 1940.<sup>24</sup>

### African American Women and the Foundations of Black Church Activism

Often overlooked in African American church historiography, black churchwomen played a crucial role in the black community's social-protest and community-outreach activities, and with institution-building. The black

church's community-service initiatives and civil rights battles would not have been successful without the support of its female membership. All the major black denominations had a predominately female membership, although the high-profile leadership positions were mainly limited to males. All the black church's internal programs, as well as its ventures into politics and economic development, depended heavily upon African American women for their promotion and success. Since the early twentieth century, women in the major black denominations had carved out their own space for leadership and power through the women's conventions of their respective denominations. Women served in many roles in black churches—as evangelists, missionaries, stewardesses, deaconesses, writers on religious subjects, Sunday school teachers, musicians, choir members and directors, ushers, nurses, custodians, caterers, secretaries, clerks, and counselors. Occasionally, women were also designated "Mothers of the Church," a title usually reserved for the wife of the founder or the oldest and most respected members. Some pastors consulted with the church's mothers before making an important decision, because of the influence these women wielded over church members.<sup>25</sup> Given the behind-the-scenes nature of most of their activities, however, black churchwomen seldom received public recognition for their work.

While most high-level church positions in Philadelphia prior to the 1960s were held by men, one early exception was Ida Robinson, a black migrant from Georgia who in 1919 founded Mt. Olive Holy Temple in Philadelphia, a Holiness church. Holy Temple began with a small but enthusiastic group of members on South Eleventh Street. It had to move five times, eventually following the African American exodus to North Central Philadelphia. In 1924, Robinson established Mount Sinai Holy Church of America, Inc., a new denomination, which under her leadership during the next quarter century would grow to twelve to fifteen thousand members nationwide, with churches spread primarily along the East Coast.<sup>26</sup> As Bettye Collier-Thomas notes in her book on black women preachers, *Daughters of Thunder* (1998), under Robinson's ministry Mt. Olive often focused on social and civil rights concerns. In one sermon, "The Economic Persecution," Robinson criticized southern whites for carrying out lynchings and supporting segregation in the section of the country "where 'Christianity' is more prevalent than any other part of our Union."<sup>27</sup> In its Philadelphia and other northern branches of the church, Mount Sinai Holy Church of America was probably one of the few denominations where blacks and whites could worship freely together without constraints, because the church believed that segregation in religious institutions was wrong. Early on, church leaders developed a

strong focus on education and musical development among youth. By the time Robinson died in 1946, she had established an accredited elementary school and high school in Philadelphia, Mt. Sinai Holy School, as well as a farm in South Jersey that housed and employed poor African Americans.<sup>28</sup>

Other women from Mount Sinai Holy Church of America would carry Robinson's vision into the postwar period. The pastors of Mt. Olive (who also were bishops of Mount Sinai Holy Church) who succeeded Robinson—Elmira Jeffries (1946–64), Mary Jackson (1964–83), and Amy Stevens (1983–2000)—continued her ideology of reshaping black religious leadership into more of a “mothering” and “nurturing” role. Mt. Olive, like other churches of the Mount Sinai denomination, was open seven days a week as a safe haven for its youth and served as a venue for numerous community events. During Jeffries's tenure, the church purchased a vacant hospital building on North Fifteenth Street and converted it into a home for elderly members of the congregation. The facility later became a nursing care facility designated the Elmira Jeffries Memorial Home. This commitment to educational and social-welfare work in the community allowed Mount Sinai Holy Church to prosper and grow well into the postwar period.<sup>29</sup>

Black women's progressive stand on civil rights issues was often rooted in religious principles and their role in making sure that the biblical teachings of love for all humankind and kindness toward the poor were followed by church members. In the past, black male church members had often narrowly stressed family norms based on the concept of the male patriarch and the female helpmate, which reinforced the idea that the women should stay out of “church politics” and focus primarily on family issues.<sup>30</sup> This focus made black women mainly responsible for feeding, clothing, and educating their children in a safe environment. As part of the reform ferment in the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century, black women began to extend their belief that the protection of the black family was in the interest of the entire community. They argued that such reforms should be a major part of the church's service initiatives and politics, and after World War II these reforms would be included as part of the platforms of civil rights for African Americans.

### The Political Influence of the Postwar Black Baptist Church

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the AME church had been able to point to local and national leaders among its membership, such as AME bishop Richard R. Wright, Jr., whose father founded the Citizens and Southern Bank; Bishop Levi Coppin of Mother Bethel AME Church; and

Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom, a nationally prominent religious figure and editor of the *AME Review*.<sup>31</sup> Among the church's many prominent families was that of Sadie Mossell, whose grandfather Bishop B. T. Tanner had founded the *AME Review* in 1888.<sup>32</sup> Ironically, however, Mossell's marriage to lawyer Raymond Pace Alexander, who attended Mt. Zion Baptist Church and whose parents had migrated from Richmond, Virginia, symbolized the rise of the Baptist church in the late 1930s and 1940s. Their marriage was the union of an old, prominent black Philadelphia family and the successful offspring of recent black migrants.<sup>33</sup>

By the late 1940s, the Baptist church had eclipsed the AME church in political influence among black Philadelphians. Eustace Gay, longtime editor of the *Philadelphia Tribune*, was a member of Zion Baptist Church in North Philadelphia. Marian Anderson, the famous singer whose 1939 concert at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington became legendary, was a member of Union Baptist Church and sang in its choir.<sup>34</sup> In the 1930s and 1940s, Rev. Marshall L. Shepard, pastor of Mt. Olivet Tabernacle Baptist Church, was a Pennsylvania state legislator and one of the most influential black politicians in Philadelphia. When he switched from the Republican to the Democratic Party in 1933, many other black politicians followed, leading an African American exodus to the party of President Franklin D. Roosevelt that would remain a defining aspect of black politics throughout the post-war era and beyond. Hobson R. Reynolds, arguably the most powerful black politician of the period, was a magistrate and the leader of the influential Black Elks fraternal organization, as well as a member of Wayland Temple Baptist Church. Black fraternal lodges were often closely connected with church membership. In August 1947, the Black Elks' parade in Philadelphia attracted ten thousand marchers and an estimated quarter of a million people who came out to watch the parade.<sup>35</sup>

By 1947, Mt. Carmel Baptist on Race Street had over three thousand members and was well known for its promotion of black community service. Led by Rev. Dennie W. Hoggard and supported by an activist congregation, Mt. Carmel extended its influence throughout the city and provided a complete community program for its members of all ages. The church took over the operation of a child-care center in 1943 when the Philadelphia Board of Education could no longer run it, and the Robert Wood boarding school in Elmwood was saved from financial collapse when Mt. Carmel purchased it to keep it afloat. The church's educational program provided scholarships to young African Americans who otherwise would have been forced to abandon plans for higher education. For adults, the church's home-buyer loan program provided any eligible member assistance with a mortgage

through the church, which was to be repaid in installments without interest. The church also employed the services of leading civil rights attorneys Raymond Pace Alexander and John Frances Williams. It was a large property holder in the city, owning an apartment building and a two-story parking garage. Mt. Carmel's large congregation and its influence throughout Philadelphia translated into political power for its pastor. Hoggard served as a Democratic member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from 1943 to 1948, and again from 1949 to 1954.<sup>36</sup>

Mt. Olivet Tabernacle Baptist, located on Forty-second and Wallace streets, was one of the best-known megachurches because of the influence of its leader, Rev. Marshall L. Shepard. Like Mt. Carmel, Mt. Olivet had both an activist congregation and an activist pastor. Before coming to Philadelphia, Shepard had served three years as an assistant to Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., at Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City. Powell was well known for his social and civil rights activity.<sup>37</sup> Hired by Mt. Olivet in 1926, Shepard was encouraged by his church's members to accept outside political positions, which in turn gave the institution more prestige. Between 1926 and 1947, Shepard served three terms in the Pennsylvania state legislature, became recorder of deeds for the District of Columbia for three and a half years, and held the position of chairman of the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention for about five years. Church members focused strongly on "saving the youth," by providing recreation activities and scholarships for higher education. They also strongly supported the YMCA. Mt. Olivet leaders made an important contribution to their neighborhood by regularly opening their church to the public for forums and meetings on important social and political issues.<sup>38</sup>

### Zion Baptist Church: Community Service and Postwar Civil Rights

The history of Zion Baptist Church in North Philadelphia illustrates the range and strength of black religious influence through community service, and the ways in which such activities were intertwined with civil rights struggles in the postwar era. When Rev. Horace B. Wayland founded Zion in 1882, it was the first black Baptist church to be located north of Market Street.<sup>39</sup> From 1926 to 1942, under the leadership of Rev. Robert J. Langston, Zion Baptist began to institutionalize its mission and to become a permanent force for community service and civil rights in Philadelphia. Langston was born in Virginia and did his undergraduate work at Virginia Union University; he later did part of his graduate work at Temple Univer-

sity in Philadelphia. His hiring continued a Zion Baptist tradition of seeking pastors who were from Virginia and well educated. Langston had early on developed close ties to Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., of Harlem, which gave him a reputation for advocating black-church involvement in civil rights and politics.<sup>40</sup> By the time of his death on October 2, 1942, Langston had laid the groundwork at Zion for the institution to take on an increased role in postwar Philadelphia in the areas of both community outreach and civil rights.<sup>41</sup>

In 1950, Zion Baptist officials hired Rev. Leon H. Sullivan as pastor. He was a perfect fit for a church that wanted a charismatic leader who could continue the church's community-oriented mission throughout the city. Sullivan was born in West Virginia and was well educated; he graduated from West Virginia State College and did graduate study at Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University. He had trained under Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., who in 1943 had taken over from his father as pastor of the large and influential Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. More important, perhaps, Sullivan had worked for the black labor—and socialist—leader A. Philip Randolph on the national MOWM during World War II.<sup>42</sup>

Leon Sullivan raised Zion Baptist's social and civil rights activity to new heights. The congregation and its activist pastor had a profound impact on the neighborhood surrounding the church. Sullivan looked to increase stagnating membership and to find a modern edifice, so that the church could better carry out its mission.<sup>43</sup> His work paid off. In 1955, Zion bought the former edifice of St. Paul's Reformed Episcopal Church on Broad and Venango streets, one of the most valuable and historic church buildings in North Philadelphia. It included a main auditorium that seated twelve hundred and had special equipment installed for the hearing impaired. The edifice was air-conditioned and featured classrooms, a baptismal pool, and a modern kitchen.<sup>44</sup> With a new building and with Sullivan in charge, working to reduce juvenile crime with his Citizens Committee Against Juvenile Delinquency, the church attracted many more members. Zion grew from a fairly large church of six hundred in 1950 to a megachurch of five thousand members by 1968.<sup>45</sup>

Sullivan's work with juveniles while he was at Zion Baptist received local and national attention from the black media. He was not afraid to speak out on controversial racial issues. In 1955, as chairman of the Philadelphia Baptist Minister's Conference (PBMC), Sullivan attacked the federal government for sending millions of tons of free food to malnourished people in foreign lands while ignoring the plight of blacks in Clarendon County, South Carolina, who were facing starvation because of racial



oppression. The "White Citizen Councils" were starving out black families in the town who had joined the NAACP and initiated a lawsuit to desegregate local schools. The PBMC, composed of two hundred area ministers, formed a committee called Aid for Southern Oppressed, which raised from black congregations more than four tons of food and \$1,800 in cash. Sullivan courageously accompanied the delivery of the food and money to the South, despite appeals from members of his family and his congregation not to go because of the danger involved. In the end, the cause was deemed a success by the black press in Philadelphia, which enhanced the status of the PBMC, Zion Baptist, and Rev. Sullivan in the black community.<sup>46</sup>

### Sullivan, Zion Baptist, Four Hundred Black Ministers, and Selective Patronage

One of Rev. Leon Sullivan's most heralded civil rights battles in Philadelphia was the grassroots-oriented "selective-patronage" campaign that he led. This was a series of boycotts called by a group of four hundred black ministers between 1959 and 1963 against a number of companies in Philadelphia that discriminated against African Americans in their hiring practices. Sullivan's involvement in Zion Baptist's employment agency convinced him of the need for action. At one point he sent letters to three hundred companies seeking job openings for blacks, but only seven companies even bothered to respond.<sup>47</sup> The boycott relied heavily on informal networks in the black community, carried out by word of mouth by regular churchgoers. Each Sunday, black ministers urged their congregations not to buy the products of certain Philadelphia companies that discriminated against blacks. The church members spread the word about these boycotts to relatives and friends, which resulted in a general boycott.<sup>48</sup> The black ministers would monitor a company by sending some church members around to see if it had changed its practices. Sullivan said about the process, "We ministers would hold midnight meetings to set our agenda and report on goals. When a company met our requirements, all 400 of us would go to our pulpits the next Sunday and say, 'it's off.'"<sup>49</sup>

African American churchwomen were a key reason why the selective-patronage campaign worked effectively. It was mostly women who coordinated the phone calls and spread the news throughout the neighborhoods. They relied on an extensive network of church organizations, women's clubs, civic organizations, and social charities to garner support and promote solidarity throughout the black community. In addition, it was usually the women who controlled what household products the family bought.

Not surprisingly, some of these products ended up being the ones that the selective-patronage campaign targeted for boycott.

Organizers also found ways to reach the unchurched black population. The selective-patronage campaign had the support of Charles Scarles, the publisher of *Nite Life*, a free weekly that was given out in black bars and clubs throughout Philadelphia. As a result, one reporter estimated, it took only four days for the boycott to reach the street from the pulpit. Thus, even the non-churchgoing element of the black community was kept involved.<sup>50</sup>

In the postwar period in Philadelphia, African Americans' prospects for obtaining better jobs were improved, but discrimination was still evident in many occupations. African Americans were much more likely than whites to hold low-paying service jobs, and they were virtually excluded from the better-paying jobs in the private sector. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) unions in the skilled trades, such as the unions for carpenters, plumbers, and electricians, remained entirely closed to black workers. The passage of FEPC legislation in Philadelphia (1948) and in Pennsylvania (1955) mainly opened up city and state jobs that had previously been closed to African Americans.<sup>51</sup> As late as 1958, blacks still faced a color barrier in the private job market in Philadelphia. As Sullivan later pointed out,

as of 1958, in all the banks in the city of Philadelphia there were only a few coloreds. There were absolutely no black salesman drivers of trucks for such major soft drink companies as Pepsi-Cola, Coca Cola, and 7-Up. There were no full-time colored salesmen drivers of major banking companies, or of any of the ice-cream companies. There were no black salesmen-drivers of oil trucks employed directly by major fuel companies. There were few black clerks in supermarkets, few colored sales girls in department stores, and few black clerical and stenographic workers in the large office buildings downtown. Everywhere you went where the jobs were good, you saw whites, and everywhere you went where the jobs were poor, you saw blacks. And even these black jobs had white bosses, for the most part.<sup>52</sup>

The selective-patronage campaign proved effective because the city's black community was united, but also because the demands made on the companies by the ministers were realistic. The ministers asked corporations to hire blacks in jobs that the companies needed to fill, and they pushed for the promotion of blacks to higher-paying positions who were already working with the businesses. This made it more difficult for critics to argue that

blacks wanted to take jobs from whites.<sup>53</sup> The victories of the campaign were well publicized in African American newspapers such as the *Philadelphia Afro-American*, the *Philadelphia Independent*, the *Philadelphia Tribune*, and *Nite Life*, as well as the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a black newspaper with national circulation.

The ministers' main aim was to break the pattern of discrimination in a company so that it would continue hiring blacks and consider them for all categories in the company structure. In all, more than twenty-nine companies were targeted for boycotts. Some of those were Philadelphia's best-known employers: the A&P and Acme supermarket chains, Penn Fruit, Food Fair, Tasty Baking Co., Breyers Ice Cream, the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, the *Daily News*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Gulf Oil, Sun Oil, Atlantic Richfield, Pepsi-Cola, and others. Other companies, such as Coca-Cola and Esso (Exxon), came to terms without a boycott. A number of black clergy, including Lorenzo Shepard, Henry H. Nichols, Joshua Licorish, O. T. Jones, and Alfred Dunston, headed committees that negotiated with individual companies. Participation in the boycott was not limited to one denomination; for example, Dunston, who was pastor of the Zion AME Church in Philadelphia, was an outspoken participant in the campaign and worked with Baptist ministers.<sup>54</sup>

The ministers were able to get support from such a large number of blacks beyond their church-member base because the selective-patronage campaign often took a militant stance, and all classes of African Americans were attracted to the prospect of getting better jobs. In one case, Sun Oil management challenged the ministers' boycott by defending its hiring practices, and company officials sent out a newsletter to the white daily newspapers and a number of black ministers in the city. Sun Oil pointed out that a publication by the Pennsylvania FEPC on job opportunities for blacks featured one of the company's black supervisors. The ministers' mission, however, was to move beyond tokenism and to get African Americans their fair share of good jobs in the company. As a result, the ministers refused to compromise with Sun officials.

A few weeks later, Sun's management announced that it had agreed to meet about half of the ministers' demands. Seven black women were hired as clerical workers, and two black salesmen and three black drivers were upgraded. The ministers acknowledged Sun Oil's progress but still refused to call off the boycott until all their demands were met. More pressure was added when the ministers sought a statewide boycott of the company by teaming up with the Black Masons fraternal organization. The Black Masons' leader asked his twenty-five thousand fraternal members not to buy

gas from Sun Oil service stations. Also, the ministers threatened to spread the boycott further by asking black churches in thirty communities across the state to join, including Reading, Scranton, and Pittsburgh. Soon thereafter, Sun Oil finally agreed to meet the ministers' demands.<sup>55</sup>

The selective-patronage campaign was successful in getting tangible results. Sullivan estimated that more than two thousand skilled jobs were opened to black workers as a direct result of the campaign. The actual number of jobs reached several thousand more, because firms in the same industry as a targeted company usually followed suit before a boycott could be called against them. Sullivan pointed out that one large company not targeted by selective patronage hired three hundred black workers in a single month because a boycott was being waged against another company in the same industry. In 1963, three hundred officials from leading firms in the Philadelphia Delaware Valley agreed that they would not discriminate against colored workers in their employment practices.<sup>56</sup>

### The Black Church and Solidarity on Civil Rights

Zion Baptist's interest in civil rights was not an exceptional case for black churches in the period. The postwar AME churches continued their historic role of strongly supporting political and civil rights for African Americans.<sup>57</sup> Nationally, AME leaders supported the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom at the Lincoln Memorial on May 17, 1957, which was a demonstration of the unity of African Americans, labor, liberals, and the church to support the passage of a civil rights bill in Congress. Speakers at the event included A. Philip Randolph and Roy Wilkins, the executive secretary of the NAACP.<sup>58</sup> In Philadelphia, AME church members worked to gain admission of blacks to Girard College, a struggle that became one of the most contentious civil rights issues in the city in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Black church leaders joined with Cecil B. Moore, who emerged at this time as one of the most prominent black spokesmen because of his protest against the college.<sup>59</sup> The AME church membership consistently supported Martin Luther King, Jr., and the southern civil rights movement, despite the movement's being mostly associated with Baptist, or Baptist-dominated, organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.<sup>60</sup> AME church leaders were able to promote the progress of their race over latent denominational pride and supported the modern-day civil rights movement from its inception.<sup>61</sup>

A 1960 *Philadelphia Tribune* article argued that the African American church was the greatest constructive force in America for change, and that the four hundred black ministers' call for a consumer boycott showed

positive leadership that would make Philadelphia a better place to live.<sup>62</sup> In postwar Philadelphia, the rising prestige of the black church culminated in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the church leaders' protest strategy held influence over their large black working-class membership and received respect from many among the so-called unchurched class of African Americans as well.<sup>63</sup> Throughout the postwar era, black church leaders showed an ability to organize effectively, with both community-service programs and civil rights activities. In the process, they overcame social and class divisions within the church and community to produce measurable benefits for many African Americans.

## The Black Professional Middle Class and the Black Community: Racialized Class Formation in Oakland and the East Bay

ERIC S. BROWN

### Black Urban Communities and Racial Inequality: Beyond the Underclass Debate

The major contemporary theoretical approach to understanding the status of the black middle class remains the *class-determined racial inequality* argument of Daniel Patrick Moynihan and William Julius Wilson, among others. The approach emphasizes the increasing inequalities *among* African Americans. This is seen particularly in the description of bipolar inequality between the black middle class and the black “underclass.”<sup>1</sup> The class-determined approach argues that the problem of racial inequality since the successful passage of civil rights laws and the implementation of affirmative action after 1964 is one of “class” rather than “race.”<sup>2</sup>

Class-determined racial inequality theory argues that civil rights policies have helped to diminish racial discrimination to a point of “declining” significance. Consequently, a relatively prosperous and competitive black middle class has emerged in the last thirty years or so. As a group, their life chances are determined by class factors rather than race.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, the black “underclass” is mired in joblessness, poverty, and pathology in ghetto neighborhoods. The life chances of this group are also seen as being determined by class rather than race. From this perspective, class-based spatial inequalities between the black middle class and the black urban poor are exacerbated. The “social isolation” of poor black neighborhoods is, in turn, fed by the exodus of middle-class blacks from the central cities for more integrated and affluent suburbs.<sup>4</sup>

The class-determined approach represents the most theoretically prominent approach to the status of the black middle class, even though it hasn’t had much to say empirically about that group. Furthermore, it has contributed

little to the understanding of the status of the black middle class in terms of urban community life. Scholars arguing from the class-determined perspective are primarily interested in the problems facing the black "underclass." The argument also underestimates the role that "race" plays in the social (re)production of black urban poverty. One example of this is the historical construction of racially segmented welfare policies in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

### Toward an Alternative Hypothesis: Racialized Class Formation and African Americans in the Professional Middle Class

While class-determined theory reduces "racial inequality" to class inequality, an alternative approach would emphasize more seriously the *interactive* relationship between race and class inequalities.<sup>6</sup> Race and class factors both "cast shadows" on the other, and both affect the life chances of blacks of differing class backgrounds.<sup>7</sup> I shall term this alternative approach *racialized class formation theory*. This theory is an "emergent paradigm" that seeks to supplant the long-dominant arguments made by the class-determined theory of racial inequality. It represents an alternative analytical framework for exploring patterns of racial inequality.

Racialized class formation argues that while class formation is a fundamental process in modern societies, it is often shaped or superseded by status group inequalities. This flows from the broader tradition of neo-Weberian theory.<sup>8</sup> Societies that have demonstrable status group inequalities (by, e.g., race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, or sexual orientation) tend to manifest these status-based inequalities in formal and informal systems of social stratification. Not all status inequalities are "created equal," and their relative importance varies from one society to another. Indeed, racialized class formation considers the intersection of two fundamental processes: class formation and what Michael Omi and Howard Winant have analyzed as "racial formation."<sup>9</sup> Thus, "racial" inequalities are not simply reducible to class inequalities.

### Spatial Inequality: Segregation as an Organizing Principle of Black Urban Communities

I will focus on race and class inequalities as two interactive types of social stratification. First, there is racial inequality based on *inequality of social position*, such as income, wealth, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, occupational status, social class categories, etc. Second, there is racial

inequality based on patterns of the *spatial dynamics of inequality* between and within neighborhoods, communities, cities, metropolitan areas, census tracts, regions, or other such geographic or spatial areas where populations defined by race and class (including the black middle classes) reside.<sup>10</sup>

These two types of inequality represent the intersections of class, race, and space. They are necessarily interrelated because communities are places where inequality takes place. Spatial inequality is important because it highlights practices of exclusion (i.e., segregation) that reduce the relative life chances of blacks (in comparison to comparable whites) of different social class backgrounds (for equal schooling, home property values, accumulation of wealth, quality of local services, neighborhood safety, etc.). This chapter is specifically concerned with the ways in which race and class have, in the post-civil rights era, shaped the formation of the black professional middle class in urban communities.

One of the most important studies to challenge the assumptions of the Moynihan-Wilson paradigm is the important work of Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton. Their demography-centered research is focused on the underclass, but it is a key example of the strength of a racialized class formation approach to local studies of racial inequality. *American Apartheid* (1993), apparently designed as an answer to Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987), demonstrates that residential segregation is central to producing the pernicious patterns of racial inequality faced by the poorest urban blacks.<sup>11</sup> Segregated black neighborhoods exacerbate problems of joblessness, poverty, and crime.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, patterns of "hypersegregation" expanded in the 1990s for blacks in many cities. They were the only group to experience this level of spatial separation from other groups.<sup>13</sup>

Norman Fainstein further challenges the hegemony of the Wilson argument regarding the "declining significance of race" and the standard "underclass narrative." As Fainstein puts it, the underclass narrative "does not need to tell the story of African Americans who are in the 'stable' working and middle class." He establishes that middle-class blacks are generally affected by segregation and greater proximity to poorer blacks.<sup>14</sup> Fainstein illustrates patterns of inequality based on "race" that differentiates middle-class blacks and whites. Middle-class African Americans fare much worse in terms of income, educational attainment, earnings returns to education, and wealth.<sup>15</sup>

### Methods, Problems, and Questions

The research methods used in this study constitute three complementary types of data collection. The project is concerned with changing patterns



of racial inequality at the national level, but it operates primarily as a case study of Oakland and the East Bay metropolitan area in California. First, I collected aggregate data from secondary sources. Most of this is from the census. The census data include some national-level and local-level evidence to describe basic trends. This allows analysis of local population dynamics, changes in occupational trends, and comparisons between blacks and whites in terms of different kinds of outcomes. The aggregate data trends also provide a useful context for further consideration of the primary interview data.

Second, I collected historical-archival data on local East Bay history and the changing historical situation of the African American community and its middle class(es). Most of this research was done at the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley and the Oakland Public Library's resources on African American history. Much of the historical material for this project is summarized in another article.<sup>16</sup> This chapter focuses primarily on the historical period of the *post-civil rights era*.<sup>17</sup>

Third, I conducted thirty in-depth interviews with "first-generation" members of the black professional middle class who entered those positions in the civil rights era of the 1960s and 1970s. The selection of interview subjects was based on a local (Oakland-area) snowball sample. These interviews revolved around questions concerning (1) personal and social background; (2) educational and occupational attainment and employment history; (3) community life; and (4) political attitudes and activities. This article is focused on the problems of community life.

I am specifically interested in studying those African Americans who entered professional occupations in the 1960s and 1970s. This period represents the origins of the contemporary black professional middle class in the *civil rights era*, and the chapter continues to focus on the post-civil rights era since the 1980s. This transition in racialized class formation is readily contrasted with the "old" black middle class derived from the pre-civil rights era of formal segregation. I see this "entering class" of civil rights-era professionals, from the 1960s and 1970s specifically, as the first-generation cohort of the black professional middle class in the then newly integrated (primary) labor market.

I am interested in two segments of black professionals: *professional employees* and *self-employed professionals*. Self-employed professionals retain many similarities with the old black middle class from the pre-civil rights era of segregation depicted by E. Franklin Frazier.<sup>18</sup> This group of self-employed black professionals—for example, lawyers and doctors—has

played a vital role, historically and presently, within the black community. However, in my study two other occupations—teachers and clergy—while not self-employed, play a role similar to that of the self-employed professionals. These roles will be discussed later, as will the provision of professional services to the black urban poor, who generally do not have broad access to such services.

Indeed, members of the black middle class have been key institutional and ideological activists seeking (both before and since the modern civil rights era) to *integrate* the basic institutions (higher education, labor markets, political representation, etc.) and communities (housing and neighborhoods) of the larger society. On the other hand, middle-class African Americans have always been central to the attempt to maintain viable, *separate* black institutions and communities. These separate communities have been the bases of support for their professional clientele, because whites have not been interested in making use of black professional services. That is, the “symbiotic” relationship between the social and economic interests of African American professionals and the efforts of that group to help maintain the social, political, and economic viability of black communities that have been created by institutionalized discrimination and segregation remains an enduring, and contradictory, dynamic of African American life.

Thus, “racialized class formation” for black professionals includes these two dimensions, in which the “integration” of black professional employees (employment dependent on the continuation of a politically threatened civil rights policy regime) and the dependence by self-employed black professionals on the shaky viability of separate black markets for professional services are both shaped by the contours of race. This effect of “race” makes the lives of black professionals substantively different from the lives of white professionals.

This chapter poses some specific research questions. Does segregation by race and class affect the life chances and the experiences of neighborhood life among the black professional middle class? In what kinds of neighborhoods do members of this black middle class live? Are there differences between black professional employees and self-employed black professionals in terms of the kinds of neighborhoods in which they live? Are there differences between them in terms of the kinds of civic involvement in which they are engaged? What kinds of relationships do members of the black professional middle class have to the larger local black community, including the urban poor?

## Methodological Rationale for Oakland as a Case Study

The predominance of the underclass debate associated with Moynihan and Wilson has shaped perspectives on the problem of the role of the black middle class in the black community in an indirect and derivative way. The two scholars have taken a cue from what has been termed the “gilded ghetto” argument of some historians. Wilson’s earlier work emphasized the hypothesis that in the pre-civil rights era, African Americans of different social classes lived in racially segregated multiclass ghetto neighborhoods. By contrast, in the post-civil rights era, the black middle class is to be found disproportionately in the suburbs, where it is unable to provide poorer blacks with appropriate role models, social capital, and viable social networks for social mobility.<sup>19</sup>

However, historians have found that “class-segregated” middle-class black neighborhoods are not a new, post-civil rights era phenomenon. By examining local census-tract data in Detroit, Buffalo, Chicago, and other cities, they have found evidence of viable class-segregated middle-class black neighborhoods in northern cities as far back as the Great Migration.<sup>20</sup> African Americans, like whites, sought to use strategies of social closure to increase the appreciation of the property values of their homes and to exclude what they considered to be the “worst” elements of the black community. In Oakland, historical evidence demonstrates the tensions that existed between long-standing black residents—frequently homeowners—and rural southern black migrants who came to Oakland in large numbers during the 1940s. These migrants were pushed into large public housing projects in West Oakland and other parts of the East Bay.<sup>21</sup>

The formation of distinct black middle-class neighborhoods is not simply a post-civil rights era phenomenon, as proponents of the “gilded ghetto” argument have suggested. These class-distinct black neighborhoods were part of pre-civil rights era black ghettos as well. When blacks have successfully “invaded” predominantly white neighborhoods in search of new and better housing, it has generally been members of the black middle class who have moved in first. This often led to the creation of class-segregated black middle-class neighborhoods.

These black middle-class neighborhoods also exist in contemporary cities in and around “traditional” black ghetto neighborhoods.<sup>22</sup> Often, these class-segregated black neighborhoods are temporary and are transformed into multiclass neighborhoods when members of other class segments of the black community move in. The black middle class generally has a relationship to and influence upon events in the less well-off neighborhoods

**Table 13.1** Population by Race in Oakland, 1940–2000

Race	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
White	287,936	328,797	270,523	213,512	129,692	120,849	124,921
Black	8,462	47,562	83,618	124,710	159,281	163,355	141,294
Latino <sup>a</sup>	—	—	19,309	—	32,492	51,711	87,443
Asian <sup>b</sup>	—	—	—	—	26,341	54,931	60,110
Total <sup>c</sup>	302,165	384,575	367,548	361,561	339,337	372,242	399,477

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, Characteristics of Population, California, 1940–2000* (Washington, DC: GPO).

<sup>a</sup>Data for Hispanic or Latino were not collected by the census before 1960. The figure for 1960 is based on the census category “white, Spanish surname.” Data are not available for the 1970 census. For 1980 through 2000, Latino can be of “any race.”

<sup>b</sup>Data for Asian Americans were generally lumped into the categories of “nonwhite” or “other race” before the 1980 census.

<sup>c</sup>Total population numbers do not equal the total of the distinct “racial” categories because Latinos are not officially defined by the Census Bureau as a racial group. They may be members of any of the other “racial” groups.

in terms of *work, residential, and civic activities*. There are important connections between these three aspects of black professional middle-class life and their relationships to other social-class segments of the local and national (symbolic) African American communities. This chapter will explore the dynamics of these linkages.

Relatively less sociological and historical research has been focused on African Americans in West Coast cities, perhaps because twentieth-century black migration to the Northeast and industrial Midwest was far greater than that west of the Mississippi River. While some important research has been done on black communities in the West,<sup>23</sup> more research needs to be carried out on the outcomes of black urban life on the West Coast. Oakland is a good choice for this endeavor because it has the greatest proportion of black population of any large city on the West Coast (including Los Angeles). In 1990, blacks constituted 43.9 percent of Oakland’s population (down to 35.4 percent in 2000; see table 13.1). Within the nine-county SMSA (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area) that constitutes the San Francisco Bay Area, a majority of blacks (56.7 percent) lived within just the two East Bay counties (Alameda and Contra Costa) that constitute the Oakland Metropolitan Area. This illustrates the racially concentrated residential patterns also common in urbanized places elsewhere in the country.

In California in general, and in the Bay Area specifically, both blacks and whites have higher incomes than comparable citizens in the United States as a whole (see table 13.2). They are somewhat better off in the East Bay than in most other places in terms of income. These relatively greater

**Table 13.2** Median Household Income and Poverty Rates by Race and Place, 1989 and 1999

Place	Black median income		Black poverty rate		White median income		White poverty rate	
	1989	1999	1989	1999	1989	1999	1989	1999
United States	\$19,758	\$24,423	29.5%	24.4%	\$31,435	\$44,687	9.8%	9.1%
California	\$26,079	\$34,956	21.1%	22.4%	\$37,724	\$51,279	9.1%	10.5%
Oakland (PMSA) <sup>a</sup>	\$25,444	—	21.1%	—	\$43,904	—	5.9%	—
Alameda County	\$24,480	\$35,909	21.3%	21.2%	\$41,740	\$62,181	6.4%	7.2%
Oakland city	\$21,771	\$31,184	23.9%	24.9%	\$34,623	\$54,076	9.0%	11.5%
Oakland suburbs <sup>b</sup>	\$32,201	\$44,270	17.0%	17.2%	\$45,299	\$67,829	5.2%	5.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Metropolitan Areas, Summary of Social and Economic Characteristics for Persons and for Households and Families, 1990 and 2000* (Washington, DC: GPO).

<sup>a</sup>The Census Bureau ceased using the designation of Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) in reference to Alameda and Contra Costa counties after the 1990 Census.

<sup>b</sup>Based on the category of "not in central cities" for the Oakland PMSA. For 1999, the data are for Contra Costa County.

incomes reflect the higher cost of living (i.e., greater demand for housing, food, services, etc.) in the Bay Area, as well as the greater demand for labor in service industries (including professional labor) in the region. The higher standard of living experienced by African Americans in the East Bay makes it an important local area to investigate via the case-study method, because of the apparent racial inequalities that remain locally manifest despite the relatively greater prosperity of the region and the higher-than-average income experienced by blacks in both the city of Oakland and its suburbs.<sup>24</sup>

These inequalities are evident when comparing local disparities in median income and poverty rates between blacks and whites. Therefore, the aggregate secondary, local historical, and interview data collected concerning Oakland is appropriate for examining the relationship between, on the one hand, national social and policy changes since the 1960s and 1970s and, on the other hand, the effects that can be analyzed at the level of a local case study. No single urban or metropolitan area can capture all the complexi-

**Table 13.3** Professionals Living in Select East Bay Cities and Counties and the Oakland Metropolitan Area, by Race, 1970–1990

	1970 <sup>a</sup>		1980		1990	
	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites
Oakland <sup>b</sup>	3,406	14,185	4,959	19,474	6,732	
Berkeley <sup>b</sup>	1,552	13,022	982	15,159	1,278	
Richmond <sup>b</sup>	914	1,669	963	3,155	1,589	
Fremont	17	6,478	143	11,048	487	
Hayward	80	3,115	189	3,445	502	
San Leandro	14	1,788	43	2,422	250	
Concord	37	5,343	278	6,868	143	
Walnut Creek	25	4,452	6	6,060	73	
Alameda County	5,335	57,649	6,885	80,176	10,486	
Contra Costa County	1,491	37,397	2,026	53,813	3,307	
OMA <sup>c</sup>	6,826	95,046	8,911	133,989	13,793	
Percentage of professionals living in urban areas	86.0%	30.4%	77.5%	28.2%	70.0%	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, Characteristics of Population, California, 1970–90* (Washington, DC: GPO).

<sup>a</sup>The Census Bureau did not denote local-level data for whites by occupation for the San Francisco Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) in 1970.

<sup>b</sup>Municipality that constitutes an “urban” area.

<sup>c</sup>Oakland Metropolitan Area, a two-county region and PMSA (Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area) of the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

ties of qualitative changes in urban racial inequality. Nevertheless, local and qualitative studies are still needed (in addition to aggregate and quantitative research) in order to capture the broader context of changes in racial inequality since the civil rights period. This study makes a contribution to that research agenda.

It is important to note that the black professional middle class in the East Bay has been primarily an urban-dwelling population, as demonstrated in table 13.3. By contrast, white professionals reside primarily in suburban communities. This is important for contextualizing the relationship of the black professional middle class to the larger segments of working-class and urban poor black populations in the East Bay urban centers of Oakland, Berkeley, and Richmond. The relationship of the black professionals to the rest of the local black communities can be found in terms of their work, their residence, and their civic and political involvements. That the black middle class can still be found in spatial proximity to less privileged members of the black community in Oakland is important for examining the larger processes and social relationships taking place among African Americans at the local level. It should be noted, as the data below indicate, that black professionals have declined somewhat over time in their rate of urban residence. If this trend continues, as is likely, it will probably say something about the viability of, or perhaps the final exhaustion of, the civil rights movement that mobilized blacks across class lines two generations ago.

### Three Types of Neighborhoods in Oakland Inhabited by the Black Professional Middle Class

In the post-civil rights period, the black professional middle class can be found residing in a range of neighborhood types. Applying Weber's concept of "ideal types" and considering census-tract and interview data, we can identify at least three major kinds of neighborhoods that are inhabited by middle-class black professionals. First is the *race- and class-segregated predominantly black middle-class neighborhood type*. This kind of neighborhood is segregated in terms of both race and class. It is predominantly black and also predominantly middle class. Spatially, these neighborhoods often tend to be isolated by major roads, open space, wooded areas, hills, or other such natural or constructed barriers that preclude connection with contiguous working-class and poor black neighborhoods. The "hills" versus "flatlands" distinction is one that is simultaneously geologic, spatial, and social. Social class and affluence in the residences of California cities rise and fall with the patterning of the hilly landscape.

These kinds of neighborhoods may be small in size and were often initially exclusive white neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods tend to have relatively high property values that financially exclude working-class and poor blacks on the basis of class. An example of this type is the largely black section of the East Oakland Hills that includes the Sequoyah Hills neighborhood. Many black professionals live in this sprawling upscale neighborhood. This most affluent, class-segregated black upper-middle-class neighborhood literally looks down (from the hills above) on poorer black neighborhoods in the East Oakland flatlands.

Second is the *multiclass black neighborhood type*. This tends to be the dominant type of black middle-class neighborhood, for two reasons. Because of the predominance of racial segregation in housing patterns in the United States, most African Americans live in predominantly black neighborhoods.<sup>25</sup> In turn, because of limited wealth accumulation by blacks of any occupational background, middle-class blacks are likely to live in less expensive housing than their white counterparts.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, as one researcher notes, "the finding that higher status blacks had significantly lower levels of homeownership than comparable non-blacks indicates that class does not supercede race in the area of wealth accumulation."<sup>27</sup>

The term "multiclass neighborhood" does not necessarily mean that poorer blacks live "right next door" to affluent blacks. Rather, it refers to a broader, traditionally or recently defined geographically configured community in which blacks of various social classes live in relative proximity to each other. These African Americans of different class backgrounds may share access to a wide range of public and private community institutions, services, and public space. Those with greater resources will be more likely to be able to afford better private services, such as private or parochial schools. Such communities can be found in the flatland neighborhoods of Northwest Oakland.

The third major type of neighborhood inhabited by some middle-class blacks is the *predominantly white middle-class neighborhood*. Some African American professionals are scattered throughout such neighborhoods in the East Bay suburbs that surround Oakland. Because of predominant patterns of racially segregated housing, this is the least frequently found residential pattern for blacks, including those in the middle class.<sup>28</sup>

Many, but not all, of these neighborhoods are "transitional." That is, when blacks move into a neighborhood, whites often move out. On the other hand, gentrification has been occurring at a rapid rate in the Oakland flatlands, given rising housing costs in "nicer" Oakland neighborhoods and elsewhere in the Bay Area (e.g., San Francisco and Berkeley). Gentrification



was the explicit policy of Oakland's two-term former mayor Jerry Brown to raise depressed property values and promote commercial development in both downtown Oakland and the neighborhoods.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, poorer black neighborhoods have been increasingly claimed by more affluent, "nonblack" artists, professionals, and university students. Nevertheless, there are some neighborhoods, such as those found in the North Oakland flatlands, that feature a long-standing quality of "integration."

### The Working-Class, Migratory, and Pre-Civil Rights Era Origins of the Black Professional Middle Class in Oakland

Members of the black professional middle class in Oakland and the East Bay are the products of either childhood in the local black community or adult migration from elsewhere. Many members of this race and class grouping migrated as adults from both northern and southern localities. However, most of the subjects in my sample arrived in the East Bay as children or were born in Oakland. Thus, this group is chiefly a product of the West Coast version of the Great Migration during and after World War II. These black migrants to Oakland emerged primarily from Arkansas and the Gulf states of Louisiana and Texas. The local emergence of middle-class blacks from ghetto neighborhoods in the 1960s and 1970s was a story that was not unique to Oakland but, rather, one that was replicated in urban communities across the United States. This massive social-mobility project (as it was played out in the life of the black community) is a process that needs to be further analyzed.<sup>30</sup>

One black professional described his move at the age of four from a rural Louisiana community of about a hundred people. His family settled into the racially segregated public housing "projects" in West Oakland in 1941.

Let's see. 1941. My father brought us here. Me and my brothers and my mother. And he found out that there were jobs out here. And he lucked out and got a job with the shipyard. . . . There was a lot of migration from the South. Blacks were moving out of the South. Getting away from that sharecropping. [Blacks were] tired of picking cotton for somebody else.

A defining experience of initial community life for black migrants to Oakland was that of the "projects." The construction of these public housing units (and the conversion of existing facilities such as military barracks) became a key facet of black urban life. The dire poverty of the migrants, coupled with the desire of white residents to keep them as far away from

their own established communities as possible, led to the viability of this segregated, low-income public housing. Just as blacks (e.g., in the shipyards) were relegated to the least remunerative sectors of the racially stratified labor market, they also inhabited the least desirable sectors of the housing market.<sup>31</sup>

One of the public housing projects in West Oakland that housed black migrants was Kirkham Court. A black local public health professional, who resided there as a child, described the experience:

All black. We lived in Kirkham Court. Oakland Army base housing. [The Navy] had moved out and made that an army base down there. So most of the blacks that came to [Oakland] lived in either Campbell Village [near the waterfront] or further down where I lived on Twenty-second and Kirkham. And that was the projects. We lived there. It was all blacks. We had some brothers who came out of those projects who did really well though.

The experience of the new migrants can be contrasted with that of the longtime and more stable black residents (often homeowners) of West Oakland, and seen in the initial expansion of blacks into more viable East Oakland neighborhoods. As one subject who had migrated to Oakland put it,

I think the [black] people at that time that were born and raised in Oakland, didn't live down in those projects. They lived around where old Merritt College is. Because a lot of the blacks who lived in there were people who worked as porters on the trains and [so forth]. And East Oakland. Some of the families that I met when we moved to East Oakland had been here for a long time, which we didn't know.

A black attorney who arrived as a youth from Louisiana described his experience with the projects as a transitional community. His mother supported six children with AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) and "under-the-table" domestic work. Even so, they sought to leave the projects. By pooling both conventional and unexpected resources and by "doubling up," the extended family was able to buy a "fixer-upper" in a rapidly ghettoizing neighborhood in West Oakland in the mid-1940s.

The housing that we moved into—my grandmother had come out here before my mother—she was living in Alameda and we were all living in the same project area. And she got into an automobile accident; a

drunken sailor hit her and [injured] her foot, and she got some kind of settlement. So what she did—we moved from the projects and moved to Oakland and bought an old Victorian-style house. And my uncles—my mother's sisters' husbands—they were all handy with their hands. They did carpentry, [etc.,] those type[s] of thing[s]. They turned the whole basement area into a livable area. And so there were about four or five families living there.

### The Late Civil Rights Period: The Late 1960s and 1970s and the Problem of Access to Predominantly White Neighborhoods

The expansion of the black population during World War II and in the post-war period put tremendous pressure on the limited housing available in segregated "traditional" ghetto neighborhoods in West Oakland, the Northwest Oakland flatlands, and South Berkeley. By the 1960s and 1970s, blacks had begun to "invade" other urban neighborhoods, including areas such as the Temescal neighborhood of North Oakland and the sprawling bungalows of East Oakland. Later, there was further eastward movement into contiguous suburbs such as San Leandro and Hayward. In Oakland, as in other cities, those who moved out of the confines of the "traditional" ghetto were those with relatively greater resources—middle-class blacks.

Many newly middle-class blacks sought to avail themselves of new possibilities for housing that was commensurate with their new occupational statuses. The broad horizon of expanding suburbs represented the "California dream" for many. The East Bay suburbs provided quiet, comfortable, private residences in the suburban rings of Alameda and Contra Costa County. These suburbs were not hospitable to blacks in the 1960s and 1970s, and they remain—at least in regard to blacks—noticeably segregated in the present.<sup>32</sup> Today, African Americans remain greatly underrepresented in the suburbs of the Oakland Metropolitan Area.

Before the 1968 Fair Housing Act, there were no significant (enforced) civil rights laws that applied to equal housing access.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, federal housing policy—especially the mortgage policies of the FHA (Federal Housing Administration) and the VA (Veterans Administration)—explicitly promoted residential segregation in cities and the virtual exclusion of blacks from suburban housing.<sup>34</sup> Despite those policies and the active or passive resistance of white homeowners, some blacks still sought access to suburban home ownership. One small and limited source of pressure to integrate the suburbs was progressive white activists. Many of these progressives felt that if one black person could initially move into a neighborhood, others

would be able to follow. These efforts at integrating the suburbs by local leftist activists ultimately had little discernible effect.

One physician described this phenomenon. She was the second African American who was able to move into an affluent East Bay suburb of several thousand people. Her home is valued today at more than \$600,000. She described a situation in which pro-integration members of the Communist Party USA and their friend, an unconventional real estate agent, were able to move the first black person (her friend) into a new home in the all-white suburb in 1965:

[At that time] the Realtors had to acknowledge to [prospective black buyers] that they couldn't show them the house during the daytime, because if the neighbors saw them showing the houses to blacks, they would get upset. But they would be happy to show them at night. And I heard of one experience where they were taken in and shown a house by flashlight at night. And of course I had heard about that story when [my] house became available. The way that I knew about [my] house was that I received a letter at my office from a real estate person, and it just happened to be my day off, and the letter stated that there was a new house in [this community] that was built by the owners. But because of illness, the owners found that they would not be able to live in the house. I said to myself, I wonder if this person knows if I'm black. . . . So I called to see if I could see the house in the daytime, that afternoon. . . . The Realtor was a big black woman. She was working in association with some of these Communist [Party members]. So they were determined to [promote] integration, so they let her in on selling this house.

In a similar case brought up by an interviewee, a progressive white real estate agent who had connections to the Black Panther Party was involved in opening access to white neighborhoods in the Berkeley flatlands outside of the historically black ghetto in South Berkeley in 1967. These activists were responding, in part, to the passage of Proposition 13 in Berkeley. This proposition represented a last-ditch effort to make it possible for white homeowners to sell only to "preferred" home buyers. This was a thinly veiled effort to keep certain neighborhoods all-white.<sup>35</sup> This local proposition was made legally irrelevant by the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act.

Of course, the widespread movement of blacks into predominantly white neighborhoods in the 1960s and 1970s did occur. However, it was primarily an urban phenomenon. Whites were fleeing Oakland in large numbers for the suburbs. Blacks began to sift out of the highly concentrated ghetto

neighborhoods in West Oakland, Northwest Oakland, and South Berkeley. Consequently, in this period, predominantly white flatland neighborhoods of Oakland were increasingly inhabited by blacks. This corresponds to what occurred within cities throughout the United States at that time.<sup>36</sup>

This twin processes of white flight and expansive black ghettoization became especially apparent in East Oakland, which was at one time a segregated stronghold of Ku Klux Klan support.<sup>37</sup> One black woman, a teacher and school administrator, described the sudden process by which her neighborhood in East Oakland went from white to black “overnight” during the 1970s:

When we first moved to the house, the neighbors were all white. The apartment [building nearby] was all-white. And overnight it turned all-black. It’s interesting. I just looked around and it was all-black. I don’t know where the white folks went, but they were gone.

This incident was a case of both “racial steering” and “blockbusting,” because her family was the first black family on the block and thus bought the house from a white homeowner. The case was made more interesting because the real estate agent that they dealt with and who “steered” them there was black. Most white agents deal primarily with white clients and thus have a financial interest in promoting the “stability” of segregated white neighborhoods.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, most of the clients of black real estate agents are black. The primary way for black agents to increase their incomes is to promote the spatial expansion of segregated black communities.<sup>39</sup> Black agents are thus able to create a new market niche for themselves by benefiting from residential segregation that is, ironically, promoted by powerful white institutions such as banks, developers, and real estate agencies.<sup>40</sup>

What made the aforementioned case even more noteworthy was that the teacher’s husband was white and the agent only wanted him to see the home initially. As a result, the neighbors may have been led to believe that the house was being bought by a white family, so that they would not put pressure on the owner to not sell to a black family. The teacher recalled,

In terms of moving to where I live now, it seems to me that I . . . remember distinctly being asked to stay home. To stay home in going to see this home. And I don’t know if that was a strategic move by the Realtor. My husband and she agreed on this. That’s my remembrance. . . . We be-

came the first black family on the block. I didn't realize it until I'm saying it now, but we became the first black people on the block. Hmm.

Aside from the general problem of exclusionary strategies by white homeowners seeking to deter blacks (middle class or otherwise) from "invading" their neighborhoods, there are other problems. When some African Americans do move into such neighborhoods, there is often a rapid process—as in the case above—of transition from a segregated white neighborhood to a segregated black neighborhood. Thus, whether in the central cities or the suburbs, the phenomenon of blacks living in integrated neighborhoods is frequently brief and transitional.

### Race- and Class-Segregated Black Middle-Class Neighborhoods in the Post-Civil Rights Era

In agreement with the observation that integrated neighborhoods are generally a fleeting thing, aggregate-level research has found that residential segregation is the general pattern for African Americans regardless of class background. Middle-class blacks are as likely to live in highly segregated neighborhoods as poorer blacks.<sup>41</sup> In my own case study, most of the interview subjects reported living in predominantly or disproportionately black neighborhoods. These neighborhoods include both *class-segregated black middle-class neighborhoods* and racially segregated *multiclass black neighborhoods*.

For the most part, the relatively privileged members of the black professional middle class have access to a much more limited metropolitan housing market than their white counterparts. "Race" is a factor that must be taken into consideration by black professionals who seek home ownership. The black middle class has fewer assets than the white middle class, and when blacks seek to maximize their assets through home ownership, these inequities are magnified by the process of residential segregation, which devalues black-owned homes.<sup>42</sup> This is the case whether blacks are seeking housing in the central city or the suburbs.<sup>43</sup>

One black professional who grew up on Chicago's South Side and began his professional career while living in the same neighborhood that he grew up in illustrated the way "race" frames the life chances and experiences of such middle-class blacks. The street crime and poor schools that were prevalent in the "multiclass ghetto" on the South Side prompted him to move his family to the suburbs.

I grew up in Chicago. We lived in Chicago for the first two or three years of our marriage. We lived on the South Side in the same area that we grew up. We encountered some pretty severe crime issues. As young married folks, there was a time when everybody in our house saw the wrong end of a gun, including my one-year-old daughter. So we decided to move to the suburbs.

His experiences in two different Chicago suburbs varied. The first suburban community was relatively less prosperous but was an ecologically designed planned community that had adopted a fair-housing ordinance and sought religious and racial diversity as far back as the 1950s. The second suburb was more affluent and better reflected his family's true economic standing. However, it was "colder," especially as his children approached dating age.

And we moved to . . . Park Forest. And we lived there for six or seven years, and we just loved it. It was an integrated community. [The community] worked very hard to promote diversity for people who knew what diversity was. We moved from there to Olympia Fields, which was a more upscale community in the suburbs, and actually did not like that. It was upscale, but it was also colder. Not from a racial standpoint, but it was just colder, and we didn't enjoy that as much. And also, [as] our kids got older, we saw that the majority kids who had associated with them in grammar school, their parents seemed to want to put some distance between them and the minority kids in high school. I think it's the fear of interracial dating and stuff like that.

When he and his family made their third move—this time across the country, to the Bay Area—they had to again factor issues of race and class into the decision of where to live. The interview subject concluded that the Oakland suburbs had "less diversity" than the Chicago suburbs. This is ironic, because the city and suburbs of Chicago have had a long and inglorious history of conflict over "open housing."<sup>44</sup> The family decided to move to Oakland and chose to reside in a "class-segregated," largely black upper-middle-class neighborhood in the East Oakland Hills.

So we said that, moving to a new community, are we going to move to the suburbs of the Bay Area, or do we want to live in [Oakland]? The suburbs of the Bay Area seemed to have less diversity than the suburbs of Chicago. . . . So I grew to like Oakland and saw that it was a very diverse

place. And it was very unlike the stereotype that the city has outside of the Bay Area. . . . So we moved to the Oakland hills. . . . We've had some minor issues—but we haven't had any serious issues to deal with.

It should be noted that a relatively small proportion of African Americans live in the more expensive and exclusive homes that dot the hill neighborhoods of Oakland. However, their choice of residence in an affluent and largely black neighborhood resolved problems of seeking “diversity” (read: avoiding racial isolation), neighborhood stability, reduced exposure to crime, and being part of a broader urban black community. This family benefited from the nearby presence of a significant black middle class that reinforced for their children that they were also expected to prepare themselves for professional careers. That is, they were supposed to socially reproduce themselves in the black professional middle class.

We think that our kids are better off being raised for the past ten years in a more urban environment. One of the things that we clearly see today is that the only way that you're connected with African American culture is to be in an urban setting. . . . One of the things that we really like about Oakland is [that] there's a large African American professional population in Oakland. And there is real diversity of occupation. It's key for kids to be able to see that they can be anybody. My experience is that if a kid has never seen anybody like him who's an airline pilot, it's difficult to aspire to be an airline pilot. Or whatever. And it's been good for my wife and I to be exposed to black professionals in areas that we're in.

Most of my interview subjects felt that today, overt housing discrimination by real estate agents was less of a problem within Oakland itself. They expressed the sentiment that discrimination was much more likely to be experienced in the suburbs, where blacks were far fewer in number and allegedly less welcome by real estate agents or residents. As another black professional put it,

Everybody has negative experiences with Realtors. Realtors are a pain in the rear. So you always run into problems with Realtors, so that's nothing new. But I'm not aware of any Realtor [in Oakland] who has deliberately said, “I'm not going to sell you a house.” I suppose if I was trying to go out to Danville or somewhere else in the suburbs, where people have deliberately gone out to try to get away from black folks, then I suppose I might run into something like that.



Even when overt or hostile discrimination isn't experienced, African Americans are likely to experience "racial isolation" in the suburbs, especially in exclusive suburbs. As one interviewee described it,

A number of my friends—some of them are officers in the major corporations around here who are black—have moved back in from the Moragas, the Walnut Creeks, back into Oakland. Isn't that strange. And for the same reason. They got a little lonely out there. They wanted to come "back home." And they feel comfortable back here, and they're living a better quality of life here [in Oakland] than they are out there.

### Problems of the Truly Advantaged

The racial problems involving housing that were experienced by most of the black middle-class professionals in Oakland that I interviewed seemed to be of a more subtle nature.<sup>45</sup> However, these subtle forms of discrimination can have potentially serious personal and economic consequences in the life chances of those blacks who have "made it." One black corporate attorney who lived in an affluent East Oakland Hills neighborhood described an appraisal incident that could have reduced both the market value of his home and his family's assets by more than \$300,000:

They will underappraise your house because of the fact that you're in Oakland and because you're in a certain neighborhood, so to speak. And they would try to not give your home the correct appraisal. So what you do is call them on it. If a white person had been in that same house, they would probably have given him a different appraisal, because appraisals are subjective. So I called him on it and it was redone. And it came up to exactly what I thought it should be. This person came in and just was convinced that no person of African American descent—if he's in this house, it just couldn't be worth this much. I've seen as much as a \$300,000 to \$400,000 difference. In fact, in my home there was a \$300,000 difference based just on the appraisal. Based on who the person was.

Even in Oakland, efforts to maintain semblances of white privilege and black exclusion remain. The all-white country club is an enduring symbol of this phenomenon. The maintenance of such exclusive institutions is certainly easier in the suburbs. In the city of Oakland, it may be one of the few things (outside of the corporate office itself) to remind privileged, affluent whites of their status, especially if blacks are generally able to live where

they can afford to in Oakland proper. The same black attorney described his neighborhood in the East Oakland Hills: the neighborhood was once all-white, but it is now an area where upper-middle-class black professionals are concentrated.

[The neighborhood is] about 50 percent black, about 50 percent white. It's an upper-middle-class area. It's right next to the country club, which for many years, until about four years ago, didn't even let blacks into membership. The community, what we call the Sequoyah Hills, is a very integrated community—racially and financially.

When I asked whether he was a member, he relayed a “country club” story:

Well, I could afford it, but I wouldn't waste my money. At the time it was integrated, a friend of mine integrated it. It cost \$10,000. After they let him in, the membership went up to \$40,000 [laugh]. So I have no desire to be a member of [that] country club. At any price.

The status of black professionals is one of *marginality*. The professional middle-class segments among African Americans are marginal to their white professional peers, who are likely to live in segregated white neighborhoods, to have significantly greater wealth and greater chances for cross-generational mobility for their children, and to associate in racially stratified private and professional social networks.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the black professional middle class is also marginal to the larger working-class and poorer segments of African Americans. Whatever overlap there is in perceptions or experiences of “race,” these groups face class differences in life chances based on educational attainment, mobility, income, and social capital. It is this experience of marginality that shapes the overlapping of race and class consciousness for the black middle classes. It informs and constrains their agendas as civic and political actors.<sup>47</sup>

### Multiclass Black Neighborhoods in the Post–Civil Rights Era: The East Oakland Flatlands

While the race- and class-segregated middle-class neighborhoods discussed previously tend to be populated by black professional employees, there is another type of neighborhood to make note of. Self-employed professionals, clergy, and teachers that I interviewed were more likely to live in or near the traditional black ghetto communities. These neighborhoods, taken

as a whole, tend to be more racially segregated and tend to possess more multiclass diversity. Middle-class blacks and poor blacks aren't likely to live next door to each other. Rather, they are likely to live in near proximity in broad neighborhood areas that might include middle-class, working-class, and poorer blacks.

African American professional employees were more likely to live in what would be termed more "upscale" neighborhoods. In part, this seems a reflection of higher incomes from employment in private firms, nonprofit organizations, and government jobs in the core sector. The communities that these professionals inhabit are apparently less racially segregated. Correspondingly, these neighborhoods are less likely to be directly proximate to poor or working-class black flatland communities. Many such employees whom I interviewed lived in the more affluent East Oakland Hills neighborhoods. Not surprisingly, these subjects were relatively more marginal, or less directly involved in the daily affairs of the broadly defined black community. They were rather less likely to interact with poor or working-class blacks on a daily basis in their work or community lives.

The case of black self-employed professionals and teachers was rather different. They were more likely to live in neighborhoods that were contiguous with, or included, residential areas with poor or working-class blacks. They were also likely to deal with those less affluent neighbors in their professional work. Their professional work was more likely to be focused on the direct delivery of services to working-class black clients, patients, or students. In addition to residential proximity and contact through professional work, they were also more likely to be involved with poor and working-class blacks in terms of civic activities, as we shall soon see.

One case is indicative of the kinds of problems that might be faced by members of the black middle class living in a multiclass black neighborhood. One woman, a teacher and doctoral candidate, lives in an East Oakland flatland neighborhood. In her college days, she was an "activist" and was loosely affiliated with the Black Panthers. Today she questions—self-reflectively—whether she has become more "conservative." This concern is based on her more recent views about the black poor. She has had some bad experiences with some of the parents of her students, including one parent who allegedly had her daughter deemed mentally retarded in order to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits on her behalf.

Another incident in her neighborhood has been particularly devastating. Her next-door neighbor, a computer technician, bought another home in the suburb of Hayward that became his primary residence. He then sought to rent out the other house. He didn't find an immediate taker, so he opted for

a subsidized low-income renter under the Section 8 program. The teacher was very upset about what she considered a trend among some homeowners in Oakland, because of the consequences for other stable homeowners.

That's becoming a trend in Oakland. Middle-class black folks want to live in Hayward, San Leandro, or whatever, and they can't rent [their homes]—the rental market is so bad in [East] Oakland. So they're going Section 8 without any concern about the other property owners around there.

Apparently, the owner of the dwelling unwittingly (or not) became a "slumlord" and rented the house to someone who was apparently engaged in numerous illegal activities. A large part of the problem was that the renter then sublet a room in the house to other people who were also engaged in illicit activities. The renters allegedly engaged in drug dealing, prostitution, and threatening behavior toward the neighbors. Many of the neighborhood residents were retired working-class homeowners concerned about the safety and stability of the neighborhood. This teacher was apparently one of the few people to stand up to her criminally inclined next-door neighbors and report their activities to the police.

My friends say I've gotten to be very conservative [laugh]. So the stuff that I've seen over the last two years, and the games people—like these folks who moved next door. Section 8 [for a house estimated to be worth \$200,000] and they pay \$200 a month to live in this four-bedroom house? . . . [The renters pay] about \$200, we [taxpayers] pay the rest. And they had the nerve to [sublet] a room—the storage room—to this man and his prostitute [laugh]. And then they got mad because we reported it. And they've got this scam going on—now that's not poverty, that's pathology, and it's happening everywhere.

The teacher was very adamant in explaining that she was not against poor blacks. She was opposed to what she termed "pathological" behavior, which she distinguished from poverty.

Yes. There are poor people in the neighborhood, and it's not poverty that I'm having problems with. For instance, there's a grandmother a couple of doors down that raises her grandkids because her daughter's strung out. And those kids are obviously AFDC kids. I have no problems—and I work with AFDC kids all the time. So poverty's not an issue; it's behav-

ior. It's drug-related behavior that I'm having a problem with. The people next door, who happen to be Section 8, I think are poor representations of poor people. So it's not poverty, it's pathology. And I'm a strong advocate that poverty does not mean pathology.

Ultimately, this teacher faced the threat of violent retaliation for "snitching" on these volatile neighbors. At the time of my interview with her, she was "house-sitting" for a friend, pending the outcome of a civil lawsuit filed against the owner of the house next door. Her goal was to get the renters evicted. She was also considering moving out of the neighborhood. This case exemplifies that middle-class African Americans are more likely than their white counterparts to experience residential segregation and thus to face an increase in exposure to higher rates of crime and violence, unstable neighborhoods, and potentially declining property values, all of which tend to lower their quality of life.<sup>48</sup> The same home that the teacher lived in might double in market value if it were placed in another Oakland neighborhood. Middle-class whites are much less likely to face these kinds of issues.

### Civic Activities and the Black Professional Middle Class

William Bowen and Derek Bok have found in their research on black graduates of elite colleges that those young, mostly middle-class blacks were much more likely to be active in civic and community affairs than their white counterparts.<sup>49</sup> In my research, I found that the older cohort of black professionals that I was studying was also very active (in both the past and the present) in the community. However, whether they were self-employed (or were teachers or clergy) or professional employees seemed to have a great effect on the types of civic activities in which they were engaged.

Specifically, black professional employees were more likely to be involved in activities that were initiated through established mainstream civic institutions—for example, the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), private foundations, or other nonprofit organizations. The mainstream civic institutions tend to promote the integration of blacks into the mainstream opportunity structures of society (e.g., scholarships for higher education). On the other hand, self-employed professionals were more likely to be involved in activities directly within their local black community. These activities varied depending on the particular perceived need in that community, at that time, by the person (or persons)

offering the help. The connection of professional employees to mainstream civic organizations reflected their employment by mainstream employers—large corporations, nonprofit agencies, and government. Indeed, it is these core-sector institutions that provide the donations, funds, volunteer efforts, publicity, and legitimacy for mainstream civic organizations and their integration-oriented civic activism.

One professional employee—an executive vice president of a large Bay Area-based corporation—typified this kind of civic participation. He sat on the boards of several foundations and civic organizations that operated at both the national and local levels.

I'm involved with not-for-profits . . . here in the Bay Area. I'm on the board of the East Oakland Redevelopment Center—that's a community center in East Oakland. Most of the leadership of that board is white. It supports an organization that is in a very depressed community. I'm also on the board of the Marcus Foster Education Institute. I haven't been very active lately. I'm the past president of that board. That's another organization that has a very mixed membership. It's an education fund that raises money for projects. I'm on the board of the United Negro College Fund. I was the dinner chairman for their dinner in January. And I'm going to be the dinner chair for the East Oakland Youth Development function.

Most of his involvement is focused on activities that benefit some segment (economic development, youth, education, etc.) of the larger black community, either locally or nationally. Another key organization that he is a member of is the Executive Leadership Council, which is a combination black professional organization and policy think tank.

It debates the current issues of the day, like affirmative action. And hopes to frame the issue toward the members so that we can articulate—forcefully articulate the position of affirmative action to our companies, since so many of us are in positions where we can influence positions in [the private sector]. The organization helps to give its members the academic framework for a lot of these issues. . . . To give you an example, [at] one meeting we had about affirmative action, A. Leon Higginbotham gave a tremendous speech where he took us through the history of affirmative action. It was very, very helpful to have that kind of resource, to have that kind of experience.

Another black professional employee (an attorney) and executive was active in many of the same civic organizations. He was also involved in the NAACP and did some pro bono work for them. I asked him if he thought black professionals should be involved in civic activities. He replied "yes," because

every middle-class [black] person, in my opinion, . . . got there on the backs of the common people, whether that person admits it or not. They got there because the common people helped raise the consciousness of this nation to get them there. Whether it was the struggle from *Plessy v. Ferguson* to *Brown v. Board of Education*, whether it was marching in the 1960s, . . . those people who had traditionally been denied opportunity made it possible for them to get there. So yeah, they owe a debt they can never repay.

These upper-middle-class African American professionals sought to maintain both *concrete* and *symbolic* connections to the larger black community, despite being relatively more detached from older and poorer ghetto neighborhoods than were their self-employed counterparts. However, it should be noted that most of these "first-generation," civil rights-era black professionals are from poor and working-class backgrounds.<sup>50</sup> Many still have siblings or other extended family who live in poorer black neighborhoods. More research is needed to determine to what degree these factors still apply to younger generational cohorts of black professionals.

To a large degree, the civic activities of this group can be described as being geared toward promoting policies that would socially reproduce black middle-class opportunities, such as affirmative action. This strategy was not just to reproduce opportunities for those who are *already* middle class (e.g., their children), but also to promote mobility and solidarity for poor blacks who want to *become* middle class. There is no way that black middle-class professionals can maintain political and cross-generational relevance to the black community unless they work to promote strategies to reproduce black access to important mainstream opportunity structures, including higher education, political office holding, and professional and managerial jobs.

These black professional employees who are involved with *national* foundations and civic organizations are relatively more connected to the *symbolic*, national African American community than their self-employed counterparts. They are interested in linking the symbolic national commu-

nity with *concrete* and *local* ones. The black community—like the larger, predominantly white society—is divided by social class and status distinctions, including gender, religion, age, region, and the like. National (read: white) U.S. elites find it important to appeal to a symbolic American society (through nationalism and patriotism, for example); likewise, African American “elites” find it important to appeal to a symbolic national black community.<sup>51</sup>

Each local urban black community has a history that is unique but comparable with that of other local African American communities. This history includes the local civic and political activities of a relatively race- and class-conscious black professional middle class. Thus, organized political and civic efforts by members of this class to challenge the structures and practices of exclusionary closure and to make claims to improve the quality of life for African Americans occur at both the national (symbolic) and local (concrete) levels.

Self-employed professionals, teachers, and clergy tend to play a somewhat different role in the black community than professional employees in terms of their civic involvements. These attorneys, physicians, clergy, and teachers are involved in direct work with clients, patients, parishioners, and students. Because of this, they are more likely to provide *direct* professional services to residents of black communities. Also, as mentioned previously, they are more likely than professional employees to live in or near the traditional black ghetto neighborhoods. Correspondingly, their civic and volunteer activities are also more directly linked to those local communities.

Their choices of civic involvement are often motivated by a *specific* problem that they have witnessed directly in the community and that they feel they can try to do something about. They might also work with foundations or other nonprofit agencies, but they are more likely to bring together people and resources in the community to work on the problem at hand. That is, the focus of their civic and political energy is more on the level of the local/concrete community and less on the larger scale of the national/symbolic black community, which is dominated by civil rights groups or national foundations.

The pastor of a Baptist church in the “upper avenues” of East Oakland has steered his church for the last thirty years. With federal programs diminishing, his church has been at the forefront of providing practical social services to the community, including college scholarships, housing for the elderly poor, job training for ex-felons, anger management to deter domestic violence, and day-care services, among many other things. As he puts it,



If you look up and down International Blvd. [East Fourteenth St.], you can just see the problems. People drinking wine out of a paper bag. Men standing on the corners, dope sales going on. You can see all of the pain and all of the poverty. If the church is going to be part of the solution rather than a part of the problem, she has to deal with the nasty now and now.

A self-employed doctor who lives in a North Oakland flatland neighborhood discussed the importance of mentoring for him. In the small, rural South Carolina town in which he spent his childhood, the only black doctor for miles around found out that this young man, who was in high school at the time, wanted to be a doctor. The doctor helped him with money and personal encouragement until he finished his degree at a highly ranked private medical school. After he himself became a doctor, he returned the favor.

When I started in private practice, there was a kid here in Oakland that I took under my wing, and he's now an anesthesiologist. And I used to do about the same thing that my mentor did for me, including giving him financial support.

This doctor, who was the most politically conservative of my interview subjects, has a strong belief in, and practice of, civic involvement. He also created a continuing program in the East Oakland neighborhood where his practice is located, to provide summer jobs for neighborhood youth.

During the summer, I have a jobs program here at my office. And we—last summer I think we had eight kids employed. And I anticipate doing that again this year. We do it—it's a yearly thing. And hopefully, we can increase the number that we employ this summer.

Another interesting example of civic involvement by black self-employed professionals involves an attorney who lives in the foothills of the East Oakland neighborhood of Havenscourt. He said, "You'd have to go three or four blocks until you get to the 'poor' people. But I ain't that far from them [laugh]." He became concerned about the problem in the neighborhood of too many bored, idle youth during the summer. He decided to become involved in reorganizing the local youth baseball leagues. A generation ago, Oakland youth baseball leagues produced such major-league players as Joe Morgan, Vada Pinson, Rickey Henderson, Dave Stewart, and Gary Pettis.

More recently, however, the traditional Little Leagues and Babe Ruth leagues had fallen into disrepair. The attorney got other prominent black lawyers involved in sponsoring teams. He also wrote the legal articles of incorporation that gave the troubled Babe Ruth league status as a nonprofit organization and provided for financial reorganization. He has been involved for about ten years.

I know one thing: when baseball season comes around, boy, these kids and all the parents in the community—they love it. They're out there every week over by Havenscourt Junior High, the field back there. All the residents of the housing projects out there, they're out there every Saturday, every Sunday. Having a good time. We've got a thriving program, man. We started out with just a few teams. Now we've got so many teams now, they have to divide it up into three different leagues. So it's alive and well.



The black middle classes, including the black professional middle class, represent a group that is often discussed, generally as a backdrop to other issues (e.g., affirmative action, role models, or the “underclass” debate) but less frequently as a focus of empirical research in and of itself. One empirical setting that is central to understanding the status and experiences of the black professional middle class is the community—both the symbolic/national community and the concrete/local community, one example of which is Oakland and the East Bay in California.

Residential segregation plays an important role as an “organizing principle” of black urban communities. Indeed, the black middle class is affected by both race and class segregation. These dynamics shape the life chances and the experience of neighborhood life for middle-class blacks. The relationship of the black professional middle class to other class segments (i.e., the working class and the poor) in the black community is affected by its proximity, or lack thereof, to the less well-off and by its particular involvements in civic activities and relationships with extended family members, who are often poorer. Whether the black professional works directly with clients or in large organizations, such as government or corporations, also plays an important role in outlook and opportunity. The differing material conditions of the two segments of black middle-class professionals shape their experiences, ideologies, and actions.



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PART 4

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*Gender, Class, and Social-Welfare Policy*



## Shifting Paradigms of Black Women's Work in the Urban North and West: World War II to the Present

JACQUELINE JONES

It was shortly after twelve noon on March 6, 1971, when startled customers and card dealers at Las Vegas's Caesars Palace Hotel looked up from the gambling tables and watched as one thousand protesters marched through the casino, singing and chanting. The protesters wended their way through the opulent hotel and then returned to the street, where they formed a procession that stretched for two miles along the city's glittering Strip. Seemingly incongruously, the aim of the intruders was to highlight the plight of impoverished mothers receiving assistance from the federal program Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). A few weeks before, Nevada's welfare administrator had suddenly slashed almost nine hundred families from the state's AFDC rolls—nearly three thousand individuals, most of them living in female-headed households, now charged with cheating the system. In response, the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), in concert with local activists, coordinated the March 6 demonstration; they demanded that the state rescind the cuts and redress the harm caused to the large numbers of children who lost Medicaid benefits when their mothers were declared ineligible for AFDC. The march featured a number of well-known people, including George Wiley, the executive director of the NWRO; Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and actress Jane Fonda. The protesters asked: What better place to highlight the divide between rich and poor, white and black, men and women, than Caesars Palace, favorite haunt of high rollers?<sup>1</sup>

Media accounts focused on the charismatic Wiley and Abernathy, and paid little attention to two African American women who were active in NWRO politics and took part in the march that day. Johnnie Tillmon, an African American activist from California, had traveled from her home in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles to be part of the NWRO delegation.

A native of Arkansas, Tillmon had worked in commercial laundries for nineteen years before she became ill, when she was forced to apply for AFDC in order to support her six children. She had been a leader in a number of grassroots causes related to voter registration and housing and welfare reform. In 1967, Tillmon served as state president of the California Welfare Rights Organization, affiliated with the year-old NWRO. Local organizers of the Caesars Palace protest included Ruby Duncan; she and other black mothers living in Las Vegas's Westside neighborhood had formed an organization called Operation Life, an advocacy group for women receiving AFDC. The group cobbled together support from the local Democratic Party, the League of Women Voters, Franciscan friars, and volunteer lawyers. Both Tillmon and Duncan were determined to hold local, state, and national politicians accountable for the immiseration of single African American mothers and their children. Contending with the Nevada governor, who refused to sit down and talk to them, Duncan declared, "We consider your refusal to meet with us as a refusal by *our* government to meet our needs."<sup>2</sup>

More than a quarter century later, black women in Las Vegas took part in a markedly different kind of confrontation with the city's largest hotels and casinos. Women such as sixty-two-year-old Hattie Canty, a widowed mother of ten children, were again doing battle on the Strip, but this time as workers fighting for union representation, increased pay, and enhanced benefits. Canty, a maid at the Maxim Casino and Hotel, was president of the 40,000-member Culinary Workers Union Local 226, part of the rapidly growing Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE). As a result of a fierce union drive begun at the Mirage Hotel in 1989, by the late 1990s unionized maids were earning an hourly wage of \$9.25 (more than double the prevailing minimum wage) and enjoying health-care benefits and a retirement pension. Canty noted, "My house is paid for. I bought cars while I was a maid. I bought furniture, I bought the things I needed for my family while I was a maid." Yet unlike the women of Operation Life a generation earlier, Canty looked not to the state or federal government, but to solidarity among her co-workers, including black men and white and Hispanic men and women: "And the way I did it was through organized labor," she said.<sup>3</sup>

Las Vegas might seem an unlikely place to gauge gendered transformations in the post-World War II United States outside the South, but the city, with its preponderance of service-sector jobs, has served as a bellwether of the forces shaping the national labor market over the last sixty years. Indeed, the divergent stories of two African American single mothers, Ruby Duncan and Hattie Canty, provide both a conceptual and a chronological

template for surveying black women's labor since 1945. Dividing the postwar period into two roughly equal segments—1945 to 1975 and 1975 to 2005—allows us to chart larger national and global developments as they affected different groups of African American women workers in the urban North and West. Simply put, the NWRO's political agenda reflected the bitter realities of postwar Jim Crow America, a time and place marked by state-sanctioned discrimination and segregation shaping the lives of all African Americans, urban and rural. Under these conditions, a variety of civil rights organizations fought to open up all-white workplaces to black men and women; but in the absence of opportunities, northern blacks looked to the federal government for jobs and for financial support. In contrast, Hattie Canty and other union organizers of the late twentieth century understood that the most effective anti-poverty strategies were grassroots union organizing efforts and living-wage campaigns. By this time, the well-established, male-dominated industrial unions, such as the United Automobile Workers, were rapidly being eclipsed by the HERE and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), both of which included large numbers of minorities and women, immigrant and native-born. Las Vegas was emblematic of this trend; by the early twenty-first century, 90 percent of the jobs in the city's major hotels were organized, and labor leaders were hailing the city as the fastest-growing union town in the nation.<sup>4</sup>

For the purposes of this essay, we shall consider several overlapping groups, including mothers and other unwaged laborers who contributed to the health and welfare not only of their immediate families but of their local communities as well; low-waged laborers with little in the way of formal education or job skills; public-sector professionals; workers hired by private employers and clustered in traditional "pink-collar" or women's work; and a tiny elite of highly educated, well-paid women in the fields of law, banking, journalism, academia, business, and medicine.

During the three decades following World War II, the federal government served simultaneously as blacks' biggest barrier to, and best hope for, workforce equality. Until at least 1965, Congress and successive presidents remained tacitly or directly supportive of blatant discrimination in the private workplace and in labor unions. And yet during this period, some African Americans found employment in municipal, state, and federal workplaces—the men as custodians and bus drivers, for example, and the women as cafeteria workers and clerical employees—when the private sector would not hire them at all. For this thirty-year period, it is appropriate to consider the job patterns of black women as a set of contrasts—between white and black women, between urban and rural workers, between northerners and



southerners. However, beginning in the mid-1970s, these distinctions began to break down, ushering in a strikingly different period in black women's labor history, a period marked by both job growth for the best educated and by deepening poverty and distress for the most vulnerable.

World War II was a watershed for African Americans in general because, for the first time in American history, substantial numbers were hired in factories to work machines. In large measure, these gains came not just from the high labor demand born of wartime, but also from organized protests by black groups ranging from A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington Movement of 1941 to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). In response to Randolph's protest in particular, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created a federal agency called the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). The purpose of the FEPC was to monitor government defense contractors and make certain that blacks received their fair share of defense-related jobs.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, black women as a group found the factory gates locked to them until well into the war years. Government officials and private employers alike held that the major role of black women was to take the place of the white women restaurant, laundry, and cafeteria workers who were now employed in defense jobs. An investigator for the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau noted that many black women service workers "do not even realize they are doing war work, work which affects directly the country's war production." A large defense employer explained, "We think every worker we can place in a laundry is worth three new workers in our own plants." In 1940, black women constituted about one out of every ten domestic workers; four years later, the figure was six out of ten. Still, by this time small numbers had won jobs in factories and shipyards.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of the war, when women in general found themselves displaced from defense-industry jobs, many white wives and mothers continued to seek out employment, now as secretaries, store clerks, and cashiers. Yet for the large numbers of black women who had migrated out of the rural South and into the urban North and West by 1945, postwar opportunities were meager. Unlike their poor-white counterparts, black families remained confined to inner-city ghettos, and black men were limited to unskilled and temporary jobs. Shut out of the fast-growing clerical sector, most black women toiled as cafeteria workers, domestics in private homes, aides in hospitals, and orderlies in nursing homes. In 1950, more than 40 percent of gainfully employed black women were working in private household service, and another 20 percent in institutional service.<sup>7</sup>

Here it is worth noting that many black workers, women and men, labored in jobs still not covered by the hallmarks of New Deal worker-protection legislation, including Social Security, laws setting minimum wages and maximum hours, and unemployment compensation. Because most blacks were concentrated in agriculture, domestic service, and seasonal and part-time employment, they lacked the basic benefits and labor protections guaranteed to full-time employees of large companies. In the postwar period, employers' discriminatory hiring policies, combined with the exclusion of most black workers from federal labor legislation, rendered not just individuals but whole families vulnerable and impoverished. By midcentury, black male unemployment rates were two to three times higher than those of the immigrants who had arrived in the United States a generation before. In Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit, the unemployment rate for black women was three to four times greater than that of foreign-born women in those cities. In 1950, 30 percent of all black wives, compared to only one-fifth of their white counterparts, were in the paid labor force; and many black women who wanted and needed work could not find a job that would help support their families.<sup>8</sup>

Faced with indifference on the part of the federal government—which in effect often carried out a policy of affirmative action for whites—black women had limited options in their fight for jobs, and for better wages and working conditions. For many of the black women living in the South after World War II, one strategy was to move, and most of those who did so headed for the urban North or West. This postwar journey took many out of the neoslavery system of sharecropping in the cotton fields and into wage work and Democratic Party politics. In the North, African American men and women formed the backbone of pressure groups challenging all-white workplaces. These groups included a variety of black women's clubs and sororities (some under the umbrella of the National Council of Negro Women), the National Negro Labor Council (NNLC), and civil rights and black advocacy organizations. Coalitions of these groups also pressed individual states to create FEPCs along the lines of the federal model; initiated boycotts against businesses that refused to hire blacks; and hailed black women "pioneers" who cracked the color barrier in clerical and professional work. Indeed, the struggle for more and better jobs remained intertwined with the struggle for political and civil rights. Founded in 1951, the NNLC welcomed women members, and its first treasurer was Octavia Hawkins, an African American garment worker from Chicago and a member of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Together with other NNLC organizers, Hawkins helped to stage a yearlong consumer boycott of the Sears stores in

Chicago, a move that opened clerical-sales positions to black women in that company. The NNLC also targeted discriminatory employers in St. Louis, Newark, and Los Angeles.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, in the urban North and West, notoriously crowded housing conditions, together with state-sanctioned job discrimination, intensified the vulnerability of many black families. Confined to inner-city neighborhoods by a combination of legal restrictions and racist banking and real estate policies, blacks as a group suffered from poor health and other forms of personal distress. Moreover, structural shifts in the northern economy put the welfare of inner-city families at risk. In places where black men had finally established a foothold in the heavy-manufacturing sector, the process of automation displaced many at the bottom rungs of the job hierarchy. Even at the peak of black men's employment in the manufacturing sector (in 1970), only 12 percent of black working men labored in factories. In just a handful of cities—Detroit and Buffalo being among the most notable—could the black community depend on good blue-collar, semiskilled jobs backed by powerful industrial unions such as the United Automobile Workers. It was these jobs that served as the economic foundation for many white communities in the postwar period.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, many African American men in cities outside the South were forced to rely on temporary or seasonal unskilled jobs in warehouses and on loading docks. Yet all of these categories of work—manufacturing, unskilled labor, and seasonal labor—either registered the effects of automation and declined in the period between 1945 and 1975, or failed to pay wages sufficient to support a family. Some industries, such as the auto industry, were introducing labor-saving machinery and reducing the number of unskilled and semiskilled employees. Other businesses were moving from the city to the suburbs, making those jobs inaccessible for ghettoized black workers; and still other industries, such as construction, remained stubborn in their refusal to hire black men at any level. Meanwhile, black families were coming to rely ever more desperately on the wages of mothers, wives, and sisters.<sup>11</sup>

For the small number of African American women in factory work, international unions varied widely in their commitment to equality within their ranks. Florence Rice, a New York garment worker, battled the exclusionary policies of Local 125 of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU). When she faced a speedup on the job, her shop steward proved steadfastly indifferent, prompting Rice to recall later, "The union wasn't for us blacks, that's one of the things you recognize." Rice's union

local passively accepted black women's inferior wage scales and job assignments; and when she protested these policies, white union officials labeled her a "troublemaker." "Naturally I was known as a Communist," she said later. "That was a way of putting you down." In contrast, workers such as the Mississippi-born Bessie Coleman found her Chicago local of the United Packinghouse Workers of America to be an active force in "fighting racial discrimination in and out of the plant," in her words. Her co-workers elected her to the positions of department steward and then recording secretary of the local.<sup>12</sup>

Confined to the menial-service sector, most black women outside the South worked at low-wage jobs that were notoriously difficult to organize. However, District 1199 of the National Union of Health Care and Hospital Employees achieved some notable successes in the late 1950s, both in Charleston, South Carolina, and in New York City. The majority of low-wage workers in New York's charity (or "voluntary") hospitals were black women and Puerto Rican immigrant women denied basic New Deal employment protection in the form of minimum wages, unemployment insurance, and disability and health benefits. Doris Turner, a dietary worker, expressed the grim irony: "We were caring for sick people, but we couldn't afford to be sick. If you took time off to be sick, you'd be fired." District 1199's drive to organize hospital workers began in 1958 and targeted a wide variety of job categories, including maintenance and laundry workers, nurse's aides, housekeepers, and X-ray and laboratory technicians. Despite attempts by hospital management to alienate blacks from their Hispanic co-workers, the union eventually prevailed in 1963, winning collective bargaining rights as a result of an act passed by the New York state legislature. Two years later, the union boasted thirty thousand members (up from five thousand six years before), all of whom enjoyed substantial increases in their wages and benefits, including health-care coverage. The victories won by District 1199 (and replicated to some extent in other cities, including Pittsburgh and Philadelphia) came as a result of not only the determination of the women workers, but also the substantial support offered by other unions, by community leaders and organizations, and by civil rights groups.<sup>13</sup>

However, the vast majority of black working women during this period did not belong to unions, and their distress was compounded by the worsening job status of black men. By the early 1960s, the black family was registering the effects of large-scale unemployment faced by husbands, fathers, and sons; the result was an increase in the number of female-headed households. It was during this period that black women's job opportunities

contrasted most starkly with those of their white counterparts, especially white women who had moved with their families to the suburbs and now enjoyed a full range of employment possibilities stemming from the booming postwar economy, including jobs in expansive business parks and shopping malls located far from central cities and access to public transportation.<sup>14</sup>

In the mid-1960s, the federal government began to eliminate Jim Crow barriers in jobs and housing and to address the problem of, though not necessarily the sources of, poverty. President Lyndon B. Johnson backed a series of social-welfare legislative initiatives to help diverse poor communities, from rural Appalachia to northern inner cities. Yet these Great Society programs offered only modest public works projects. Many of the provisions passed in the early 1960s—the Manpower Development and Training Act, the Economic Opportunity Act, and the Work Incentive Program—affected relatively few black women and provided little more than “training” for menial jobs. Indeed, the thrust of the Great Society was to expand entitlement programs, including Medicare and Medicaid, rather than to provide job seekers and job holders with the opportunities and basic protections they and their families needed. In any case, federal anti-poverty programs could not halt the continued deterioration of inner cities, many now bisected by interstate highways, blighted by high-rise public housing projects, and deprived of decent public services, including schools and even grocery stores. Within these distressed communities, the economic significance of black women’s unwaged work—caring for the children of kin and neighbors, making do with little in the way of cash or other resources, negotiating a tightfisted and contemptuous welfare bureaucracy—increased proportionate to their impoverished status.<sup>15</sup>

The civil rights acts of 1964 (Title VII) and 1965 formed the centerpieces of the Great Society, and they represented a radical shift in federal policy. No longer would the federal government promote discrimination in jobs and voting. Several African American women played key roles in the drafting and implementation of this legislation, including Pauli Murray, an attorney who pressed for the word “sex” to be added to Title VII; Phyllis Wallace, a Yale-trained economist who documented patterns of blatant discrimination by private employers; and Eleanor Holmes Norton, an activist who served as chair of the administrative arm of the act, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in the late 1970s.<sup>16</sup>

However, the formal dismantling of a centuries-old system of Jim Crow could not and did not produce overnight results. Meanwhile, ghetto residents simmered in anger and frustration, their rage bursting forth in the civil disorders of 1965 to 1968. Against this backdrop, the National Welfare

Rights Organization sought expanded benefits for single women who headed households. In 1968, the NWRO claimed 75,000 members in 300 chapters in 150 cities around the country. The group demanded that the federal government increase AFDC and food-stamp benefits and eliminate restrictive rules. Recipients denounced regulations that required them to forfeit cash payments if they earned any money on their own and that declared ineligible any woman who had a "man in the house," presumably a husband or boyfriend who might help support her.<sup>17</sup>

Individual black families bore the brunt of the lag time between the passage of federal rights legislation and tangible results in the workplace. Thus, the NWRO was responding to the hard reality of hungry children who were living in households in a perpetual state of crisis. Between 1960 and 1970, the percentage of black children born to unwed parents increased from 38 percent to 55 percent. In 1960, AFDC administered 3 million cases; fifteen years later, the number was 11.4 million. The rise of AFDC caseloads reflected not just effective NWRO advocacy, but also actual suffering among impoverished black families. And that suffering was the catalyst for urban civil disorders. Executive Director George Wiley declared in 1967, "So long as welfare mothers cannot find redress in the halls of Congress, their sons will continue to seek it in the streets of our cities."<sup>18</sup>

During the turbulent 1960s, the NWRO garnered few allies among larger rights groups. The National Organization for Women focused on the priorities of the well-educated, affluent woman who desired both a high-powered job and a paid housekeeper (in all likelihood a minority woman) to go with it. Promoting such rights as suffrage and equal job opportunities for blacks, the NAACP and the National Urban League remained uneasy with the NWRO's slogan, "Welfare is a right." For its part, the NWRO and its allies focused not so much on paid employment options for women as on definitions of work: Were not women who stayed home full-time to care for their children engaged in productive labor? And did not AFDC policies serve to demean the women who relied on federal aid to feed their children?<sup>19</sup>

Johnnie Tillmon's signature statement came in the form of an essay published in *Ms.* magazine in 1972. In "Welfare Is a Women's Issue," she compared welfare dependency to a "supersexist marriage," with the federal government in the role of an abusive husband: "You trade in a man for *the* man. But you can't divorce him if he treats you bad. He can divorce you, of course, cut you off anytime he wants. But in that case, *he* keeps the kids, not you." Tillmon pointed out that for most poor women, even a full-time job at the minimum wage of two dollars an hour would not support a mother with three children. She argued that both caring for children and dealing with the

AFDC bureaucracy were forms of respectable labor: "You have to learn to fight, to be aggressive, or you just don't make it. If you can survive being on welfare, you can survive anything." Tillmon wrote that if she were president, she would guarantee a family of four an annual income of \$6,500, and then "I'd just issue a proclamation that "women's work is *real* work."<sup>20</sup>

By 1973, the NWRO was in decline, wracked by internal dissension and a lack of support among other advocacy organizations. At the same time, a number of developments at home and abroad ushered in contradictory forces affecting the labor, paid and unpaid, of northern urban black women. The demise of state-sanctioned Jim Crow opened up new job opportunities for black workers, now theoretically entitled to any job for which they were qualified. No longer would employers be able to run want ads that said "No Negroes [or women, or Jews] need apply." And indeed, by 1970, some black women had finally begun to reap the benefits of Title VII. Compared to ten years earlier, the percentage of black women workers who were in clerical and sales jobs had doubled, from 17 percent to 33 percent; and northern black women had reached parity with their white counterparts in terms of median earnings. Small numbers of white and black women "pioneers" were laboring in hostile, formerly all-white and all-male workplaces in the construction industry and other blue-collar trades. An African American woman, Mercedes Tompkins, eventually felt worn down by her male co-workers on a Boston construction site; their unrelenting abuse "was really affecting my self esteem," she said. "As soon as I came on the job, "the pin-ups went up, the naked ladies and the jokes—the works."<sup>21</sup>

The effects of Title VII were not uniform across the full spectrum of the black female workforce; the potential employees who gained the most from the new law were younger, well-educated women (including the 5 percent who had a college degree), and especially the light-skinned women favored by white personnel managers. In Compton, California, community leaders picketed the local Bank of America branch for a full year before the first black employee was hired there. Describing the employee, one activist observed, "Well, she was fair-skinned, blond hair, blue eyes, but they called her black. She was." Black women in general made the greatest gains in traditional (white) women's work, including the professions of social work, nursing, and teaching and the "pink-collar ghetto" of clerical support and retail sales. In 1980, equal proportions of black and white women (about a third of each group) were clustered in the fields of technical, sales, and administrative support.<sup>22</sup>

By this time, black families in northern and western cities were legally free to move wherever their ambitions and incomes would take them. Yet only a minority of families—the relatively small middle class—could afford

to move out of the city. In the meantime, rising unemployment (now at Depression-era levels for black men) continued to take a devastating toll on poor black households. By 1980, 40 percent of all black households were headed by a woman (compared to only 14 percent of all white households), and only about 50 percent of black female heads of household were gainfully employed. Neither "color-blind" nor affirmative action employment policies would substantially improve the plight of poor African Americans who possessed little in the way of formal education or job skills.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time, national and global economic and political developments during this period worked to the disadvantage of poor people everywhere, now forced to compete among themselves on a playing field that, while in some respects leveled, was lower and meaner than previously. The ill effects of corporate restructuring and the universal search for cheap labor abided no color line. In the United States, indices of household inequality were on the increase, reversing the trend of the previous three-decade period. Well-paid jobs for high school graduates were gradually disappearing, and with them went the industrial unions representing large numbers of relatively well-paid, semiskilled machine operatives and assembly-line workers. At the same time that Title VII opened the way for black men and women in a variety of previously all-white jobs, global competition and deindustrialization began to squeeze many workers out of those jobs, whether in southern textile mills or midwestern steel and auto plants. Throughout the country, black men were increasingly concentrated in sectors in decline, especially agriculture and unskilled labor in general.<sup>24</sup>

The 1970s rallying cry of "Black Power" reflected not just African Americans' frustration at their renewed vulnerability within the global economy, but also demographic trends rendering cities increasingly black and poor. Yet big-city black mayors could not stanch the hemorrhaging of jobs now flowing to the suburbs, the South, and Southeast Asia. In addition, the Reagan Revolution of the 1980s brought cutbacks in government services, with a corresponding decline in the number of public-sector jobs and the pay associated with those jobs—a trend fueled by the tax revolts of white suburbanites. For the black men and women who had established a "niche" in public employment and counted on these jobs as vehicles of upward social mobility, these developments were devastating. Reagan's firing of 11,359 striking air-traffic controllers in 1981, combined with policies that devolved federal power to the states, signaled that traditional unions of all kinds—the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees no less than the United Mine Workers—were now under siege from market forces and government policies alike. In 1974, women members of major trade and



industrial unions came together in Chicago to form a new group, the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), but within a few years it had succumbed to the forces of deindustrialization and downsizing afflicting several major industries, from automobiles to garment manufacturing.<sup>25</sup>

During this period, ideologies of racial difference promoted two contradictory but equally vicious stereotypes about black people in general and black women in particular. On the one hand, whites decried the black workers taking advantage of a new openness in hiring, and in some cases public-sector affirmative action policies, making their way into midlevel jobs as police, firefighters, letter carriers, and teachers. These aggressive, job-hungry people, so the reasoning went, would not rest until they had stripped white workers of their own jobs. According to this view, job hunting was a zero-sum game, and opportunities for blacks came at the expense of "rights" for whites. On the other hand, taking the lead from Reagan, whites also popularized the vicious stereotype of the black "welfare queen," a woman who saw her own children only as a means to fatter welfare checks. These stereotypes of blacks, as alternately assertive in the workplace and dependent on the dole, masked the structural features of inequality that took such a high toll on black households.<sup>26</sup>

By the 1980s, the American workforce was beginning to look quite different from the way it had just two decades before. Certainly the post-World War II city had never been just a black and white place, as revealed by large numbers of Puerto Ricans in New York City and Chinese in San Francisco, for example. Still, the immigration-reform act of 1965 had created a more diverse urban population composed of growing numbers of political and economic refugees from Southeast Asia and Latin and Central America. A decade after passage of the act, Chinese women workers accounted for fully 80 percent of all members of New York City's ILGWU Local 23-25. Now clerical and retail positions were open to African American women, and traditional men's jobs to various groups of women in general. Those who gained most were white women and also well-educated black women; this latter group now took jobs as bank tellers, department-store clerks, secretaries, and lower-level managers and other professionals. By the end of the century, fully two-thirds of black working women had jobs in the white-collar sector, which included retail sales, clerical work, and lower-level management positions. In contrast, in 1940, only 7 percent of all black working women were in those jobs.<sup>27</sup>

In this new world of work, class differences separated middle-class black women from poor women, and gender differences separated black women from black men. To some extent, black women's gains in middle-level man-

agement positions and other forms of white-collar work were a function of their gains in education. In 2000, more than a third of all African American women were in college, compared to a quarter of black men; and the women would go on to graduate in greater proportions than men. At the same time, black women benefited from the relative favor of employers, too many of whom saw black men as threatening and resistant to the demands of the workplace.<sup>28</sup>

Yet even the most privileged black women workers, those on the front lines of workplace integration, felt they were still living in the shadow of Jim Crow. Some companies made a show of hiring highly educated black job applicants but then relegated them to a corporate ghetto where they were concentrated in personnel, community-outreach, and human resources offices. Other employers hired black applicants for jobs commensurate with their talents but then did little to address an unwelcoming workplace culture. Jill Nelson, a well-educated journalist and the first black woman hired by the *Washington Post*, claimed that with the prestige of her new job came time-honored forms of racial prejudice: as an African American woman in a virtually all-white, all-male workplace, she felt demeaned and patronized by her boss and co-workers. She likened her position to that of a "volunteer slave"—she had agreed to take the job, but not the routine humiliation that came with it. Nelson shared with other well-paid black professionals "the rage of a privileged class"; these were employees who remained on a "race watch," ever sensitive to slights from white co-workers who regarded black forms of dress, hairstyle, and even religious faith with a mixture of curiosity and contempt.<sup>29</sup>

By the late twentieth century, a black working woman did not need to be a highly paid professional in order to excel at new kinds of tasks—"code-switching," or "shifting" between predominantly white workplaces during the day and black neighborhoods and family kin groups in the evenings and on weekends. "Code-switching" referred to the ability of workers to modify their behavior—the way they talked, dressed, laughed—according to the setting. In majority-white workplaces, black women battled stereotypes fueled not only by historic prejudices but also by the misogynistic lyrics of the gangsta rap music that was becoming increasingly popular in the 1980s and 1990s. A survey of black working women in 2000–2003 found that about six out of ten claimed that they took pains to act differently around white people than around blacks. Among some women, whites called out mixed emotions of defensiveness and assertiveness. One Harvard graduate remarked, "With certain white crowds, I need to be a bit more pretentious and full of myself than I would ordinarily be."<sup>30</sup>

As they achieved job and wage parity with their white co-workers, some “code-switchers” continued to distance themselves from problems they associated with white women exclusively—on the one hand, the guilt of working mothers; on the other, the resentment of stay-at-home mothers. These “mommy wars” seemed far from the everyday challenges faced by black working women who were worried about protecting their children from a raw street culture, and about providing money and other kinds of support for extended kin still living in impoverished central cities. Of white working women’s grievances, black attorney Robin Rucker Gaillard, 41, noted, “They don’t speak to my reality. We don’t generally have the time or luxury for the guilt and competition that some white mothers engage in.” Pamela Walker, a Chicago business-school professor, agreed: “My family can afford expensive things, but why would I think about spending hundreds on a stroller when I could help a cousin buy textbooks for college? That’s not my world.”<sup>31</sup>

And in fact, statistics suggesting parity between black and white women workers hid persistent differences between the two groups. Black college-educated women with children under eighteen were more likely to be working than similarly situated white women (83.7 percent, in contrast to 74 percent). Even well-compensated African American women remained in a relatively precarious state, since, compared to middle-class white households, their families had little in the way of inheritances or real estate holdings to rely upon. Frances Luckett, a school principal in Maryland, expressed concern that her well-educated daughter had decided to stay home with her children full-time: “A lot of financial sacrifice went into helping her get her two degrees,” Luckett said of her daughter. She added, “There are no guarantees in life, and I worry that if she just gives up her career, is just a wife and a mother, she will have nothing to fall back on.”<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, in 2000 one-third of employed black women were laboring in the unskilled and lower-level service sector, revealing that a disproportionate number were still relegated to the bottom of the wage scale. These were the women who toiled for minimum wages or less as nursing-home workers, fast-food employees, custodians, child-care workers, and cashiers in supermarket and discount-store chains. Uneducated black women were at a tremendous disadvantage in a highly credentialed society. However, evidence also suggests that, no matter how intelligent and ambitious, these women faced stubborn prejudice from employers who chose to sort job applicants by place, using their home address as a code for their “race.” A street address in a poor, all-black neighborhood could doom a candidate regardless of her (or his) potential for the position.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, gender distinctions between black men and women sharpened, especially within the poorest communities, many of which showed a demographic imbalance in favor of women. Where were the black men? Like other poor men, some were living apart from their families, transient, undetected by census takers. However, an unprecedented number were in jail. By 2004, fully 10 percent of all black men in their twenties were incarcerated (up from 5 percent ten years earlier). Among those living in inner cities, more than half failed to graduate from high school. In 2004, almost three-quarters of black male high school dropouts in their twenties were jobless; in contrast, the figures for white men and Hispanic men in that age range were 34 percent and 19 percent respectively. Indeed, compared to black men, Hispanic men overall had consistently higher labor-force participation in the nation's largest northern central cities. For example, in Chicago 58 percent of black men, but 82 percent of Hispanic men, were in the paid labor force; in the District of Columbia the figures were 65 percent black, 90 percent Hispanic; in Los Angeles 68.5 percent black, 81.2 percent Hispanic; and in Milwaukee 51.4 percent black, 76.8 percent Hispanic. Taking into account all black men in their twenties who were also dropouts from high school, they were more likely to be in jail than working.<sup>34</sup>

These statistics highlight the historic burdens of black women who had to provide for themselves and their children without the emotional or financial support of resident husbands and fathers. Among single mothers, these burdens spawned high rates of chronic illness, including diabetes and hypertension, and also a cynical attitude toward men and toward the institution of marriage. The "jobless ghetto" yielded few economic incentives for men and women to marry or even establish households together.<sup>35</sup>

By the end of the twentieth century, enduring forms of prejudice still thwarted the prospects of black job seekers and workers. At the same time, the traditional binaries distinguishing northerners from southerners, urban residents from suburbanites, and even blacks from whites proved an inadequate template for the 1975 to 2005 period. The divergent challenges faced by "code-switchers" in corporate offices in Manhattan on the one hand and counter workers at McDonald's in Detroit on the other did not differ all that much from those of their respective counterparts in Atlanta and Houston. Stark contrasts between the impoverished inner city and the affluent suburb dissolved as some cash-starved suburbs composed of poor minorities developed forms of blight associated with big-city neighborhoods—failing schools and high rates of unemployment, crime, and drug use. Even rural-urban distinctions were blurring as distress settled over pockets of the countryside

where good jobs were in short supply. The 1980s crack epidemic in the nation's largest cities had as its counterpart the later methamphetamine epidemic that afflicted rural areas throughout the South and Midwest.<sup>36</sup>

Overall, stubborn trends that emerged in the mid-1970s were not favorable for low-wage workers regardless of skin color, cultural background, or region of the country. The emerging high-tech economy produced tremendous wealth, but workers did not share in that wealth to the extent they had in the three decades before. Between 1973 and 2001, real hourly wages rose by only 7 percent for the median American worker; for men in general, real wages actually fell. During this period, the incomes of the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans tripled, while the bottom 20 percent saw their household income rise by only 9 percent. Many businesses chose to keep wages and benefits low, replace full-time workers with part-time or contract employees, and hire undocumented immigrants who were powerless to protest ill-treatment. Taken together, these policies—the so-called low road of labor relations—spelled disaster for poorly educated women, who were disproportionately black, Hispanic, and Asian. Workers were increasingly vulnerable to employers who used a combination of conventional and creative forms of labor exploitation—altering time cards, locking night-shift employees into the workplace, firing employees who expressed an interest in joining a union, promoting white native-born men over qualified women and immigrants. In this “netherworld” of labor relations, contractors paid cleaning-crew members only \$3.50 an hour, then defied them to complain, pointing to the line of people waiting to take their jobs.<sup>37</sup>

In search of compliant, cheap labor, some companies moved their operations to low-wage, non-unionized regions of the United States; shifted to offshore production sites; or employed immigrants, documented or undocumented, and paid them a fraction of what they paid the immigrants' native-born counterparts. These developments, combined with the effects of increased immigration from Latin America and Southeast Asia, produced culturally diverse workforces of low-waged women in urban areas throughout the country. In 1982, twenty thousand Chinese women garment workers in New York City struck for a new ILGWU contract. The decline of the family-owned laundry, plus increasing competition for men's restaurant jobs, meant that more families had to depend on wage earning by wives, mothers, and daughters. Among the organizers was Alice Ip, a native of Hong Kong, who became the business agent for ILGWU Local 23-25. In her union activism, Ip faced intense disapproval from her family, including her children, who “hoped that I could spend more time with them.” After she and other workers won a union contract that covered all shops

in Chinatown, Ip said, "The most rewarding thing was my children's increased respect for me. . . . I don't believe that one's life is predestined and unchangeable. I believe in my own effort"—and, presumably, in the effort of ordinary women workers, whose energy and determination made the strike a successful one.<sup>38</sup>

In the 1980s, in California's Silicon Valley, employers of circuit-board assemblers eagerly sought out women newly arrived from a veritable globe's worth of homelands—Mexico, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Ethiopia, Haiti, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Venezuela. Most shop bosses were men, and they sought to discipline their female workforces by denigrating assertive behavior as "unfeminine." These men treated employees as if their jobs were incidental to the welfare of their families, when in fact just the opposite was true; eight out of ten women workers served as the primary breadwinners of their households. One Portuguese woman reported, "The boss tells us not to bring our 'women's problems' with us to work if we wanted to be treated equal. What does he mean by that? I am working here *because* of my 'women's problems.' I need this job because I am a woman and have children to feed."<sup>39</sup>

In the decades after Title VII, the nation's cities remained the site of an ongoing effort among women to integrate previously all-white and all-male workplaces. A 1984 consent decree leading to the breakup of the communications giant AT&T included affirmative action programs that opened up both blue-collar jobs and higher-level executive positions to women. By the mid-1990s, women who worked for US West in Denver included Bonny Arquiroy, a single Filipino American mother who toiled underground splicing cables; Annette Leal, a Latina serving as vice president of the company's communications; Terry Miyamoto, an Asian American employed as a labor-relations executive; and Ellen Masquat, a Sioux in charge of a mentoring program for minority employees. On the East Coast, in 2003 SEIU officials estimated that only one hundred of New York City's three thousand door people were women; but among the pioneers were Panathy Hill, an African American who successfully sued a building-management company, and Blanca Alonzo, an immigrant from Ecuador who first got her job as a door person on West End Avenue in 1994. Nine years later, people were still doing a double take when they saw Alonzo in uniform: "They say, 'Oh my God—bless you. . . . They can't believe it's a woman.'"<sup>40</sup>

In 1996, Congress abolished the federal program Aid to Families with Dependent Children ("welfare as we know it," in the words of President Bill Clinton). By that time, about four out of ten recipients were black, four times the proportion of blacks in the overall U.S. population. AFDC was

replaced with a new program called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which devolved the responsibility for welfare to the states and mandated that recipients either work or be dropped from the rolls after a specified amount of time. The aim of this legislation was to get women off the welfare rolls and into jobs, regardless of their domestic responsibilities. Politicians and policymakers expressed confidence that supplementary legislation, including the earned income tax credit for poor households and subsidies for child care for working mothers, would substantially improve the condition of the working poor. In 1996, 4.8 million families were receiving AFDC; in 2000, 2.2 million were receiving TANF.<sup>41</sup>

Subsequent studies of the effects of TANF suggested that poor women who headed households were receiving about the same amount of cash assistance as they had under AFDC. Some women who were dropped from the rolls (in March 2004, 8 percent) nevertheless did not enter the workforce. Presumably, these mothers were doubling up with friends, relying on the goodwill of family members, or living on the streets or in homeless shelters. In 2004, more than a third of all single mothers were impoverished; this figure was no doubt an underestimate, since it did not account for regional variations in the cost of living and did not indicate how many families were just a health-care crisis away from utter disaster. TANF policies failed to take into account that some women could not find or keep a steady job because of any number of factors, including drug or alcohol addiction and chronic physical and mental-health problems. For ill and overworked women, where was the "reform" in welfare reform? In the early twenty-first century, the plight of the poor seemed impervious to government policies and to market forces alike.<sup>42</sup>

In the 1960s, Johnnie Tillmon, Ruby Duncan, and other leaders of the welfare-rights movement believed that government entitlement and cash-redistribution programs held the key to a decent life for the poorest and most vulnerable Americans. Three decades later, the most effective anti-poverty strategies relied not on the largesse of politicians and bureaucrats, but on the organizational savvy of service workers' unions, as well as on urban-based living-wage campaigns and local worker centers and advocacy groups. By the early twenty-first century, Tenants and Workers United was sponsoring centers that—from Chicago to Florida, from Alexandria, Virginia, to Los Angeles—served as advocates for immigrants confronting low wages, fraudulent employers, dangerous jobs, and high medical-care bills. Meanwhile, with the decline of the heavy-manufacturing sector, women and minorities gained increasing representation in the labor movement (in the 1990s, white men accounted for less than half of all union members).

Women attained leadership positions in some of the fastest-growing unions, including the SEIU and UNITE-HERE, which merged unions of restaurant and hotel employees with garment workers.<sup>43</sup>

Women also figured prominently in grassroots living-wage campaigns. Initiated in the mid-1990s, these efforts brought together coalitions of labor unions, religious groups, and grassroots organizations to pressure local municipalities and states, and the contractors they hired, to offer their workers wages considerably higher than the minimum wage. In mid-2007, the federal minimum wage was just \$5.15 an hour, reflecting Congress's apparent indifference to the straitened position of low-wage employees; but a number of cities had raised their own minimum wages—Santa Fe to \$9.50 an hour, for example. Moreover, SEIU took the lead in sponsoring broad-based movements to lift wages and improve benefits for service-sector workers. These movements highlighted the fact that the struggle for decent working conditions and pay knew no barriers between men and women, blacks and whites, immigrants and the native-born, in southern or northern, urban or rural workplaces. However, by this time, only 8 percent of all private-sector nonfarm workers belonged to unions.<sup>44</sup>

In the early twenty-first century, workplace health as much as wages served as a defining issue of a two-tiered job system that provided generous benefits for a few and deprived the lowest-paid workers of both a safe workplace and health insurance for themselves and their families. Despite technological innovations in production and in information management, urban workplaces were dangerous places. Silicon Valley workers endured exposure to toxic chemicals. Key punch operators and other clerical employees suffered from eyestrain and carpal-tunnel syndrome. New standards of comfort in some of the nation's most expensive hotels and upscale hotel chains added to the burdens of chambermaids. Lifting mattresses as heavy as 115 pounds and wrestling with ever-growing layers of bedding, including duvets, bed skirts, and extra pillows, comforters, and blankets, taxed the resources of the most energetic women, who now had to rely on daily doses of medication to ease back and shoulder pain. In 2006, housekeepers were earning on average only \$17,500 a year, despite their increasingly arduous labor—stooping and twisting and bending their bodies, completing bed-making routines that required they lift mattresses as many as 150 to 200 times each day. Housekeepers continued to suffer rising injury rates, while the rates associated with other kinds of hotel work were declining. Attempts by union officials to raise the issue with management brought a swift rebuttal: a spokesman for Hilton Hotels suggested the issue was a "smokescreen" designed to pressure managers to recognize the union.<sup>45</sup>



Although living-wage campaigns and SEIU strikes brought together diverse groups of workers in common cause, the domestic workings of the global economy provoked raw new rifts between immigrants and African Americans. In some poor places where the local public school system was the largest employer, black and Hispanic workers vied for a variety of jobs, from teacher to custodian to cafeteria worker. More generally, about three-quarters of the nation's undocumented immigrants were concentrated in unskilled jobs in cleaning, construction, food preparation, manufacturing, and transportation, historically the work sites of blacks in general and black men in particular. In the spring of 2006, massive street demonstrations and marches focused the nation's attention on the hardships endured by many Hispanic immigrants, both documented and undocumented. In their rhetoric and civil-disobedience tactics, the protests evoked the African American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Some black leaders reacted angrily, charging that immigrants were appropriating the protest strategies favored by a group that had suffered from state-sponsored terrorism for years and that now faced intense competition for even the lowest-paying jobs. These leaders feared that the most vulnerable native-born workers, disproportionately African American men and women in northern cities, would face an ever-worsening low-wage job market. Linda Carter-Lewis, a human resources manager and the head of the NAACP branch in Des Moines, said, "We [African Americans] will have no power, no clout. That's where I see this immigrant movement going. Even though many thousands and thousands of them have no legal status now and no right to vote right now, that day is coming."<sup>46</sup>

Despite the blurring of conventional categories distinguishing northern from southern and urban from suburban workers, certain enduring inequalities have characterized the recent history of black workers, men and women. A substantial proportion of black women and men in northern cities formed an integral part of the class of the working poor, composed of an estimated fifty-four million people who worked but faced a critical cash shortfall at the end of every month. Blacks as a group were still disproportionately dependent on state-funded jobs; in 2000, more than four out of ten black women worked in government offices or in public hospitals or schools, in some communities virtually the only jobs available. In the early twenty-first century, black middle-class families represented but a minority of the total black population, and the black poverty rate was twice as high as the rate for non-Hispanic whites. Centuries of slavery and discrimination in the workplace—state-sanctioned patterns of prejudice that eased only within the last half century—meant that black families had accumulated less property than

whites, owned their own homes in smaller proportions than whites, and could count on smaller inheritances to bequeath to future generations. And black single mothers remained disproportionately poor (more than 50 percent) compared to their white counterparts (about 25 percent). The plight of black children living in such households was particularly dire, with half of them impoverished, compared to only 16 percent of white children living in female-headed households.<sup>47</sup>

Over the past quarter century, American workplaces have revealed, simultaneously, enduring ideologies of racial and gender difference on the one hand, and, on the other, global economic forces that no longer abide by such ideologies. Today, for African American women, like other waged and unwaged workers, formal educational credentials are a powerful predictor of job status; and job status, in turn, determines a whole host of other meaningful life-indicators related to residence, health care, and family stability. At the same time, increasingly diverse low-wage workforces, combined with class divisions that set all poor workers apart from their privileged counterparts, have not erased the legacies of slavery and institutional discrimination. Understanding the ways that the Jim Crow era continues to shape the transformed workplace of the modern economy is the challenge for historians today.

## “Something’s Wrong Down Here”: Poor Black Women and Urban Struggles for Democracy

RHONDA Y. WILLIAMS

After the 1930s, U.S. cities experienced demographic changes, economic restructuring, and shifting racial landscapes that shaped struggles for citizenship and democracy. These “diverse movements for full citizenship rights resulted in the rise of the new industrial unions, the New Deal state, and the gradual growth of the modern civil rights and Black Power movements.”<sup>1</sup> However, despite the proliferation of scholarly studies that examine these topics, including African Americans’ resistance and movement experiences, only recently have scholars begun to seriously consider, include, and critically engage the stories of low-income black women.

Often absent from scholarly studies, low-income black women struggled in informal and formal ways—and their citizenship struggles draw attention to the issues shaping postwar urban residency as well as the character of the liberal state and U.S. democracy. Experiencing the daily pain of social inequality and economic deprivation, low-income black women lodged trenchant critiques of their impoverished circumstances, mistreatment, and crude societal perceptions of poor people as indolent, satisfied, unintelligent, and inactive. Low-income black women experienced a gamut of emotions, from dismay, disillusionment, and dejection to disgruntlement. Their daily lives, political expressions, and community responses reveal not only considerable discontent transformed into activist participation, but also how social needs, urban conditions, and government policies shaped grassroots demands for greater democracy.

By putting the lives and struggles of low-income black women at the center of the analysis, some recent historical studies have made critical interventions by bridging “the physical city and the city of lived experience,”<sup>2</sup> by exploring race, gender, and state power on the urban political terrain, and by complicating a scholarly black freedom narrative that, overall, still

ignores the historical experiences and political parlance of some of the most marginalized and publicly demonized black citizens in the United States. In *The Politics of Public Housing*, I explore low-income black women's experiences, politicization, and relationships with the state and social-welfare programs by examining urban inequality and tenants' and welfare-rights struggles in Baltimore after the 1930s.<sup>3</sup> Christina Greene, in *Our Separate Ways*, focuses on the interracial and intraracial struggles of working-class and poor black women around housing, employment, and community in Durham, North Carolina.<sup>4</sup> Annelise Orleck's *Storming Caesars Palace* charts the post-1940s migration of black women to Las Vegas and explores how that city's racial politics and the economic disfranchisement that low-income black mothers experienced in the hub of gaming wealth birthed an activist struggle that demanded welfare rights and used anti-poverty money to build child-care, health-care, and other community-based programs.<sup>5</sup> Other historians, such as Lisa Levenstein, are documenting poor black women's confrontations with public institutions—including housing, welfare, hospitals, schools, and the legal system.<sup>6</sup> And Premilla Nadasen, in her national study of the National Welfare Rights movement, charts how low-income black women, whom many deemed apolitical and not very bright, became formidable "welfare warriors" in 1960s and 1970s America.<sup>7</sup>

These scholarly examinations of the daily struggles, politicization, informal networks and associations, and responses of low-income black women enrich historical understanding of the black urban experience as well as seriously engage little-discussed people and issues in post-World War II cities. Low-income black women's personal stories—which reveal the human toll of urban living and connect race, gender, class, residence, place, and politics—complicate the dominant depiction of postwar cities as veritable urban wastelands and black women as incubators of social ills. By paying particular attention to the material conditions, the seemingly mundane worries of life, and urban policies that often provided the exigencies for local and national struggles in postwar America, these scholars reconsider, even reimagine, the prevailing narratives of black freedom struggles, which have tended to focus on traditional organizations and the more familiar activists linked to them.<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of these studies welcomely historicize what political scientist Ange-Marie Hancock has described as the contemporary "politics of disgust," which has legitimized the maltreatment of poor black single mothers and the gutting of social-welfare policies, such as public housing and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.<sup>9</sup> In the wake of public debates over government responsibility—driven by the politics of race, gender, residence,

and poverty—in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, these kinds of demythologizing studies are more necessary now than ever.<sup>10</sup>

Building on this burgeoning scholarship, then, this essay forges a preliminary, multicity narrative of low-income black women—particularly those who relied on government social-welfare programs and lived in increasingly black inner cities—and their struggles during the 1960s and early 1970s. While often conflated conceptually or used interchangeably, the terms “low-income,” “subsidy-reliant,” and “AFDC” (receiving what is commonly called “welfare”) are not collapsible, even though they may be overlapping descriptors. Not all low-income women were subsidy-reliant. Neither were all subsidy-reliant women AFDC recipients or outside the paid labor market. More research on low-income women’s lives and resistance in specific places and over time will further enrich our understanding of the multiplicity of their identities, experiences, and relationships to the state. For it is clear that after World War II, the welfare state and its social programs and policies intricately shaped the physical, social, and political terrain of cities where many poor black people lived out their existence.

This study—only a slice of a much larger and more complicated historical picture—will focus on low-income, subsidy-reliant black women, who may or may not have earned wages but are similarly linked by their decision to turn to the government—in this case, for help paying their rent. In numerous eastern, southern, midwestern, and western cities, low-income black women’s resistance exposes the intimate connections between the state, place, urban government policies, structural inequality, and poor people’s claims to full citizenship rights. The following stories, which focus on battles that emerged out of the specific spatial context of public housing in cities including Baltimore, Philadelphia, Chicago, Durham, Nashville, St. Louis, and Los Angeles, provide a pathway to comprehend the historically grounded boundaries of “traditional” political struggles and to explore the often decisive power of urban issues to shape citizens’ demands for democratic inclusion. In response to the “ghetto” conditions of postindustrial capitalism, the flowering of vociferous struggles, and societal disrepute, low-income black women waged their own battles for citizenship based on achieving empowerment, human dignity, and the basic necessities of human existence. Seeking to be good mothers and responsible citizens, poor black women harnessed their pain and their indomitable wills, available skills, political alliances, and liberation languages to challenge municipal and federal power brokers and transform their local conditions. During a historical moment when subsidy-reliant status distinctively positioned low-income black women as social bogeys, some poor black women even

accepted the awesome and, for them, enthralling responsibility of local and national leadership, which afforded them an opportunity to broker and channel discontent into group outrage, alliances, and campaigns.

### Protesting the Tenant as Serf

McDougald Terrace, a racially segregated public housing complex in Durham, North Carolina, opened in 1953, and its 360 apartments served as home to many black low-wage and low-income families.<sup>11</sup> On November 11, 1964, Joyce Thorpe, a black divorced mother of three, moved into McDougald Terrace, not even suspecting that she would file a lawsuit against the housing authority, help spur a city-based organizing effort, and foment the development of a federal regulation to legally protect public housing tenants against retaliatory evictions. But, just as important, the battle by Thorpe and her attorney against housing officials who they thought persecuted public housing tenants for their activism forced government officials to reckon with the disparate treatment of low-income black women as citizens because they relied on public subsidies.

A married mom, homeowner, beauty-school graduate, and college student, Thorpe experienced a significant decline in economic security when she divorced. Many women in cities across the nation found themselves in similar harrowing situations that thrust them into not only poverty, but also social positions of disrepute and disgust, particularly because they proactively turned to social-welfare programs to abate their and their families' suffering. Having few economically feasible housing options in cities bereft of enough adequate, sanitary, and affordable residences, Thorpe applied for public housing and moved into McDougald.<sup>12</sup>

On August 10, 1965, tenants elected Thorpe president of the complex's Mothers Club. She encouraged them to organize and, as their leader, asked Durham Housing Authority officials for meeting space "so the tenants could plan a child care center."<sup>13</sup> Across the country, female public housing tenants had formed Mothers Clubs and other tenant groups to promote sociability, share information, pool resources, and develop mechanisms to address the harsh circumstances, ineffective resources, and government irresponsiveness that accompanied being poor in urban America. In fact, in the initial years of public housing, federal officials deemed such community-based organizations acceptable, even desirable—as did many local housing officials, but only so long as tenants engaged in self-help and recreational activities and did not burden officials with "troublesome" issues. Apparently, however, leading an activist mothers' group that sought housing-authority

resources (and at a moment when black people's demands for rights took the country by storm) had put Joyce Thorpe in a very precarious position.

One day after her election, Thorpe received an eviction notice, effective August 31. When she asked housing-authority officials for the reason—she had lived in her apartment nine months without incident—they gave her none. Fearing that she and her three children would have nowhere to live, Thorpe refused to leave. On September 1, her attorney met with housing-authority officials, who had earlier that day met with a police detective “who had been investigating [Thorpe’s] conduct”—though officials failed to mention that meeting to Thorpe’s attorney.<sup>14</sup> About two weeks later, the housing authority filed a summary-eviction petition against Joyce Thorpe in Durham’s Justice of the Peace Court. Three days later, on September 20, the judge ordered Thorpe removed.<sup>15</sup> When the Durham County sheriff came to put her out, Thorpe locked herself in her apartment and threatened him with deadly bodily harm. More specifically, Thorpe frantically yelled that if the sheriff entered her home, she would blow his brains out.<sup>16</sup>

Low-income black women’s political battles as citizens did not stem simply from the legal proscription of civil rights, but resulted from their desire to secure provisions for human survival and from their uniquely delimited citizenship status structured by their race, gender, and public dependency. In 1964 and 1965, civil rights activists’ struggles to secure legal citizenship rights had resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act, signed on August 6, 1965. But neither of these acts mitigated the everyday problems related to housing, income, health care, and child care suffered by Joyce Thorpe and other low-income black women in poor, often inner-city neighborhoods. Nor did these acts protect them from the whims of government power brokers who, as in the Thorpe case, were their landlords. Facing her family’s unexplained expulsion from government housing and potential homelessness, Thorpe filed an appeal in the Superior Court of Durham County, “claiming that her eviction was based upon her organizational activities with the tenants’ organization and was a violation of her first amendment rights.”<sup>17</sup> Thorpe’s physical and legal protests against what she deemed a spurious and penalizing antidemocratic action by housing officials reveal an underexamined expression of the ways in which black women have fought for equal citizenship.

The attack against Thorpe galvanized other poor, mostly female black residents of the area to establish the United Organizations for Community Improvement (UOCI) to challenge housing and urban renewal policies that disadvantaged Durham’s black neighborhoods.<sup>18</sup> Thorpe’s legal battle is just one example among many that reveal what Temma Kaplan has identified as

"an invisible revolution" in which women globally have asserted "collective rights," made "broad claims about human needs," and "linked social need to democracy."<sup>19</sup> Often, these invisible revolutions in post-World War II U.S. cities were responses to economic challenges; to spatial realities such as overcrowding, declining urban infrastructures, and crime; and to government urban policies, including housing and urban renewal programs and public housing regulations.

Despite Joyce Thorpe's argument that the housing authority unjustifiably abridged her freedom of expression and denied her equal protection of the laws, the Durham County Superior Court and the North Carolina Supreme Court upheld her eviction and argued that "the Authority's reasons for terminating [her] tenancy were immaterial."<sup>20</sup> Not to be stymied, Thorpe and her lawyers petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court, which agreed to hear the case in December 1966. But on February 7, 1967, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in an official circular, mandated local housing officials to tell public housing tenants why they were being evicted, as well as give tenants an opportunity to reply. Replacing the wording in a previous HUD regulation that "strongly urge[d]" eviction notification "as a matter of good social policy," the HUD circular stated, "We believe it is essential that no tenant be given notice to vacate" without a reason.<sup>21</sup> As a result, the U.S. Supreme Court vacated the North Carolina Supreme Court judgment and remanded the case for reconsideration.

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, however, in his concurring opinion, argued that the HUD circular—or maybe more aptly, he suggested, the press release—failed to offer appropriate guidelines for judging whether Thorpe's eviction was retaliatory. Douglas wrote, "The circular does not specifically state the reasons which can support eviction; it does not state that a tenant cannot be evicted for his stand on civil rights; it does not even broach the subject." Douglas also criticized the use of "arbitrary power," particularly by government officials: "It is not dispositive to maintain that a private landlord might terminate a lease at his pleasure. For this is government we are dealing with, and the actions of government are circumscribed by the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment."<sup>22</sup>

Douglas's opinion, while in response to a specific legal case, broadly reaffirmed low-income black women's sentiments—neither inadequate housing, economic marginalization, nor tenants' decisions to live in government-subsidized, low-income, urban housing should strip them of their government protections as citizens. Douglas maintained, "The recipient of a government benefit, be it a tax exemption, unemployment compensation, public employment, a license to practice law, or a home in a public housing



project, cannot be made to forfeit the benefit because he exercises a constitutional right." Douglas did concede housing officials' right to evict tenants, but for things such as "destroying fixtures, defacing the walls, disturbing other tenants by boisterous conduct and for numerous other reasons which impair the successful operation of the housing project. Eviction for such reasons will completely protect the viability of the housing project without making the tenant a serf who has a home at the pleasure of the manager of the project or the housing authority."<sup>23</sup>

When the North Carolina Supreme Court refused to reconsider its judgment in light of the HUD policy, the U.S. Supreme Court again agreed to hear the Thorpe case. Eventually, in 1969, Thorpe won her lawsuit. In "one of the most famous and far-reaching recent cases concerning the rights of public housing tenants,"<sup>24</sup> the Supreme Court justices prohibited "landlords from evicting public housing residents without cause," thereby judicially protecting tenants from retaliatory evictions, as well as affirming tenants' rights to not be evicted "for engaging in constitutionally protected activity."<sup>25</sup> While Thorpe and her case had national policy ramifications, Thorpe was only one of many low-income women who contested inequality and challenged the state as they sought to provide for their families and transform their circumstances.

The language of constitutional protections in the age of rights struggles infused low-income black women's political discourse, particularly as they battled discriminatory public regulations governing their everyday lives as urban dwellers, subsidy-reliant citizens, and poor black mothers. For instance, Baltimore's Daisy Snipes—a Perkins Homes public housing tenant and co-chair of the city's first welfare-rights organization, Mother Rescuers from Poverty—asserted low-income mothers' constitutional right to privacy. In 1966, in a public statement criticizing the state's disparaging treatment of welfare recipients, Snipes claimed that "untrained appointed investigators visit welfare recipients to assure public funds are not misused. Recipients are not informed of their rights in this matter. Their entire investigative system should be abolished. . . . No other recipients of public funds are harassed in this manner."<sup>26</sup> Like Thorpe and Snipes, many poor black women across the country questioned the constitutionality of government actions, such as housing authorities' punitive evictions and welfare agencies' man-in-the-house rules and their raids that specifically targeted subsidy-reliant, primarily black women and their families who lived in cities.<sup>27</sup>

Confronting the exclusions wrought by federal urban policies in local government programs and agencies, poor black women vigorously proclaimed that their poverty did not trump their rights as citizens and as hu-

man beings deserving of help, equality, and dignity. By the mid- to late 1960s, the material hardships of poor people and the daily travails of low-income black women increasingly appeared on the public agendas of nationally known social-change organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which increasingly recognized the ineffectiveness of prevailing civil rights protest strategies in altering entrenched urban problems. For instance, in November 1965, CORE, which had vowed at its national conference that year in Baltimore to target the "ghetto" as part of the next phase of its democratic struggle, critiqued the state's discriminatory treatment of poor people at the White House Conference on Civil Rights held in Washington, D.C. CORE charged that "encroachments" by welfare and public housing administrations "reduced the legal *entitlements* of the poor, especially Negroes," and it maintained that people's "power to shape the physical, social and aesthetic parameters" of their lives was as important as the power to shape their political life through the vote.<sup>28</sup>

Interestingly, even as CORE critiqued the government institutions that low-income black women disproportionately confronted, the imprecise language that CORE organizers used minimized the central relationship of women to social-welfare programs and the gendered image of welfare clients. While it is not clear whether CORE's consistent use of male pronouns signaled male leaders' unexamined privilege or chauvinism, represented a savvy attempt to circumvent the stigmatizing rhetoric of the black matriarchy, or both, CORE clearly protested the systemic and institutionalized mistreatment that low-income black women experienced.<sup>29</sup>

The guiding principle of those agencies who serve our communities must be "no service without representation." Schools, hospitals, welfare programs must all give to their clients a dominant role in the shaping of the programs which serve them. No longer should the welfare client be ground down further as the passive recipient [*sic*] of a begrudging dole handed out by a social worker made more spy than aide by a system established to catch "cheaters." Instead the client himself should shape and mold the program so that it comes to serve his needs as he perceives them and in this very process gives to him a new sense of dignity and honor through the exercise of power.<sup>30</sup>

While the above example clearly shows that low-income black women and CORE shared similar concerns, more research still needs to be conducted on the relationship between low-income women's activism and CORE, as well as other such freedom organizations at the local level.

In the following years, low-income black women and their allies sought to alter the desperate economic circumstances and marginalized social status of poor people by not only demanding economic resources from government, but also fighting for representation on the governing boards of public agencies and institutions. Low-income black women demanded the right to participate in the municipal decision-making process. Theirs was a call for democratic inclusion in urban-based institutions that extended beyond the legal right to vote or even the constitutional recognition of their civil rights. In their demands, low-income black women deployed the language of not only constitutional rights, but also “maximum feasible participation,” to counter the exclusionary and dismissive treatment of their supposed government benefactors. And when they did so, public housing, as well as other urban spaces such as welfare offices, community centers, and the streets, became their staging grounds for mobilizing against uncaring, hostile, or intransigent political officials in cities throughout the country.

### From Legal Claims to Representative Voice

By 1968, grassroots public housing activism had received a jolt with the Great Society’s anti-poverty programs and the establishment of HUD’s modernization program—in part the result of residents’ discontent with deteriorating housing. The HUD program, which extended the philosophy of “maximum feasible participation” to the realm of public housing, sought not only to upgrade the physical condition of public housing, but also to modernize tenant-management relations by mandating the participation of residents in the decision-making process.<sup>31</sup> As a result, the modernization program spurred new tenant organizing efforts and claims to power in Baltimore, St. Louis, and Philadelphia, among other cities; and residents and their allies who were already championing tenants’ rights earned an enhanced sense of activist legitimacy. In this way, black female tenants in local communities across the country claimed their right to participate in (with the hopes of influencing) the policies and programs that shaped their lives, homes, and neighborhoods.

In Baltimore, in August 1968, public housing tenants spearheaded an effort that eventually secured representation for black and white, female and male tenants in the formulation of agency-wide housing-authority policies. Led by Margaret E. Johnson, the small group of tenants from the Lafayette, Flag House, and Perkins public housing complexes in east-central downtown Baltimore, with the counsel of Legal Services lawyers, met with Robert Embry, Jr., the housing authority’s executive director. The public

housing cadre demanded the withdrawal of the housing authority's \$3 million modernization budget for 1968–69, because officials had not consulted tenants, as stipulated by the new modernization program. The tenant delegation also requested the establishment of a "recognized channel for [citywide] representation."<sup>32</sup> While Embry refused to withdraw the modernization budget and to negotiate with "non-tenants"—as did many city officials who bristled at the activist role of government-employed anti-poverty workers—he promised to include tenants in future housing-authority deliberations.<sup>33</sup> The result was the formation of Baltimore's citywide Resident Advisory Board (RAB). Through the activism of numerous black female public housing tenants who pressed for rights and power at the grassroots level, Baltimore became one of the first cities to establish a formal and officially recognized citywide tenant council, in October 1968. Unlike boards of tenants' affairs—such as those mandated by law in Rhode Island and Detroit, which had only 50 percent public housing resident membership—Baltimore's RAB was "composed entirely of public housing tenants."<sup>34</sup>

The same year that Baltimore tenants questioned their local agency's modernization budget and secured representation, public housing tenants in St. Louis and Philadelphia became embroiled in their own local battles, which ultimately resulted in tenant representation. In early 1969, St. Louis public housing tenants who were protesting the housing authority's new rent schedule—established in late 1968 and based on a flat fee, rather than income level—organized a rent strike. Operating at a deficit, housing-authority officials had argued that the new rental rates would help the agency avoid an impending bankruptcy, which they maintained was the result of increased maintenance expenses, inflation, vacancy rates, and insufficient rent revenue linked to an increasing number of AFDC families. But tenants would not hear of it. In December 1968, one month after the new rates were imposed, the tenants of Carr Square Village and Vaughn Homes, led by Rev. Buck Jones, "signed pledges to participate in a rent strike to protest the rent increases and to demand greater tenant voice in running the public housing program."<sup>35</sup> They were joined by tenants in five other St. Louis public housing complexes, as well as "a more militant strike leader" in Jean King, who represented tenants in the Darst-Webbe and Clinton Peabody public housing complexes.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to suggesting the traditional methods of paying rent to the court, to a rent-strike account, or to strike leaders for safekeeping, Jean King also suggested to tenants that they "could save the money on their own or spend it for food or other family necessities." In June, six months after the strike began, the housing authority's executive director, Irvin Dagen, instituted

a new 25 percent sliding scale for AFDC and fixed-income families only. He also promised to propose a new rent schedule for the next fiscal year and "invited" tenants to appoint an advisory group to work with him on the 1970 fiscal budget. However, tenant leaders vowed to continue the strike "until the new rent schedule actually takes [effect]," until residents were actually involved in the decision-making process, and until the housing authority developed programs or other mechanisms to strengthen tenants' managerial skills and economic well-being. King demanded more than that. She urged the housing authority to not only reduce the rental rate, but also make the reduction "retroactive to February," replace Dagen as executive director, and separate the housing authority from the St. Louis redevelopment authority.<sup>37</sup> After nine months, city officials reduced rents, appointed a new board of commissioners and director, and established a tenant-affairs board.<sup>38</sup>

While the federal government undeniably shaped urban space, municipal politics, and citizenship struggles through its national policies and programs, the desires (and even hubris) of municipal authorities, as well as the specific political economy of individual cities, also structured how or whether federal regulations were implemented at the local level. In Philadelphia, public housing residents in the Richard Allen, James Weldon Johnson, and Tasker public housing complexes who sought tenant representation and voice in housing-authority affairs successfully barred the agency's access to modernization money. Only after an intense struggle with city officials and the tenants' independent formation of a Resident Advisory Board did the local housing authority sign a "memorandum of understanding," in March 1969. That memorandum secured not only residents' official voice and representation in the modernization program, but also a \$25,000 grant (renewable annually for four years) to employ residents and develop programs.<sup>39</sup> Chicago public housing tenants would win a similar battle in 1971. When the Chicago tenants charged that the housing authority blocked democratic participation by tenants, HUD threatened to hold up \$8.2 million in modernization money, thereby forcing the Chicago Housing Authority Board of Commissioners chairman, Charles Swibel, to enter into a "memorandum of accord" that "allowed Chicago's public housing tenants to elect their own leaders directly."<sup>40</sup>

Just as in the earlier campaigns in Durham, Baltimore, and St. Louis, black female public housing tenants in Philadelphia and Chicago emerged as vociferous and strident activists. Housing, neighborhood, and community-based political activism throughout the nation had often featured women, both before and after World War II. But it was in the 1960s that low-income

black women, in particular, increasingly found themselves instigators, especially as the government responded to the economic and social-welfare needs of increasingly black cities through state-mediated policies and programs. By the 1970s, such women would become a force to be reckoned with at the national level.

Never one to flinch in the face of power, Sarah Rosetta "Rose" Wylie, a resident of Philadelphia's Richard Allen Homes since 1952, went quickly from local housing activist in 1964 to spokesperson for the National Tenants Organization (NTO), a post she held just three years after helping to secure the memorandum of understanding with Philadelphia public housing authorities. Born in 1926 in Bassett, Virginia, Rose Wylie graduated from the Henry County Training School of Martinsville, Virginia, and worked for a time as a practical nurse there. Then she moved to Philadelphia, joining the massive World War II-era migratory flood of black and white southerners to cities. She took classes at Dover State College for two years and eventually graduated from the Bok School of Practical Nursing and the Catier School of Cosmetology. In Philadelphia, she worked as a school crossing guard and as an intake intern for the U.S. Employment Office before becoming a postal clerk from 1964 to 1967. From 1967 to 1969, she organized and supervised the Philadelphia Tutorial Program, which included developing a program for the Richard Allen Homes public housing complex and a dropout program for the Philadelphia Board of Education. A widowed mother of six when she became a tenant activist, Wylie already had educational organizing and activist experience.<sup>41</sup>

Having risen to national leadership first as the NTO's eastern region vice-chair (in 1970) and then as the organization's chair (in 1972), Wylie also found herself a target of Philadelphia's obstinate Democratic political machine. On February 22, 1972, police issued a warrant for her arrest on charges of check forgery and defrauding a housing authority's Model Cities program of nearly \$6,000. Her arrest came two weeks after police arrested the modernization-program director, Clarence Patton, for embezzling \$18,000. The program aimed to provide 170 youth who lived in two public housing communities, Rosen Homes and Allen Homes, with maintenance skills.<sup>42</sup>

Two days after Wylie surrendered herself at city hall and walked out of the police station on \$1,000 bail, she and supporters held a thirty-minute press conference at Philadelphia's RAB office. All of Philadelphia's major newspapers covered the event, among them the *Philadelphia Tribune*, the *Philadelphia Daily News*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the *Philadelphia Bulletin*. Wearing a small Afro and a goatee, Wylie's lawyer, A. Benjamin

Johnson, denounced her arrest as “part of a conspiracy to discredit black leaders throughout the nation.”<sup>43</sup> RAB’s lawyer, Robert Sugarman, also came to Wylie’s defense, arguing that prosecutors were engaged in a “political escapade against people who are trying to do something for the community.”<sup>44</sup> Sugarman’s decrying of Mayor Frank Rizzo, District Attorney Arlen Specter, and City Controller Thomas Gola’s action as part of a “smear campaign” sparked loud clapping and screams of “right on.”<sup>45</sup>

After the applause died down, state representative and West Philadelphia community activist Hardy Williams lambasted the media for doggedly covering the attack against Wylie while failing to report “racial discrimination in the Philadelphia Police Department and Fire Department.”<sup>46</sup> Thomas Gilhool, a Legal Services lawyer who had formerly served as RAB’s counsel, similarly charged that city hall despised RAB and Wylie because of the organization’s success in helping tenants to, for instance, obtain city jobs outside of patronage channels, garner official representation, and improve their daily lives.<sup>47</sup>

While lawyers and supporters dominated the public press conference, limiting Wylie’s comments to a few words for her own protection, Rose Wylie did issue a five-page written statement that delineated the reasons she felt the city’s power structure targeted her for attack. The statement began, “Today the R.A.B. reports to the tenants, tenant council presidents and the friends of the Resident Advisory Board. We feel these people[,] especially the people of public housing[,] are entitled to our side. We appreciate the confidence, trust and support that they have given us during this crisis despite our silence.” Wylie outlined the modernization program in more detail, starting with the youth-training efforts. According to her written statement, the initial 101 trainees came “from gangs, shooting galleries [*sic*] and broken homes. ‘Hard-core unemployed’ would be their appropriate working status.” Alongside job training, Wylie claimed that Philadelphia’s RAB had established drug-rehabilitation services for trainees, who eventually detoxified, gained “self-pride,” entered GED and GI Bill programs, and secured legitimate work. “Once a detriment, the trainees have become assets to the environment in which they live,” she wrote. The statement then outlined the establishment of child-development centers; economic-development programs, such as grocery stores and “tenant-owned-and-operated laundromats within public housing”; and manpower-training efforts.<sup>48</sup>

In describing RAB’s record, Wylie staved off apparent criticisms of RAB as a “token group” and entertained the possible reasons for Rizzo’s attacks—that he disliked RAB’s pro-black, pro-poor activist agenda and that he was attempting to divert attention away from underhanded police de-

partment activities.<sup>49</sup> Refusing to shrink in the face of city administrators' attacks, Wylie asserted tenants' citizenship status, their stance of self-determination, and their claim to fundamental human dignity—unveiling the multiple ways that tenant activism overlapped with civil rights, Black Power, community-control, and anti-poverty activism in low-income black women's urban struggles.<sup>50</sup> Declared Wylie, "Our activities and accomplishments prove that tenants are capable of operating and maintaining their own communities. We believe that this is the GOD-given right of every citizen[.] As long as R.A.B. operates, we will continue the struggle to achieve these rights for all public housing tenants. Until this is realized, neither Mayor Rizzo nor his investigators will stop us."<sup>51</sup> Within two weeks, Mayor Rizzo and District Attorney Specter prepared to file a suit to put the Philadelphia Housing Authority into receivership for "mismanagement, waste and apparent misappropriation of funds."<sup>52</sup> Despite the machine politics and racial vehemence (and even possibly financial carelessness) that may have motivated the mayor's actions, Rizzo's attempt to establish mayoral jurisdiction over the housing authority pointed to a growing problem: the inadequate provision and maintenance of low-income, affordable housing in the city. Out of 22,000 units, 1,307 were empty and boarded up.<sup>53</sup>

The attack on Rose Wylie and Philadelphia's RAB galvanized not only local supporters, but national ones as well. Not surprisingly, NTO members offered their support. Formed in 1969, the NTO, which organized tenants in private and public housing, held its first convention in St. Louis and began publishing a monthly newsletter, *Tenants Outlook*.<sup>54</sup> In early 1972, President Richard Nixon appointed Wylie, by then the NTO's chair, to the national Rent Board, which advised the Price Commission on rent controls. As a Rent Board member, Wylie bore "the awesome responsibility of trying to generate recognition of the housing tenants' plight."<sup>55</sup>

On March 18, 1972, the NTO issued a news release and held a press conference at the Sheraton Hotel in Washington, D.C., in support of its chair. The organization condemned Rizzo and his attacks on the Philadelphia RAB and described Rizzo, Specter, and others as minions of Nixon who sought "to destroy the Tenants Movement in the United States."<sup>56</sup> A complex, multifaceted, urban-based movement that privileged the politics of place and exposed the ways in which race, gender, and class politics manifested, this "tenants' movement" featured rent strikes, antisegregation and open-housing campaigns, and squatting, as well as other mobilizations among marginalized people in cities. Bill Goode, the NTO's eastern vice-chair, called Rizzo "Nixon's 'flunkie' for the enforcement of a policy of public oppression for the poor people of this country." Goode continued,



"Mr. Rizzo embodies all the attributes of a lying bigot. He has assembled a dictatorship composed of controlled city agencies, the press and business interests." The NTO's news release ended with a forceful assertion of tenants' rights and a vigorous reaffirmation of support for Rose Wylie: "As representative of 300,000 tenants in 43 states, the National Tenants Organization pledges its full support to Mrs. Rose Wylie. We affirm as never before that she is our leader and will continue to be. We are prepared to take any action necessary to discredit the instigators of this malicious attack on the Tenants of this country."<sup>57</sup> On April 12, Barbara Barnes of the American Friends Service Committee conveyed similar support of Wylie on behalf of that organization's national board. The AFSC board left "the merits of the charges against Rosetta Wylie" to the courts and instead expressed deep concern that the negative press reports on Wylie and RAB "may obscure the important contributions which RAB has made to improving the dignity and living conditions of tens of thousands of low income tenants of Philadelphia."<sup>58</sup>

### Building National Alliances

By the early 1970s, not only had public housing tenants'-rights groups and Resident Advisory Boards sprung up in cities nationwide, but local black women activists affiliated with the NTO made appearances at national events and organized and participated in national campaigns. For instance, in Chicago on September 10, 1970, public housing tenant leaders from Boston, Philadelphia, Nashville, Chicago, and New Haven, Connecticut, converged at a meeting of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) for a workshop entitled "The Tenants' Role in Housing Management—Participation and Responsibility."<sup>59</sup> Founded in 1933 as the National Association of Housing Officials, the association became NAHRO in 1953, some four years after the passage of the Housing Act of 1949, which established "federal assistance for urban redevelopment and . . . the national housing policy of 'a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.'<sup>60</sup> Several of the women tenant activists, who fearlessly advocated for tenant participation on the local level, were also NTO officers: Philadelphia's Rose Wylie was at that time the NTO's eastern region vice-chair, St. Louis's Jean King was the midwestern vice-chair, and Nashville's Mattie Buchanan, a public housing tenant and leader of the Nashville Tenants Organization, served as the southern region vice-chair.

At this national conference, NTO leaders and local activists demanded greater inclusion in housing management and sought the passage of two specific resolutions. They asked that NAHRO appoint five tenant represen-

tatives to its board of governors. NAHRO's Housing Divisional Committee passed the resolution, but not without a few modifications that curtailed its potential effectiveness. "They changed the word 'immediately' where it made reference to polling members of the board to 'as soon as possible.' I'm not sure if that means 'with all deliberate speed'—or what," quipped Anthony Henry, the NTO's executive director and a Chicago-based activist who moderated the workshop session. Referencing the 1955 Supreme Court statement in *Brown v. Board of Education II* that ostensibly allowed local officials to drag their feet with regard to implementing school-desegregation policies, Henry continued, "It was the intention of the people who drafted the resolution that such polling would take place before the end of this conference"—not in December at the next board of governors' meeting. Henry also questioned whether NAHRO would appoint five tenants, as requested, given that NAHRO officials made "no reference as to how many tenants would be placed on the board. . . . But there was a commitment to the idea in principle, I presume."<sup>61</sup> The second resolution—a request that the Chicago housing-authority chairman and board of commissioners meet with representatives of the Chicago Housing Tenants Organization, CHTO (which at this point had not secured formal housing-authority recognition)—eventually passed after a full and contentious discussion. According to Curly Brownlow, who had been a Chicago public housing tenant activist for three years, "CHTO is about the business of getting resident control. I'm sure many of you live in communities where you control the things that go on in your community."<sup>62</sup>

The tenant leaders at the conference also updated one another on the progress of their grassroots local efforts to establish citywide councils and secure seats on municipal boards. In doing so, they facilitated the national transmission of otherwise locally based efforts, as well as reaffirmed their mutual support and commitment to building tenant involvement nationwide. And if necessary, they would continue to wage protests. Maintained Jean King of St. Louis:

We don't have all the answers that we know are needed but we are still heavily involved in the struggle of turning the situation around. We had very confused people down there; a lot of them are still confused. . . .

I think that is the whole problem with public housing now: that tenants have never been in a position to know anything. They want to know: who's HUD?!

The main thing they do know is something's wrong down here: "I'm paying too much rent, it's never clean, and when I speak to my manager

about it, he seem [*sic*] only to be able to tell me to constantly pay this rent, and yet no services. What am I paying for? How come my kids are hungry?"

King lambasted the housing authority for never having answers, but she maintained that one thing was for sure nevertheless: "Tenants all over the country are beginning to say to NAHRO (without knowing who NAHRO is), to the housing authority, to the federal government, to the—whomever. We know what's needed and we are going to be about changing that."<sup>63</sup>

Rose Wylie announced the success of Philadelphia tenant activists who had secured their memorandum of understanding with help from Legal Services lawyers. She also conveyed the Philadelphia RAB's effort to gain representation on the housing authority's board of directors and, in front of the national cadre, threatened to "close down the housing authority," if necessary, if Philadelphia officials appointed a Realtor, "because we ain't got no realtors living in public housing."<sup>64</sup> Eventually, after six months of negotiations, Frostena Kee, who participated in the James Weldon Johnson tenant council and in RAB, would become the first tenant commissioner in Philadelphia.<sup>65</sup>

The concern of Wylie and the NTO and Kee's eventual appointment bespoke a national trend. Across the country, in local and national forums, some tenant activists successfully pressed for administrative-level representation in urban agencies that passed policies affecting their neighborhoods, families, and daily living situations. In Baltimore, Lillian Jones, a tenant of the Gilmor Homes public housing complex since 1942, became the city's first tenant commissioner. When Jones died of a heart attack in 1971 (the same year Kee ascended to Philadelphia's board of commissioners), Shirley Wise, a tenant of Baltimore's Lafayette Courts and a future NTO eastern region vice-chair, became a commissioner.<sup>66</sup> In Las Vegas, Erma Lee O'Neal, the former vice president of the Clark County Welfare Rights Organization, joined the Las Vegas Housing Authority Board. "One of the city's most respected tenant advocates" who was well versed on federal, state, and local public housing regulations, O'Neal had founded Poor People Pulling Together, an organization that protested evictions and price gouging in Las Vegas public housing.<sup>67</sup>

In 1972, two years after the Chicago NAHRO meeting, Wylie, as NTO's chair, led public housing tenants in a national protest action in Washington, D.C. She took "three bus loads of concerned tenants into the House Banking and Currency Committee's hearing" to protest the 1972 Housing Act,

which had provisions eliminating tenant protections against evictions—protections that were a result of tenants' grassroots activism in the mid- to late 1960s.<sup>68</sup> On June 12, Wylie appeared before the committee. She argued that the proposed HUD bill aimed to repeal the Housing Act of 1937 and substitute a new one that "would undermine and destroy many of the hard-won rights for which we have struggled so hard."<sup>69</sup>

Public housing activists also strategically built alliances with established civil rights, Black Power, anti-poverty, and New Left activists, as well as with black politicians who had challenged, or even experienced, similar poverty conditions. Such alliances, alongside the housing activists' staunch public demands for rights and power, expose the political awareness and savvy of low-income black women as they contested political exclusion and poverty. On August 7, 1972—less than two months after the House Banking and Currency Committee hearing—tenant leaders and activists rallied in front of HUD's office at Seventh and D streets in Southwest Washington, D.C., to protest the proposed HUD regulations. The speakers included Rose Wylie and the NTO's executive director, Jesse Gray; George Wiley of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO); Rep. Parren Mitchell (D-MD) of the House Banking and Currency Committee; and Rep. Louis Stokes (D-OH), chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.<sup>70</sup> Jesse Gray was a veteran tenants'-rights activist from Harlem, having organized massive rent-strike protests in New York. George Wiley, a former member of CORE, had helped start the NWRO in 1967. Parren Mitchell and Louis Stokes were prominent local activists, elected representatives, and members of well-respected civil rights families from Baltimore and Cleveland, respectively. Louis Stokes and his brother Carl Stokes, who was elected Cleveland's first black mayor, grew up in Outhwaite Estates, a federally funded low-income housing complex.<sup>71</sup> Female tenant activists and the NTO thus had sympathetic and well-established allies.

Drawn together by similar interests, public housing tenants and welfare-rights activists also forged relationships (sometimes conflicted ones) through conscious coalition-building. At times, they attended each other's national conventions and worked together on the local and national level—not only because the groups' issues were so closely related, but also because often those groups represented, or at least served, the same constituency. Johnnie Tillmon, a single mother raising six children, lived in the Nickerson Gardens public housing complex in Los Angeles, where she was a tenant activist and helped to found the welfare-rights organization ANC Mothers Anonymous of Watts in 1963. She became a member of the Los Angeles

County Welfare Rights Organization and in 1967 served as an NWRO representative. She became NWRO's associate director in 1971 and its director a year later.

Welfare-rights organizers, some of whom also lived in public housing, traveled from cities across the country, including Boston, Philadelphia, and Atlanta, to exchange information, strategize, and develop skills in convention workshops. For instance, in July 1971, at the NWRO's national convention in Providence, Rhode Island—where the organization called for “welfare, not warfare”—Baltimore and Philadelphia welfare-rights leaders Rudell Martin and Roxanne Jones led a workshop on building citywide organizations.<sup>72</sup> Both Martin and Jones were public housing tenants. Jones had joined a Philadelphia welfare-rights organization (WRO) in South Philadelphia's Southwark public housing complex and took over as the city's WRO chair in 1968.<sup>73</sup> And Martin had helped form a welfare-rights chapter in the Cherry Hill Homes public housing complex in south Baltimore and became the city's WRO chair in the early 1970s.<sup>74</sup> In 1972, Ethel Mae Mathews, the leader of Atlanta's WRO, and John Hampton, an NTO staff member, served as two of the resource persons at the NWRO's national convention in Miami.<sup>75</sup>

Like public housing tenants who mustered “rights” claims based on the First and Fourteenth amendments, the NWRO had a “Bill of Welfare Rights” based on the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments. Fighting for adequate income, dignity, justice, and democracy, the NWRO maintained, in the bill's introduction, that “welfare recipients have all the rights that other citizens have *plus* special rights guaranteed by Federal and State welfare laws. But, like all rights, welfare rights are meaningless unless welfare recipients *know* their rights, *demand* their rights, *use* their rights, and *protect* their rights.” The bill listed fourteen points that protected their broad citizen rights as well as their specific rights as welfare recipients. The NWRO claimed, for instance, that welfare recipients had the right to be NWRO members, “to apply for any welfare program,” to spend their subsidies as they wished, and to expect speedy decisions and fair hearings by welfare agencies. They also had the right to “fair and equal treatment,” “respect,” “privacy,” and “the same constitutional protections that all other citizens have.”<sup>76</sup>

The NWRO's convention platforms and major sessions also reflected the interconnected issues that low-income women, as poor people and subsidy-reliant mothers, confronted in cities. The 1972 convention theme was “People before Politics.” In Miami that year, organizers discussed the topics “The New School Lunch and School Breakfast Bill of Rights,” “The

New Food Stamp Bill of Rights," and "The Poor People's Platform of the National Welfare Rights Organization, National Tenants Organization, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference."<sup>77</sup> They also held plenary sessions that focused on welfare as a women's issue (with facilitators Beulah Sanders, Johnnie Tillmon, and Gloria Steinem) and on welfare repression, child care, and health care, as well as tenants' rights and the Brooke Amendment. The Brooke Amendment, which Congress had enacted in 1969 with NTO pressure, maintained that public housing tenants should pay no more than 25 percent of their adjusted income in rent.



Suffering the daily pain of social and economic inequality, low-income black women navigated and tried to ameliorate the hardships of living in cities refashioned by industrial restructuring, shifting racial demographics, and government housing and renewal policies. They did not seek extraordinary things—no more than what most U.S. citizens wanted (and what programs such as federally guaranteed mortgage loans helped many to secure). Low-income black women desired affordable and sanitary housing, safe neighborhoods, good schools, adequate income, food and clothing, even a little comfort, and lives free of chronic distress for themselves and their families. And yet they encountered considerable barriers and incredible public enmity, particularly as they turned to government subsidies to abate suffering.

The way low-income black women fought for and effected change exposes the specific challenges of post-World War II cities, the liberal state, and liberation struggles. The everyday strivings and unique challenges of "subsidy-reliant" low-income black women reveal not only the starkness of urban poverty, but also how government urban policies fueled grassroots demands for enhanced democracy in the prolific age of mid- to late-twentieth-century liberation struggles. Motivated by daily travails and invigorated with the emergence of other battles for civil rights, Black Power, and the War on Poverty, low-income black women confronted entrenched demeaning attitudes and power structures inside and outside their communities. And in their informal and formal struggles, they pushed political boundaries (and by extension contemporary scholarship) by encouraging, or forcing, a reckoning between legal protections, spatial realities, perceptions, and the materiality of human existence. Moreover, low-income black women's lives and resistance help expose the concrete limitations and manifestations of black freedom struggles in post-World War II urban communities. Scholars

must, therefore, consider how low-income black women, and poor people generally, have been marginalized not only in the historical moment, but also by those writing the historical narratives.

In fact, low-income black women's incomplete and freighted historical depiction in—and in many cases their utter absence from—prior scholarship on black urban America and freedom struggles suggests the “secondary marginalization” that they suffered, and still experience, within black America as a result of the stigmatized positions they occupied and negotiated in postwar cities fashioned by racial liberalism, the welfare state, urban and suburban policymaking, and a U.S. democratic sensibility imbued with often competing impulses of race, gender, and class.<sup>78</sup> Historians will learn plenty about the past and the present by paying attention to how low-income black women influenced and navigated cities, the state, and liberation struggles. This will require the ongoing excavation and analysis of the complex relationships among historical actors that have rendered low-income black women both politically usable throughout time and space and yet, simultaneously, fairly invisible or one-dimensional in the prevailing scholarly narratives of post-World War II America. Low-income black women not only influenced the physical geography of the city through their ongoing efforts to change the day-to-day living conditions of public housing, but also helped to transform the urban political landscape through their insistence that poor public housing residents were also citizens.

## Gendering Postwar Urban History: African American Women, Welfare, and Poverty in Philadelphia

LISA LEVENSTEIN

In 1962, Ada Morris faced a severe financial crisis. Struggling to support her five children on welfare in one of Philadelphia's poorest African American neighborhoods, she could no longer make ends meet. Mrs. Morris phoned her welfare caseworker and informed him of the urgency of her situation: "I don't call up very often and complain about my finances to you people, but I would like some sort of assistance." She explained that her husband had defaulted on several child-support payments, and she was sinking into debt. Her most recent welfare check was "only \$47.80 which I entirely owed . . . to the rent man." She had defaulted on her \$65.00 rent to "pay the food bill, which was \$42.00 for two weeks for six people, which I think is very good, don't you?" Mrs. Morris's caseworker agreed that her \$42.00 food bill demonstrated remarkable thrift. However, he told her that he could not provide her with supplementary income until the "halfway mark" of the month. With not a penny to her name and her debts piling up, Mrs. Morris had exhausted all of her options and had nowhere else to turn for assistance. "When people say, 'Oh, you're on relief [welfare],' they think the average person that's on relief is sitting down with nothing to do," she observed. "Being on relief is a . . . strain, whether anybody knows it or not. Physically, mentally—a strain."<sup>1</sup>

In the 1950s and early 1960s, tens of thousands of working-class African American women like Mrs. Morris struggled to care for their families while receiving Aid to Dependent Children (ADC). Despite meager stipends and stigmatizing treatment, they applied and qualified for ADC in increasing numbers, broadening the scope of the U.S. welfare state and transforming the struggle against poverty in their communities. By the early 1960s, more than 10 percent of Philadelphia's African American population and one-quarter of its African American children received ADC. With an annual



turnover of twenty-five thousand, the number of people who received assistance from the program each year or at some point in their lives was considerably higher.<sup>2</sup> It is thus impossible to understand the construction of African American poverty in postwar cities without exploring women's experiences with ADC.

Poor African American women expended tremendous effort to secure and survive on ADC, and their struggles reveal the crucial role that gender and public institutions such as welfare played in the production of inequalities in postwar northern cities. These public institutions and the women who used them are largely absent from most historical accounts of the origins of the "urban crisis." Scholars such as Thomas J. Sugrue have vividly illuminated how deindustrialization combined with racial discrimination in housing and employment to produce racially segregated, impoverished black neighborhoods on the outskirts of center cities.<sup>3</sup> This literature employs a structural—and employment-centered—approach that views chronic black male unemployment as the driving force behind the creation of inner-city poverty.

Shifting the focus from black men to black women reveals a much wider range of social and economic forces that shaped poverty in postwar cities. In addition to the deindustrialization and racial discrimination explored by urban historians, the struggle against poverty was shaped by sex discrimination, inadequate education, health problems, domestic violence, lack of child care, and the policies of public institutions. These various constituents of poverty were mutually reinforcing, and the relationships among them changed constantly: sickness caused unemployment, domestic violence led to homelessness, responsibility for children made it difficult to find and retain employment, and low-wage jobs caused poor health.

When women sought to contend with their multidimensional problems by seeking assistance from public institutions such as welfare, their efforts shaped the urban landscape in ways that scholars have not yet considered. Several studies have explored African American women's activism in the welfare-rights and tenants'-rights organizations of the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>4</sup> Although most women in the 1950s and early 1960s did not organize collectively, they still engaged in important forms of mass activism when they sought in enormous numbers to claim assistance from public institutions. Women's assertive pursuit of welfare brought crucial resources into poor black communities that helped tens of thousands of families to survive. Although the ADC program did not provide the substantial assistance that most families needed to help them achieve upward mobility, it offered a subsistence level of living that enabled women to raise their children them-

selves and gave them some leverage in their negotiations with employers and with men. Many women used their ADC grants to help them avoid relying solely on jobs they deemed exploitative, and some worked under the table to supplement their welfare stipends. Women chose not to marry, yet also refused to comply with welfare policies that prohibited them from living with men. They insisted that their reliance on ADC should not require them to forgo intimate relationships.

In Philadelphia and cities across the nation, African American women's assertive pursuit of ADC inspired a fierce public opposition. Both Democratic and Republican public officials charged that Philadelphia's welfare programs took money from "upstanding taxpayers" to support mothers who had "illegitimate" children as a "way of life." Many ordinary whites and African Americans echoed these condemnations, exhibiting both disdain for ADC recipients and resentment of their allegedly easy lives. Even prominent civil rights activists tempered their support of ADC, illuminating the gender- and class-based limitations of their visions of social justice. When liberal advocacy groups and welfare authorities tried to defend the program, they failed to undermine the inflammatory rhetoric used by welfare's opponents. The racialized antigovernment rhetoric and appeals to conservative ideals of gender, sexuality, and the family that emerged in local debates over welfare in the 1950s shaped U.S. social policy and politics for decades to come.<sup>5</sup>

The burgeoning opposition to African American women's use of welfare inspired a significant body of academic scholarship documenting the lives of Philadelphia ADC recipients. The most extensive work was compiled and directed by Jane C. Kronick, a Bryn Mawr College social work professor. Between 1959 and 1962, Kronick conducted a study of a random sample of 239 Philadelphia ADC recipients. She analyzed their casework files and hired two African American women to conduct interviews with 119 of the women. Kronick wrote several reports exploring her findings, and many social work graduate students at Bryn Mawr based their master's theses on the information she compiled. In their work, Kronick and the students critically interrogated the negative images of African American "illegitimacy" and the "culture of poverty" found in white newspapers and academic discourse by exploring ADC recipients' employment histories, personal relationships, material circumstances, and survival strategies. Many of the mothers who participated in the study tried to show the interviewers how their lives did not conform to popular stereotypes. Several of the studies include excerpts from the interview transcripts that allow us to hear and interpret women's own words. Read critically, and in conjunction with other primary sources,

the studies provide us with rare insight into ADC recipients' past struggles and daily lives.<sup>6</sup>

### Why Women Sought Welfare: Gender, Race, and the Multidimensionality of Urban Poverty

When the federal government created the ADC program as part of the 1935 Social Security Act, the women social reformers who drew up the blueprint for the program modeled it on the Mothers' Assistance programs administered by states in the early twentieth century. Mothers' Assistance programs used strict morals and means tests to limit new clientele to small numbers of poor white and immigrant widows. Although the ADC program also employed rigid standards of eligibility, states increasingly allowed separated, deserted, and unmarried mothers to qualify for grants. Whites constituted the majority of ADC recipients on the national level, but in northern cities such as Philadelphia, with large impoverished African American populations, the shift from Mothers' Assistance to ADC resulted in a significant increase in African American recipients. By 1960, African Americans constituted 26 percent of Philadelphia's population but at least 85 percent of its ADC recipients.<sup>7</sup>

African Americans' strong presence in Philadelphia's ADC program reflected their concentration among the city's poor. Between 1950 and 1960, as African Americans migrated to the city in search of jobs and as whites moved to the suburbs, Philadelphia's black population increased from 18 percent to 27 percent. Race and sex discrimination and the concentration of African American women and men in jobs classified as unskilled meant that they were hit particularly hard as the city increasingly lost its manufacturing base. By 1960, the African American unemployment rate was 11 percent, compared to only 5 percent for whites. A survey of some of the poorest African American neighborhoods found 37 percent of the labor force without jobs and 42 percent employed only irregularly, as domestics, service workers, and common laborers. Urban renewal and slum-clearance projects gained a reputation as "Negro removal," because they disproportionately uprooted working-class African Americans. The locations chosen for public housing further confined poor black families to segregated neighborhoods, and women found it particularly difficult to find places to live, because many landlords refused to rent to single mothers. By 1960, African Americans inhabited 75 percent of all dilapidated units in the city, mostly crowded together in census tracts that were more than 50 percent black.<sup>8</sup> A strident public discourse that charged that black men's criminality and black

women's promiscuity had caused their poverty legitimized discrimination and camouflaged the role that policymakers and ordinary citizens played in the construction of impoverished African American neighborhoods.

The multifaceted problems that led African American women to ADC illuminate the importance of gender in shaping the struggle against racialized urban poverty. Although black women were certainly hurt by black men's struggles to secure decent jobs, men's unemployment did not in and of itself lead most women to welfare. Like most African American women, ADC recipients had expected to pursue employment themselves. Before receiving ADC, most had held jobs. They lacked education and had usually worked as domestics or in factories, laundries, hotels, or hospitals. Like black men, black women were vulnerable to layoffs. In 1960, 10 percent of African American women were unemployed, constituting 47 percent of all unemployed women in the city (more than twice their proportion in the labor force).<sup>9</sup> Since they did not qualify for unemployment insurance when they were laid off, single mothers often turned to ADC. In 1960, 11 percent of ADC recipients cited their own layoffs as the precipitating event that led them to welfare.<sup>10</sup>

For many ADC recipients, their struggles finding jobs were exacerbated by their own or their family members' ill health. In the early 1960s, two-thirds of ADC recipients were ill, most with chronic diseases. About half of these women stated specifically that their health problems impeded their abilities to seek or hold jobs. In other cases, women were consumed with their family members' medical problems. Half of all ADC recipients had at least one child with health problems. In a few cases, alcoholism, drug addiction, depression, or mental illness further hindered women's abilities to hold jobs. Bell Jackson, a mother of four, said that she had not been able to hold a steady job because "before I got a good check on my emotions, they was popping forth on me." Health problems were gendered struggles, because women from all races and income groupings were more likely than men to suffer from medical problems at a young age and to shoulder the responsibility for caring for sick family members.<sup>11</sup> Race and class also played a significant role, because dilapidated housing, lack of heat, and poor nutrition made people vulnerable to disease.

Many women who were physically capable of holding jobs had at one time supported their families through employment but found that their responsibility for children impeded their participation in the labor force. Thirty-five percent of ADC recipients said that lack of child care prevented them from seeking employment. Many women had large families of four or more children, making it particularly difficult for them to find child care.<sup>12</sup>

Affordable day-care centers were scarce in working-class African American neighborhoods. Some mothers relied on family or friends, but many ADC recipients found that their mutual support networks did not provide adequate assistance. Because most of the people in ADC recipients' lives were poor themselves, the assistance they could provide—and that women could reciprocate—was usually limited and short-term. Some women had friends and relatives who wanted to help but were consumed with their own responsibilities. Mrs. Jackson's family lived nearby, but she received little support caring for her four small children. Her grandmother wished she could help, but she was too old. Mrs. Jackson's sister suffered from tuberculosis. She received even less help from her mother, who did not "have very much interest" in her and was not "particularly fond of children." Seventeen percent of ADC recipients had no relatives in Philadelphia. Some mothers reported being so cut off from the support of other people that when they were pregnant and went into labor, they had to call the police to look after their older children because they did not have anyone they could call on to provide child care while they were giving birth.<sup>13</sup> Most scholars have emphasized the tremendous amount of help that support networks provided to poor families, but ADC recipients frequently underscored their limitations.<sup>14</sup>

Most women turned to ADC because they felt morally obligated to raise their children themselves. They refused to give their children over to the state and rejected the possibility of asking other women in their community to informally adopt their children—a practice that was largely accepted among their peers. "If you have a child, bring it up," explained Patricia Black. "Take the responsibility. Hard or easy, it's yours." Many women identified a link between their reliance on ADC and what they hoped would be their children's ability to avoid having to turn to welfare. Loretta Carter used ADC so her children could have a "better life than I had." When asked if she thought her children would turn to public assistance, Annie Hite responded, "Unless there are no jobs in the world they won't. . . . They don't want it and I don't want it." Women hoped their use of ADC would enable their children to "get good jobs," "settle down when old enough," "know their responsibilities," and "just be a good one of whatever they are."<sup>15</sup>

To qualify for ADC, women had to be the primary providers for their children, which meant that they were usually single mothers. Seventy-five percent of them had once been married, and many had experienced several long-term relationships. Most women described their relationships ending because their husbands had not helped to support them financially, had physically abused them, were unfaithful, or were incarcerated. In a few cases, per-

haps 10 percent, the rules of the ADC program convinced couples to split. They needed public assistance because they did not have decent jobs, but they could not receive ADC if the welfare department considered the man in the relationship to be "employable." Some of these couples stopped officially living together so that the woman could receive ADC.<sup>16</sup>

Women's status as single mothers enabled them to qualify for ADC, but it did not by itself push them to welfare. In the 1980s, social scientists discovered the "feminization of poverty"—the disproportionate concentration of poverty among women. Although many scholars assumed that single motherhood was a powerful predictor of poverty, comparisons of single mothers across racial lines have complicated this view.<sup>17</sup> In Philadelphia in 1950, white women who separated from their husbands were two and a half times as likely as married white women to live in poverty, while for African American women, marital separations increased their rate of poverty only by slightly over one half.<sup>18</sup> Many African American women who became single mothers had also been poor when they were married: their husbands rarely earned much money, and these women were confined to low-wage jobs, in need of child care, struggling with health problems, and hindered by discrimination and their lack of education. Single motherhood created even more difficulties in women's lives because it was expensive, laborious, and stressful. However, the struggles women faced raising children, combined with their difficulties finding jobs and housing and their poor health, lack of child care, and limited education to put them on the road to welfare.

### Getting By on ADC

Most women avoided applying for welfare for as long as they could because of its stigma, meager assistance, and invasions of privacy. When they experienced a crisis such as the loss of a job or health problems, they sought assistance from private social-service agencies, tried to borrow from family, friends, and neighbors, pawned furniture and other household goods, and spent any meager savings that they had. Emma Counts "waited until the last minute" before applying for ADC, trying to find another way to support her family. Only after exhausting all of their resources and calling in every last favor did most women embark on the application process.<sup>19</sup>

When women finally decided to apply for welfare, they faced the daunting task of getting an appointment with the Philadelphia Department of Public Assistance (DPA). Many spent hours at pay phones, because they did not have their own phones and the lines at the DPA were notoriously busy. Once women managed to make an appointment at one of the welfare

offices located throughout the city, they often had to walk long distances with young children in tow, since they rarely owned a car or had money for bus fare. Welfare offices were crowded, the waits long, and the chairs uncomfortable. When women finally met with caseworkers, they learned that in order to qualify for ADC, they had to collect a whole sheaf of documents: rent books and leases, birth certificates, Social Security cards, separation agreements, life insurance policies, bank statements, hospitalization records, and old pay stubs. The welfare-rights groups of the late 1960s and 1970s provided applicants with a list of the requirements, which enabled women to plan ahead and bring the correct papers the first time. But before the welfare-rights movement, women rarely brought all of the necessary documents to their initial appointments. Mrs. Jackson described her frustration with the system: "I had a hard time getting on [welfare]. . . . I had to get papers from this place and that place. . . . I went down there about six or seven times, before I was put on."<sup>20</sup>

The longer a woman tried to avoid applying for welfare, the more difficult it became for her to qualify for a grant. When some time had elapsed between a woman's application for welfare and her loss of wages or male support, a caseworker would force her to disclose how she had made ends meet in the interim and to prove why these strategies were no longer effective. Many women had to sign affidavits swearing that their relatives could no longer support them. If a caseworker decided that the father of a woman's children or any of her family members might be able to contribute support, the woman had to press charges in the municipal court to try to get support payments, which were then subtracted from her welfare grant.

In the face of these obstacles, women devised strategies to help each other negotiate the system. When they observed that other mothers on their block had experienced a crisis such as sickness or the loss of child care, a job, or a husband, those familiar with the welfare system provided them with the phone number of the DPA, explained which documents were required, and told them what to expect from the initial interviews. Although such collaboration could not ensure that women would avoid being rejected for trivial or racist reasons, it provided them with greater confidence and resources in their negotiations with the system. In the mid- to late 1950s, with so many women sharing information about welfare, the ADC program grew by 40 percent. Although an increase in federal monies available to states facilitated the rising caseload, it would not have occurred without women's assertive pursuit of assistance.<sup>21</sup>

Once women qualified for ADC, the stipends they received barely enabled them to achieve a subsistence level of living. The Pennsylvania legis-

lature did not appropriate adequate funds for welfare, forcing recipients to make do on meager incomes. In 1960, state welfare authorities estimated that ADC provided women with just two-thirds of their estimated cost of living at a minimum standard of health and decency. Limited financial resources and the segregated, overpriced housing market made it a major challenge for African American women to find decent apartments to rent and to secure the cash to pay for a deposit. The fact that landlords often refused to rent to welfare recipients hardly helped. In 1956, more than half of the city's public-assistance recipients lived in substandard shelter, and one-fourth lived in conditions that the Philadelphia Housing Association deemed hazardous to their health and safety.<sup>22</sup>

Mere survival required a tremendous amount of labor and expense. Many women constantly worried about how to feed their children adequately, especially when they had teenage sons with big appetites. Unable to afford automobiles, most women had to shop at the stores in their neighborhoods—which frequently charged higher prices than the stores in middle-class neighborhoods, and for inferior goods. Finding shoes and clothing for children was an enormous chore that required women to visit secondhand stores and social-service agencies on a regular basis. Maude Seibert explained, “The Outgrown Shop, the Goodwill, Salvation Army—all these places have been a blessing because otherwise I wouldn’t have been able to keep the refrigerator [full] and keep the house half-way decent and keep something on the children.” Jocelyn Carter was dissatisfied with second-hand merchandise. She complained that her children were “tired of being seconds”: “When you go out and calls yourself shopping, and come back with some second hand clothes every time, it makes them feel pretty bad.” Prioritizing food and clothing, many women said that decent furniture was out of the question. It was not unusual in ADC recipients’ families to find three to five people sharing one bed. Meals usually had to be eaten in shifts, because few families had enough chairs, cutlery, or dishes for everyone to eat at the same time. Most mothers purchased a television, considering it a necessity because of their restricted social lives, the lack of safe recreational opportunities in their neighborhoods, and their crowded houses. However, since the only way they could afford a TV was through installments, they usually had to pay three times the normal cost of the set.<sup>23</sup>

Over the course of the 1950s, women’s struggles to provide material goods for their families intensified. The booming postwar consumer economy popularized a range of consumer items such as household appliances, telephones, and automobiles. This new white middle-class standard of living deeply affected poor mothers, who resented the way that their inability



to participate in the consumer culture degraded and stigmatized their families. Elsa Bell lamented that her children were “hungry for *things*—not food, not a home to live in . . . they’re hungry for the trimmings.” Because women found their inability to buy consumer goods so painful and publicly humiliating, welfare-rights organizations made credit at department stores (which was denied to welfare recipients) one of their central demands. Before the welfare-rights movement, most women and children had to make do with secondhand clothing and no “trimmings.”<sup>24</sup>

Many women resented welfare policies that they believed prevented them from achieving upward mobility. By restricting the savings, life insurance, and property that recipients could own, ADC forced them to sink deep into poverty before qualifying for assistance, leaving them with very few resources that they could draw on to help them leave welfare. If ADC recipients reported obtaining gifts from other people or earned extra income, authorities subtracted most of the additional money from their grants. Such policies limited women’s abilities to profit from employment and restricted their engagement in the informal economic pursuits that had sustained working-class families for decades, such as taking in boarders, babysitting, styling hair, and selling liquor.

Authorities frequently encouraged ADC recipients to find jobs even though they knew that women would receive few financial benefits from employment. In the immediate postwar period, welfare policies stipulated that recipients could choose whether or not to hold jobs while receiving ADC. By 1953, employment was officially a condition of eligibility for healthy women whose children were away at school all day. Other states restricted women’s access to ADC when low-wage jobs (particularly in agriculture) became available, but Philadelphia mothers who refused to seek jobs rarely lost their grants.<sup>25</sup>

Many women observed that by keeping them in poverty and not helping them to acquire child care or education, ADC did not enable them to engage in a successful job search. Cassandra Wilson believed that “with a little help,” she could be “very successful.” However, she blamed welfare’s small stipends for preventing her from improving her situation: “Look, let’s face it, I haven’t got the proper clothes, I don’t get the proper food, nothing right, you know, that would help me. I can’t go out and try to better my position without the proper clothes, shoes, food.” Other women resented ADC for hindering their attempts to get job training. Welfare “holds a lot of people back,” complained Lenora Hill, after authorities prevented her from going to school. Mrs. Hill’s mother had offered to pay for her to take a “course in IBM,” but the authorities would not allow it, stating that if her mother

could pay for the course, she should contribute to Mrs. Hill's support instead. Women who found a way to pursue an education ran into many of the same problems that they faced when they tried to hold jobs. They found it difficult to find care for their children, because their family and friends were often overwhelmed with their own responsibilities and the welfare department offered no help with child care.<sup>26</sup> In the face of these strict rules and meager welfare allocations, many women complained that the ADC program impeded their efforts to substantially improve their lives.

### Pushing the Boundaries of the System

Many women tried to capitalize on the potential they saw in ADC by using their grants in ways that authorities did not condone. They developed strategies that became integral features of daily life in working-class African American neighborhoods, which ranged from earning money under the table to engaging in clandestine relationships with men. Such strategies required women to break the rules of the ADC program and live with the constant fear of losing their grants. Still, many women insisted on determining for themselves whether and how to participate in the labor force and form intimate relationships with men.

One of the most highly charged decisions that women faced concerned employment. For many women, employment was never an option: their health problems were too severe, or they never found reliable child care. However, among those who were capable of finding jobs, different patterns emerged. Many women vastly preferred employment to welfare and left ADC as soon as they could. In 1960, nearly half of the women who left ADC entered the labor force. Other women used ADC to avoid taking the worst jobs available, particularly positions as domestics. African American women had for decades resisted the exploitative nature of domestic work through acts of resistance ranging from quitting, going on strike, and working slowly to warning friends about abusive employers and refusing to take live-in positions.<sup>27</sup> ADC provided them with a new avenue of resistance: the ability to leave the occupation altogether. Women such as Lenora Hill categorically refused to take low-paid positions in "domestic work, hospital aide, or something like that. . . . I don't want *those* types of jobs." ADC provided women with a little bargaining power with employers, enabling them to resist taking positions they considered demeaning and exploitative. Low-wage employers who relied on large numbers of working-class African American women recognized the increased leverage that women received from ADC and played a major role in postwar campaigns to limit access to welfare and

force women to take jobs. The success of their campaigns in many southern and some northern states prevented many African American women in other regions from using ADC to avoid low-paid, backbreaking agricultural labor.<sup>28</sup>

In Philadelphia, African American women did not leave domestic work entirely. In 1960, 23 percent of employed African American women in the city still held positions as domestics, which was a significant decrease from the 60 percent in 1940 but not a complete retreat from the profession. Some ADC recipients staked out a middle ground. Given the insufficiency of their welfare stipends, they did not see a choice between low-wage employment and ADC; rather, they believed that both were necessary for their families' survival. They received ADC while performing a variety of low-wage work in both the formal and informal economy, ranging from babysitting and domestic work to selling liquor and styling people's hair. Viewing the outside income they obtained as a necessary supplement to ADC, not a replacement for it, they rarely reported their earnings to the DPA, as regulations required.<sup>29</sup>

Women who had steady boyfriends frequently defied the rules of the ADC program by allowing men to sleep over. Authorities justified their strict prohibitions on men sleeping over by emphasizing the need to prevent women from forming close relationships in which they received unreported income. Most women wanted to have intimate relationships but considered it far too risky to give up ADC to marry or move in with men. No matter how much they liked their current boyfriends, they considered it highly unlikely that their relationships would last or that their boyfriends would be able to earn enough money to support them, be good to their children, or abstain from using violence. Lucille Williams explained, "I ain't taking no chances. . . . I went through hell with the first one [husband] and I won't go through hell with the second one." In some cases, women chose not to marry or move in with men whom they liked very much but who could not provide them with a steady source of income. In other cases, women used ADC to avoid depending exclusively on men who could provide them with financial support but whom they did not trust to consistently refrain from abuse or infidelity. They appreciated ADC for giving them a certain degree of power in their relationships that they had not had when they were more dependent on men for their livelihood. Although most ADC recipients still depended on men for economic support, welfare enabled them to maintain control over their households and not worry as much about men's financial contributions. By providing women with an independent source of income, ADC also helped them to break up with men who became abusive, unfaith-

ful, or otherwise unreliable. Many men also probably saw advantages to entering into relationships with ADC recipients, because the women made fewer demands on them.<sup>30</sup>

Some women valued ADC for enabling them to avoid depending on men altogether. After weighing their options, they believed that the benefits of being in a relationship with a man were not worth the costs. "I'm very independent," explained Barbara Cook, who did not have a boyfriend. Although Mrs. Cook regretted her inability to receive financial support from a man, she chose to stay single because "I have a mind of my own . . . [and] I have my own ambitions." She appreciated welfare because it enabled her to be the "boss" in her house and not have to answer to anyone else.<sup>31</sup> ADC gave women like Mrs. Cook the financial power to support their families without contributions from men.

The degree to which women managed to capitalize on the resources of ADC varied. Younger recipients who had small families and who were educated and in good health could sometimes successfully use ADC in conjunction with other resources to help them through a rough time. Those who found it extremely hard just to survive on ADC often lacked education, had large families, and faced problems such as children's misbehavior, ill health, alcoholism, drug addictions, and mental illness. Some of them lived in very dilapidated apartments and found the grants so meager that they could barely manage to feed and clothe their children. "I've tried all the tricks of environment [*sic*] to keep the children nice," explained Ethel Wright. "And somewhere along the line, you gradually feel that you're battling your head against a brick wall." Some were depressed and pessimistic about their future prospects. "It's no use making plans," observed Delores Graham. "They get all fouled up."<sup>32</sup> No one found life on welfare pleasant or easy. Women like Mrs. Wright and Mrs. Graham found ADC's small stipends wholly inadequate to meet their multidimensional needs.

### Welfare and Postwar Racial Politics

In many respects, the 1950s was a decade of liberalization and reform in Philadelphia. In 1951, the electorate approved a new city charter designed to reduce political patronage and graft. The Republicans, who had become identified with corruption, were voted out of office, and Democrat Joseph S. Clark was elected mayor. Democrats took over the city council, and North Philadelphia was represented by Raymond Pace Alexander, an African American lawyer who was a staunch and effective advocate of civil rights. Mayor Clark sought to put an end to the machine politics that had run the

city for decades. He enforced the new charter and replaced many of the political appointees in city hall with qualified young professionals. In 1955, when Clark stepped down as mayor to run for the U.S. Senate, his district attorney, Richardson Dilworth, replaced him and adhered to many of the same progressive reform principles. The city also had a vibrant civil rights movement that engaged in highly visible campaigns to reduce discrimination and open jobs to African Americans.<sup>33</sup>

Fierce struggles over African Americans' place in the postwar city, however, tarnished the image of Philadelphia as a bastion of liberal reform. Local whites who were insecure about their own financial circumstances frequently felt resentful and anxious about the achievements of the civil rights movement and fiercely resisted African Americans' advancement. In the first six months of 1955 alone, there were 213 racial conflicts over housing in the city, which frequently involved whites opposing African Americans moving into their neighborhoods. In some cases, crowds of whites greeted African Americans with heckling, pickets, and vandalism. Similar resistance developed when African Americans tried to integrate parks, swimming pools, and other municipal recreation facilities. The police generally supported whites in these conflicts, and the media fueled the perception that African Americans were responsible for the violence by printing numerous articles about their engagement in crime and juvenile delinquency.<sup>34</sup> In this climate of white resistance, African American women's receipt of ADC became extremely controversial.

In 1952, the year after African Americans provided the decisive votes for the Democrats' victory in the city's municipal elections, welfare became a target of intense public criticism. The public-assistance caseload was at an all-time low when an inquiry into welfare corruption conducted by Robert Lowe Kunzig, the Republican deputy attorney general of Pennsylvania, led the Philadelphia DPA to join welfare authorities in cities throughout the North and West in launching a drive to crack down on relief "chiseling" by prosecuting cases of welfare fraud in court. The welfare department's own studies ultimately concluded that cases of fraud were extremely minimal. Nevertheless, in Philadelphia and the many other cities that engaged in similar crackdowns, the media created the perception that thousands were purposely cheating the government. Philadelphia municipal court judge Adrian Bonnelly, a Democrat, linked fraud to southern African American migration, by criticizing the DPA for "throwing money away" on "those who have been brought here from the South to take advantage of the magnificent bounty of Pennsylvania."<sup>35</sup>

Over the course of the 1950s, welfare became increasingly racialized in the public mind, and women became the main targets of criticism. Whereas the early coverage of fraud had focused on recipients of all types of public assistance, by the late 1950s it focused almost exclusively on ADC recipients. "Of all the categories, the aid to dependent children is the one that beats the devil out of us," observed Ralph Havens, supervisor of restitutions collections for the DPA. "The blind and the aged don't cheat—there the need is obvious. On general assistance, most people are honest . . . but the dependent children category is a headache."<sup>36</sup>

Considerable public attention focused on ADC recipients' "illegitimate" children. Municipal court judges and district attorneys seized on the issue, issuing numerous inflammatory statements based on their frequent contact with African American single mothers in the courts. Democratic judge Edward A. Kallick claimed that ADC recipients had "no conception of a code of morals. . . . They don't even believe in getting married." District Attorney Victor H. Blanc decried the women who "deliberately have illegitimate children to increase the amount of state dole they receive."<sup>37</sup> Laying the groundwork for the notion of a "culture of welfare dependency" that emerged in subsequent years, the Republican newspaper, the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, disparaged the "hundreds of second generation reliefers in Philadelphia," for whom "living on relief comes naturally." "It's been called 'chain reaction relief,'" the *Bulletin* observed—"illegitimacy . . . relief . . . more illegitimacy . . . more relief." By the late 1950s, the idea that ADC promoted African American "illegitimacy" had become so firmly established in the public mind that some judges in Philadelphia began to advocate the adoption of "suitable home" laws to deny welfare to women who had more than two children out of wedlock. One former judge even publicly advocated forced sterilization.<sup>38</sup>

Legal authorities bolstered their attacks on ADC recipients by describing them as bad mothers. Blanc claimed that he had found ADC families with "children . . . left alone in their houses while their mothers were in neighborhood taprooms drinking liquor, smoking marijuana cigarettes and playing the numbers." Such ideas became so widespread that by 1961, the editorial page of the *Bulletin* matter-of-factly described the typical ADC recipient who abused the system as a "drunken wench . . . paid more for each hapless offspring." In such ADC recipients' families, "the mother may be a mother only biologically," wrote the *Bulletin*. "The fathers of her assorted children may be missing primarily because she never is sure who they are. Her pathetic children may stay with her only because she needs them to

keep the ADC relief checks coming in. They may even die of neglect or malnutrition because the money intended for their care is entrusted to the trollop who happened to beget them."<sup>39</sup>

Critic of welfare portrayed white taxpayers as innocent victims of promiscuous African American women. Newspaper reports described the relationship between ADC recipients and Philadelphia's taxpayers as one of dependency, in which black women drained resources directly from the pockets of hardworking and law-abiding whites. A 1958 *Bulletin* editorial warned that "taxpayers [did] not want to support mothers living in repeated degradation." "No one local sore point seems to be more irritating to the ordinary citizen," reported the *Bulletin*, "than the use of tax money to support low-living slatterns on relief."<sup>40</sup> With its portrayal of honest taxpayers subsidizing immoral welfare recipients, the discourse masked the labor it took for women to raise children in poverty and the massive amounts of welfare that middle-class families received through federal home-ownership programs and Social Security.

Images of upstanding white taxpayers helped foster the overrepresentation of blacks on welfare by encouraging struggling whites to avoid ADC at all costs, in order to claim the social privileges of whiteness. Many working-class whites had already been deterred from welfare because they had access to alternative resources and wanted to avoid the program's restrictions. As the ability to identify as a "taxpayer" became an important marker of Philadelphians' racial identities, whites became even more motivated to avoid ADC, so that they could define themselves as superior to the growing numbers of blacks who relied on welfare. An element of resentment, and even envy, entered into some whites' perceptions of ADC recipients, because they believed that women who received welfare led easy lives of leisure that they themselves could not attain. One older man noted, "We had to do without" welfare; "why can't they?"<sup>41</sup> Both the sense of superiority and the resentment that whites expressed toward ADC recipients played a crucial role in shaping the growing resistance to welfare expenditures throughout the nation.

Many African Americans joined whites in claiming identities as taxpayers, in order to avoid being identified as immoral drains on upstanding working people. The *Philadelphia Afro-American* noted significant antiwelfare sentiments among its audience. "I think all public assistance to unwed mothers should be eliminated. . . . if the same mistake is made repeatedly," Molly Blackwell told reporters. "After all, those of us who are working have to pay the bill." African Americans who did not receive welfare were sometimes particularly critical of ADC recipients because they suffered

from the racist images of the program. Many confronted situations where other people assumed they received welfare and discriminated against them or treated them disrespectfully just because they were African American and looked like they did not have very much money. Angry at their own vulnerability to racist treatment, some African Americans criticized ADC recipients for engaging in behaviors that conformed to the white public's stereotypes. One typical letter published in the *Philadelphia Independent*, a black newspaper, lamented the "women and young girls on Public Assistance for two or three generations, some with four or five children with different fathers. . . . We find these mothers sitting in taprooms drinking, and their little children are being neglected."<sup>42</sup> While such statements made it abundantly clear that many African Americans did not support welfare, they reinforced the harsh stereotypes of ADC recipients that proliferated throughout the city.

Civil rights activists found it particularly difficult to negotiate the new racial politics of welfare. Many viewed single motherhood and women's reliance on public assistance as unfortunate symptoms of what they considered a much more important problem: chronic male unemployment, which prevented black men from fulfilling the dominant masculine ideal. Some activists believed they would suffer politically if they took a strong stand on African American women's right to welfare. In 1961 Roy Wilkins, executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), noted that although he supported ADC, to express support for single mothers publicly would be political death for civil rights organizations. Given the widespread public disapproval of "illegitimacy," Wilkins explained, to defend women with children born out of wedlock "would be regarded by the Negro's opponents as an admission on our part that our people are not yet worthy of the status we demand for them."<sup>43</sup>

The Urban League stood out among civil rights organizations for the sympathetic attention it paid to welfare issues. Led on the national level by social workers Lester Granger and Whitney M. Young, Jr., the league devoted a great deal of attention to social-welfare issues. Insisting that the high numbers of African American welfare recipients were a consequence of racial discrimination, the Philadelphia Urban League (PUL) attempted to increase ADC grants and engaged in community networking and lobbying on behalf of welfare recipients. Yet while lobbying for raised welfare allowances, the PUL simultaneously emphasized that more generous grants would help enable women to "get the most out of marriage" and achieve "marital stability" (how exactly that would occur was never made clear).<sup>44</sup> This advocacy of marriage placed the PUL and ADC recipients fundamentally



at odds. While the PUL viewed women's status as single mothers as a problem that needed to be solved, many working-class African American women appreciated welfare precisely because it enabled them to mother their children while heading their own households.

The most ardent public defense of ADC came from local and state welfare departments and liberal civic groups, with support from some labor unions and caseworkers. These groups tried to dispel the myths associated with welfare by releasing numerous statements and studies that emphasized the need for higher grants and the falsity of the derogatory images of ADC recipients. Welfare advocates on both the local and the national level frequently argued that the main problem with ADC stemmed from its inadequate funding, which prevented authorities from hiring caseworkers who could work individually with clients. They accepted one of the central premises of the antiwelfare discourse—the idea that too many women received public aid—and argued that a trained, well-paid staff with manageable caseloads would enable more recipients to find jobs and leave the program. Their emphasis on finding jobs for welfare recipients reflected the growing acceptance of employment as a viable and necessary option for many white middle-class mothers and authorities' reticence to support poor African American women's engagement in full-time motherhood.<sup>45</sup>

Ultimately, then, although cities and defenders of ADC held radically different views of the mechanisms needed to help women leave welfare, with cities advocating purges and defenders championing increased services and funds, by the late 1950s most agreed that welfare policies should aim to reduce caseloads and facilitate women's "self-sufficiency." This broad post-war consensus on restricting access to ADC and encouraging women's employment shaped welfare policy and discourse for many years to come.<sup>46</sup>



Tens of thousands of working-class African American women in Philadelphia viewed ADC as an essential resource. They understood that life on welfare was not a panacea: that ADC sustained them in poverty instead of helping them to escape it, and that small stipends proved no match for their struggles with dilapidated housing, restricted employment prospects, health problems, child-care shortages, and inadequate education. Still, they appreciated ADC for enabling them to keep and raise their children themselves and tried to use the grants to obtain more power and autonomy in their relationships with employers and with men. Many women avoided taking low-wage jobs that did not provide an adequate income. Some insisted that

they deserved more money than welfare provided, pursuing jobs illegally to increase their standard of living. Many women found ways to use ADC to achieve more power in their intimate relationships.

Over the course of the 1950s, public attacks on ADC threatened to derail women's abilities to use welfare to meet their needs. In a climate of resistance to African American in-migration and civil rights activism, critics charged that ADC promoted promiscuity, immorality, and fiscal irresponsibility. Contempt for ADC and those who depended on its benefits became a crucial source of identity and pride for many whites. African Americans, sensitive to a dynamic that was equating the entire race with welfare and damaging their own tenuous hold on social respectability and political citizenship, repeated the antiwelfare discourse. With ADC recipients constituting the "other" against which Philadelphians from a range of backgrounds sought to define their own position, even civil rights activists and welfare advocates rarely mounted an effective defense of the program. Yet as authorities faced tremendous pressure to restrict access to welfare, women continued to seek and receive ADC in ever-increasing numbers. They refused to give up on the program, viewing it as an essential resource in their efforts to improve their lives.

Women's efforts to make the most of ADC in the 1950s and early 1960s set the stage for the political mobilization of public-assistance recipients and substantial expansion of welfare programs in the late 1960s. Yet historians have only recently begun to explore the connections between these crucial decades.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, during the 1950s, ever-increasing numbers of African American women in northern cities sought assistance not only from welfare, but also from public hospitals, municipal courts, public housing, and public schools. Their interactions with these public institutions fundamentally altered the landscape of urban poverty and substantially shaped the political struggles over race in postwar cities.<sup>48</sup> Only by exploring the ways that gender and public institutions influenced African American life and racial politics in postwar U.S. cities will historians begin to fully capture the constraints and opportunities that black people encountered, the broad scope of their assertiveness, and the power of northern white resistance.



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PART 5

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*Culture, Consumption,  
and the Black Community*



## African American Consumers since World War II

ROBERT E. WEEMS, JR.

In the decades following World War II, African Americans, as consumers, helped to change the social and economic landscape of the United States. The strategic use of black spending power represented the cornerstone of the celebrated civil rights movement. Also, as the collective spending power of African Americans increased, corporate marketers in a variety of commercial sectors accelerated their efforts to reach this important segment of the consuming public. To provide an illuminating cross-section of this economic phenomenon, this essay will include, among other things, a discussion of campaigns instituted by Major League Baseball, the radio industry, Hollywood, mainstream financial-services firms, and the purveyors of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products that aimed to generate enhanced African American consumer support. These and other post-World War II advertising campaigns directed at African Americans generally featured imagery that counteracted past stereotypical depictions of blacks. Yet while increased African American consumerism has had some positive consequences for blacks, the evidence also suggests that in recent decades, African American spending *power* might be better characterized as spending *weakness*. It appears ironic that the last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a simultaneous increase in African American spending power and the decline of both historic black businesses and urban black America's infrastructure. This disturbing trend is further complicated by the emergence of the hip-hop-inspired "bling-bling" phenomenon, with its emphasis on conspicuous consumption. Unless contemporary African Americans are merely content to enhance the profit margins of corporate America, a revisitation of self-determined, proactive, consumer activism appears appropriate.

It is impossible to discuss the growing importance of the postwar African American consumer market without linking it to the dramatic urbanization

of African Americans during the same period. Once dismissed as poor, rural southerners with limited disposable income, African Americans became, after World War II, an increasingly urban and geographically dispersed group with enhanced employment options.

Between 1940 and 1960, the proportion of African Americans who lived in cities grew from 48.6 to 73.2 percent. Significantly, by 1960, for the first time in U.S. history, the percentage of blacks who lived in cities exceeded that of whites. A decade later, as the 1970 census revealed, 81 percent of the national African American community resided in urban areas, compared to 72 percent of whites.<sup>1</sup>

The massive mid-twentieth-century migration of African Americans to cities across the country resulted not only in a change of address for the migrants, but also in a distinct improvement in their occupational status. For instance, between 1940 and 1960, the percentage of African Americans in relatively low-paying southern agricultural work declined dramatically. Conversely, in the same period, more African American men and women moved into more prestigious and better-paying occupations.<sup>2</sup> These significant demographic developments contributed mightily toward increasing the perceived importance of the black consumer market.

Major League Baseball was one of several industries that viewed post-World War II African Americans as a consumer market worth pursuing. By the mid-1940s, the national per capita income of African Americans stood at \$779, compared to \$1,140 for whites. Moreover, the per capita income of blacks residing in cities with Major League Baseball teams compared very favorably with national white per capita earnings. In fact, in some cities, blacks possessed a higher per capita income than the national white average.<sup>3</sup> These demographic realities, coupled with the fact that African Americans were avid baseball fans (who had sustained their own Negro Leagues), motivated Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers to conduct what one author has called "baseball's great experiment" when he hired Jackie Robinson.<sup>4</sup> Rickey's coordination of Robinson's historic 1947 entry into Major League Baseball reflected Rickey's business acumen. He reportedly told his family that "the greatest untapped reservoir of raw material in the history of the game is the black race! The Negroes will make us winners for years to come. . . . And for that I will happily bear being called a bleeding heart and a do-gooder and all that humanitarian rot."<sup>5</sup>

If Branch Rickey viewed black players as an "untapped reservoir," it appears plausible to assume that he viewed black consumers similarly. Since Major League Baseball profits, in the days before huge television contracts,

were closely linked to attendance at games, Rickey clearly hoped that African American fans, coming out to see African American players, would make him a winner both on the field and in the box office. In fact, as Ken Burns's 1994 documentary *Baseball* revealed, on April 15, 1947—the date of Jackie Robinson's official entry into the major leagues—blacks made up more than half of Ebbets Field's capacity crowd.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Robinson's presence dramatically enhanced attendance at Brooklyn Dodger road games.<sup>7</sup>

As other teams followed the example of the Brooklyn Dodgers, one of the consequences of the simultaneous desegregation of major-league rosters and the "courting" of black consumer support was the subsequent decline and disappearance of black-owned baseball teams. Moreover, racial desegregation's negative impact on the Negro Leagues would subsequently be reenacted in other economic venues.<sup>8</sup>

While Major League Baseball used African American interest in baseball to make inroads in this consumer market, other industries began using African American interest in music to make their own inroads among black shoppers. The dramatic growth of "Negro-appeal" radio stations in postwar America exemplified this trend.

As late as 1949, *Sponsor*, the advertising trade journal of the broadcasting industry, referred to black consumers as "the forgotten 15,000,000."<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, data from the 1950 census removed any lingering doubt about the efficacy of actively seeking black customers. Between 1940 and 1950, the number of African American city dwellers increased from 6,253,588 to 9,120,000, a 46 percent increase.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, by the early 1950s, the national African American community represented a significant segment of America's largest (urban) markets. Moreover, this dramatic demographic development would have far-reaching economic consequences, especially for the radio industry.

In 1952 *Sponsor*, in a follow-up to its 1949 article, featured an extensive section titled "The Forgotten 15,000,000 . . . Three Years Later." First and foremost, it seemed clear that black consumers were far less forgotten (or ignored). Whereas only a handful of U.S. radio stations carried "Negro-appeal" programming in 1949, by 1952 there were more than two hundred stations that featured this format on a full- or part-time basis. Moreover, these stations were attracting an increasing amount of corporate advertising.<sup>11</sup>

As a service to its readers, *Sponsor* provided not only demographic information about the increasingly important "Negro market," but also tips on how to use radio advertising to most effectively reach black consumers. For instance, the July 28, 1952, issue featured two articles on this topic: "The



Negro Market: \$15,000,000,000 to Spend" and "Negro Radio: 200-Plus Specialist Stations—More Coming," which used a question-and-answer format to give white businesses a "crash course" on marketing to blacks.

Ironically, *Sponsor's* 1952 "primers" related to black consumers gave scant attention to the role of black disk jockeys in marketing to blacks. Yet by the mid-1950s, corporate marketers were increasingly told that the success of their radio campaigns (aimed at African Americans) depended almost solely upon the showmanship and salesmanship of these black community icons. By 1955, the amount of "Negro-appeal" radio stations had grown to six hundred, nearly triple the amount of three years earlier. A major reason for this proliferation was the growing stature of black disk jockeys.<sup>12</sup> These individuals, referred to as "personality deejays," were noted for their ability to flawlessly meld regular programming with advertisements. One example was New Orleans's "Okey Dokey," described by radio station WBOK's promotional material as "a frantic race showman that sells and sells."<sup>13</sup>

Besides relying upon *Sponsor* and other advertising trade journals, white businesses seeking insights about the "Negro market" and how to reach it also consulted with the Commerce Department's Division of Negro Affairs in the postwar period. This unit, which existed from 1927 to 1953, conducted numerous studies related to the economic life of black America and came to be viewed as a clearinghouse for such information.<sup>14</sup>

For instance, in May 1943 Emmer Lancaster, who headed the Division of Negro Affairs from 1941 to 1953, sent a memorandum to Assistant Secretary of Commerce Norman W. Baxter seeking support for a proposed survey of African American income and purchasing power. After citing requests for such a study from such disparate sources as the Atlanta Regional Office of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Pepsi-Cola company, Lancaster declared that "this office will attempt to comply with these requests by conducting a survey of incomes of Negro professionals including lawyers, clergymen, teachers, college professors, and physicians in 36 cities wherein the Negro population is 25,000 or more."<sup>15</sup>

In the years following World War II, the Commerce Department's Division of Negro Affairs, because of its research and its reputation, received an ever-growing number of requests for such items as the convention dates of prominent African American organizations; the names and addresses of black firms with at least one hundred employees; the types of supplies and products used by black beauticians and beauty-shop operators; information that could be incorporated into business courses aimed at African American

students; and a listing of black disk jockeys in America.<sup>16</sup> Even the venerable W. E. B. Du Bois, then working on a project examining African American business development and property accumulation, contacted this office for assistance in October 1947.<sup>17</sup>

By the early 1950s, the vast majority of information requests received by the Division of Negro Affairs were related to the increasingly important "Negro market." Moreover, a brief article entitled "Negroes Offer a Big Growing Consumer Market," which appeared in the May 9, 1953, issue of the *Kiplinger Washington Letter*, explicitly cited this office as a source of information about black consumers. Not surprisingly, after this exposure, the number of such inquiries to the Division of Negro Affairs increased dramatically.

Significantly, Emmer Lancaster, an African American who had once served as president of the Akron, Ohio, chapter of the NAACP,<sup>18</sup> wanted to ensure that the increased interest in the "Negro market" would have some tangible benefits for blacks. For instance, his responses to the more than five hundred inquiries resulting from the *Kiplinger Washington Letter* article<sup>19</sup> included recommendations that promoted black newspapers and salesmen. The following excerpt is representative of how Lancaster replied to businesses seeking advice on how to secure more African American customers:

I think the best methods of reaching Negro residents in your area would be to advertise in the local Negro newspaper and to employ competent Negro sales personnel to market your products with the Negro community. For your general information there are approximately 200 Negro sales representatives now employed by 30 national merchandising firms; these include IBM, Remington Rand, BBDO and all the tobacco companies.<sup>20</sup>

After the Eisenhower administration terminated the Commerce Department's Division of Negro Affairs in 1953,<sup>21</sup> publications such as *Sponsor* and *Sales Management* accelerated their provision of information about the "Negro market" (and gained additional readers in the process). Also, as more companies began to take the "Negro market" more seriously in the postwar period, blacks increasingly realized they could use this economic reality to stimulate positive social change. In fact, African Americans' proactive use of their spending power represented a cornerstone of the celebrated civil rights movement.

Although African American consumer power reached a high point of effectiveness and visibility through such events as the Montgomery Bus

Boycott of 1955–56 and the “sit-in” movement of the early 1960s, these represented the continuation of a long tradition of organized black consumer action. For example, in the early twentieth century, African Americans in twenty-five southern cities boycotted streetcars segregated by Jim Crow laws.<sup>22</sup> A June 9, 1906, editorial in the black-owned *Lynchburg* (Virginia) *News* summed up the goal of this movement when it stated, “Let us touch to the quick the white man’s pocket. Tis there his conscience often lies.”<sup>23</sup> Nearly sixty years later, the activist politician Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., echoed this sentiment (more colorfully) when he asserted that blacks were ready to “withhold the dollar to make the white man holler.”<sup>24</sup>

Given increased African American urbanization and consumer activism in post–World War II America, the evidence suggests that the celebrated Civil Rights Act of 1964, which provided for blacks’ unfettered access to public accommodations, represented more an acknowledgment of growing African American economic power than a morally based acknowledgment of African Americans’ intrinsic civil and human rights. For instance, as the June 20, 1964, issue of *Business Week* noted, white businessmen, on the basis of self-interest, played an important role in ensuring that Congress passed this monumental legislation.<sup>25</sup> In fact, one can characterize the relationship between white businesses and black consumers since 1964 in the context of how European American–owned businesses profited from both the civil rights movement and increasing African American urbanization. A classic case of this phenomenon was Hollywood’s promotion of the “blaxploitation” movie genre during the early 1970s.

By 1970, eight out of every ten African Americans lived in urban areas. Conversely, “white flight” to suburban areas, which accelerated during the 1950s and 1960s, contributed to the creation of what the popular black musical group Parliament referred to in 1975 as “chocolate cities and their vanilla suburbs.”<sup>26</sup> At the same time that America’s cities were becoming increasingly black, Hollywood producers were desperate for ways to resuscitate an ailing motion-picture industry. Television’s birth and growth had contributed to a dramatic decline in U.S. movie attendance. Between 1946 and 1970, the average weekly attendance at U.S. theaters dropped from 90 to 17.7 million moviegoers. Moreover, “white flight” to the suburbs included the abandonment of large downtown movie theaters. Consequently, in what one contemporary observer called “one of the greatest ironies of our time,” Hollywood turned to urban black consumers to help it avert financial ruin.<sup>27</sup>

The huge financial success of Melvin Van Peebles’s 1971 independent film *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song* clearly demonstrated the poten-

tial profits associated with appealing to black moviegoers. Shot in nineteen days with a budget of \$500,000, *Sweet Sweetback*, which chronicled the radicalization of a black stud, grossed more than \$10 million within a couple of months. This feat appeared all the more remarkable because no major distributor would touch this film. Because of *Sweet Sweetback's* overt sexual content, Van Peebles, an African American filmmaker, had to rely upon Cinemation Industries, a small distribution house that handled only pornographic films, to distribute *Sweetback*. Although the film debuted in only two theaters, one in Detroit and one in Atlanta, it quickly broke box-office records in both locales. Moreover, through word of mouth, *Sweet Sweetback* soon became a nationwide box-office smash.<sup>28</sup>

After the success of *Sweet Sweetback*, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer made its own explicit appeal to black moviegoers, with its 1971 release of *Shaft*. This film, described as a black James Bond movie, proved to be an economic godsend to MGM, which had posted losses of \$43 million for the previous two years. Costing only \$1.8 million to produce, *Shaft* reportedly grossed more than \$17 million within a year.<sup>29</sup> Predictably, MGM's success with *Shaft* reverberated throughout major Hollywood studios. In fact, by late 1972, nearly 25 percent of Hollywood's total planned films were black-oriented. By contrast, only 3 percent of Hollywood's 1970 releases were films intended primarily for African American audiences.<sup>30</sup>

Although by 1972 Hollywood had committed itself to actively woo the African American filmgoing public, the emphasis appeared to be on quantity, not quality. In fact, the overwhelming commercial success of the low-budget *Sweet Sweetback* and *Shaft* apparently convinced Hollywood producers that movies made for African American consumers did not need large budgets to be successful. Moreover, in the majority of the black-oriented movies of the 1970s, African American audiences were given extra-heavy doses of Hollywood's unholy trinity of sex, violence, and crime. The term "blaxploitation" thus arose to convey the film industry's exploitation of black consumers during this period.<sup>31</sup>

Contemporary black critics of blaxploitation movies decried not only the dubious screen images presented in these films, but also how another set of white business owners—namely, proprietors of movie theaters—were generating huge profits from black moviegoing. During this period, out of the approximately fourteen thousand motion-picture theaters in the United States, fewer than twenty were owned and operated by African Americans.<sup>32</sup>

A study of movie theaters in downtown Chicago in 1974 revealed just how profitable it was to show films that appealed to black consumers. The eight theaters in downtown Chicago featured black-oriented films (by

themselves) fifty-five times in that year. These engagements of a week or longer generated box-office receipts of \$7,716,534, or an average of \$140,300 per engagement. By contrast, these eight Loop theaters featured white-oriented films (by themselves) ninety-four times. These movies generated box-office receipts of \$8,667,900, or an average of \$92,212 per engagement. The same downtown Chicago movie houses featured Asian martial-arts films (by themselves) thirty-one times. This genre, which was also very popular among urban black moviegoers, generated box-office receipts of \$2,778,329, or an average of \$89,624 per engagement. Combined, black-oriented and Asian martial-arts movies clearly generated the majority of box-office receipts for downtown Chicago theater owners. This pattern was repeated across America.<sup>33</sup>

While whites apparently received the bulk of the profits associated with the black-oriented movies of the 1970s, some African Americans did materially benefit from this phenomenon. Besides Melvin Van Peebles's stunning success with *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*, two African American musician-songwriters, Isaac Hayes and Curtis Mayfield, achieved far-reaching success during this period.

Part of the formula associated with attracting black consumers to blaxploitation movies was the utilization of popular African American recording artists to develop film scores. Isaac Hayes's soundtrack album to the 1971 film *Shaft* earned him an Academy Award and also generated several million dollars in sales. Likewise, Curtis Mayfield's 1972 soundtrack album for the movie *Superfly* went to platinum, with more than a million sold.<sup>34</sup> Other notable blaxploitation soundtracks that successfully encouraged African Americans to make two purchases (movie ticket and album) included Marvin Gaye's *Trouble Man* (1972), Willie Hutch's *The Mack* (1973), Roy Ayers's *Coffy* (1973), and James Brown's *Black Caesar* (1973).

Besides witnessing the emergence of the blaxploitation genre, the 1970s saw a dramatic increase in collective African American spending power. In 1969, D. Parke Gibson, a noted African American marketing consultant to white corporations, wrote a book called *The \$30 Billion Negro*, whose title reflected collective black spending power at the end of the 1960s. Nine years later, Gibson wrote a sequel, *\$70 Billion in the Black: America's Black Consumers*.<sup>35</sup> Ironically, while white-controlled companies profited mightily from this increase in collective African American spending power, black-owned enterprises, such as insurance companies, were unable to do likewise.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, white-owned insurance companies either ignored or discriminated against the black consumer

market. Given this economic manifestation of Jim Crow, black-owned insurance companies were established to provide these needed services to the African American community.<sup>36</sup> Like other white businesses, mainstream insurance companies, beginning in the 1950s, became increasingly cognizant of the economic ramifications of accelerated African American urbanization and the evolving civil rights movement. Consequently, companies such as Prudential and Metropolitan Life rescinded their discriminatory stance toward black consumers and aggressively pursued potential black policyholders. One technique widely used by white-owned insurance companies to make inroads among black consumers was to recruit top agents from black insurance companies by offering them higher pay.<sup>37</sup>

In a subsequently futile attempt to compete in a desegregated marketplace, black insurance companies put considerable effort into securing potential white clients. For instance, the black-owned Chicago Metropolitan Assurance Company, during the early to mid-1960s, aggressively sought to recruit white agents. Yet while some black agents with black companies eagerly defected to white-owned companies, white insurance agents were not similarly attracted to employment with black firms. Thus, by the end of the 1960s, Chicago Metropolitan and other black insurers had all but abandoned hopes of desegregating their labor force and client base.<sup>38</sup>

By the 1970s, black-owned insurance companies, facing increased competition from white companies (for black clients), found themselves having to adjust to a new socioeconomic reality. The Black Power movement of the late 1960s, with its emphasis on "buying black," had provided black insurers a temporary respite from increased white competition. Nevertheless, many black consumers seemingly welcomed the wider range of buying choices associated with racial desegregation. As a contemporary analysis of the black insurance industry noted, "There is another side to the 'buy black' coin. It is 'buy white.' Many blacks evidently feel that whites and white companies give superior products and superior services. There exists, moreover, among blacks the feeling that dealing with white companies constitutes a status symbol, a badge of 'arrival' for upwardly mobile blacks."<sup>39</sup>

African American insurance companies' heavy reliance on "industrial" insurance further hindered their efforts to impress black consumers. Industrial insurance, a form of coverage characterized by the weekly collection of premiums in policyholders' homes and by low policy face values, had long been de-emphasized by mainstream companies. By 1970, only 2.9 percent of all U.S. companies provided industrial coverage. On the other hand, industrial insurance represented 43.9 percent of black companies' total insurance in force.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the disadvantages of industrial insurance, which included high administrative costs that were passed on to consumers, some African American insurance company executives reminded their critics that this form of coverage represented the cornerstone of the historic personal relationship between black insurers and their policyholders. Still, as the 1970s unfolded, it seemed increasingly clear that African American consumers were becoming less interested in nostalgia and more concerned about saving money in the present.<sup>41</sup>

As previously stated, there existed a linkage between white companies' interest in reaching black consumers and the perceived ramifications of the mid-twentieth-century civil rights movement and accelerated African American urbanization. Yet by the 1980s, it was crystal clear that while African Americans were a solidly urban people, not all blacks were benefiting equally from the desegregation of America. The introduction of the terms *buppie* (to describe black urban professionals) and *underclass* into the national vocabulary represented one manifestation of growing class distinctions in the black community. Moreover, corporate marketers, in response to this demographic reality, developed class-specific advertising aimed at African Americans.

Before the 1980s, when many corporate marketers approached black consumers with a one-size-fits-all mentality, advertisements aimed at African Americans regularly featured black "street" dialect to allegedly help black consumers better identify with a particular product. While the use of "slanguage" did indeed appeal to some elements of the African American consuming public, an important contemporary marketing study warned that such advertisements ran "the risk of turning off another segment of black consumers, particularly middle class blacks."<sup>42</sup>

Using this information, financial-services companies made considerable inroads among well-to-do blacks during the 1980s. Instead of using overtly "ethnic" marketing campaigns to attract more black clients, banks, white-owned insurance companies, and investment-brokerage firms employed general-market advertising campaigns that included a requisite number of African Americans in desegregated professional settings.<sup>43</sup>

Although financial-services companies tended not to employ special advertising to reach black clients, they used other techniques to "invite" African Americans to use their products. One especially innovative strategy was a joint venture between *Black Enterprise* magazine and the investment brokerage Dean Witter Reynolds. In 1986, *Black Enterprise*, a premier gateway to the black middle class, and Dean Witter Reynolds teamed up to cosponsor four-hour seminars for African American professionals in several major U.S. cities. The large crowds that attended these meetings heard

Dean Witter professionals talk about personal finance and career planning. This project proved so successful that *Black Enterprise* and Dean Witter held similar seminars in additional cities in 1987. Other financial-services companies quickly sought their own partnerships with *Black Enterprise*.<sup>44</sup>

Sadly, while black middle-class consumers in the 1980s increasingly attracted the attention of financial-services companies and other upscale industries, blacks who had not materially benefited from the civil rights movement increasingly attracted the attention of liquor and cigarette manufacturers. One glaring example of this was the proliferation of outdoor billboards marketing these products in urban black enclaves across America.

During the 1980s, the number of eight-sheet billboards (three hundred square feet or less) that extolled the social "benefits" of drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes proliferated at an alarming rate in African American neighborhoods. For example, the Los Angeles metropolitan area, with a population of nearly eight million people, contained 1,373 eight-sheet billboards in 1986. Of these, 663, or 48 percent, were placed in predominantly black neighborhoods. This was especially significant considering that the 1.2 million African Americans in the Los Angeles area represented just 15 percent of the total population. Similar data for St. Louis appeared even more striking. Although African Americans represented only 28 percent of that city's population, 95 percent of the eight-sheet billboards in that city were located in the black community.<sup>45</sup>

To put the above data in clearer context, it should be noted that the consumption of alcohol and cigarettes has historically been viewed (by some) as effective short-term escapes from the sometimes harsh realities of everyday living. For a significant number of urban blacks during the Reagan administration, "reality" consisted of protracted, demoralizing unemployment. In this context, the accelerated marketing of alcoholic beverages and cigarettes in the 1980s in urban African American enclaves can be construed as an attempt to profit from human misery.

The 1980s witnessed not only corporate marketers' class-targeted attempts to reach black consumers, but the spread of hip-hop culture, which would ultimately be transformed into another marketing bonanza for corporate America. Ironically, considering hip-hop's future seizure by corporate interests, one of the first ways this musical genre endeared itself to its primarily urban African American audience was by providing a "platform" to speak out against the obvious inequities associated with being black and poor in late-twentieth-century America.

Arguably, the most noteworthy early hip-hop group to engage in explicit social commentary was Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. Their 1982



classic "The Message" was described in a *Los Angeles Times* review as "a revolutionary seven-minute record" that was "a brilliantly compact chronicle of the tension and despair of ghetto life that rips at the innocence of the American Dream." Another reviewer, in *Newsweek*, asserted that "The Message" was "a Reagan record. . . . It has to do with the perception that all pretenses toward equity have been abandoned."<sup>46</sup>

Another aspect of early hip-hop, which would open the door for corporate exploitation, was the vigorous competition among emcees (rappers) to determine who was the best at their craft. A classic example of this phenomenon was Kool Moe Dee's 1987 album *How Ya Like Me Now*. Besides featuring a "rapper report card," where Kool Moe Dee received the highest grade among current emcees, *How Ya Like Me Now* featured the artist on the cover with a customized Jeep and flashing various pieces of diamond and gold jewelry in an urban vacant lot. In the context of later expressions of hip-hop artists' success, which featured rappers in mansions, on yachts, and driving Bentleys, Kool Moe Dee's braggadocio appears almost comical. Still, *How Ya Like Me Now* represents an important precursor to the bling-bling phenomenon, with its focus on conspicuous consumption, that came to dominate hip-hop and influence its fans.<sup>47</sup>

By the 1990s, although such hip-hop artists as Public Enemy, KRS-One, and Dead Prez continued the tradition of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five in using hip-hop as a means to engage in relevant social commentary, it increasingly appeared that other hip-hop artists had "sold out" to "get paid." As one of the contributors to *The Vibe History of Hip Hop* noted, "Ironically, the hip hop nation, once so proudly self-sufficient, became obsessed with the finer things in life: designer clothing, imported champagne, Cuban cigars, luxury automobiles, and fine jewelry—all the things that prove how successful you are by American Dream standards."<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of hip-hop's evolution toward conspicuous consumption was that the promoters of bling-bling and their fans (who sought to emulate the buying patterns of their hip-hop heroes) were being overtly exploited by corporate America. Since the 1930s, corporate marketers have known that African Americans, because they were the only group to have been enslaved in this country, occupy a precarious place in the nation's consumer culture. Thus, large U.S. companies know that some blacks, in an attempt to distance themselves from their slave and Jim Crow past, developed buying patterns designed to enhance their respect and dignity.<sup>49</sup>

Although many young African American urban consumers in the 1990s were apparently captivated by the actions and lifestyles of hip-hop's foot soldiers for corporate America, there were important voices of dissent.

George Curry, former editor in chief of *Emerge* magazine, used this publication to provide thoughtful analyses of hip-hop-stimulated conspicuous consumption. For instance, in an editor's note titled "Walking Billboards," Curry asserted:

After conducting successful campaigns to remove certain billboards from our neighborhoods, perhaps, it's time to launch a campaign against another kind of billboard in our community—our youth (and some adults) who are walking advertisements for Nike, Polo, Tommy Hilfiger, Nautica, and too many other labels to list in this space. . . . There is an obsession with having someone else's name plastered on our baseball caps, shirts, bags, and the back of our jeans. In addition to spurring some of our youth to commit crimes against African Americans in order to sport these expensive brand name items, we're lining pockets of designers who show contempt for us, but not for our \$400 billion per year spending power.<sup>50</sup>

To buttress his statements, Curry cited a quotation from the popular designer Tommy Hilfiger in *Forbes* magazine: Hilfiger told *Forbes* that "many of these people [blacks] would rather have a Rolex than a home."<sup>51</sup>

While not all hip-hop artists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are ambassadors of bling-bling, there are enough proponents of African American conspicuous consumption to generate increasing concern about the future of black America. Given that hip-hop's primary audience is young people under the age of twenty-five, hip-hop artists, because of their wide media exposure, are shaping the worldview of a future generation. When contemporary ten-year-olds are fed a steady stream of messages glorifying individualistic conspicuous consumption, how will this manifest itself when these children become adults?

While it is impossible to answer this question with precision, the evidence suggests that the conditioning of young African Americans to secure as many flashy trinkets as possible (jewelry, big cars, fancy clothes, gold-plated teeth) may have dire consequences for the African American community. The focus of bling-bling on *individual* accumulation seemingly diminishes and trivializes any notions of *collective* social, political, and economic activity. This is especially disturbing considering that historically, African American survival and progress has repeatedly been linked to proactive, communal struggle.

Another way in which corporate America has used hip-hop to manipulate African American consumers has been through paying artists to write

and perform songs about particular products. Songs such as Run-DMC's "My Adidas" and Busta Rhymes's "Pass the Courvoisier" are examples of this genre.<sup>52</sup> In 2005 Maven Strategies, a Maryland-based entertainment-marketing firm (whose stable of hip-hop artists included Kanye West, Twista, the Franchise Boys, and Petey Pablo), developed a marketing plan that would enable its corporate clients to maximize their profits with little or no financial risk by getting hip-hop artists to write and perform songs about their products. This arrangement provided further proof that many hip-hop artists, despite their brashness and bravado, are little more than obedient intermediaries between corporate marketers and African American consumers.

In a March 23, 2005, *Advertising Age* article entitled "McDonald's Buying Way into Hip-Hop Lyrics," Tony Rome, president and CEO of Maven Strategies, outlined the economic parameters of McDonald's proposed relationship with Maven's hip-hop "posse." The following excerpts from this article are extremely illuminating:

For the deal involving the Big Mac, McDonald's receives first approval of the lyrics, but it will ultimately allow artists to decide how the sandwich is integrated into songs. . . . Maven's already started receiving several songs for consideration. Maven receives a consulting fee for its services. *Music acts, however, will not receive payment up-front. Instead they will earn anywhere from \$1 to \$5 every time their song is played on the radio.* (emphasis added)



That payment strategy not only limits the risk for McDonald's or any other brand partner looking to partner up with music acts, but also encourages artists to produce a hit song. "At the end of the day, this has to work for the brands, and we want to deliver quantitative results," Mr. Rome said. "The risk involved for upfront payment is all eliminated. If an artist isn't able to deliver [a hit], there's no out-of-pocket cost to the client." (emphasis added)<sup>53</sup>

The following day (March 24, 2005), the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (CCFC) issued a press release denouncing the proposed collaboration between Maven Strategies and McDonald's. It featured the following statement from noted African American psychiatrist Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint: "This campaign undermines McDonald's claim that they are

serious about combating childhood obesity. Even as McDonald's is drawing praise for pushing salads and apples, they are finding new ways to market high calorie standbys like the Big Mac to children." This press release, with the catchy title "Children's Coalition Raps McDonald's Supersized Hypocrisy," also provided some chilling information: "Obesity rates have soared among children in recent years and are highest among African Americans, who comprise a disproportionate share of the hip-hop audience. A report in last week's *New England Journal of Medicine* found that due to obesity-related illnesses, the current generation of children may have shorter life expectancies than their parents."<sup>54</sup>

Another especially illuminating response to the proposed collaboration between Maven Strategies and McDonald's appeared in the online publication *Stay Free! Daily*. A brief commentary with the appropriate title "McDonald's Pimps Hip-Hop" included this pertinent analysis: "If a group's Big Mac plugging cut fails to become a hit, McDonald's doesn't have to pay them anything. But if the song does get lots of airplay, a suit from Maven [Tony Rome] points out that 'there's a strong likelihood it will be played in clubs, be downloaded, be turned into a ringtone and sell more CDS.' In other words, hits will reap a lot of free exposure for McDonald's since it only has to pay artists for radio play."<sup>55</sup>

This proposed manipulation of African American consumers and artists by McDonald's and Maven Strategies represents just the latest instance of white corporate hostility and insincerity as it relates to blacks. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when African Americans were perceived to be a group with very limited spending power, many companies employed the derogatory term "nigger" in naming products. By the mid-twentieth century, when the growing African American consumer market could not be ignored, white companies, which had previously practiced employment discrimination, began hiring blacks to serve as "Negro market" specialists and consultants. Today, these firms extract huge profits from African American consumers, while paying relative "chump change" to a few black hucksters pushing their products.<sup>56</sup>

Given the power and effectiveness of corporate America's ongoing strategies to reach black consumers, it is not hyperbole to assert that in recent decades, African American spending *power* might be better characterized as spending *weakness*.<sup>57</sup> As table 17.1 indicates, collective African American spending power grew from \$367 to \$679 billion between 1996 and 2004. Yet if one were to take a stroll (or drive) through most urban black enclaves in America, one would be hard-pressed to see where increased African American spending has improved the infrastructure and the ambiance

**Table 17.1** African American Buying Power, 1996–2004

Year	Total disposable income of African Americans
1996	\$367,000,000,000
1997	391,000,000,000
1998	441,000,000,000
1999	491,000,000,000
2000	543,000,000,000
2001	601,000,000,000
2002	631,000,000,000
2003	656,000,000,000
2004	679,000,000,000

Source: Target Market News, "The Buying Power of Black America," <http://targetmarketnews.com/BuyingPower05.htm>; <http://targetmarketnews.com/buyingpowerstats.htm>.

of these neighborhoods. Black consumers, who now spend the vast majority of their money in shiny downtown and suburban shopping malls, enhance the economic bases of these outside areas, to the detriment of their own enclaves. One of the most visually stunning verifications of this unfortunate reality appeared in Lizabeth Cohen's 2003 book *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*. Her use of photographs taken thirty years apart of a prominent inner-city Newark intersection shows how a once vibrant commercial district has become an urban "wasteland."<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps ironically, the ongoing decline of urban black America's infrastructure appears linked to the ongoing decline of black-owned insurance companies. On the surface, as stated earlier, it appears that contemporary African Americans are being better served by large white insurers than by historic black insurers. Just as supermarkets can offer more economical prices than mom-and-pop grocers, large mainstream insurers can offer cost-conscious African American consumers more economical coverage than can much smaller black-owned insurance companies. Yet, notwithstanding the dynamics of economy of scale, the contemporary abandonment of black insurance companies by black consumers has seemingly helped accelerate the disintegration of black urban enclaves across the country.

The history of the African American insurance industry reveals these firms' longtime commitment to reinvesting a significant proportion of their premium income back into the black community, primarily in the form of mortgage loans.<sup>59</sup> As these companies have declined (and disappeared) in recent years, there has been a simultaneous decline in the amount of money they have designated for community reinvestment. Thus, the seem-

ing simultaneous deterioration of African American insurance companies and urban black America's infrastructure appears far from coincidental. Significantly, while white-owned insurers readily take African Americans' premium payments, they appear far less enthusiastic about investing in African American enclaves.

The clearly observable decline of urban black America's infrastructure in recent decades seemingly validates the central message of William K. Bell's controversial 1958 book *15 Million Negroes and 15 Billion Dollars*. Unlike other contemporary works related to black consumers, which sought to assist white corporations in their quest for more black customers and clients, Bell's book urged African Americans to use their increasing spending power for their own benefit.

Why should not 15 MILLION NEGROES become more conscious of their condition by developing their own market for the advancement of their own lives? There is no record in history to show that any race on the face of this earth has ever become great that did not develop itself economically. . . . 15 MILLION NEGROES cannot be kept from gaining economic power if they determine to keep within the race a certain portion of that 15 BILLION DOLLARS that is running daily through their fingers, as water does over a dam. . . . There is GREAT POWER in 15 BILLION DOLLARS.<sup>60</sup>

As a new century unfolds, the history of African American consumerism since World War II clearly suggests that African Americans, since the civil rights movement, have not effectively leveraged their power as consumers. Although aggregate African American spending figures are approaching \$1 trillion dollars, this money has enhanced the profit margins of major corporations, rather than promoted urban black community development. Future research related to African American consumer history, especially in the realm of television's impact on the consumption patterns of blacks in the postwar period, should provide even more details concerning how corporate America profited from increased black urbanization and the civil rights movement.

## Black Dollar Power: Assessing African American Consumerism since 1945

SUSANNAH WALKER

Consumer recognition and economic justice were related but at times contradictory issues that were central to post-World War II African American freedom struggles. During the 1920s and 1930s, the black press and experts on the African American market had argued, with little success, that mainstream advertisers needed to pay more attention to black consumers. After 1945, however, a combination of related factors—including the accelerated migration of African Americans to northern and western cities, the increasing incomes of black workers, and the emergence of new mass-media publications such as *Ebony*—led to increased marketing attention from national brand-name advertisers. For the next sixty years, the popular press, along with marketing trade publications, printed regular updates on the ever-growing consumer strength of African Americans. Whether these publications were touting the profit potential of a “Negro market” worth \$8–9 billion in 1947, reporting on “black purchasing power” of \$30 billion in 1969, or commenting on \$500 billion in “buying power among African Americans” in 1999, the rosy portrayal of black consumers remained strikingly consistent, focusing on the affluence, brand knowledge, and image consciousness of blacks and blaming any lack of “recognition” of the African American market on careless ignorance at best or racial bigotry at worst.<sup>1</sup>

But the “Negro market” genre of news stories rarely discussed how factors such as segregation, discrimination, and poverty complicated and often undermined black participation in American consumer culture. Those that did avoided criticizing this situation; they pointed out that racial separation required special ad campaigns directed at blacks, attempted to persuade potential advertisers that African Americans were not too poor to warrant marketing attention, and educated white businesses on the existence and expansion of the black middle class. African American activists, in contrast,

*did* make black consumer influence an issue and a rallying point throughout the second half of the twentieth century. The boycotts and chain-store sit-ins that are a familiar part of the southern civil rights movement represent only one example of this. In northern and West Coast cities, African Americans picketed and enacted "selective-buying" campaigns, both in sympathy with the southern movement and, increasingly, on behalf of local community interests. Many of these campaigns sought more than recognition of black consumers by product manufacturers and fair treatment by retailers: they also hoped to use consumer strength to press for greater economic justice.

This essay seeks to explore, in a broad way, the significance of black consumer culture from the end of World War II to the turn of the twenty-first century. Since Lizabeth Cohen made African Americans' roles as consumers a key part of her study of black and white workers in *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (1990), scholars have produced important studies illuminating the relationship between African American history and the development of mass consumer culture in the United States. In 1998, Robert Weems, Jr., in his pathbreaking *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century*, perceptively investigated how social, economic, and political developments in black America affected African American consumerism, and particularly perceptions of African American consumers by marketing experts and advertising executives. In the meantime, recent and concurrent studies have built on and/or complemented Weems's work, focusing on particular time periods and regions or examining topics such as advertising and commercial beauty culture. These studies have helped us to understand better how racism shaped the development of American mass consumer culture, how racism and racial discrimination have affected African Americans' participation in mass consumer culture, and how African Americans have used consumerism to shape culture, signify social and political ideas, and fight for racial justice. Much of this current work focuses on the first fifty years of the twentieth century, but an increasing number of studies have tackled the post-World War II era, particularly examining the relationship between African American consumerism and key developments of the last fifty years, including continuing urbanization and postwar political activism.<sup>2</sup>

This article seeks to continue this scholarship, with a particular emphasis on connecting the period covering the end of World War II up to 1970, when black consumer power grew rapidly and closely paralleled African American freedom movements in these decades, with the as yet understudied period leading to the end of the twentieth century. It also seeks to link



the history of black consumerism and market research in this period with African American consumer activism and continuing debates among black business and political leaders over the relative merits of economic inclusion versus economic autonomy for African Americans in relation to the dominant American white economy. Finally, my essay uses the African American beauty-culture industry as a case study for examining all of these issues.

African American marketing advocates continually, throughout the fifty years covered in this essay, held up recognition of black consumers by white advertisers as being at once proof of racial equality and a way to achieve it. However, the struggles of African American consumers and social activists cast doubt on the suggestion that more big-name advertisements in *Ebony*, or even in the local black newspapers, were enough to adequately change most African Americans' relationships with America's consumerist society. The freedom movements of the postwar decades, notably the civil rights and Black Power movements, used nationwide and community activism to encourage African Americans to marshal their influence as consumers and to pressure local and national retail stores and product manufacturers to treat them with respect, provide quality goods and services, and enact more racially inclusive hiring policies. Calls for equal treatment of consumers tended to enjoy wide popular support nationally during the civil rights era and won considerable victories by the end of the 1960s. Alternatively, efforts to use consumer activism to push for broader economic opportunities for African Americans were more controversial and usually less successful, particularly after the 1960s, when the legislative victories of the civil rights movement convinced many white Americans, at least, that continued struggles for racial justice were unnecessary.

In addition, many African Americans, business owners as well as advocates of black economic nationalism and cultural autonomy, could sometimes find themselves in an awkward relationship with consumer activists and black consumer market boosters alike. Certainly, consumer activists and marketing experts supported black entrepreneurship. Still, they also depended upon the large and ever-growing buying power of blacks in a largely white-owned consumer economy to press for their goals of black consumer recognition. The more attention black consumers got from white advertisers, the more the autonomy and economic survival of black business enterprises were threatened.

This essay is organized into three parts, each covering the same time span (roughly from 1945 to the early 2000s) from a different perspective. The first section is an overview of the growth of black consumerism and the

growth of media and marketing attention that black consumers received, as well as an exploration of how and why marketing perspectives on African American consumerism changed (or didn't change) over the years. Throughout the period studied here, African American marketing experts consistently sought white advertisers' recognition of black consumers by emphasizing their growing affluence and sophisticated tastes. At the same time, these "Negro market" professionals were quite selective in how they drew on the social and political transformations that characterized the era.

The second section looks specifically at the strategies, successes, and limits of black consumer activism in the context of the shifting social, cultural, and political climates of the post-World War II decades. Civil rights-era efforts to combat racial discrimination against black consumers achieved a certain amount of success, but when African American activists sought to use black consumer power to achieve greater economic opportunities and autonomy for black communities, the results were more ambiguous.

The third section uses the beauty-culture industry as a case study to examine the paradoxical position of black businesses in this era of broader recognition of black consumers. While such "recognition" could provide African American consumers with better treatment and more choices in the marketplace, it also exposed well-established and successful African American businesses, such as the beauty-product industry, to increased competition from larger, wealthier white companies.

This essay is far from comprehensive; rather, it points to the need for more research on post-World War II African American consumer culture, particularly in the period after 1970. Specifically, studies of black consumerism and consumer activism in cities in the post-Jim Crow South, as well as in northern and West Coast urban centers, will be useful for examining the impact of such developments as deindustrialization, return migration, and white flight on urban black consumer culture.<sup>3</sup>

### Selling to African Americans, 1944–2003: A ~~\$15 Billion~~ . . . ~~\$150 Billion~~ . . . \$500 Billion Market!

As World War II drew to a close, U.S. manufacturers and marketing executives were already planning for the postwar consumer economy. Advertisers knew that even if they could convince a generation whose frugal habits had been ingrained by sixteen years of depression and war rationing to become big spenders, new markets would be needed to feed the behemoth that the American production engine had become. For instance, many companies beefed up their efforts to sell goods across the border in Canada, in Latin

America, or overseas in Europe and the developing world. African American market researchers noticed this and redoubled their efforts to attract new attention for African American consumers. During the 1930s, these efforts had met with only limited success. Many white businesses maintained that advertising campaigns directed particularly at African American consumers would not be worth the extra funds required to launch them. Some argued that black consumers were familiar enough with brand-name products through mainstream media advertising, making specialized campaigns unnecessary. Others assumed that most African Americans were too poor, too rural, and not educated enough to be reached effectively by sophisticated advertising. Most big companies, furthermore, eschewed black newspapers as venues for advertising, citing low circulation numbers, substandard design, and parochial journalism. By the end of World War II, this view of black consumers and the black media, which had undoubtedly been influenced by demeaning racial stereotypes, was beginning to decline. African Americans were rapidly becoming more urban and affluent, their media publications were more diverse and numerous, and racial liberalism in American society was gaining strength in tandem with reinvigorated postwar civil rights efforts. In this context, a new generation of black advertising executives and market researchers entered the scene. As long as U.S. industries were willing to make up special new advertising campaigns tailored for South Americans, Canadians, and Swedes, they asked, why not focus on what one black marketing executive referred to as the "American Negro—an 'export' market at home!"<sup>4</sup>

The African American market was not new in the postwar era, but African Americans were more likely to live in cities and to have more expendable income during and after World War II. While black people continued to face considerable discrimination in the industrial job market, World War II did open up new employment opportunities, and African Americans enjoyed substantial improvements in wages over Depression levels. Moreover, in the years after the war, the earnings gap between African American and white workers narrowed. Between 1920 and 1943, the annual income of African Americans increased threefold, from \$3 billion to more than \$10 billion. While the end of World War II led to some regression in the gains African Americans had made in employment during the war years, black men and women did enjoy some of the postwar prosperity of the 1940s and 1950s. The average per capita income of African Americans was \$779 in the mid-1940s, compared with \$1,140 for whites. In many cities, however, as African American market researchers were eager to point out, black incomes were significantly higher: \$949 in New York, \$1,081 in Chicago,

\$1,154 in Washington, D.C., \$1,028 in Detroit, \$1,100 in St. Louis, and \$1,142 in Cleveland.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, residential segregation and housing discrimination, trends that had begun in northern cities earlier in the twentieth century, intensified after World War II. While the extent of segregation and discrimination varied from city to city, African Americans were, by the middle of the twentieth century, more urban and more segregated than they had ever been in American history.<sup>6</sup>

Blacks' postwar prosperity, while paltry in comparison with the affluence many whites enjoyed, increased the ranks of the black middle class and boosted the spending power of African Americans generally. Black people had always participated in and helped to shape American consumer culture, but it was only in the late 1940s and early 1950s that African Americans gained significant attention as consumers from national white-owned companies. In these years, marketing experts began fresh efforts to convince national brand-name manufacturers that the black consumer was worth courting. A handful of black advertising executives were being asked to join large, white-owned advertising firms. In addition, expansion and diversification of the black press provided attractive nationwide venues for advertisers. According to *Tide*, a white marketing magazine that first noticed African American consumers in 1947, national corporate advertisers had in the past shied away from black newspapers, citing unconfirmed circulation figures and perceived substandard journalistic quality. Now, *Tide* observed, black newspapers had improved and provided better circulation numbers. As Kathy Newman points out, the growth of African American-oriented radio stations also attracted new local and national advertisers. Perhaps most visibly, the emergence of successful mass-market black magazines after World War II was a crucial factor in raising the profile of African American consumers. The most famous of these was, of course, John H. Johnson's Chicago-based news, entertainment, and lifestyle magazine, *Ebony*. With a circulation of over three hundred thousand in 1947, *Ebony* was only the most successful of many magazines Johnson founded, which included *Negro Digest*, *Jet*, *Hue*, and *Tan*. Other black magazines emerged after World War II such as *Our World*, *Sepia*, *Color*, and *Eyes*. These magazines covered entertainment, politics, sports, leisure, fashion, and beauty from an African American point of view. They celebrated the achievements of prominent black people in a variety of occupations and devoted considerable space to racial issues rarely touched by white-dominated magazines. By the 1950s, and particularly in the 1960s, many more big advertisers, including car manufacturers, makers of home appliances and electronics, and national food producers, regularly placed ads in these magazines (particularly *Ebony*). The

popularity and success of black magazines encouraged white businesses, on the advice of black marketing professionals, to use African American models in the advertisements they ran in black magazines.<sup>7</sup>

Immediately after World War II, several black marketing professionals emerged. These included David Sullivan, founder and president of the Negro Market Organization, a market-research and advertising firm; and Edgar Steele, who did market surveys of urban black consumers for the white-owned Research Company of America. There was also William G. Black, sales manager for Interstate United Newspapers, a consortium of African American publications founded in 1940 that worked to increase advertising revenue for black newspapers. By the mid-1940s, Black had used demographic data on African American income and spending patterns to successfully persuade Seagram's, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Ford, and Buick to place advertising in the largest African American weekly papers. The findings of these market researchers, and their arguments for why advertisers should pay attention to black consumers, seemed to set a template for multitudes of future advocates to follow. All the studies emphasized the size and affluence of the market, suggesting that advertisers would be foolish to ignore black consumers and their ever-rising incomes. Market researchers also insisted that this market could be reached effectively only by direct advertising appeals to black communities in black media publications.<sup>8</sup>

One example of this sort of argument by researchers was a Negro Market Organization pamphlet that David Sullivan sent to businesses in 1945. Here, Sullivan took what would become a familiar approach: comparing the African American market with that of a foreign country in an attempt to tap into manufacturers' postwar hunger for new markets. As indicated on the cover—which pictured an outstretched hand holding money, superimposed over a map of Canada—African Americans outnumbered Canadians by 1.4 million in 1943 and, with a gross income of almost \$9 billion, earned almost a billion and a half more dollars per year than Canadians did. While the Canadian market featured “Tariff Barriers” and a “Bi-lingual Language Market,” American businesses would face no such obstacles when it came to African Americans. Inside the pamphlet, Sullivan wrote: “The European phase of our two-front war is rapidly drawing to a close. Its ending will result in substantial production cut-backs. . . . Are you prepared to take advantage of every market opportunity . . . do your present or postwar plans provide for action aimed specifically at reaching Negro Consumers? You cannot overlook them.” Edgar Steele's surveys focused on the buying habits of African Americans in cities across the United States. As with the international comparisons, this strategy would reappear constantly in reports on black

consumers throughout the second half of the twentieth century. While African Americans might make up only 11 or 12 percent of the population of the United States, this argument went, they were more concentrated in urban areas, which are easy for advertisers to reach and where most shopping gets done. In a study of Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia (on behalf of the *Afro-American* family of newspapers), Steele pointed out that blacks made up 13 percent, 19 percent, and 28 percent, respectively, of those cities' populations. Businesses wishing to succeed in these markets, studies like Steele's implied, ignored black consumers at their peril.<sup>9</sup>

### *Black Consumerism as a Civil Rights Issue*

Commentators on the African American market had for decades portrayed recognition of black buying power (in the form of advertising in black publications) as an issue of racial justice. In the 1950s and 1960s, the "Negro market," and white advertisers' acknowledgment of black "consumer citizenship," was increasingly linked to the ideals and goals of the civil rights movement, particularly in the black press but also, with increasing frequency, in white publications. Articles chronicling the growing Negro market and profiling African Americans employed in the advertising business proliferated in these decades. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, for example, featured a regular column titled "The Negro Market" on its op-ed page for several years during the 1950s and 1960s. Basing their stories on the growing pile of market research about African Americans, newspapers and magazines reported, year after year, the breaking news that African Americans had money to spend, were brand conscious, and responded well to respectful advertising campaigns.<sup>10</sup>

In 1958, for example, the *New York Times* cited a public opinion survey's finding that urban African Americans not only paid attention to which companies targeted them in advertising and which did not, they also harbored "antipathy toward buying products from the latter companies." African American marketing consultant D. Parke Gibson warned the American Marketing Association in 1962 to beware of "tunnel vision" among marketing executives whose strategies failed to "include the Negro market," a move that threatened to "be costly to both increased income and good will." The next year, the *Chicago Defender* cited market-research data that placed African Americans' per capita income at \$1,050 in 1960, compared with \$1,000 for British citizens and \$850 per person in France and West Germany. The article went on to describe efforts by the African American Co-Ordinated Marketing Agency to convince American industry of the "need

for expanding sales in the Negro market as an expression of the Negro's right to participate more fully as a consumer in the country's economic progress and growth." Reinforcing the message that consumer recognition equaled racial justice, publishing magnate John H. Johnson told the *New York Times* in a 1964 article about the impact of the "civil-rights struggle" on advertising that "the new Negro consumer is demanding that his hopes and fears, needs and dreams be considered. . . . The Negro can not be sold by advertisements that take him for granted."<sup>11</sup>

While arguing that African Americans expected more advertiser recognition as a result of civil rights struggles, market researchers simultaneously maintained that continued segregation and racial discrimination were *also* a reason for increased attention from advertisers, because they resulted in a socially and culturally separate market. African American marketing professionals often credited racism as being partially responsible for African American spending patterns, while citing the cultural and geographical separation of black America as the reason why advertisers needed to develop racially specialized campaigns. In 1958, for example, *New York Times* advertising reporter Carl Spielvogel quoted a "marketing expert" on black consumers who observed, "Any attempt at understanding the Negro consumer should begin by recognizing the reality of the stratification of American society wherein the status of Negroes allows limited association outside their birth group." This separation, John Johnson told the *New York Times* in 1965, blinded white advertisers to the potential of the black middle class, which was prosperous, strong, growing, and, Johnson declared, "vastly different from the image [of blacks] in the minds of many whites." Related to this, market-research survey reports and newspaper stories repeatedly observed that, across class lines, African Americans spent as much as or more than whites in key market areas. Many observers argued, in so many words, that race and racism played a role in these spending patterns. Edgar Steele, for example, claimed in 1945 that "the racial consciousness that has been forced upon them" (emphasis mine) had engendered in African Americans a "collective ambition for improvement" that translated into a desire for the highest-quality products. Thus, according to this argument, African Americans were more likely than whites to seek status, and particularly to bolster self-esteem in the face of racism, through consumption. The *Pittsburgh Courier* cited a 1961 *Printer's Ink* article pointing out, as African American market researchers had for decades, that blacks "spend more disposable income on clothing, TV, appliances than whites." In 1966, the *Amsterdam News* reported that automobile makers had "begun increasingly to appeal

to the Negro's desire for status and preference for luxury cars." Reflecting the ubiquity of such stories, *New York Times* reporter Philip Dougherty summarized the results of an advertising presentation on black consumers at a 1968 conference of newspaper publishers, writing that "as usual, the presentation pointed out the product categories where Negroes spend more than white persons, including tobacco products, liquor, household furnishings, clothing, and personal-care products."<sup>12</sup>

Market researchers and the black press, eager to attract revenue from advertising directed at African Americans, might have blamed insufficient marketing attention from white companies on racial stereotyping, but they were happy to use racism as yet another reason why black consumers warranted special attention. If the black middle class was particularly concerned about status, the argument often went, it was *because* of past racial slights. Most reports on the black market from the 1950s and 1960s stopped short of explicitly stating that African Americans' consumer habits might reflect their experiences living in a white-supremacist society, likely to avoid sounding too "militant" and putting off wary white businesses. A few alluded to discrimination towards black consumers, especially by retailers in black neighborhoods who, several observers pointed out, had a reputation for selling low-quality goods to blacks. However, they mentioned this only to explain why African Americans were willing to spend more money on brand-name luxury goods. "Brand awareness and brand preference are the reflections of dual desires for status and reassurance among Negro consumers," the director of a market-research firm told the *Chicago Defender* in 1962, explaining that "the Negro consumer is extremely wary of 'unknown brands' because of his long and unfortunate experience with shoddy products dumped on the Negro market." Similarly, *Time* reported in 1954 that "a long history of exploitation makes [African Americans] wary of cheap, shoddy goods. Thus, a Negro buyer is likely to spend more of his salary on high-priced goods than a white man, partly because it gives him prestige before his friends." *Time's* conflation of African Americans' desire for "status" among peers and their demands for fair treatment in the marketplace is odd and analytically imprecise, but hardly unusual. According to both the *Time* and *Defender* stories, African Americans with the means to do so chose high-quality, brand-name goods not just for status, but also to combat retailers' assumptions that they could not afford and did not deserve the best that American capitalism had to offer. Too few of these reports explored the possibility that the consumer habits they observed might also represent assertions of individual and group worth—one front in the continuing battle



against racism in the United States. Fewer still explored the possibility that middle-class blacks spent more on luxury consumer goods than middle-class whites for reasons that were even more materially linked to racial discrimination. For example, housing segregation, North and South, likely prevented many African Americans from using whatever postwar financial gains they had made to buy homes (as many working-class and lower-middle-class white families were doing). This may have encouraged many middle-class blacks to spend increased income in other ways.<sup>13</sup>

It is likely that the market researchers and reporters who wrote on black consumerism played down an overtly political message for fear of scaring off white advertisers. As black marketing consultant Parke Gibson put it in 1962, while advertisers needed to understand current shifts in American race relations, "the advertising industry cannot solve social problems, it is not in that kind of business." At the same time, observers agreed, this socially, culturally, and geographically segregated market required specially tailored advertising campaigns that depicted African Americans accurately, and with respect. Market researchers who were black cited this as a reason that white companies needed their services. David Sullivan, for example, promised in 1945 that his Negro Market Organization had the resources and marketing information to help businesses sell to "over 45 Negro markets," and that he could create advertising appeals "in language understood by and pleasing to the 13,190,518 Negro consumers." White companies were advised to study the black market to avoid costly mistakes. *Printer's Ink*, quoted in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, pointed out that "not only is the Negro market a separate one, but it differs from section to section," and that "well-intentioned campaigns have gone awry, inadvertently offended." *Time* reported in 1954 that while "374 U. S. radio stations now broadcast special programs to sell to Negroes" and employed black disk jockeys, crude appeals to race were unpopular. "One hair-lotion manufacturer wanted to begin a commercial: 'Attention Negro Women!'" *Time* explained, "but was promptly turned down. The station manager knew any such blatant approach would alienate listeners." In fact, respectful advertising designed to appeal specifically to African Americans did not necessarily mean simply inserting ads in black media—whether the ads merely substituted African American models and actresses for white ones without changing the message, or tried to tailor ad copy to appeal directly and exclusively to an African American audience. Market research found, instead, that most African Americans at the height of the civil rights movement wanted integrated advertising, with black and white models featured interacting together.<sup>14</sup>

As it happened, the beauty industry was practically alone among advertisers in black magazines in taking this advice. In 1963, for example, just a few months before the March on Washington, Apex, a well-known African American-owned beauty company, ran an advertisement in *Ebony* for a chemical permanent product called Natural-Perm. In the ad, the headline "Progress" appears below a photograph of a black woman and a white woman enjoying a cup of tea together. "A picture, they say, is worth a thousand words," runs the copy. "Yet it took uncounted words and deeds and years to make this picture possible." Touting the advertisement as a symbol of the successes of the civil rights movement, the copy offered the photograph as "an indication of progress," adding that while the ad "set out to make the point that both girls use Natural-Perm . . . the inner meaning of the picture itself guided us along a different, and better, path."<sup>15</sup> The irony of this and similar advertisements is that they promoted products (in this case, a product meant for use as a chemical hair relaxer) that were designed for black women and appeared only in African American magazines. This happened in the context of a beauty-culture industry that remained highly segregated in the 1960s. Advertisements such as this one symbolically desegregated the beauty industry, showing beautiful black models next to white ones, emphasizing that woman of all races could use the products and advocating a multiracial beauty standard that contradicted the largely white ideal that dominated American media.

Meanwhile, the black press celebrated the increasing numbers of black executives being hired by white advertising agencies, even though a closer examination of these hirings indicated that potential profit, not social consciousness, likely prompted them. When the large New York firm Batten, Barton, Durstine, and Osborn (BBDO) hired black consultant Clarence Holte in 1952, African American accounts went up from two to forty. By 1958, the *New York Times* was reporting that BBDO was probably the only white advertising agency with a black marketing department. Holte, the director of the department, downplayed any civil rights connection, explaining that "it just makes good dollars and cents for us to be able to counsel our clients in this area." On the other hand, African American BBDO executive Tom Sims saw social significance as well as practical utility in his job, observing that black market researchers were more effective out in the field interviewing black consumers because the research subjects "are pleased that members of their race are getting ahead in the business world." He added, "There must be some rapport between the interviewer and the consumer. There is a natural reluctance to reveal themselves fully to non-Negro interviewers."<sup>16</sup>

*Black (Consumer) Power!*

To a significant degree, the efforts of established companies such as BBDO, as well as smaller, black-run marketing firms, were beginning to pay off at the same time that civil rights struggles were gaining visibility and winning important legal and legislative victories. By the mid- to late 1960s, national corporations of all kinds were courting African American consumers. The continuing urbanization of African Americans contributed to the unprecedented attention that white companies paid to black people in these years. Surprisingly, Black Power, whose advocates often denounced corporate white America, did not slow this trend, although it did influence advertising rhetoric directed at African Americans. With the help of African American marketing experts, white and black corporations began to incorporate the language and images of black identity politics into advertising campaigns, starting in the late 1960s. The integrationist agenda of the early civil rights movement had often meshed well with the efforts of black marketing experts to get white advertisers to court African Americans. As Robert Weems explains, liberal white advertising executives sympathized with the larger goals of the civil rights movement, and they supported the idea that African Americans wanted only to "consume" on equal terms with whites. Black Power, on the other hand, seemed to reject integration altogether. The emergence of "Black Power" as a slogan and an ideological principle in the mid-1960s signaled to some a rift in the civil rights movement; and indeed, it did encourage the development of initiatives and organizations that were skeptical about the goals of integration, disenchanted with nonviolent tactics, and less committed to building an interracial movement. For example, African Americans in northern cities who were facing the limits of liberal reform, growing poverty, police harassment, and urban violence were receptive to the cries that Black Power activists made for economic and political independence and community control. In terms of economic ideology, Black Power activists included advocates of black economic nationalism, who stressed the need to establish black-owned and black-run enterprises, and the Black Panthers, who critiqued capitalism as a part of the racist American power structure. From the viewpoint of potential white advertisers, neither perspective could have seemed that welcoming.<sup>17</sup>

Black Power might have initially seemed a barrier to white marketers, but the urban black market could not be easily ignored. A 1970 article in the *New York Times* recognized *Ebony's* twenty-fifth birthday by observing that the magazine was "fat with advertising" and speculated that at

least some of that increase might be “related to the new militant stance by American blacks.” In 1973, *Black Enterprise* devoted an entire issue to “the black consumer.” The issue began with an article that complained about continuing stereotypes and asserted that in spite of the fact that “many of us are poor—one out of three in 1972,” the significance of African Americans in the U.S. economy was too large to be ignored. Citing familiar statistics comparing blacks’ buying power to that of Swedes, Brazilians, Mexicans, and Eastern European Communist-bloc nations, the magazine went on to profile new developments in the African American market, including rising numbers of blacks living in the suburbs and the growing ranks of upper-middle-class and wealthy African Americans. Throughout the 1970s, though, complaints persisted that the African American market was under-researched and sometimes overlooked. As Parke Gibson put it in 1975, “blacks have been overkilled in study on a sociological basis, but not on a marketing basis.”<sup>18</sup>

In fact, the consciousness of an ever-growing, culturally unique urban market did prompt more companies to develop specialized advertising for African American consumers. By 1970, 81 percent of African Americans lived in cities, and many white advertisers, guided by black advertising executives such as Clarence Holte and Caroline Jones, had discovered the “soul market.” Ignoring the political ideology of Black Power, white marketing executives latched on to dynamic changes in black urban style in order to market their products, to blacks and whites, in a new way. Articles in marketing magazines acknowledged that black-owned companies had the inside track on the soul market, but promised that savvy white companies could use soul to attract young black and white consumers alike. “What’s happening is pride,” one 1969 *Sales Management* article observed. “It cuts across the color barrier to give youth an identity and plugged-in marketers a whole new scene.” The article went on to offer a helpful glossary of soul vocabulary (e.g., “boss,” “fox,” “jive”) and an excerpt from Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice* describing soul food. The year 1969 also witnessed the creation of Zebra Associates, an integrated advertising firm that touted both its racial diversity and the extensive marketing experience of its staff. Zebra—which counted Caroline Jones, previously an ad executive with J. Walter Thompson, among its African American employees—claimed an extensive understanding of minority and low-income markets, as well as the combined knowledge of the top advertising firms in the country. The creation of the soul market by advertisers and the emergence of advertising companies such as Zebra changed the look of advertising aimed at African Americans. Advertisements for all manner of products routinely invoked themes

of black pride, solidarity, and soul style. While the images and rhetoric in these ads implicitly invoked the aesthetics of Black Power, they virtually never referred to the economic or political ideals of black nationalism.<sup>19</sup>

Nowhere was this more clearly demonstrated than in the black beauty-culture industry. The Black Power movement, declaring that black was beautiful, encouraged black women to stop wearing makeup and straightening their hair, as a way of rejecting commercially promoted "white" beauty standards. It was not too long, though, before manufacturers of beauty products embraced the Afro as a youthful, "hip" style that they could promote as easily as the new, gentler hair relaxers coming onto the market in the 1960s. African American companies such as Johnson Products and Supreme Beauty Products were the first to do this, but white companies such as Avon, Clairol, and even Perma-Strate (which produced hair relaxers) and Nadinola (a maker of skin-bleaching cream) were soon promoting the "black is beautiful" ideal. Cosmetics producers developed new lines of lipsticks, powders, and eye colors particularly suited to black women's complexions. All these companies incorporated rhetoric about soul and black pride into their marketing campaigns. For example, the black-owned Johnson Products Company was a top seller of African American hair products in these years. While continuing to promote the Ultra Sheen brand of straightening products, the company also marketed the popular Afro Sheen line of conditioners, shampoos, and sprays. Advertising campaigns featured explicit appeals to racial pride. "Natural Hair hangs out. Beautiful!" declared a 1969 Afro Sheen advertisement featuring a large photo of a man and a woman wearing impeccably groomed Afros. Other advertisements touted Afro Sheen as "a beautiful new hair product for a beautiful people" and "soul food for the natural." One Afro Sheen advertisement pictured a woman and a girl above the Swahili caption "Kama mama, kama binti (Like mother, like daughter)."<sup>20</sup>

#### *"Buppies" and "Urban" Marketing in the 1980s and 1990s*

Though they did not always intend to, advertisers who wanted to court black consumers in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s responded to the political and social circumstances that were reshaping African American and U.S. society. In the 1980s and 1990s, marketing and media perspectives on black consumers were more contradictory and, if anything, less reflective of many African Americans' economic and social concerns than ever before. Black and white newspapers continued to report, in very familiar ways, on the incredible growth of the African American market. *Jet* observed in 1979 that

with an annual gross income of \$92 billion, “blacks would rank 12th among the top 20 countries” if their income were separated from the U.S. total. In 1981, the *New York Times* commented that black consumers, having spent “\$38 billion on food, housing, and clothing in 1980, are an increasingly potent commercial force in the American economy” and were “also concentrated in a select group of urban markets.” In 1984, *Ebony* founder John Johnson observed that his magazine was so well known and well respected by potential advertisers that “if I don’t sell an account, I don’t think it’s race anymore. I think maybe I didn’t sell well enough.” Twelve years later, the *New York Times* reported that “black Americans’ buying power increased sharply last year, helping black households outpace white households in the increase on spending for cars, children’s clothing, and perishable foods.” More recently, in 2003, *American Demographic* observed that “they may be outnumbered at the shopping mall, but minority consumers and their buying power should not be underestimated.” The article added that “while whites continue to account for the majority of total consumer spending . . . their market share is dwindling.” But such reports masked increasing income disparities between middle-class and poor African Americans, particularly during the 1980s. In *Desegregating the Dollar*, Robert Weems points out that in spite of the spectacular rise in black buying power during the 1980s, “it became increasingly clear that not all blacks were benefiting equally from the partial desegregation of America.” The black middle class grew tremendously, from 13 percent of black wage earners in 1960 to one-third of black workers by the late 1980s—a shift that, as Weems notes, reflected the ability of many blacks to benefit from the educational and occupational opportunities won through civil rights activism. Nevertheless, the recession of the early 1980s, compounded by the domestic policies of the Reagan administration and economic shifts that drew the better-paying blue-collar jobs away from urban centers, ensured that blacks who did not have access to college were increasingly likely to be unemployed and poor. The black unemployment rate remained twice as high as the white rate throughout the 1980s, while black poverty was consistently three times higher than white poverty.<sup>21</sup>

The African American market had never been monolithic, but, as Weems puts it, the economic shifts implicit in “the introduction of the words ‘underclass’ and ‘buppie’ [black urban professional] to the national vocabulary demonstrated growing class distinctions within the black community.” These terms also indicated a wider recognition of these class distinctions in white America, which in turn encouraged advertisers to develop class-segmented marketing strategies. Weems astutely points out how problematic

this could be. In particular, he notes, the 1980s witnessed intensified efforts to sell liquor and tobacco products in poor black communities, a development that became a focus of black consumer activism in that decade. Upscale advertising aimed at middle-class blacks proliferated in the 1980s and 1990s, but this did not necessarily mean an end to discrimination in the marketplace. In 1982, black actors in television commercials were still rare, in spite of market research that suggested such ads had “a positive effect on black consumers, while not having a negative effect on white consumers.” In 1991, African Americans appeared in only 4.5 percent of magazine advertising, even though blacks were 12 percent of the population and 11 percent of magazine readers. That same year, the *New York Times* told the stories of several middle-class and professional African Americans who were accused of theft, refused service, or ignored by store clerks.<sup>22</sup>

In the meantime, advertisers invented what they called the “urban” market, a term that was meant to mask, but actually highlighted, racial and class segmentation. Partly, this was an attempt by black-owned advertising agencies to break into the mainstream market by convincing advertisers that they were well positioned to tap the broad and growing popularity of urban black culture. But white agencies soon moved in on the trend, as when DDB Worldwide collaborated with Spike Lee’s 40 Acres and a Mule production company to produce hip ads for companies such as Coca-Cola, AT&T, and Jaguar, and when the black-owned “urban” agency Da Streetz joined Deutsch Inc. to create a Tanqueray Gin campaign. In 2001, *Black Enterprise* profiled several black ad agencies that had merged with white companies in an attempt to survive in a marketplace where large white agencies increasingly competed for “urban” campaigns, while black agencies still struggled to get mainstream accounts. Meanwhile, the real black urban market was, by the early 1990s, both sensationalized and commodified, but rarely portrayed in a realistic way. Elizabeth Chin’s ethnographic study of the relationship of black grade school-age children to consumer culture in New Haven, Connecticut, is a case in point. Chin points out that in 1991 and 1992, when she was conducting her study, the news media was full of stories about inner-city black kids who shot or beat up other kids for a pair of Nike sneakers, or committed robbery so they could buy the latest Tommy Hilfiger fashions. African American teens, she argues, were portrayed in American popular culture as pathological consumers, the ultimate victims of a segmented urban market that drove poor kids to become criminals in order to dress like their wealthy African American sports and music idols. The children that Chin observed and interacted with in her study reflected a more mundane but probably more common experience of

class and racial market segmentation. Chin found that, first of all, while the children were well aware of all the popular brands, they were “hemmed in” as consumers by geography, discrimination, and financial constraints. Few owned brand-name clothes or expensive video-game systems. Most had mixed feelings about shopping at the nearest downtown mall, where they seldom had the money to buy luxuries and where they were treated with suspicion, even hostility, by store clerks. When given the chance to spend twenty dollars at the mall, most of the children either bought practical items (school supplies and clothing for school) or shared their bounty by purchasing toys for siblings and gifts for parents. Chin’s study represents only one example of the way “urban” marketing often failed to reflect the experiences and resources of real black urban consumers.<sup>23</sup>

### African American Consumer Activism

During the 1950s and 1960s, as we have seen, African American marketing professionals were quick to characterize recognition of black consumers, particularly the growing ranks of northern, urban, middle-class consumers, as a civil rights issue. At the same time, these advocates rarely made direct reference to the consumer activism that was proliferating in these decades and that was often directly connected to black freedom struggles of the era. While the consumer boycotts that took place in Montgomery, Birmingham, Jackson, and many other southern cities are well known to students of the civil rights movement, northern urban blacks—who, after all, had received the lion’s share of new advertising attention in these years—also marshaled their consumer power to demand social change. Sometimes these efforts were “sympathy boycotts” designed to put pressure on national chain retailers who maintained Jim Crow regulations in their southern stores. In New York in 1960, interracial groups at the Harlem and downtown Woolworth’s, Kress, and Kresge stores staged picket demonstrations and sit-down protests in sympathy with the southern student sit-in movement. Leaders of the southern protests spoke at the New York rallies, and Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., called for a nationwide interracial boycott of the chain stores involved. Rallies also took place in front of stores in Newark, Boston, Los Angeles, and Seattle.<sup>24</sup>

More often, though, African Americans in northern cities focused on local social and economic issues. In Philadelphia, for example, a picket of downtown chain department stores in 1960 began as a sympathy protest but evolved into a movement to increase job opportunities for African Americans in these stores. Very likely inspired by events in the South, African



Americans in northern cities revived longtime efforts (exemplified by the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns of the 1930s) to demand economic and racial justice from national and local businesses. It was a development that created some anxiety among white advertisers who had recently been made aware of the importance of appealing to African American consumers. "There is growing concern on Madison Avenue about the increasing militancy of Negro groups on the issue of advertising," began an article on the topic in the *New York Times* less than two weeks after the March on Washington in 1963. The article cited threats by the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) of a nationwide "selective-buying" campaign unless advertising agencies employed more African Americans and included more African Americans in advertisements. A few weeks later, the newspaper cited a national survey that asked African Americans, "If a prominent Negro were to tell you that there was a boycott against a store or brand, what would you do?" In response, 44 percent said they "definitely" would participate, while 45 percent said they were "likely" to boycott the store or brand. Even more menacing to white business owners, perhaps, was the possibility of "unorganized boycotts." "Apparently without coordination or instigation by any national organization," the *New York Times* observed in 1961, "local boycotts have sprung up in Cincinnati, Fort Wayne, Philadelphia, Baltimore and other cities against a variety of companies. The aim of the boycotts usually is to induce the companies in question to extend greater employment opportunities to Negroes." Meanwhile, market researchers in 1962 were finding evidence that "individual and unorganized boycotts" by African Americans who avoided stores well known for discriminatory practices were "sharply on the rise."<sup>25</sup>

The results of these consumer boycotts were mixed. In her essay on northern urban boycotts in the early 1960s, Stacy Sewell argues that boycotts of the sort mentioned above not only received less media approval than the southern protests—which often focused on integration of services as much as, or more than, on stores' hiring practices—but were also controversial among African American activists. Sewell points out that increased use of boycotts to force stores and companies to hire more African Americans reflected the disjuncture between activists' expectations and the lack of real gains in employment for urban blacks in the early 1960s. She observes that the "federal government and self-proclaimed progressive business leaders had demonstrated a rhetorical eagerness, if not a real commitment, to equal employment opportunity that civil rights leaders hoped would lead to more substantive racial integration in the workplace." Some of the more radi-

cal groups, such as CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) in New York City, readily adopted boycotts and pickets to press the employment issue, while the NAACP and the Urban League were less willing to do so and often criticized CORE's efforts. Still, these demonstrations sometimes forced local businesses, who "quickly realized they did not want to be forced to negotiate with the 'radicals,'" to deal with more moderate civil rights leaders. This, Sewell concludes, eventually led to the creation of a decades-long relationship among government, businesses, and moderate civil rights groups in major northern cities to negotiate affirmative action and other "racially conscious" hiring policies.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, selective-patronage campaigns in the North could be quite effective, even without such complex negotiations, in pressuring white businesses to respond to African American consumers' grievances. In the small suburban town of Hempstead, Long Island, for example, African Americans participated in a boycott of local stores in June of 1963 to protest a change in the zoning law that would have shifted a largely black neighborhood from a residential to a light-industrial zone, presumably reducing housing values and quality of life for the residents. Hempstead store owners tended to side with their African American patrons in this instance. Radio-store owner William Abramowitz, for example, told a reporter, "I think what these people are fighting for is right," adding, "I think their tactics are wrong. But if they think it is the only way, I support them." While not all the merchants were as sympathetic as Abramowitz—and many complained about being caught in the middle of a fight they had little control over, since most lived outside Hempstead and did not have a voice in the town government—they nevertheless successfully petitioned the mayor to rescind the new zoning law less than a week after the boycott had begun.<sup>27</sup>

In Philadelphia, as in the southern boycott campaigns, ministers led the selective-patronage activities that proliferated from 1960 to 1963. Sewell identifies Zion Baptist Church pastor Leon Sullivan as one of the main leaders of the movement. He explained its origins as follows: "Some of us were picketing the five-and-ten to support the lunch counter sit-ins in the South, when we realized that the North and East had problems that were just as acute." At the time, the campaign claimed no leaders and identified only a group of "400 ministers" loosely organized around the issue of getting skilled and clerical jobs for young, educated African Americans in the city. Able to marshal as many as two hundred thousand participants at their height, the selective-buying campaigns successfully pressured Sun Oil Company and Pepsi, after several months, to hire and/or promote black employees. In December of 1962, the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported that similar

campaigns had emerged in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Wilmington, Delaware. By 1963, observes Sewell, when the ministers mounted a boycott against A&P supermarkets, twenty companies had agreed to change their hiring practices as a result of boycotts. The use of the term "selective patronage" rather than "boycott" and the refusal to name leaders were deliberate moves designed to deflect criticism and prevent accusations that black leaders were trying to damage or shut down targeted businesses. As the *Courier* put it, "A boycott has the negative approach of not doing business with a commercial organization. . . . The more positive 'selective patronage' technique is to do business with those who cooperate in the achievement of the group's goals." Still, the *Courier* admitted, "the result so far as the non-cooperative business is concerned is the same in either case—loss of business." Indeed, as Sewell points out, targeted businesses resented the selective-patronage movement, describing it as "intimidation" rather than "persuasion."<sup>28</sup>

Selective-patronage campaigns did have some limited success and, as Sewell observes, even helped to push forward new cooperative agreements among city governments, civil rights activists, employers, and unions to improve racial diversity in hiring. When it came to issues of hiring and equal treatment of customers in stores, black civil rights activists were increasingly able to press liberally inclined politicians and businesspeople to support them. Consumer movements that sought to more directly address poverty and the lack of African American economic power in black communities were less successful. The Harlem liquor-store boycott of 1959–61 is a case in point. In the summer of 1959, the New York NAACP began a campaign directed at Harlem liquor-store owners and the city's liquor wholesalers to end discrimination against the wholesalers' African American sales representatives. L. Joseph Overton, president of the local NAACP branch, accused the wholesalers and the wholesale liquor sales union of shutting black salesmen out of sales territory in white neighborhoods, as well as in white-owned stores in Harlem. In response, the NAACP mounted a boycott of Harlem liquor stores, successfully pressuring many of them to grudgingly sign form letters to the wholesalers stating that "due to mounting community pressure," they would "refuse to continue doing business with any wholesaler who will not send as their representative a Negro Salesman." As occurred in the selective-patronage campaigns in Philadelphia, white liquor-store owners in Harlem complained that picketing had forced them to "knuckle under," and they accused the NAACP of "reverse discrimination."<sup>29</sup>

In this case, the campaign created more conflict than cooperation. The local NAACP branch was given no support from the national organization, which received multiple complaints from white businesspeople and some African American NAACP members. As the boycotts were getting started, NAACP national president Roy Wilkins telegraphed Overton, warning him that because the campaign "objective is not to secure employment of Negro salesmen but to enforce exclusive rights to sales territory on racial basis," the NAACP might be subject to discrimination lawsuits. Later, Wilkins admitted to a Cleveland NAACP organizer that, "frankly, the national office was embarrassed by the campaign launched by the Harlem branch," adding that the letter liquor dealers had been pressured into signing "raised rightful criticism which cast reflection on the good name and good sense of the Association as a whole. We found it most difficult to smooth over." "Smoothing it over" apparently meant distancing the national organization from Overton as much as possible. While Overton continued as president of the New York NAACP during the boycott and appears to have remained involved in the issue, by the spring of 1960 the campaign was being run by a new organization called the Liquor Action Committee, chaired by Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and coordinated by Powell staffer John Young. Overton continued to publicly support the boycott, however, and Wilkins continued to do damage control on the issue, instructing NAACP director of public relations Henry Lee Moon to disavow to the New York media any connection between the NAACP and Young. Meanwhile, the Liquor Salesmen's Union in New York won a stay on the boycott from the state Supreme Court in March of 1960. When the Liquor Action Committee resumed picketing in direct violation of the injunction, the organization was taken to court once again, this time by a white Harlem liquor-store owner. State Supreme Court justice Henry Epstein ruled that the African American picketers were "guilty of 'discriminatory racial practices.'" In a related case directed against John Young, Supreme Court justice Irving H. Saypol accused certain African Americans of "fomenting racial discrimination against white men" and ruled that such practices were as illegal as discrimination against blacks.<sup>30</sup>

Leaders of the liquor-store boycott had maintained from the beginning that it was the Liquor Salesmen's Union that discriminated against its own black salesmen, who paid the same dues as their white colleagues but were barred from selling to any retailers except black ones. The boycott leaders also hoped that more business for black wholesale representatives would bring more money into the African American neighborhoods where they

lived. White store owners and salesmen countered that the real object was to push white businesses out of black communities, and they accused Powell of threatening that once Harlem activists had taken "care of the liquor industry, they will take care of the 'milk and bread' business." Even when boycotts were conducted in the name of liberal integrationist goals, white political and business leaders viewed them with disapproval, as being overly militant. They were even less tolerant of consumer protests that presented community control and African American economic autonomy as goals. At the same time, more moderate civil rights groups such as the national NAACP continued to support only limited boycott initiatives. In November of 1963, for example, Roy Wilkins refused to endorse a nationwide Christmas buying strike in protest of the Birmingham church bombing, because the strike was not focused on the issue of fair employment practices and needed "some clearcut purpose and some reasonable chance of being effective." Indeed, boycotts that were not aimed at consumer or hiring issues seemed even less likely to elicit sympathy or results. For example, in 1962, a short-lived CORE-sponsored boycott of merchants in Englewood, New Jersey, sought to address gerrymandered school districts that maintained segregation in the city. The boycott attracted few African American participants, perhaps reflecting a perceived incongruity between tactics and goals. As one black woman put it upon seeing a picket with a "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" sign, "What do they mean by that? . . . You can work anywhere you want to in this town." A 1966 boycott of Washington, D.C., merchants on behalf of the home-rule movement attracted more black participants, but little support from the District's white business leaders on the issue.<sup>31</sup>

Consumer activism that addressed race-based poverty was on the rise after the mid-1960s but also tended to enjoy limited results. In 1966, the NAACP announced a National Youth Committee project to survey inner-city retailers in twenty-five to fifty cities and report on incidents of price gouging and unfair credit practices. The results of the survey do not appear in the newspaper record, but the issue of high prices and expensive credit was a central concern for black consumer activists throughout the late 1960s and into the 1970s and 1980s. Nevertheless, it was difficult for activists to make progress on the issue. The California commission appointed to investigate the 1965 Watts riot concluded that African American complaints about customer exploitation in the Los Angeles neighborhood were not a matter of "discrimination" but instead a result of "the traditional interplay of economic forces in the marketplace." Isolation and lack of good public

transportation forced African Americans to depend on small neighborhood stores with what the *New York Times* called “strange” credit practices. But there were other barriers for poor people who wanted affordable credit. According to Felicia Kornbluh, welfare-rights activists in the late 1960s embraced the fair-credit issue, notably organizing a nationwide boycott of Sears in 1969 in an effort to pressure the company to offer credit to women on welfare. Citing high prices and usurious credit in neighborhood stores, these activists posited access to consumer credit as a civil right. While perhaps less radical than the proposals of Black Power leaders such as Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, who advocated African American consumer boycotts of all white-owned businesses who would not agree to donate half of their profits to black communities, the Sears boycott challenged the limits of liberal conceptions about civil and economic “rights.” While the movement achieved credit for women on welfare in a few cities, Sears did not approve a national change of policy, and, as Kornbluh points out, “today the very idea of ‘welfare rights’ seems outlandish to most Americans—much less the idea of consumer rights for people who cannot afford to shop without government aid.”<sup>32</sup>

In the years after the 1960s, black consumer activists seemed to turn away from boycotts, which were less frequently reported on in the mainstream and African American media. In the 1980s, Jesse Jackson’s civil rights organization PUSH (People United to Save Humanity) used persuasion and the occasional boycott to induce national companies to use black-owned distributors and retailers for their products.<sup>33</sup> As Robert Weems observes, the 1980s witnessed passionate criticism of malt-liquor and cigarette advertisers, who, as a result of white companies’ new consciousness of a class-segmented market, targeted African Americans (especially young African Americans) in particularly blatant and exploitative ways. As in earlier decades, consumer activism around the “traditional” civil rights issues of access and fair treatment continued to get better results than activism that focused on addressing poverty or advocating a generalized program of community control and empowerment for African Americans. For example, the NAACP’s 2001 boycott and lawsuit against the Adam’s Mark hotel chain for discriminatory treatment of black guests ended with an apology and a settlement from the hotel company. In contrast, civil rights activists’ calls in 1998 for a general Christmas-season consumer boycott to “unapologetically advance a progressive Black agenda” met with little support.<sup>34</sup> By the end of the twentieth century, it was certainly true that “corporate marketers would have to do more than simply ‘recognize’ blacks and invite them

to use a certain product."<sup>35</sup> But it was equally true that African Americans might well wonder how far such "recognition" could take them in their struggles for social justice and economic power.

### Too Much Recognition? White Companies and Black Beauty Culture

The tension between the desire for market recognition and African Americans' continuing commitment to economic autonomy is well illustrated through an examination of the African American beauty-culture industry in the decades following World War II. Just after the war, while African American market researchers were busily trying to convince white advertisers to pay more attention to black consumers, they were also working to make sure that traditionally black-owned enterprises, such as the beauty-culture industry, did not take their position for granted and lose market share to white-owned companies. In 1945, for instance, David Sullivan sent the most famous African American beauty company a promotional package hawking his marketing firm's services. Opening with the headline "The New Negro Market: Unexplored, Untouched by Madam C. J. Walker Co.; What Shall We Do?" Sullivan pointed out that while the company "pioneered," "was first," and continued to be "tops in quality," white businesses were getting a larger share of the growing black cosmetics market because of "consistent advertising, better packaging," and "popular prices."<sup>36</sup> Because he was trying to sell his services, Sullivan almost certainly exaggerated the degree to which the Walker Company was out of touch with black consumers. However, it is true that the vast majority of beauty-product ads found in magazines such as *Ebony* were hawking the goods manufactured by white-owned companies. Most of these were small companies that primarily catered to black consumers, but there were also larger corporations, such as Clairol, Helene Curtis, Avon, and Noxzema, which had once advertised only in white publications but now began to market their products to black women, in black magazines, using black models.

While African American marketing professionals and media producers welcomed this "recognition" for black female consumers, they, along with African Americans in the beauty industry, understandably worried about its impact on their economic security and autonomy. This was, in fact, not a new concern. Beauty culture for black women had been one of the few industries to attract much attention from white manufacturers before World War II. Then, as in the postwar period, advocates of black consumerism had bemoaned what they often referred to as white infiltration of the beauty

industry, even as they strove to get white producers of other sorts of products in African American newspapers. It was a seeming contradiction that actually reflected the circumscribed realities of blacks' social and economic circumstances. When white advertisers ignored or stereotyped black consumers, it reflected ignorance and racial discrimination in the marketplace that African American market researchers, understandably, sought to address. At the same time, advocates for black businesses, among whom market researchers should be included, were equally committed to protecting those few enterprises, such as beauty culture, in which African Americans served and employed other African Americans, and which invested money directly into black communities. Thus, when it came to promoting black consumerism, calls for inclusion and interracial advertising could coexist with expressions of black economic nationalism.

Nevertheless, black-owned beauty-product companies were undeniably the major casualties as white advertisers increasingly sought to attract ever more affluent African American consumers. While the black beauty parlor remained a more or less independent enterprise, African American-owned product manufacturers faced increasing competition from white companies with a lot more money to spend on marketing and distribution. In the 1950s and 1960s, the size and profits of pioneering black-owned beauty-product companies such as Madame C. J. Walker, Poro, and Apex dwindled precipitously. By the 1970s, virtually none of the companies begun before World War II were actively in business. Newer black-owned companies such as Johnson Products and Supreme Beauty Products did better in the 1960s, in part because of their successful development of chemical hair relaxers for women in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as their innovative marketing of Afro grooming products in the late 1960s. At the same time, white companies had also been quite good at adapting to changes in the market, readily tapping into the "soul" beauty market by selling Afro enhancers. Even Nadinola, a company that had sold skin-bleaching creams since the turn of the century, got in on the act. An October 1968 full-page ad in *Ebony* for Nadinola bleaching cream featured a simple, full-face close-up of a black woman with an Afro and the caption "Black is beautiful." The company, which for decades had declared in ads that fairer skin was more beautiful and offered to lighten black women's skin by several shades, now exclaimed that black skin was "naturally beautiful" and promoted the cream as a product that could eliminate blotches and blemishes, bring out "the natural beauty of your complexion," and create "a smooth, glowing skin tone that's even all over." The advertisement represented a shrewd attempt to retain a market for a product that, given the political climate at the time, seemed doomed.



What really seemed doomed by the 1970s and into the 1980s and 1990s were black-owned beauty-product companies. In 1978, the *New York Times* reported that Johnson Products had lost significant market share in the industry, dropping to 32 percent of the market that year from 50 percent in 1974. Johnson was losing ground to white-owned companies such as Revlon (which had unsuccessfully offered to buy Johnson Products for \$100 million in 1970) and Cosmair. The next year, Johnson reported a 12.6 percent loss in sales from the previous year, citing Revlon's larger production and distribution capabilities as a major reason for the decline. By 1985, Revlon was leading sales of hair relaxers, and black-owned companies such as Soft Sheen and Johnson Products were struggling for survival. During the 1990s, many of these black-owned companies were acquired by white corporations. Johnson Products was bought out by two medium-sized white-owned companies before finally being purchased by the multinational L'Oréal in 1998. L'Oréal also bought Soft Sheen that year, meaning that it then owned what had been the two leading African American hair-care companies in the country. In 2000, Alberto-Culver acquired the third-largest black-owned company, Pro-Line Corporation. Observers in the industry bemoaned this development but recognized the difficulty of trying to compete with giant national and international corporations. Nathaniel H. Bonner, Jr., executive vice president of one of the remaining small African American-owned beauty-product companies, explained: "The companies that are buying these larger (black) companies are a hundred times larger than we are. . . . Black companies simply cannot come up with that kind of financing power."<sup>37</sup>



The example of beauty culture illustrates a larger lesson about African American consumerism in the decades after World War II. The impressive growth of black spending power, along with the social and political gains that came with the civil rights movement and other freedom struggles in this era, brought unprecedented attention to black consumers. African American marketing professionals had long fought for this recognition of the "Negro market," and in a postwar context in which America's national identity often aligned with images of a commercialized American "standard of living," these marketing professionals, understandably, cited this recognition of black consumer citizenship as a civil rights success story.

However, this was an ambiguous victory. In the case of the beauty-culture industry, as with other businesses that had been dominated by African American entrepreneurs serving African American customers, rec-

ognition of black consumers by white companies could spell disaster for black-owned businesses. More broadly, mainstream recognition of black consumers rested upon limited, overly simplistic characterizations of African Americans as striving, status-conscious consumers who wanted only to consume on equal terms with whites. Thus, the efforts by black consumer activists to parlay African Americans' collective spending power into movements to press for economic justice and autonomy for blacks across class lines met with little success.

## Race, Place, and Memory: African American Tourism in the Postindustrial City

ELIZABETH GRANT

In the summer of 1995, thirty years after leading the historic march from Selma to Montgomery, legendary civil rights activist Hosea Williams created quite a stir when he accused Atlanta's African American mayor Bill Campbell of being an "Uncle Tom." Williams, a former member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and a close ally of Martin Luther King, Jr., was responding to Campbell's official lockdown of Freaknik, an annual gathering of African American fraternities and sororities, when he jibed, "Mayor Campbell, stop Uncle Tommin' for white folks." Thrown into a maelstrom of controversy surrounding an annual event that had seen its attendance increase from thirty thousand to two hundred thousand over the space of just three years, Williams's comments seemed to speak to a departure in the city's African American political leadership from the priorities of a previous generation. As Williams threatened to organize demonstrations protesting the city's treatment of Freaknik's young black patrons, Mayor Campbell, himself in many ways a symbol of African American political achievement in a hotbed of the civil rights movement, stood his ground in refusing to officially welcome the event, choosing instead to greet participants with a stern warning: "[Everyone] must obey the law when they are here. If you don't obey the law, we're going to arrest you."<sup>1</sup>

For Williams and outspoken supporters of the event, the annual return of Freaknik reaffirmed Atlanta's importance as a black mecca, a cultural and historic homeland for young black men and women in colleges and universities in cities across the nation.<sup>2</sup> To Mayor Campbell, Freaknik represented both the best and the worst that his administration's pro-tourism policies could bring to the city. On the one hand, as Campbell explained to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* in 1994, Freaknik embodied the aspirations of an entire generation of college-educated black men and women:

"These 200,000 students are the doctors and lawyers and architects and teachers of tomorrow. The fact that they want to return and live here [after attending Freaknik] is great." He then appealed to the city's deep dependence on tourism revenue: "They have spent large amounts of money, by some accounts over \$20 million."<sup>3</sup> Yet as general disruption and incidents of violence overshadowed the event and clouded its image in the eyes of Atlanta's residents and business leaders, Campbell conceded that Freaknik, as it had developed by 1995, could no longer coexist with the city's business-friendly tourism economy.

To appraise the cultural and political significance of African American tourism in contemporary urban economies, this essay focuses on two annual events, Atlanta's Freaknik and Philadelphia's Greek Picnic. For the majority of people attending these events, Freaknik and the Greek Picnic represent African American solidarity and achievement in a historically racist higher-education system. To many observers, however, disruption and violent disturbances in the 1990s scarred the events and their reflection on both participants and the black communities of Atlanta and Philadelphia. As they unfolded in an era of heavy business investment and real estate development spurred by the expanding global economy, debates over Freaknik and the Greek Picnic centered on control over and access to the economic power embedded within the carefully constructed spaces and places of two postindustrial cities. In Philadelphia, these debates touched on the vital importance of an African American heritage industry as part of the city's overall bid to develop its leisure-tourism economy, while in Atlanta, controversy over Freaknik centered on how the black political elite would balance racial politics with a pro-business agenda.

These annual events and how they were received reveal a great deal about the power of place and memory in negotiating shifting parameters of race and class in the transformation from industrial city to postindustrial metropolis. The Greek Picnic is a reflection of black Philadelphia's social and institutional evolution, a tribute to the city's well-established black elite and the host of fraternal orders and educational bodies that have defined this upper class for more than two centuries. As such, the picnic evokes a history of interracial class divide that defies contemporary notions of a singular urban black public sphere. The controversy surrounding Freaknik, set within a historic seat of black higher education and a stronghold of activity among black Greek-letter organizations (BGOs), signaled tensions between Atlanta's black communities, their political leadership, and the city's ruling business interests.<sup>4</sup> While disagreements over Freaknik and the Greek Picnic in many ways centered on the role African American tourism

would play in these service-oriented cities, tensions were rooted in constructions of race and racial identity that have developed over both time and space, through key moments in the histories of Atlanta and Philadelphia, and through individual and collective memories of significant events, people, and places.

### Race and Tourism in the Postindustrial City

In Atlanta, Philadelphia, and many other cities of similar size and dimensions, tourism is a driving force behind contemporary urban development, one that has given new meaning to the spaces and places composing U.S. cities.<sup>5</sup> According to David Harvey, global economic change has resulted in a shift from a managerial to an entrepreneurial urban politics built on public-private relationships, speculative business and design practices, and increasing prioritization of place within the city. The “urban growth machine” defined by Harvey and its emphasis on selling the city through its own image has left an impression on urban landscapes and in the economic and cultural values projected through them.<sup>6</sup> Sharon Zukin locates these new values within a postindustrial symbolic economy centered on culture and imagery. According to Zukin, the production processes driving the urban symbolic economy since the late 1970s have transformed the spaces of typical postindustrial, service-oriented cities (convention centers, hotels, shopping malls, and arts venues) into products. The images conveyed through them—a strong business economy, ample leisure space, ethnic diversity, and a thriving arts scene—are the currency in which the city is valued.<sup>7</sup>

The impact of postwar deindustrialization has been concentrated among urban black communities, and the reemergence of U.S. cities as centers of a new service industry has resulted in increased residential segregation and low-skilled, unstable employment for poor and working-class African Americans living in the city.<sup>8</sup> Studies of African American urban culture and identity underscore the significance these events have had in understanding the value of race in the contemporary city. In today’s service-driven economies, African American history and culture have become commodities within the urban symbolic economy. These commodities take alternate forms—for example, as cultural expressions of the urban experience, such as jazz or hip-hop, or as projections of an urban decline that continues to justify the redevelopment of city centers, gentrification, and segregation.<sup>9</sup>

Philadelphia’s tourism industry is based in the city’s downtown area known as Center City. As the historic heart and geographic axis of the city,

Center City Philadelphia provides both a "spatial link with history and a temporal link with economic and political power," described by Zukin as vital to the creation of an effective symbolic economy.<sup>10</sup> Fifty years of city planning have repackaged Center City Philadelphia as an easily navigable collection of overlapping historic, commercial, cultural, and business districts, each marketed through the city's greatest selling point—history. As colonial America's busiest and richest seaport, and the location of the signing of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, Philadelphia is America's First City, the Cradle of Liberty, the Quaker City of Brotherly Love. Heritage is what the city does best. Tourism campaigns such as "Philly First" and "Welcome America!" reference the city's age and place in U.S. history, while advertising slogans such as "Enjoy our past, experience our future" unite the contemporary city with projections of its historic past.<sup>11</sup> As historian Gary Nash writes, "Philadelphia's past is a thriving business."<sup>12</sup>

Unlike Philadelphia, a city that built its present tourism industry around a celebration of its past, Atlanta is a forward-thinking city, a city born of ashes and built on visions of industrial and financial prosperity. While Philadelphia has invested its economic and political efforts in enticing visitors to Center City's carefully packaged neighborhoods, Atlanta has leveled the city stage for new business parks, shopping malls, and swank hotels designed to draw investment in the form of new international business headquarters and conventions. Public-private investment has characterized Atlanta's development from the days of nineteenth-century boosterism, and Atlanta—dubbed "Convention Capital" of the United States in the 1970s<sup>13</sup>—beckons a late-twentieth-century business-oriented clientele with new hotel and convention facilities. The result, according to Dennis Judd, is that "Atlanta has moved indoors, and the city streets have almost been deserted by pedestrian traffic. Shops, hotels and their lobbies, offices, food courts, and atriums are connected by a maze of escalators, skytubes, and arcades."<sup>14</sup>

Returning to Zukin's definition of the symbolic economy, it is clear that the landscapes of both Atlanta and Philadelphia have become products valued and marketed through recognizable forms of cultural currency. However, as defunct features of the old industrial city are either wiped away by or recycled into functional spaces for the postindustrial city, the resulting eclipse of a "moral public sphere" by a "private sphere selling fictional styles of life and imaginary behavior" raises important questions over the values celebrated within these reimagined spaces and who determines them.<sup>15</sup> Tourism, particularly heritage tourism, brings to the forefront important

sociopolitical and cultural concerns over representation that center on the question of "whose history" is to be celebrated.<sup>16</sup>

In both Atlanta and Philadelphia, black history is inexorably intertwined in the physical, social, and overall contextual development of the cities.<sup>17</sup> Race is clearly, then, a key element in forging each city's future. Philadelphia actively markets its racial history within a thriving African American heritage industry. City leaders who proclaim Atlanta "the city too busy to hate" recognize a need to safeguard Atlanta's reputation as a cosmopolitan, business-friendly metropolis by disassociating the city from its Jim Crow past. As urban political economies are more and more intertwined with the physical restructuring of cities into service-providing business and tourism centers, the emergence of a strong African American heritage industry in Philadelphia and the rise of a black political elite in Atlanta not only point to new outlets for facilitating urban racial politics, but also suggest new meanings of race and race relations in the postindustrial city.

### Black Tourism in the Postindustrial City

Multicultural business and leisure tourism generates more than \$40 billion across the nation each year. In 1988, the city of Philadelphia set out to corner that market by establishing the Multicultural Affairs Congress (MAC) to promote and facilitate minority tourism. From its inception, MAC boosted the city's minority convention bookings, from a mere six in 1987 to well over one hundred by 1990. MAC expanded its efforts throughout the 1990s, working with local heritage sites, museums, tour groups, and retailers to compile marketing promotions and literature geared to minority groups. By far, MAC's greatest success has come in generating African American tourism. Print campaigns in black interest and lifestyle magazines and television advertisements featuring black celebrities have generated increased interest in Philadelphia among African American tourists across the country. Once in Philadelphia, African American visitors find special brochures, including the annual *African American Historical and Cultural Guide* and *Sojourner*, which highlight historic sights, cultural events, and minority-owned businesses and restaurants. By 1999, just over ten years since MAC's inception, Philadelphia had accrued more than \$400 million from minority tourism and had been described by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as the "premier example of a well-developed minority tourism destination in the United States."<sup>18</sup>

Philadelphia's African American heritage industry comprises the city's most notable historic sites, such as Independence Hall and the Liberty

Bell, as well as black history and culture museums, the preserved homes of notable black residents, and cultural arts events either based in the city's black community or aimed toward the city's black visitors.<sup>19</sup> Philadelphia's African American tourism industry challenges dominant narratives of democracy and equality instilled in celebrations of the city's early history by paying tribute to the turbulence and violence of American black history and honoring the foundations of a specifically African American identity. While this confusion of narratives can perhaps be resolved only through the subjective positioning of the tourist, when placed in context with the city's postwar economic shifts and consequent spatial reorganization, the blending of American and African American historical narratives in Philadelphia's tourism industry is perhaps not as subjective as it may seem. While sights commemorating African American history and culture form a critical part of Philadelphia's tourism industry, this industry and the development and neighborhood regeneration attendant to it are noticeably limited to Center City and its historic sights, an imbalance with strong repercussions for poorer, working-class, predominately nonwhite communities outside Center City's gentrified areas.

As with Philadelphia, Atlanta's place in African American history and culture and the city's strong middle-class black communities suggest an entry for the city's black residents to the economic and political spoils of urban development centered on increasing tourism. Harvey K. Newman's study of race and Atlanta's tourism industry argues, however, that although the city's black leadership—most notably its black mayors—has embraced the public-private relationship characterizing Atlanta's development, the working-class and poor black neighborhoods continue to bear the weight of the city's growth. The election of four African American mayors has not reversed the effects of renewal on the city's black neighborhoods; indeed, Newman quotes Adolph Reed to argue that Atlanta's black mayors are "by and large only black versions of the pro-growth regimes that they have replaced."<sup>20</sup>

In comparison to tourism in Philadelphia, Atlanta's tourism industry caters to a predominately white clientele. This was not always the case; in Jim Crow Atlanta, black businessmen maintained a strong African American tourism industry, which largely dissolved with the dismantling of legalized segregation.<sup>21</sup> As Atlanta entered the second half of the twentieth century, race and the city's racial past were factored into Atlanta's campaign to present itself as a modern, forward-thinking and business-friendly southern city. In 1959, Mayor William B. Hartsfield proclaimed Atlanta "the city too busy to hate," a move described by Charles Rutheiser as "not so much inspired



by a lack of racism on the part of white city leaders, but by the pragmatic recognition that, in the age of television, outward resistance to school desegregation *a la* Little Rock and New Orleans would damage the city's image and hinder the attraction of outside capital." Atlanta's racial past was alternately obscured and highlighted by politicians taking steps to preserve the city's reputation as a business-tourism destination. In the 1990s, Mayor Andrew Young angered the city's beleaguered preservationists and charmed corporate developers when he referred to historic commercial properties and housing stock destroyed in the extension of Atlanta's commuter rail line, MARTA, as "hunks of junk" and proclaimed, "Atlanta has no character, we are building it now." Charles Rutheiser hypothesizes that Young's reticence toward historic preservation involved a desire to rid the city of physical manifestations of its Jim Crow past: "Young argued that many of Atlanta's historic buildings were inimically bound up with the history of racialized inequality and that to preserve them was to somehow preserve and legitimate the memories of those times along with those spaces. . . . Seen in this light, historic preservation was thus primarily the preservation of the bricks and mortar of a Jim Crow city."<sup>22</sup>

Several tourism projects have brought Atlanta's buried racial past to the surface in even more pronounced and public ways. As Atlanta made preparations for the 1996 Olympics, a bitter dispute erupted over the redevelopment of the Martin Luther King Historic Site. The National Park Service, the city, representatives of the Auburn Avenue commercial district, and the King family struggled over the rights to control redevelopment of the historic site, to preserve the King legacy, and to benefit from the millions of tourist dollars that Olympic-sized crowds were expected to generate. The site is today one of the city's largest tourist attractions, drawing more than three million visitors per year, but it continues to bear the scars of Atlanta's racially slanted postwar redevelopment. A highway constructed in Atlanta's first stages of downtown renewal slices across historic Auburn Avenue and dislocates black-owned businesses from the thriving conservation area, making it difficult for visitors to find their way to local shops and restaurants. Rather than being encouraged to patronize local businesses, tourists are ferried back to the downtown area by the same tour buses that brought them to King's birthplace earlier in the day.<sup>23</sup>

The question of whether the cultural currency attached to race and racial identity by postindustrial urban economies carries any real significance in contemporary urban politics should be posed at the intersection of urban and racial history. General economic shifts toward service and tourism and

the spatial changes accompanying these shifts coincided with fulfillment of a key civil rights project in the election of Atlanta's Maynard Jackson in 1974 and Philadelphia's W. Wilson Goode ten years later, the cities' first African American mayors. In his study of Mayor Goode, John F. Bauman points out that the special demands facing African American leaders of economically and racially stratified cities have resulted in an increased emphasis on entrepreneurial politics and leadership.<sup>24</sup> Having to meet African American needs for improved employment opportunities and political representation without the state-backed programs of the postwar era, black leaders such as Jackson and Goode turned to speculative development projects based in service provision and tourism to provide their constituents with a source of income and capital. Over the course of their successive administrations, Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young fought for and won significant concessions to minority contractors for the overhaul and extension of Hartsfield International Airport.<sup>25</sup> Jackson and Young also worked their business connections to court the Olympic Games Committee and bring the games to Atlanta in 1996, a coup for the city's business interests that ultimately led to the further decimation of Atlanta's crowded African American communities.<sup>26</sup> Like Jackson and Young, Goode introduced urban-redevelopment projects as part of his pledge to address African American unemployment. Plans for Gallery II, successor to James Rouse's successful Center City Gallery Mall project, set specified levels of minority employment in the distribution of construction contracts, jobs, and retail space within the completed shopping mall.<sup>27</sup>

While Mayors Maynard Jackson and W. Wilson Goode represent the historical link between racial politics and the urban growth machine, the value of tourism can be measured only by its impact on the various ethnic groups and economic classes composing the city.<sup>28</sup> Tourism failed to completely address pressing concerns of black urban poverty in the 1990s, and the very same constructions of race and racial identity at work in issues such as residential gentrification, economic turnaround, and urban redevelopment surfaced in debates surrounding the explosion of black youth culture in the Greek Picnic and Freaknik.

### The Greek Picnic: Race and Place in the Postindustrial City

In the summer of 1974, a small group of African American fraternity brothers and sorority sisters from the Philadelphia area came together for a picnic in Blue Bell Park in the city's Germantown section. This small, intimate

gathering, initiated to break up the long summer holiday, marked the first Greek Picnic and set in motion a tradition that has dominated the black Greek social calendar for more than thirty years.<sup>29</sup> The Greek Picnic grew substantially in its first fifteen years, eventually edging beyond its traditional geographic and social boundaries. In the early 1980s, the Greek Picnic moved to Fairmount Park's spacious Belmont Plateau, and in 1988, an independent party promoter named E. Steve Collins opened the event to the public as Greekfest '88, appealing to Greeks and non-Greeks alike with big-name music talents and personalities, corporate sponsors, and exposure through local press, national radio syndicates, and even MTV.

The Greek Picnic expanded greatly under the direction of Collins and gradually came to exist in a delicate balance of the multiple identities and objectives it had come to represent. Led by Mayor Goode and his successor, Ed Rendell, the city showed an increasing interest in the Greek Picnic. Tourism officials celebrated the picnic's fiscal potential, while local politicians embraced the event as an opportunity to improve the city's reputation among the scores of young black students and professionals brought to the city by the picnic year after year. Although forces of racial and class identification shaped these impressions of the Greek Picnic from various perspectives, the self-interest of Greek and non-Greek organizers and of city representatives successfully molded the Greek Picnic and its multiple meanings and values into a peaceful celebration that drew up to three hundred thousand young black men and women to the City of Brotherly Love each year.

In July 1992, two shootings—one in Fairmount Park, the other in the city's South Street district—and several racially motivated assaults threw these perspectives and their disparate racial and class identifications into conflict. In the wake of Greek Picnic '92, the Philadelphia alumni chapter of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (PPHC), a nationwide organizing body of black Greek-letter fraternities and sororities, assumed control of the Greek Picnic and began a long campaign to restore the picnic to its roots. As debates surrounding the event, its participants, and its place in the city continued through the 1990s, merchants and residents in the city's popular South Street district banded together as the Concerned Communities Coalition and cited the Greek Picnic's mounting attendance as the reason for incidents of property damage, disruption, and violence. These arguments added yet another, spatialized layer in the multiple racial and class-based identities held in the balance of the twenty-year-old celebration. In 1999 organizers closed the event to the public, and by 2001 the picnic's attendance had dropped to ten thousand.

A study of the heated disagreements that erupted in the 1990s between the PPHC, the city, its residents, and commercial interests reveals the significance of place in negotiating the particular racial and class-based identities projected through the Greek Picnic. Dolores Hayden argues in her study on the relationship between place and public history that identity is deeply entrenched in the city landscape and cites Henri Lefebvre in noting that the production of space is fundamental to the "inner workings" of the political economy.<sup>30</sup> To understand the Greek Picnic and the controversy surrounding it, the picnic's existence on overlapping planes of black identity and urban development must be negotiated with the importance of place in constructing and defining these identities within the changing city. While the Greek Picnic represented different things to different interests, these meanings and the racial and class-based identifications at work within them have been formed in context with the symbolic economy constructed in or projected through the city's landscape. Tracing the Greek Picnic's spatial development reveals an increased emphasis on striations of class in the picnic's celebration of African American achievement and unity, as well as the rising influence of private interests in defining the patchwork of diverse communities and neighborhoods of postindustrial Philadelphia.

As the picnic developed and took on multiple meanings, it was increasingly identified with two specific places—Belmont Plateau in Fairmount Park and the city's trendy shopping and entertainment district running along South Street. Belmont Plateau, with its proximity to the black neighborhoods of North and West Philadelphia and its historic place within the city's African American community, forged the crux of overlapping identifications with the picnic by its Greek founders, the city, and the black community. Fairmount Park, and Belmont Plateau within it, occupies a strong place in the development of Philadelphia's black community as a peripheral space for the relief of social tensions and racial anxieties aggravated by the close quarters of the city.<sup>31</sup> Former mayor William Tate credited Fairmount Park and its proximity to the predominantly African American neighborhoods of North and West Philadelphia with "sparing the city all but one major racial disorder during the mid and late sixties." One local African American minister assured the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that "Fairmount Park is the black man's country club."<sup>32</sup>

The Greek Picnic secured its first permit from the Fairmount Park Commission in 1981, and its ties to Belmont Plateau only strengthened with the event's growth through the 1980s. As unrest surrounding the picnic's impact on Center City grew, the PPHC increasingly emphasized the picnic's ties to Fairmount Park, not only to place the Greek Picnic firmly within

the racial community defined by Belmont Plateau, but also to reaffirm the class-based boundaries of the black Greek-letter organizations responsible for the event. Working with the city, the PPHC secured more road closures and special parking permission for Greek Picnic '93 in order to reemphasize the spatial boundaries laid out in the late 1980s; a host of special activities centered in the park reaffirmed these boundaries and refocused the event on its historic roots. The PPHC hoped these efforts would contain the picnic's growth and increasing popularity, and that in its bid to "reclaim" the event, "the positive aspects of the picnic—opportunities for socializing and networking with older members who are now in the workforce—will be prominent."<sup>33</sup>

While PPHC and city officials looked upon post-picnic gatherings on South Street as inauthentic to the Greek Picnic tradition, commercial and residential interests continued to understand the picnic in terms of the thousands of young black people descending from the plateau's lofty heights and filling the shop-lined street year after year. Like Fairmount Park, South Street occupies a particular place in the city's history. From early on, this shopping district has functioned as a liminal space in which social boundaries are transgressed and affirmed.<sup>34</sup> As the border between Center City and the ethnic communities of South Philadelphia, as well as a multicultural marketplace, black ghetto, and red-light district, South Street brought fears surrounding the violence and crime riddling the industrial city into focus. Campaigns to save South Street from submersion under the Crosstown Expressway gave voice to the street's bohemian character in the 1970s. Gentrification of its eclectic mix of shops and entertainments in the 1980s and early 1990s yielded to the South Street neighborhood and business associations that carefully mold and protect the street's "funky" character with high rents and property agreements.<sup>35</sup> As tensions mounted over the Greek Picnic's place in the city, South Street's symbolic value within the postindustrial city was weighed into the conflict.

At the surface level, the debate between the picnic's organizers, the city, and South Street that overshadowed the picnic through the 1990s pitted the businesses and residential interests of South Street against the fiscal needs of the city.<sup>36</sup> Merchants claimed that the picnic was anything but beneficial to business. Shopkeeper Dave Fitch told the *Daily News* in 1994, "Business was wrecked. It was deplorable. The paying customers couldn't get through." Peter Hiler of the South Street relic Book Trader told another reporter, "If they think it [the picnic] is going to bring business, forget it. . . . Bars were closing all night." Several merchants expressed their preference

to close up shop rather than face another Greek Picnic. "I will close for vacation that week if I find out they are going to have it again," said nightclub owner Kathy James. City hall responded to these complaints by maintaining that the city had no right to restrict access to specific neighborhoods. "We can't stop people from going into a neighborhood in this town, particularly a neighborhood that is a tourist attraction," City Managing Director Joe Certaine declared in 1999.<sup>37</sup>

Running beneath the surface of these debates, however, was a resentment that was symptomatic of other, deeper problems on South Street. The *Daily News* pointed out in its coverage of Greek Picnic '94 that "what happened Greek Picnic night only exacerbated longstanding South Street weekend problems of noise, public urination and a concentration of people more prone to buy cheesesteaks and pizza than a pricey dinner for two."<sup>38</sup> Rooted in the street's transition from a bohemian hideaway into the new frontier for pioneering yuppies, troubles on South Street predated Greek Picnic '94. Bars, clubs, and pizza parlors had kept apace with rising rents and increasingly upscale clothing, dining, and entertainment establishments appearing on the South Street corridor, their clashing clientele forcing area merchants to work together in finding a healthy balance for the street. At least a decade prior to the Greek Picnic after-parties that galvanized support for increased regulation of South Street, area residents and business leaders were fighting to control the market and overall image of their street.<sup>39</sup> In 1988, residents and business owners formed a task force to combat problems of garbage, late-night cruising, and drunken behavior. The three neighborhood groups that banded together against the Greek Picnic as the Concerned Communities Coalition—the Queen Village, South Street Neighborhood, and Washington Square West Civic Associations—participated in the South Street Task Force in the late 1980s, which debated the merits of erecting a police barricade to control Saturday-night crowds.<sup>40</sup> In a 1997 interview, local city council member Frank DiCicco spoke of the district's long journey in redefining itself and its place in the city: "Perception is everything. We've come a long way in convincing people that South Street is a good and safe place to be."<sup>41</sup>

Responses to the furor following post-picnic gatherings on South Street carried implicit and even explicit charges of racial and economic discrimination. Rev. William Green felt that shuttered businesses on South Street sent "a bad message, makes the youth think: Here they are closing the place because they don't want to be bothered with black people." PPHC member Claude Harrison relayed his suspicions to the *Daily News*: "I think there's

a fear of that many African American kids." The head of Philadelphia's Commission on Human Relations, Kevin Vaughn, described an underlying racial "tension" on South Street evident throughout the year. According to Vaughn, anxiety peaked after eleven o'clock on Saturday nights, "when the racial character goes from an interracial, mixed group to a predominately black group."<sup>42</sup> Newspaper coverage of a crusade by South Street neighborhood associations to close Down South, an after-hours hip-hop club, documents this tension. Complaining of late-night disturbances and drunken revelry, residents and businesses succeeded in shutting the club down in 1990.<sup>43</sup> Residents and business operators, however, maintained that their views on the Greek Picnic were not racially prejudiced. Queen Village resident Gray Smith told the *Daily News*, "All of us [in the South Street Neighborhood Association] are very sensitive to the accusation that 'they're just racist.' You'll never find a more liberal population than on South Street." He emphasized his point: "But if somebody is whizzing on my front steps, I don't care what color the whizzer is."<sup>44</sup>

Smith's protestations appear bogus when South Street's increasing pressure on city hall in the 1990s to restrict picnic-related activities is compared to the district's Mardi Gras celebrations in 2000 and 2001. On March 9, 2000, more than twenty-five thousand "hard-drinking, bead-donning, party-to-the-max revelers" jammed South Street until police blockaded the area at 10 p.m. Despite some property damage and reports of isolated violence, the Philadelphia police department's chief inspector assured *Inquirer* readers that the atmosphere of the South Street Mardi Gras celebration was no worse than "Saturday night in the summertime."<sup>45</sup> Buoyed by positive press, Mardi Gras promoters set up shop in the early hours of Fat Tuesday 2001. With some bars opening their doors at 6:30 a.m., South Street was bursting with drunken revelers, most of them reportedly in their teens and early twenties, by the time police began clearing the 40,000-strong crowd in the early evening. Fighting and looting broke out after midnight, and images of the drunken crowd filled city papers the following morning.<sup>46</sup>

Accusations were hurled at the city, police, and area proprietors for sowing the seeds of Mardi Gras 2001 with inadequate preparation for its inevitable outgrowth. Unavoidable comparisons between Mardi Gras and the Greek Picnic called into question the fiscal and racial imperatives directing responses to both events. The North Philadelphia council member Darrel Clarke told the *Inquirer*, "I don't mean to inflame the issue, but the reality is that there's a concern in certain communities that there's a disparity in the treatment of young people in the city of Philadelphia. We need to look

honestly at that." DJ Karen Warrington, host of "The Network" on Philadelphia's historically black radio station WHAT-AM, reported that calls from people wanting to debate the disparate responses to the Greek Picnic and Mardi Gras were "burning up the airwaves."<sup>47</sup>

The city denied accountability for the Mardi Gras disaster, pointing out that the celebration was an entirely private affair initiated by and under the control of area proprietors. In holding South Street responsible for its own downfall, the city highlighted the influence of private interests in determining divergent responses to the Greek Picnic and Mardi Gras. South Street residents and commercial interests eschewed the public, city-sponsored Greek Picnic but sanctioned Mardi Gras, an event privately promoted by three or four establishments, with copious alcohol and extended licensing hours. While the racial and class tensions resulting from the gentrification of South Street account for such a disparity, an editorial in the *Tribune* laid out the troubling implications of Mardi Gras 2001: "What concerns us [black Philadelphians] is the misperception that a bunch of African Americans getting together means trouble, while a large number of whites getting together receives the benefit of the doubt. In fact, white gatherings are encouraged. Yet an event like the Greek Picnic, an event of mostly college-educated people, is hardly encouraged and is heavily regulated and highly restricted."<sup>48</sup>

By the time the PPHC closed the picnic to outsiders in 1999, South Street residents and merchants had adopted an official anti-Greek Picnic stance. As a result, the post-picnic crowds slowly dissolved, and the Greek Picnic's unofficial boundaries retracted to its official setting on Belmont Plateau. From its beginning in Blue Bell Park through the turbulent 1990s to its present state, the Greek Picnic has engaged deep concerns over the production and consumption of race and place in the symbolic economy of the postindustrial city. While the city's active interest in the Greek Picnic reflected the value that an organic, African American cultural celebration would hold in the symbolic economy of postindustrial Philadelphia, this value is relative to the social, economic, and political opportunities afforded by the city's tourism industry. As the picnic's presence on South Street dissolved under the contempt of area residents and merchants, the power wielded by South Street's Concerned Communities Coalition bared the influence of private interests in maintaining the racial balance of Philadelphia's carefully constructed districts and communities. The picnic's eviction from South Street and continued presence on Belmont Plateau situates the event on the edge of a tourist trade that thrives amid the symbolic and cultural importance of Center City Philadelphia.



## Freaknik: Race and Memory in the Postindustrial City

The Greek Picnic is one in a constellation of annual events supported by historically black Greek-letter organizations. Freaknik came along almost ten years after the first Greek Picnic, but its origins and development are very similar. Set in a historic seat of black higher education and BGO activity, Freaknik began in 1982 as a small get-together for Atlanta University students who chose not to make the long drive home for spring break.<sup>49</sup> Oral tradition claims that the name "Freaknik" was derived from "the Freak," a 1970s dance style enjoying a revival around the time the event was founded. Freaknik grew substantially in the 1980s and peaked in the mid-1990s, when more than 250,000 black college students poured into Atlanta's streets.<sup>50</sup> Unofficial Freaknik parties and events drew revelers into bars, clubs, and other venues across the city, and the annual celebration seemed to collapse in a mass of snarled traffic, general disruption, and isolated incidents of violence.

High-profile sexual-assault charges cast a shadow over Freaknik's future in the late 1990s. Over the course of one weekend in 1998, Atlanta police made 481 arrests and reported four rapes, six additional sexual assaults, and four shootings. Local television stations covering Freaknik repeatedly broadcast amateur video footage of violence and general disruption in the dense crowds.<sup>51</sup> Throughout Freaknik's peak years, residents and business leaders in Atlanta called on the city to end the annual bacchanal, citing disrupted traffic, violence, and an overall threat to Atlanta's quality of life. Reacting to the public call for action, the city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia enacted strict crowd-control measures for Freaknik in the early 1990s. The city closed major highways and set up identification checkpoints, and the state kept the Georgia National Guard on alert throughout the weekend. Atlanta police issued tickets for misdemeanors ranging from jaywalking to open containers of alcohol to public indecency. In 1995, Mayor Bill Campbell requested the presidents of Atlanta's historically black colleges and universities to contact the administrators of more than one hundred institutions across the country and ask them to discourage their students from traveling to Atlanta for Freaknik.<sup>52</sup> The *Inquirer* wrote that Atlanta's reception of Freaknik was "like the town pulling in the welcome mat, drawing the curtains and pretending no one's home." Even more, Freaknik was "Southern hospitality turned inside out."<sup>53</sup>

Hospitality in its various indigenous forms stood at the center of debates over Freaknik, the Greek Picnic, and other annual black Greek festivals that popped up across the country in the 1980s and 1990s. In Atlanta,

Philadelphia, and many other cities, these racially charged debates were filtered through layers of local and national history, and through collective memories of race and racial identity within the changing city. Atlanta city council member Carolyn Long Banks went so far as to describe Atlanta's Freaknik policies as "apartheid" and evoked memories of urban unrest in the wake of the Rodney King verdict to warn her fellow council members of the "absolute carnage" that would result from police checks and road-blocks.<sup>54</sup> Atlanta was not alone in pulling in the welcome mat, and chapters of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) from Long Island to Florida accused predominantly white beach towns of sustaining long-standing racist policies toward nonwhite vacationers.<sup>55</sup> In 1998, the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* described Daytona's policies toward its annual Black College Reunion as the "remnants of forced segregation." According to the article, black college students attending the reunion felt that the city's police procedures evoked a "hostile racial atmosphere reminiscent of Selma, Alabama, in 1965."<sup>56</sup> The piece concluded, however, by predicting that while segregated beaches and the National Guard evoked the violence of the Jim Crow South, the revenue generated by fetes such as the Black College Reunion would tilt the balance of power in favor of the events and their participants. On the surface, city leaders and politicians in Atlanta and beyond seemed to agree. Commenting on the Black College Reunion, Daytona city council member Charles Cherry claimed, "It just doesn't make sense for a business to close when thousands of visitors are in town."<sup>57</sup> George Hawthorne, an Atlanta-based real estate developer and events promoter who led a civic review of Freaknik in 1998, told the city council, "Cities cannot afford not to be involved in the planning of these events . . . because while not every city can be a winner in this, no city should be a loser."<sup>58</sup>

Official responses to Freaknik and the Greek Picnic diverged at almost all levels and reveal how collective memories of race and class engage notions of place. From Atlanta's city hall, Mayor Campbell touted an anti-Freaknik line that contrasted sharply with Philadelphia mayor Ed Rendell's outward support for the Greek Picnic. While Campbell sought to quash Atlanta's annual black Greek bash at its source—the city's strong African American university community—Rendell advocated considered cooperation and sought to fold the Greek Picnic into the city's tourism economy. Campbell's response to the public outcry against Freaknik reflected Atlanta's interest in its convention economy and the role of the city's African American elite in maintaining that economy. Campbell, Atlanta's third African American mayor, descended from a political lineage that Lawrence

Otis Graham describes as “solidly representative of the black upper class—a characteristic that historically has not been welcome in black electoral candidates in cities like Washington, Chicago and Detroit.”<sup>59</sup> Campbell, a member of Omega Psi Phi and the elite business society One Hundred Black Men, held a position in Atlanta’s business community and a status among Atlanta’s black upper classes that undoubtedly shaped his perception of Freaknik.<sup>60</sup>

Freaknik’s unpredictable course through the city penetrated Midtown and Piedmont Park, two of Atlanta’s more exclusive residential areas, and inconvenienced some of the city’s most influential residents. Widespread media coverage of the annual event suggested a sense of lawlessness prevailing during Freaknik and did little to confirm Atlanta’s image as a modern southern city. Recognizing that the specter of racial discord raised by the annual celebration threatened the city’s tourism objectives, Mayor Campbell used his strong ties to the leaders of Atlanta’s black university community to stem the tide of young black undergraduates pouring into the city’s streets. He publicly shrugged off the “Uncle Tom” label attached to his stance on Freaknik and reprimanded his detractors, saying that such “irresponsible” accusations of racial discrimination could have “potentially tragic consequences.”<sup>61</sup>

Mayor Rendell’s position on the Greek Picnic hinged on a long-standing desire to build and maintain Philadelphia’s reputation as a multicultural center of business and leisure tourism. Rendell’s involvement with the picnic was public, and his support, true to his political character, was outspoken. In 1998, he assured the public at a press conference announcing the new Greek Picnic Task Force, “I am committed to continuing this weekend . . . [because] one, I believe this is a city that should welcome anybody as best we can,” and two, “if we called it off, people would come anyway in an unstructured way that could create even more problems.” Rendell saw the picnic’s fluid structure as its greatest flaw and actively pursued his vision of the picnic as a city-sponsored, convention-like event. In a September 1998 meeting with the PPHC, the mayor offered to restrict access to Fairmount Park to BGO members only. “The reason they [picnickers] cruise is to mix and mingle,” Rendell told the *Daily News*, and he emphasized that a gated and ticketed event “could be an enormously successful way for them to interrelate and socialize, and at the same time relieve a lot of problems” (i.e., of crowding and violence).<sup>62</sup>

Rendell’s plans for a convention-like picnic exposed his interest in maintaining the Greek Picnic tradition by securing the city’s official relationship to the annual celebration. Moreover, in dislocating the Greek Picnic from

the city's African American neighborhoods, a convention format would lay to rest associations between the event and those black communities. In the wake of the PPHC's decision to close the picnic, Rendell described the prospect of a new Greek Picnic as a "win-win" situation for the PPHC and the city of Philadelphia: "I think this will scale down and sort of end the Greek Picnic mentality, in which some Philadelphians sort ofglom onto this event."<sup>63</sup> In other words, for Rendell, saving the event meant preserving the Greek Picnic's historic connection to Philadelphia and its racial identity even while severing its ties to the city's black communities. In this respect, Mayor Campbell's perspective on Freaknik mirrored Rendell's views on the Greek Picnic. In 1995, Campbell told the *Philadelphia Tribune* that Freaknik was an opportunity for "a few lawless thugs" to run wild. In Campbell's opinion, those arrested during the event were "local, dedicated, freelance hoodlums who took advantage of the crowd."<sup>64</sup> While Campbell saw Freaknik as a liability to Atlanta's massive convention business and Rendell focused on the financial gains associated with the Greek Picnic, both leaders placed responsibility for the disruption and violence accompanying the celebrations with the urban black youth of their respective cities.

In negotiating with Freaknik and the Greek Picnic, Campbell and Rendell successfully engaged a contemporary urban discourse that problematizes the interaction between municipal authorities and inner-city black communities. Campbell, by calling on his ties with Atlanta's elite black university community, and Rendell, by treating Greek Picnickers as conventioners, prioritized the economic status of the events' participants over their racial identity. Moreover, recognizing the political stickiness coating Freaknik and the Greek Picnic and the significance of negotiating among the events' organizers, residential and commercial interests, and city services such as the police and sanitation crews, Campbell and Rendell embraced the rhetoric of an underclass that distanced the black middle class from its urban, working-class, and poor counterparts. Freaknik's mix of educated, middle-class African Americans with Atlanta's "thugs" and "hoodlums" proved too explosive for city leaders, and the Greek Picnic's rebirth as a private event illustrated the city's dependence on an African American tourist class.



Postindustrial urban economies and the redevelopment projects supporting them place a high priority on construction of place that is reflected across city landscapes, from the cobblestoned streets of historic Philadelphia to the

gleaming towers of Atlanta's Peachtree Center. The careful constructions of place evident in postindustrial Philadelphia and Atlanta draw on memories of the city and its diverse neighborhoods and communities in varied stages of development.<sup>65</sup> When understood in relation to the impact globalization has had on constructions of place and memory, the Greek Picnic, Freaknik, and their changing dynamics within the shifting landscape of their host cities reveal the ways in which race and class are constructed and negotiated within the postindustrial city.

The controversy engulfing the Greek Picnic and Freaknik in the 1990s centered on how African American youth culture would fit within the tourism and service-driven economies of Philadelphia and Atlanta. The Greek Picnic's dwindling attendance and shrinking presence in Philadelphia in recent years not only reflect the exclusive middle-class and professional boundaries of the black Greek-letter societies behind it, but also replicate the peripheral character of Philadelphia's black tourism industry. In Philadelphia, overall efforts to cool associations with what some theorists label an urban "underclass" resulted in the event's dislocation from the city's core rather than a full embrace of the event and its middle-class aspirations by private and political interests conscious of the Greek Picnic's value in building and representing Philadelphia's knowledge economy. In Atlanta, these associations subsumed the event until it gradually disappeared under increased regulation and supervision by the city.

Understanding these events as representative of black urban tourism within the postindustrial city opens up critical issues facing second-tier cities as they make their entry into the global economy. In the traumatic shift from industrial to postindustrial modes of production, former industrial powerhouses such as Philadelphia and Atlanta have embraced a postmodern style that emphasizes fragmented city spaces layered in references to past and present uses. In doing so, these cities have constructed new identities for themselves within the business, commercial, and social spaces of the reimagined city. Complications arise in negotiating the diverse nature of city populations within these carefully constructed spaces. Sharon Zukin claims that private interests capitalizing on diversity within the symbolic economy contribute to an "aesthetics of fear" in which public spaces are defined in reference to social, ethnic, and political others.<sup>66</sup> In the postindustrial age, private interests and their need to control access to and use of city spaces represent limitations to the surface-level advantages of city development strategies celebrating cultural and ethnic diversity.<sup>67</sup>

The debates that raged over the Greek Picnic and Freaknik hinged on control over and access to the economic power embedded within the care-

fully constructed spaces and places of the postindustrial city. The complications of race and class running through these debates reflect the critical dilemma facing second-tier cities as they capitalize on multicultural and working-class legacies to mark their position within a global marketplace. Ed Soja's *Thirdspace* proposes that resistance to constructions of race and class within the privatized spaces of the city comes from the borderlands, or "thirdspace," between lived and perceived conceptions of the city.<sup>68</sup> As second-tier cities turn to tourism and events like the Greek Picnic or Freaknik to secure their position within the global economy, resistance from communities disenfranchised by this appropriation will force cities to reconsider the limitations that private interests bear on the advantages represented by commercialized embodiments of cultural and ethnic diversity, particularly in the demarcation of public and private space.



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NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

1. For reviews of this literature, see Kenneth L. Kusmer, "The Black Urban Experience in American History," in *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 91–122; Kenneth Goings and Raymond A. Mohl, eds., *The New African American Urban History* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996); Arvarh E. Strickland and Robert Weems, eds., *The African American Experience: An Historiographical and Bibliographical Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), chaps. 1 and 2; and Joe W. Trotter with Earl Lewis and Tera W. Hunter, eds., *The African American Urban Experience: Perspectives from the Colonial Period to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

2. Francille Rusan Wilson, *The Segregated Scholars: Black Social Scientists and the Creation of Black Labor Studies, 1890–1950* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006); Michael B. Katz and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds., *W.E.B. DuBois, Race, and the City: The Philadelphia Negro and Its Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); Joe W. Trotter, "African Americans in the City: The Industrial Era, 1900–1950," *Journal of Urban History* 21, no. 4 (May 1995): 438–57.

3. Kenneth L. Kusmer, "African Americans in the City since World War II: From the Industrial to the Post-industrial Era," *Journal of Urban History* 21, no. 4 (May 1995): 458–504; Kenneth L. Kusmer, ed., *The Ghetto Crisis of the 1960s: Causes and Consequences* (New York: Garland, 1991); Trotter, Lewis, and Hunter, *The African American Urban Experience*, 1–20.

4. Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Timothy J. Gilfoyle, ed., "Urban History, Arnold Hirsch, and the Second Ghetto Thesis," special section, *Journal of Urban History* 29, no. 3 (March 2003). See also Wendell E. Pritchett, ed., "On Black Milwaukee," special section, *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 4 (May 2007); Michael B. Katz, ed., *The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Kusmer, "African Americans in the City since World War II," 475–89.

5. Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Knopf, 1991); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban*



*Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit! Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001). See also James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

6. Wendell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

7. Lawrence N. Powell and Clarence L. Mohr, eds., "Through the Eye of Katrina: The Past as Prologue?" special issue, *Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (December 2007); Joe William Trotter, Jr., and Johanna Fernández, eds., "Hurricane Katrina: Urban History from the Eye of the Storm," special section, *Journal of Urban History*, in press.

8. Nancy Foner and George M. Fredrickson, eds., *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004).

9. Gerald David Jaynes and Robin M. Williams, Jr., eds., *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1989); Reynolds Farley and Walter R. Allen, eds., *The Color Line and the Quality of Life in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); John Charles Boger and Judith Welch Wegner, eds., *Race, Poverty, and American Cities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Kim Hopper, *Reckoning with Homelessness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 147–71; Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Adolf Reed, Jr., ed., *Without Justice for All: The New Liberalism and Our Retreat from Racial Equality* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999); and Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), which appeared after this volume went to press.

#### CHAPTER ONE

1. Dona L. Irvin, *I Hope I Look That Good When I Am That Old* (iUniverse Publisher, 2002), 37–38.

2. Book-length studies of the Second Great Migration include James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Knopf, 1991); Daniel M. Johnson and Rex R. Campbell, *Black Migration in America: A Social Demographic History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1981); Sam Joseph Dennis, *African-American Exodus and White Migration, 1950–1970: A Comparative Analysis of Population Movements and Their Relations to Labor and Race Relations* (New York: Garland, 1989); and J. Trent Alexander, "Great Migrations: Race and Community in the Southern Exodus, 1917–1970" (Ph.D. diss., Carnegie Mellon Univer-

sity, 2001). For a survey of the historiography of the Great Migration, see Joe William Trotter, Jr., ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). Stewart E. Tolnay surveys the sociological literature in “The African American ‘Great Migration’ and Beyond,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2003, 209–33.

3. Steven Ruggles, Matthew Sobek, Trent Alexander, Catherine A. Fitch, Ronald Goeken, Patricia Kelly Hall, Miriam King, and Chad Ronnander, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (machine-readable database), version 3.0 (Minneapolis: Minnesota Population Center, 2004). Integrated Public Use Microdata Series are large samples of individual census returns (generally 1 percent of the U.S. population). Information about IPUMS is available at <http://www.ipums.umn.edu>.

4. This method is used in chapter 1 of Gregory, *Southern Diaspora*, and is explained in appendix B of that book.

5. Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528–1990* (New York: Norton, 1998), 251–77; Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California, 1910–1963* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Joshua Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

6. The dispersion of white migrants is analyzed in Gregory, *Southern Diaspora*, 153–64, 354 (table A.24).

7. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States. 1940. Population. Characteristics of the Nonwhite Population by Race* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1943), table 3, pp. 13–14.

8. 1980 IPUMS 1% Rural Urban sample. See also Donald Holley, *The Second Great Emancipation: The Mechanical Cotton Picker, Black Migration, and How They Shaped the Modern South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000); Jack Temple Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920–1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); and Pete Daniel, *Standing at the Crossroads: Southern Life in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986).

9. 1970 IPUMS 1% Form 2 State sample.

10. On southern intraregional migration, see Luther Adams, “‘Headed for Louisville:’ Rethinking Rural to Urban Migration in the South, 1930–1950,” *Journal of Social History*, Winter 2006, 407–30; Louis M. Kyriakoudes, *The Social Origins of the Urban South: Race, Gender, and Migration in Nashville and Middle Tennessee, 1890–1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Christopher Silver and John V. Moeser, *The Separate City: Black Communities in the Urban South, 1940–1968* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995); and Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class, and Urban Expansion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

11. The rural-origin argument is advanced by James R. Grossman in *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Carole Marks, in *Farewell—We’re Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration*

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), argues that most migrants had some urban experience. Both focus on the first phase of the exodus.

12. Calculated from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Characteristics of the Population, Labor Force, Families, and Housing, Detroit-Willow Run Congested Production Area: June, 1944*, Series CA-3, no. 9, October 1, 1944, table 13, p. 19.

13. 1960 IPUMS 1% sample; 1970 IPUMS State F2 sample. Note that nonmetropolitan is not the same as rural.

14. See Tolnay, "African American 'Great Migration,'" for a survey of much of this work.

15. Calculated from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Detroit-Willow Run Congested Production Area*, table 15, p. 20.

16. Belle Alexander, interview by Sarah Miner and James Gregory, May 3, 2006, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, <http://www.civilrights.washington.edu>.

17. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Characteristics of the Population, Labor Force, Families, and Housing*, Series CA-3, reports no. 2, *San Diego Congested Production Area*; no. 3, *San Francisco Bay Congested Production Area*; no. 5, *Los Angeles Congested Production Area*; no. 6, *Portland Congested Production Area*; no. 8, *Puget Sound Congested Production Area*; and no. 9, *Detroit-Willow Run Congested Production Area* (1944).

18. 1960 IPUMS 1% sample; 1970 IPUMS Form 1% State sample.

19. Katherine J. Curtis White, "Women in the Great Migration: Economic Activity of Black and White Southern-Born Female Migrants in 1920, 1940, and 1970," *Social Science History*, Fall 2005, 413–55; Susan Tucker, *Telling Memories among Southern Women: Domestic Workers and Their Employers in the Segregated South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

20. 1950 IPUMS 1% sample.

21. 1960 IPUMS 1% sample; 1970 IPUMS 1% Form 1 State sample. This figure includes both graduates and nongraduates of all kinds of colleges.

22. Stewart E. Tolnay, "Educational Selection in the Migration of Southern Blacks, 1880–1990," *Social Forces* 77 (December 1998): 487–514; Horace C. Hamilton, "Educational Selection of Net Migration from the South," *Social Forces* 36 (1959): 33–42.

23. 1970 IPUMS 1% Form 1 State sample. See also Bernard C. Nalty, *The Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

24. In 1940, African Americans constituted 12.5 percent of the population of Philadelphia and less than 10 percent in other major northern cities. The largest percentages in the South were in Memphis and Birmingham, each with a 41 percent black population. In 1980, seven northern big cities were at least 40 percent black: Chicago (40%), Cleveland (44%), St. Louis (45%), Oakland (48%), Newark (58%), Detroit (63%), and Gary (71%). Southern cities at least 40 percent black in 1980 were Memphis (48%), Richmond (51%), Baltimore (55%), Birmingham (56%), New Orleans (56%), Atlanta (67%), and Washington, D.C. (71%). 1940 IPUMS 1% sample; 1980 IPUMS 1% Metro sample.

25. The easy-to-use mapping tool can be found at <http://www.socialexplorer.com>. On Chicago, see Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Amanda I. Seligman,

*Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

26. Also emphasizing economic difficulties are Jacqueline Jones, *The Dispossessed: American Underclasses from the Civil War to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 233–68; and Robert Coles, *The South Goes North* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972).

27. Belle Alexander, interview.

28. Irvin, *I Hope I Look That Good*, 41, 177; Dona L. Irvin, *The Unsung Heart of Black America: A Middle-Class Church at Midcentury* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press 1992). For a sample of recent oral histories, see Timuel D. Black, Jr., *Bridges of Memory: Chicago's Second Generation of Black Migration* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

29. These calculations include only persons who earned some personal income. Cost-of-living differences would have reduced these differentials slightly. The differentials would also be reduced if we confined the comparison to stay-behinds who resided in southern metropolitan areas. Male migrants living in the northern and western cities earned 36 percent more in 1949 than those remaining in southern cities; females, 37 percent more. In 1969, the migrant earning advantage was 36 percent for men, 29 percent for women.

30. Gregory, *Southern Diaspora*, chap. 3.

31. Larry H. Long, "Poverty Status and Receipt of Welfare among Migrants and Non-migrants in Large Cities," *American Sociological Review* 39 (February 1974): 54; Larry H. Long and Lynne R. Heltman, "Migration and Income Differences between Black and White Men in the North," *American Journal of Sociology* 80, no. 6 (May 1975): 1391–1409; Stanley Lieberson and Christy A. Wilkinson, "A Comparison between Northern and Southern Blacks Residing in the North," *Demography* 13 (1976): 199–224; Stewart Tolnay, "The Great Migration and Changes in the Northern Black Family, 1940 to 1990," *Social Forces* 75 (June 1997): 1213–38; Stewart Tolnay and Kyle D. Crowder, "Regional Origin and Family Stability in Northern Cities: The Role of Context," *American Sociological Review* 64 (February 1999): 97–112.

32. Gregory, *Southern Diaspora*, 103–12; Tolnay, "African American 'Great Migration.'"

33. In the labor force of 1980 (including both males and females), 36 percent of African Americans held blue-collar jobs—skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled—compared with 31 percent of whites. In the same year, 52.3 percent of whites held white-collar jobs, compared with 36 percent of blacks. Twenty-five percent of African Americans earned their living in service jobs; 1.5 percent in agriculture. 1980 IPUMS 1% Metro sample.

34. This argument is developed in detail in chapter 4, "The Black Metropolis," in Gregory, *Southern Diaspora*.

## CHAPTER TWO

A version of this essay was published as "Cities of Color: The New Racial Frontier in California's Minority-Majority Cities," in *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (February 2007).

1. Albert M. Camarillo, "Black and Brown in Compton: Demographic Change, Suburban Decline, and Intergroup Relations in a South Central Los Angeles Community, 1950–2000," in *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States*, ed. Nancy Foner and George M. Fredrickson, 358–76 (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004).
2. For discussions of the immigration and settlement of Mexicans and Latinos in southeastern states, see, for example, *The New Latino South: The Context and Consequences of Rapid Population Growth*, Pew Hispanic Center Project (Washington, DC, July 25, 2005); William Kandel and Emilio Parrado, "Hispanics in the American South and the Transformation of the Poultry Industry," in *Hispanic Spaces, Latino Places: Community and Cultural Diversity in Contemporary America*, ed. Daniel D. Arreola, 255–76 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004); and "Bridging a Racial Rift That Isn't Black and White," *New York Times*, October 3, 2006, A1, A26. For an excellent documentary that discusses the impact of Mexican immigrants on relations with whites and blacks in Siler City, North Carolina, see "Divide," in the series *Matters of Race*, PBS, September 2003.
3. Conflict between Latinos and African Americans, especially in the realm of politics, is the focus of Nicolás C. Vaca, *The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict between Latinos and Blacks and What It Means for America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004).
4. John Márquez, "Re-thinking Black-Brown Relations: Racial Violence and Unexpected Coalitions in Baytown, Texas" (unpublished paper, University of California, San Diego, 2002). See also *Houston Chronicle*, November 6, 1998; March 4, 2002; June 13, 2002.
5. *Pathways to One America in the Twenty-first Century: Promising Practices for Racial Reconciliation*, President's Initiative on Race (Washington, DC, 1999).
6. Alan Berube, "Racial and Ethnic Change in the Nation's Largest Cities," in *Redefining Urban and Suburban America*, ed. Bruce Katz and Robert E. Lang, 139–40 (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003); William H. Frey, "Melting Pot Suburbs: A Study of Suburban Diversity," in Katz and Lang, *Redefining Urban and Suburban America*, 155, 163; *Washington Post*, August 21, 2006, A3. See also William H. Frey, *Diversity Spreads Out: Metropolitan Shifts in Hispanic, Asian, and Black Populations Since 2000*, Brookings Institution Living Cities Census Series (Washington, DC, March 2006).
7. Analysis of the U.S. census population figures for the twenty largest cities for 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000.
8. Analysis of the U.S. census population figures for the ten largest California cities for 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000.
9. The Hispanic population in Los Angeles County in 2005 was 47.3 percent. See U.S. Census Bureau Web site, American Community Survey, Los Angeles County, California.
10. Camarillo, "Black and Brown in Compton," 364–66. The U.S. Census Bureau's enumerations of Hispanics in Compton in 2000 and in earlier censuses were, most likely, substantial undercounts, primarily because of a large number of undocumented immigrants in the city. The proportion of Hispanics in 2000 was probably closer to 60 to 62 percent of Compton's total population.

11. Analysis of the U.S. Census population figures for 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000; Michael Berman, "Race, Ethnicity, and Inter-minority Suburban Politics: East Palo Alto, 1950–2002" (unpublished paper, Stanford University, 2002); *San Jose Mercury News*, April 25, 2004, A1, A17. The census figures are difficult to analyze with precision, for many reasons in addition to the undercount of the undocumented immigrants that form a sizable proportion of East Palo Alto's Latino population. The Latino population before 1980 was variably enumerated as "Spanish surname," "Spanish origin," or "Spanish mother tongue," all of which were imprecise in counting the actual number of people in any designated census tract or other locality. East Palo Alto's census counts were complicated further because before 1983, the community was an unincorporated area of Santa Clara County and thus not a continuously designated "place" over time.

12. Carol McKibben, "Diversity, Community, and Race: Seaside, California, 1908–2006" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Pacific Coast Branch—American Historical Association, Stanford University, August 2006).

13. The formation of segregated African American neighborhoods in what is commonly referred to as South Central Los Angeles is treated in great detail in two recent books: Douglas Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); and Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). On Mexican American residential patterns, see George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1990–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Asian American community segregation patterns are described briefly in Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989). An excellent case study of Southgate describes how municipal leaders and residents in this white working-class suburb near Compton deliberately kept minorities out of the city during the decades before and after World War II, see Becky M. Nicolaidis, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920–1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

14. Camarillo, "Black and Brown in Compton," 363–65.

15. Berman, "Race, Ethnicity, and Inter-minority Suburban Politics."

16. McKibben, "Diversity, Community, and Race."

17. *Ibid.*

18. A rich study of segregated residential housing patterns, focusing on blacks, is Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

19. Don Drummond, interview by Carol McKibben, Carmel Valley, CA, June 15, 2006, in McKibben, "Diversity, Community, and Race."

20. McKibben, "Diversity, Community, and Race."

21. David M. Grant, "A Demographic Portrait of Los Angeles County, 1970 to 1990," in *Prismatic Metropolis: Inequality in Los Angeles*, ed. Lawrence D. Bobo, Melvin L. Oliver, James H. Johnson, Jr., and Abel Valenzuela, Jr., 51–80 (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000).

22. Jeffrey Benjamín Camarillo, "In and Out of Compton: The Impact of Demographic Change and Urban Decline in a Los Angeles Community; A Case Study of Compton" (senior honors thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2001).
23. Berman, "Race, Ethnicity, and Inter-minority Suburban Politics."
24. Diana Ingersoll, Seaside Public Works Director, interview by Carol McKibben, Seaside Public Works Department offices, January 18, 2006, in McKibben, "Diversity, Community, and Race."
25. U.S. Census Bureau, *The Foreign-Born Population: 2000*, December 2003.
26. Jeffrey S. Passell, *Estimates of the Size and Characteristics of the Undocumented Population*, Pew Hispanic Center Report (Washington, DC, March 21, 2005).
27. See Bobo et al., *Prismatic Metropolis*; and Melvin I. Oliver and James H. Johnson, Jr., "Interethnic Conflict in an Urban Ghetto: The Case of Blacks and Latinos in Los Angeles," *Research in Social Movements, Conflict, and Change* 6 (1984): 57–94. For a study focusing on the role of stereotypes between Latinos and blacks in Houston, see Tatcho Mindiola, Jr., Yolanda Flores Niemann, and Nestor Rodriguez, *Black-Brown Relations and Stereotypes* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).
28. *San Jose Mercury News*, March 11, 2001, A1, A14.
29. *Los Angeles Times*, February 13, 2000, D1.
30. *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 1998, A1.
31. *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 1990, B1.
32. *Newsweek*, July 10, 2006, 44–45.
33. *Ibid.*, 45.
34. Mayor Ralph Rubio, interview by Carol McKibben, Carpenter's Local Union office, Marina, CA, September 5, 2005, in McKibben, "Diversity, Community, and Race."
35. Ingersoll, interview.
36. Sister Carmelita, interview by Carol McKibben, St. Francis Xavier Church office, Seaside, CA, November 10, 2005, in McKibben, "Diversity, Community, and Race."
37. Spokesman for Seaside Police Department, interview by Carol McKibben, June 15, 2006, in McKibben, "Diversity, Community, and Race."
38. *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 2005, A1; May 19, 2005, B1. The riots in spring 1992 followed the verdict in the Rodney King police-brutality case, in which members of the Los Angeles Police Department were found not guilty of the charges against them. Widespread violence and rioting continued for several days in Los Angeles.
39. *San Jose Mercury News*, January 20, 2002, B1, B9.
40. Fiscal Crisis and Management Assessment Team, *AB52 Assessment and Recovery Plans—Compton Unified School District* (Sacramento: California State Assembly, February 1, 1999), 11.
41. *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 2000, B1.
42. Helen B. Rucker, interview by Carol McKibben, Seaside, CA, January 9, 2006, in McKibben, "Diversity, Community, and Race."
43. *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 1998, A8.
44. *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 1990, B1.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Susan Goldsmith, "Blacks Only," *New Times Los Angeles*, December 12, 1997.

47. *Newsweek*, July 10, 2006, 44–45.
48. Omowale Satterwhite, interview, c. 1996, East Palo Alto Project/Dreams of a City Production Team, Harmony House Archives, Stanford University.
49. *San Jose Mercury News*, June 14, 2004, A1, A9.
50. On One East Palo Alto, see the organization's Web site (<http://www.epa.net/oepa>). On the East Palo Alto Mural Art Project, see <http://www.epamap.org>.
51. The quotations in this paragraph are from Regina Freer, "Black Brown City: Black Urban Regimes and the Challenge of Changing Demographics; A Case Study of Compton, California" (unpublished paper, 2004), 12, 33.
52. *Ibid.*, 33.
53. Interviews by Carol McKibben with Seaside residents Al Glover (February 2, 2006), Estela MacKenzie (June 1, 2006), and Antonio Morales (August 25, 2006); group interview with white and Asian American Seaside residents (September 10, 2006); all in McKibben, "Diversity, Community, and Race."
54. *Newsweek*, July 10, 2006, 44.

## CHAPTER THREE

1. U.S. Census Bureau, "More than 300 Counties Now 'Majority-Minority,'" press release, August 9, 2007, <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2007/cb07-113/radiorelease.pdf>.
2. Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, vol. 2, *From 1865* (New York: Norton, 2005), 947.
3. Timothy J. Hatton and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Global Migration and the World Economy: Two Centuries of Policy and Performance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
4. Iris Morales, "¡Palante, Siempre Palante! The Young Lords," in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*, ed. Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 214–15.
5. When a plantation economy developed in Puerto Rico in the nineteenth century, severe labor shortages led to compulsory-labor laws, which forced white land squatters to work alongside slaves and freemen of color in the fields. This development encouraged racial mixing and blurred racial differences, as black slaves and white and colored laborers were compelled to intermingle with one another in the fields—an arrangement that eventually led them to find common cause with each other. See Sidney Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 82–94. For a discussion of racial ideology in the United States, see Barbara Jeanne Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, 143–77 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Barbara Jeanne Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the USA," *New Left Review* 181 (1990): 95–118. The history of racial formation in the Dominican Republic and the absence of racial identification among Dominicans are also instructive. See Silvio Torres Saillant, "The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity," *Callaloo* 23, no. 3 (2000): 1086–1111.
6. James Petras, *Latin America in the Time of Cholera: Electoral Politics, Market Economics, and Permanent Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 1992).



7. Nancy Foner, *New Immigrants in New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
8. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970), 93; Andrés Torres, *Between Melting Pot and Mosaic: African Americans and Puerto Ricans in the New York Political Economy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 66.
9. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Experience of the Puerto Rican Worker*, Middle Atlantic Region, Regional Report no. 9, June 1968, 2. See also Kal Wagenheim, *A Survey of Puerto Ricans on the U.S. Mainland in the 1970s* (New York: Praeger, 1975), 4–5.
10. Joseph Fitzpatrick, *Puerto Rican Americans: The Meaning of Migration to the Mainland* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1987), 141–42.
11. Jack Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), chaps. 2–4; Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 60, 75–76; David Steigerwald, *The Sixties and the End of Modern America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 188.
12. Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor, 1790–1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Barbara A. Driscoll, *The Tracks North: The Railroad Bracero Program of World War II* (Austin: CMAS Books, Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1999).
13. Clara Rodriguez, *Puerto Ricans: Born in the U.S.A.* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 11–13; Cesar Ayala, "The Decline of the Plantation Economy and the Puerto Rican Migration of the 1950s," *Latino Studies Journal* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 62–90.
14. Thomas McCormick discusses the convergences between American foreign policy and the reorganization of the world economy after World War II in chapters 1, 3, and 4 of *America's Half Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
15. This kind of structural unemployment among Puerto Ricans resulted from many factors, including the higher participation of Puerto Rican males in declining blue-collar industries and occupations, lack of educational opportunities and retraining, racial discrimination, and the group's exclusion from the trade unions and government employment. Puerto Ricans encountered particular difficulty in the labor market because, as a considerably younger population, they lacked the experience and job-market skills of their counterparts in the population at large. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Changing Patterns of Employment, Income, and Living Standards in New York City*, Middle Atlantic Region, Regional Report no. 10 (June 1968).
16. I am adapting, to the urban environment, an analysis of the general character of 1960s protesters articulated in Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (New York: Verso, 2004), 43.
17. For a discussion of Chicago gangs, see Andrew Diamond, "Hoodlums, Rebels, and Vice Lords: Street Gangs, Youth Subcultures, and Race in Chicago, 1919–1969" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2004); and Frederic Milton Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

18. Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
19. Rory Garcia, interview by the author, Chicago, October 25, 2005.
20. Jose Jimenez, interview by the author, Chicago, October 24, 2005.
21. Henry “Poison” Gaddis, interview by the author, Chapel Hill, NC, January 2007.
22. Frank Browning, “From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords,” in *The Puerto Rican Experience*, ed. Francesco Cordasco and Eugene Bucchioni (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams, 1973), 232.
23. By July 1970, the Young Lords had established two offices in East Harlem, one on the Lower East Side, another in Newark, New Jersey, and a Bronx office, which also operated as the organization’s information center. See Michael Abramson, *Palante: Young Lords Party* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 11.
24. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Experience of the Puerto Rican Worker*, 7. One source estimates the neighborhood’s racial and ethnic makeup in the early 1970s as 70 percent Puerto Rican, 20 percent African American, and 10 percent other. See Seymour Kaplan, *The Organization and Delivery of Mental Health Services in the Ghetto: The Lincoln Hospital Experience* (New York: Praeger, 1976), 6. A study published in 1969 reported an ethnic and racial breakdown of the South Bronx population as “60% Puerto Rican, 30% Negro, and 10% Irish and Jewish.” *Community Health Services for New York*, Report and Staff Studies of the Commission on the Delivery of Personal Health Services (New York: Praeger, 1969), 272.
25. See Nathan Glazer, “The South Bronx Story: An Extreme Case of Neighborhood Decline,” *Political Studies Journal* 16, no. 2 (Winter 1987): 269–76; Fitzhugh Mullan, *White Coat, Clenched Fist: The Political Education of an American Physician* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 113–14; and “Lincoln Hospital House Officer Program, 1975–1976,” Dr. Harold Osborn Personal Files, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York City. For discussions of the profit-driven structure of the U.S. health system and its consequences, see David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, “Hospital, Insurance, and the American Labor Movement: The Case of New York in the Postwar Decades,” *Journal of Policy History* 9, no. 1 (1997): 74–95. Between 1945 and 1970, hospital employment in the United States soared 114 percent, compared to 74 percent in all service industries and 17 percent in manufacturing. Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: A History of Hospital Workers’ Union, Local 1199* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 1–2; Charles Rehmus, “Labor Relations in the Public Sector in the United States,” in *Public Employment Labor Relations: An Overview of Eleven Nations*, ed. Charles M. Rehmus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), 22.
26. Joshua Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor since World War II* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 213–14.
27. Rosner and Markowitz, “Hospital, Insurance, and the American Labor Movement.”
28. “Bronx Conflict Focused on Community Control,” *Hospital Tribune* 3, no. 9 (date not available), 1, 20, D. Samuel Gotteson Library, Yeshiva University, Albert Einstein College of Medicine Archives, Lincoln Hospital Papers and Vertical File, 1960–1975; Mullan, *White Coat, Clenched Fist*, 139.
29. “Mental Health Memo,” Lincoln Hospital Papers and Vertical File.

30. Fink and Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone*, 199.
31. For a history of the revolutionary union movement, see Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (Boston: South End Press, 1998).
32. Mullan, *White Coat, Clenched Fist*, 45; Danny Argote and Cleo Silvers, "Think Lincoln," *Palante* 2, no. 6 (July 3, 1970): 2, 16.
33. Ellen Frankfort, "The Community's Role in Healing a Hospital," *Village Voice*, November 26, 1970, 12, 14.
34. Argote and Silvers, "Think Lincoln," 16.
35. "Lords Liberate Hospital," *Old Mole* 1, no. 45 (August 7, 1970): 5.
36. For a fuller story of these struggles, see Mullan, *White Coat, Clenched Fist*, chap. 7.
37. Argote and Silvers, "Think Lincoln," 16.
38. *Ibid.*, 2.
39. Mullan, *White Coat, Clenched Fist*, 142.
40. *Ibid.*, 144.
41. Alfonso A. Narvaez, "Young Lords Seize Lincoln Hospital Building," *New York Times*, July 15, 1970, 34.
42. Carl Pastor, "Socialism at Lincoln—July 14, 1970," *Palante* 2, no. 8 (July 31, 1970): 5; see also Narvaez, "Young Lords Seize Lincoln Hospital Building," 34.
43. Pastor, "Socialism at Lincoln," 5.
44. Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 45.
45. Health Ministry, "Lincoln Hospital Must Serve the People," *Palante* 2, no. 11 (September 11, 1970): 3.
46. Mullan, *White Coat, Clenched Fist*, 147.
47. *Ibid.*, 148.
48. "Bronx," *Health/PAC Bulletin*, October 1970, 1–3.
49. Carl Pastor, "Seize the Hospitals," *Palante* 2, no. 8 (July 31, 1970): 6; "El Programa de las Drogas," *Lincoln News*, 1971.
50. Miguel Melendez, *We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 177–78.
51. Glazer, "South Bronx Story," 269, 271. According to Glazer, a political scientist, approximately forty-four thousand units were abandoned yearly in the South Bronx between 1970 and 1981. See also Jill Jones, *We're Still Here: The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of the South Bronx* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986).

## CHAPTER FOUR

1. *Arizona Sun*, May 9, 1957. See also Carl E. Craig, interview, Phoenix, AZ, 1978, tape recording, Phoenix History Project, Arizona Historical Society, Central Arizona Division, Tempe (hereafter cited as TP, PHP, AHSCAD); Matthew C. Whitaker, *Race Work: The Rise of Civil Rights in the Urban West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 199–200.

2. I have chosen to use the terms *Latino*, *Mexican American*, and *Chicano* in this study. *Latino* will be used to describe people of Latin American descent. I acknowledge that this term is not without problems, because *Latino*, like the word *Hispanic*, can engender confusion—implying, incorrectly, that these terms are something other than rather arbitrary social and political constructions. Latinos can be American Indian, black, or white. Indeed, more often than not they are a combination of these, and other, socially constructed races. The word *Latino* has also been used in an effort to deny and obscure indigenous identities within the Western Hemisphere, associating Spanish colonizers and indigenous people, especially the descendants of both groups, as the same. The term *Mexican American* will be used when referring to persons of Mexican descent in the United States prior to 1960. The term *Chicano* is used when referencing people of Mexican descent after 1960. It was during the cultural and political upheaval of the 1960s that many Mexican Americans adopted *Chicano*, a term that had been used for some time to ridicule them. They gave new meaning to the label, employed it as a call to arms, and ascribed to its use an oppositional consciousness, affirmation, and dignity.

3. *Arizona Sun*, May 9, 1957; Craig, interview, TP, PHP, AHSCAD.

4. *Arizona Sun*, May 9, 1957; Craig, interview, TP, PHP, AHSCAD; Greater Phoenix Council for Civic Unity (GPCCU), ed., *To Secure These Rights* (Phoenix: Phoenix Sun Publishing Company, 1961), 16; Bradford Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix: A Profile of Mexican American, Chinese American, and African American Communities, 1860–1992* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 177.

5. *Arizona Sun*, May 9, 1957.

6. *Arizona Informant*, December 4, 1974; July 30, 1975; *Arizona Republic*, July 17, 1967; Richard E. Harris, *The First 100 Years: A History of Arizona's Blacks* (Apache Junction, AZ: Relmo Press, 1983), 102–38; City of Phoenix, *Chronological History of LEAP* (Phoenix: City of Phoenix, 1967), 1–16.

7. Lincoln Ragsdale, Sr., and Eleanor Ragsdale, interviews by Dean E. Smith, Phoenix, AZ, April 4 and November 3, 1990, transcripts, Arizona Collections, Arizona State University, Tempe (hereafter cited as TS, ACASU); Lincoln Ragsdale, Sr., interview by Mary Melcher, April 8, 1990, tape recording, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University, Tempe (hereafter cited as TP, AHFASU); *Arizona Sun*, May 9, 1957; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 167.

8. Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale, interviews by Dean E. Smith, TS, ACASU; Lincoln Ragsdale, Sr., interview by Mary Melcher, TP, AHFASU; *Arizona Sun*, May 9, 1957; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 167.

9. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, General Characteristics by States, 1940*.

10. Robert Nimmons, "Arizona's Forgotten Past: The Negro in Arizona, 1539–1965" (master's thesis, Northern Arizona University, 1971), 92–93; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, General Characteristics by States, 1940*. See also Michael J. Kotlanger, "Phoenix, Arizona, 1920–1940" (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 1983).

11. *Arizona Republican*, August 4, 1935; Shirley J. Roberts, "Minority Group Poverty in Phoenix: A Socio-economic Survey," *Journal of Arizona History* 14 (Winter 1973): 358–59; Kotlanger, "Phoenix, Arizona," 403–6. See also Gordon Connell-Smith, *The*

*Inter-American System* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962); and Federico G. Gill, *Latin American–United States Relations* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971).

12. Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 95–96; Kotlanger, “Phoenix, Arizona,” 443. See also Bradford Luckingham, *The Urban Southwest: A Profile of Albuquerque, El Paso, Phoenix and Tuscon* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1982), 15; *Arizona Republic*, June 20, 1934; August 15, 1935; July 23, 1936; September 16, 1938; August 1, 1940; and *Phoenix Gazette*, July 20, 1940.

13. GPCCU, *To Secure These Rights*, 14–16, 62–65; Eleanor Ragsdale, interview by Mary Melcher, Phoenix, AZ, June 16, 1991, tape recording, Arizona Historical Society, Central Division, Tempe (hereafter cited as TP, AHS); Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale, interviews by Dean E. Smith, TS, ACASU.

14. F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1996), xxi.

15. *Ibid.*, xxii; Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1999), 328–85; Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 99–126.

16. *Arizona Sun*, May 9, 1957; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 57, 177; Rosales, *Chicano!* xxii; Acuna, *Occupied America*, 328–85; Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 99–126.

17. Rosales, *Chicano!* 108.

18. Action Citizens Committee, *Pena Supports Opportunity for Underprivileged Youth*, paid political advertisement (Phoenix: Action Citizens Committee, 1963); GPCCU, *To Secure These Rights*, 16; Manuel Pena, Testimony on Migrants in Phoenix, *Hearings before the United States Commission on Civil Rights*, Phoenix, AZ, February 3, 1962 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1962), 74–75; Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale, interviews by Dean E. Smith, TS, ACASU; Lincoln Ragsdale, Sr., interview by Mary Melcher, TP, AHFASU.

19. Action Citizens Committee, *Pena Supports Opportunity*; GPCCU, *To Secure These Rights*, 16; Pena, Testimony on Migrants in Phoenix, 74–75.

20. Grace Gill-Olivarez, Testimony on Mexican Americans in Phoenix, *Hearings before the United States Commission on Civil Rights*, 89.

21. *New Times*, June 11–17, 1986; Patricia A. Adank, “Chicano Activism in Maricopa County—Two Incidents in Retrospective,” in *An Awakened Minority: The Mexican Americans*, ed. Manuel P. Servin, 246–65 (Beverly Hills, CA: Glencoe, 1974).

22. *New Times*, June 11–17, 1986; Adank, “Chicano Activism.”

23. *Arizona Republic*, October 9, 1970; December 2, 1970; *Phoenix Gazette*, October 7, December 3, 1970; January 13, 16, February 2, 1971; Yvonne Garrett, “Chicano Politics in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area” (typescript, Chicano Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe), 1–17.

24. *Arizona Republic*, October 9, 1970; December 2, 1970; *Phoenix Gazette*, October 7, December 3, 1970; January 13, 16, February 2, 1971; Garrett, “Chicano Politics,” 1–17.

25. Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 61; Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale, interviews by Dean E. Smith, TS, ACASU; William Dickey, interview by the author, April 6, 2000, TS, ACASU.

26. *New Times*, June 11–17, 1986; Adank, “Chicano Activism”; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 60.
27. Quoted in *Phoenix Gazette*, March 21, 1993.
28. *Arizona Republic*, December 13, 1981; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, General Characteristics by States, 1970, 1980, 1990*.
29. *Arizona Informant*, September 19, October 8, 1990; April 3, 10, June 5, August 7, November 28, December 25, 1991.
30. *Arizona Informant*, October 8, 1990; April 3, 10, June 5, August 7, November 28, December 25, 1991.
31. Ward Connerly, *Creating Equal: My Fight against Race Preferences* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000), 22–86; Ken Hamblin, *Pick a Better Country* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 13–32, 139–56; Thomas Sowell, *Race and Culture: A World View* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 81–186; Shelby Steele, *Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (1990; reprint, New York: Perennial Press, 1998), 1–20, 111–48; Armstrong Williams, *Letters to a Young Victim: Hope and Healing in America's Inner Cities* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 1–65; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Yo Mama's Disfunktional! Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 89; Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945–1990* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 201–2.
32. Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 72.
33. Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale, interviews by Dean E. Smith, TS, ACASU; Lincoln Ragsdale, Sr., interview by Mary Melcher, TP, AHFASU; Garrett, “Chicano Politics,” 1–17; Eleanor Ragsdale, interview by Mary Melcher, TP, AHS; Cloves Campbell, Sr., interview by the author, Phoenix, AZ, August 6, 1996, tape recording in author's possession (hereafter cited as TP, AP); Judis R. Andrews, Sr., questionnaire to the author, April 18, 2000, transcript in author's possession (hereafter cited as TS, AP); Herbert L. Ely, interview by the author, Phoenix, AZ, July 17, 2000, TS, ACASU; William Dickey, interview by the author, TS, ACASU.
34. Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528–1990* (New York: Norton, 1998), 292–93.
35. *El Sol*, January 18, February 1, April 12, July 5, 12, August 2, 16, 30, 1991; Barry Edward Lamb, “The Making of a Chicano Civil Rights Activist: Ralph Estrada of Arizona” (master's thesis, Arizona State University, 1988), 122–60; Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale, interviews by Dean E. Smith, TS, ACASU; Garrett, “Chicano Politics,” 1–17; Cloves Campbell, Sr., interview by the author, TP, AP; Kris Aron, “Chicanos Por la Causa: Developing Leadership for the Future,” *Phoenix* 19 (December 1984): 101–2, 130–35; Joe Alvarado, interview, Phoenix, AZ, 1977, TP, PHP, AHSCAD; Val Cordova, interview, Phoenix, AZ, 1977, TP, PHP, AHSCAD; Charles Lama, Jr., interview, Phoenix, AZ, 1977, TP, PHP, AHSCAD.
36. *Arizona Republic*, April 29, 1984; John E. Crow, *Mexican Americans in Contemporary Arizona: A Social Demographic View* (San Francisco: R and E Research, 1975), 83–84.
37. ASU official quoted in *New Times*, January 6, 1987; Eleanor Ragsdale quoted in Lincoln Ragsdale, Jr., interview by the author, April 6, 2000, TP and TS, ACASU; Edward Valenzuela quoted in Crow, *Mexican Americans in Contemporary Arizona*, 78–79.

38. Action Citizens Committee, *Pena Supports Opportunity*; GPCCU, *To Secure These Rights*, 16; Manuel Pena, Testimony on Migrants in Phoenix, 74–75; Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale, interviews by Dean E. Smith, TS, ACASU; Lincoln Ragsdale, Sr., interview by Mary Melcher, TP, AHFASU; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 292–93; Black quoted in Robert Alan Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960–1965,” *Journal of Southern History* 49, no. 3 (August 1983): 362, 370.

39. Richard W. Thomas, *Understanding Interracial Unity: A Study of U.S. Race Relations* (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), 201.

40. *New Times*, June 11–17, 1986; Adank, “Chicano Activism,” 246–65; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 60; Action Citizens Committee, *Pena Supports Opportunity*; GPCCU, *To Secure These Rights*, 16; Pena, Testimony on Migrants in Phoenix, 74–75; Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale, interviews by Dean E. Smith, TS, ACASU; Lincoln Ragsdale, Sr., interview by Mary Melcher, TP, AHFASU.

#### CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter is a slightly revised and updated version of my “Displaced Labor Migrants or the ‘Underclass’: African Americans and Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia’s Economy,” *The Collaborative City: Opportunities and Struggles for Blacks and Latinos in U.S. Cities*, ed. John J. Betancur and Douglas C. Gills, 115–36 (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000). For an expanded discussion of Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia, see Carmen Teresa Whalen, *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economies* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

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1. For example, two important works on the “underclass” published in the same year suggest the separate treatment of African Americans and Latinas/os. Michael B. Katz, ed., *The “Underclass” Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993) barely includes Latinas/os, while Joan Moore and Raquel Pinderhughes, eds., *In the Barrios: Latinos and the Underclass Debate* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1993) begins with a discussion of the exclusive focus on African Americans and of the applicability of the “underclass” construct to Latinas/os.

2. Frank L. McNamee, Regional Director, War Manpower Commission, “Memorandum on Preliminary Draft of 1944 Program for Recruiting Workers for Food Processing Industry,” January 19, 1944, 1, 3, War Manpower Commission Collection (hereafter cited as WMC), RG 211-269, box 2299, National Archives, Mid Atlantic Region, Philadelphia.

3. See also Cindy Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of Their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farmworkers and the Making of Migrant Poverty, 1870–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

4. McNamee, "Memorandum on Preliminary Draft," 2.
5. Thomas Costello, State Director (NJ) to Frank McNamee, January 14, 1944, WMC, RG 211, box 2299.
6. "Puerto Ricans Recruited," *Washington Post*, April 19, 1944, clipping, RG 126, file 9-8-116, Population, Emigration, General, National Archives, Washington, DC.
7. Floran J. Bowland, State Manpower Director (PA), "Special E.S. Bulletin No. 244: Immigration of Puerto Rican Workers," July 31, 1944, WMC, RG 211, box 2298.
8. W. T. Doe to Thomas Costello, Cross Reference Sheet, May 25, 1944, WMC, RG 211, box 2299.
9. Bowland, "Special E.S. Bulletin No. 244; Frank L. McNamee to State Manpower Directors, memo, "Puerto Rican Labor," September 21, 1944, WMC, RG 211, box 2333.
10. Between 1942 and 1945, four hundred thousand foreign workers—Mexicans, British West Indians, British Hondurans, Canadians, and Newfoundlanders—were employed in the United States. See Julia Henderson, "Foreign Labour in the United States during the War," *International Labor Review*, December 1945, 609–31.
11. Pennsylvania Bureau of Employment Security, *Annual Report: 1953*, 14–15.
12. U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Service, Farm Placement Service, *Handbook for Farm Placement Service* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1950).
13. Pennsylvania Bureau of Employment Security, *Annual Reports: 1954–1970*.
14. Morrison Handsaker, *Seasonal Farm Labor in Pennsylvania* (Easton, PA: Lafayette College, 1953); U.S. Department of Labor, *Handbook for Farm Placement Service*, 1950.
15. Handsaker, *Seasonal Farm Labor*, 38, 41.
16. *Ibid.*, 78, 139.
17. Pennsylvania Bureau of Employment Security, *Annual Report: 1958*, 7.
18. Costello to McNamee, January 14, 1944, 2.
19. Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, *Philadelphia's Non-white Population: Report No. 1, Demographic Data*, prepared by Martha Lavell (November 1961), 1–2; Peter O. Muller, Kenneth C. Meyer, and Roman A. Cybriwsky, *Metropolitan Philadelphia: A Study of Conflicts and Social Cleavages* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1976), 12–14; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1940–1970* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1940–70).
20. Michael B. Katz, "Reframing the 'Underclass' Debate," in Katz, *The "Underclass" Debate*, 457.
21. Douglas S. Massey, "American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass," *American Journal of Sociology* 96 (September 1990): 352.
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## CHAPTER SIX

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

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18. As with low birth weight, the effects of hypertension linger even in upwardly mobile African Americans. Sherman James accounts for the influences of "race" with the concept of "John Henryism," a term he coined to explain the excess mortality African Americans face from cardiovascular disease. John Henryism refers to a behavioral disposition toward high-effort coping that James believes many African Americans possess as they deal with grinding individual struggles. High-effort coping with adversity is accompanied by a strong activation of the sympathetic nervous system, expressed by increases in heart rate and blood pressure. If high-effort coping is evoked repeatedly in response to daily stressors, over many years, a permanent increase in blood pressure will occur. James, "Confronting the Moral Economy of US Racial/Ethnic Health Disparities," *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 2 (2003): 189; Sherman James and Peter Thomas, "John Henryism and Blood Pressure in Black Populations," *African American Research Perspectives* 6, no. 3 (2000): 1–10.

19. G. B. Lal, "Half of All U.S. Deaths and Disabilities Laid to Emotional Upsets," *Washington Post*, December 19, 1940, 50; Felicia Leclere et al., "Neighborhood Social Context and Racial Differences in Women's Heart Disease Mortality," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 39, no. 2 (1998): 91–107.

20. Atul Gawande, "The Way We Age Now," *New Yorker*, April 30, 2007, 51–59.

21. Leah Y. Latimer, "Quarantined: How a Daughter Was Robbed of Her Mother's Affection through Ignorance, Carelessness and Fear," *Washington Post Magazine*, December 10, 2006; Centers for Disease Control, "Trends in Tuberculosis—United States, 2007," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, March 21, 2008, 281–85, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5711a2.htm>.

22. Jose Antonio Vargas, "Once a Pioneer in AIDS Battle, District Is Now Fighting Blind," *Washington Post*, March 26, 2006, A1, A11; Ruth P. Wilson and Moses Pounds, "AIDS in African-American Communities and the Public Health Response: An Overview," *Transforming Anthropology* 4, nos. 1–2 (1993): 9–16; Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Washington, D.C., Has Higher AIDS Incidence Rate than Baltimore, San Francisco, New York," July 18, 2003.
23. Gay Becker, "Deadly Inequality in the Health Care Safety Net," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (2004): 258–75; Ronald Bayer and Gerald Oppenheimer, "AIDS Care—Reflections on the Epidemic's Early Years," *New England Journal of Medicine* 355 (2006): 2273–75; Gerald Oppenheimer, *AIDS Doctors: Voices from the Epidemic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Whitman Walker Clinic, "Profile of the Epidemic: Washington, DC, Statistics," [http://www.wwc.org/hiv\\_aids\\_services/dc\\_stats.html](http://www.wwc.org/hiv_aids_services/dc_stats.html) (accessed December 3, 2008); News-Medical.Net, "Washington D.C. a Hotbed for AIDS," November 27, 2007, <http://www.news-medical.net/?id=32865> (accessed December 3, 2008).
24. Merrill Singer, "Forging a Political Economy of AIDS," in *The Political Economy of AIDS*, ed. Merrill Singer, 3–31 (Amityville, NY: Baywood, 1998); Alise Waterston, *Street Addicts in the Political Economy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Nina Glick Schiller, "What's Wrong with This Picture? The Hegemonic Construction of Culture in AIDS Research in the United States," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1992): 237–54.
25. E. J. Sobo, "Love, Jealousy, and Unsafe Sex among Inner-City Women," in Singer, *Political Economy of AIDS*, 75–104; Richard Horton, "AIDS: The Elusive Vaccine," *New York Review of Books*, September 23, 2004, 53–57.
26. Marilyn M. Thomas-Houston and Mark Schuller, *Homing Devices: The Poor as Targets of Public Housing Policy and Practice* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006); Susan Greenbaum, "Social Capital and Deconcentration: Theoretical and Policy Paradoxes of the HOPE VI Program," *North American Dialogue* 5, no. 1 (2002): 9–13.
27. Carlos A. Manjarrez, Susan J. Popkin, and Elizabeth Guernsey, *Poor Health: Adding Insult to Injury for HOPE VI Families*, Urban Institute, brief no. 5 (June 2007).
28. Donald Braman, *Doing Time on the Outside* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

## CHAPTER EIGHT

This essay is drawn from chapters 5 and 6 of my book *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (University of Chicago Press, 2004).

1. The names are pseudonyms. See Dorothy Sutherland Jayne, "First Families: A Study of Twenty Pioneer Negro Families Who Moved into White Neighborhoods in Metropolitan Philadelphia" (master's thesis, Bryn Mawr College, 1960), appendix B, 66–70.

2. *Ibid.*, 66–67.

3. Following the U.S. Census, I use "suburbanites" to refer to people living within census-defined metropolitan districts but outside the central city. By this definition, southern suburbs gained 330,000 African Americans in the 1940s and 1950s (despite aggressive annexation of outlying areas by central cities). Suburbs outside the South added almost 700,000. In the Northeast and Midwest, the black suburban population ballooned

from 468,000 to 905,000. The number of western suburbanites grew from just 32,000 to 274,000, which accounted for more than a quarter of black population growth in the region. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, vol. 3, *Selected Area Reports*, pt. 1D (Washington, DC: GPO, 1963), 2–5.

4. Reynolds Farley, "The Changing Distribution of Negroes within Metropolitan Areas: The Emergence of Black Suburbs," *American Journal of Sociology* 75 (January 1970): 345–46; Clarence Dean, "Negroes Facing Test in Suburbs: Major Shift from the City Poses Housing Question," *New York Times*, May 21, 1961, 1.

5. On symbolic uses of domestic space to challenge white supremacy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Barbara Burlinson Mooney, "The Comfortable Tasty Framed Cottage: An African American Architectural Iconography," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 61 (March 2002): 49–67.

6. Up to one-fifth of African Americans in metropolitan areas lived in suburbs through much of the twentieth century. By 2000, suburbs were home to well over a third of all African Americans. Even before the post-1960 boom in black suburbanization, suburbia was an important context for the study of African American life; by century's end, it was an indispensable one.

7. Pioneering works that focus on African American meanings of housing and landscape include James Borchert, *Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion, and Folklife in the City, 1850–1970* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980); Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); and Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

8. Housing and Home Finance Agency, *The Housing of Negro Veterans: Their Housing Plans and Living Arrangements in 32 Areas* (Washington, DC, June 1948), 9–10.

9. Frederick Gutheim, "Failure to Build for Negroes Will Create New Blight Areas," *New York Herald Tribune*, July 4, 1948, section VI-1.

10. Robert J. Kleiner, Seymour Parker, and Haywood Taylor, *Social Status and Aspirations in Philadelphia's Negro Population* (Philadelphia: Commission on Human Relations, 1962), 9.

11. Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, *Some Factors Affecting Housing Desegregation* (December 1962), 1.

12. The eight metropolitan areas with the most black suburbanites at midcentury were New York, Detroit, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, Newark, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Housing: 1940* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1943), vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 8; pt. 2, p. 764; pt. 3, pp. 576, 869; pt. 4, pp. 146, 270, 860; Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Housing: 1960* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1963), vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 228–33.

13. Clydie Smith, interview by the author, July 1986.

14. City of Pasadena, Department of Planning and Permitting, letter to owner of 523 Pepper Street, April 4, 1952, Building Permit Files, Hall Building, Pasadena, CA. See also letters to owners of 525 and 545 Hammond Avenue, *ibid.*

15. David Doles, interview by Elizabeth Langley, October 25, 1979, "Black History in Mount Vernon, New York," Local History Room, Mount Vernon Public Library. On gardening in other suburbs, see Harold Rose, "The All Black Town: Suburban Prototype or Rural Slum," *Urban Affairs Annual Reviews* 6 (1972): 414; and David J. Dent, *In Search of Black America: Discovering the African American Dream* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 69; and Felix James, *The American Addition: History of a Black Community* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979), 58–60. Even newly wealthy entertainers such as Pearl Bailey, Eartha Kitt, and Josephine Baker indulged working-class roots by keeping chickens on estate properties. Pearl Bailey, *The Raw Pearl* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), 141–44; Eartha Kitt, *Alone with Me: A New Autobiography* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1976), 234; "Josephine Baker, Modern Cinderella," *Baltimore Afro American Magazine*, October 25, 1947, 1.

16. Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), 41, 78.

17. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Housing: 1940, Block Statistics, Evanston, Illinois* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1942), 5, 8–9; Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Housing: 1950*, vol. 5, *Block Statistics* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1952), pt. 61, *Evanston, Illinois*, 3–11; pt. 56, *East Orange, New Jersey*, 3–8; pt. 124, *New Rochelle, New York*, 3–10; pt. 138, *Pasadena, California*, 3–17; pt. 17, *Berkeley, California*, 3, 17.

18. "Get Tough Policy on Housing Urged at Interracial Meeting," *Evanston Review*, September 17, 1959.

19. See "Lots for Sale," *Chicago Defender*, May 11, 1946, 11; "Special Sale, Choice Homesites, Morgan Park," *Chicago Defender*, October 13, 1945, 11; "\$10 a Month Pays for a Large Lot," *Chicago Defender*, May 25, 1946, 8; and "It's Cheaper to Own than to Pay Rent," *Chicago Defender*, October 13, 1945, 2. For New York, see "Gordon Heights, L.I.," *Amsterdam News*, December 31, 1949; "Help Me, I Want to Own My Own Home," *Amsterdam News*, July 12, 1947; and "Bungalow, Farm or Homesite," *Amsterdam News*, July 12, 1947. For Detroit, see "Little Farms, 90' x 126'," *Michigan Chronicle*, October 13, 1945, 4.

20. "Farm Homesites," *Amsterdam News*, July 12, 1947.

21. "You Too Can Beat the High Cost of Living," *Chicago Defender*, January 31, 1948, 4.

22. Smith, interview; William Hagler, interview by the author, August 11, 1986; Clara Adams, interview by the author, July 29, 1986.

23. E. P. Stephenson, testimony to U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearings before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: Hearings Held in San Francisco, January 27–28, 1960* (Washington, DC, 1960), 622; Harold Lindsay, "From Fields to Ford's: The Development of Inkster, Michigan" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1992); James, *American Addition*, 58–60.

24. "Port o Cottage," *Chicago Defender*, August 14, 1948, 9; "Phoenix, Ill. Properties. . . Owner Completed or Finished Homes on Your Paid Up Lot," *Chicago Defender*, April 1, 1950, 19; "Quonset Makes an Attractive Home," *Cleveland Call and Post*, December 21, 1946, 13B; Floris Barnett Cash, "Long Island by Design, Segregation's Brand of Housing," *New York Newsday*, December 29, 1997, A25.

25. Eunice and George Grier, *In Search of Housing: A Study of Experiences of Negro Professional and Technical Personnel in New York State* (New York: State Commission Against Discrimination, 1958), 18.
26. Jayne, "First Families," summary report by the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (Philadelphia, 1960), 1–4; Jayne, "First Families," 22.
27. "St. Alban's: New York Community Is Home to More Celebrities than Any Other U.S. Residential Area," *Ebony*, February 1951, 34.
28. "Period Styles for Elegance: Detroit's Dr. Saulsbury Chooses 18th Century Motif to Furnish Home in Restful Tone," *Ebony*, December 1950, 64; "Louis Jordan Birthday Party," *Ebony*, November 1950, 91–92; "Rochester: Radio Star Finds Long Greens Buy Lots of Comfort and Ease," *Ebony*, November 1945, 13–20; "Push Button Home," *Ebony*, November 1954, 42–46; "The White House," *Ebony*, April 1946, 3–7.
29. "St. Alban's," 34–39.
30. On equality through consumption, see Lizabeth Cohen, "Citizens and Consumers in the Century of Mass Consumption," in *Perspectives on Modern America: Making Sense of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Harvard Sitkoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 152–58. On middle-class suburban dreams, see Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 243–45; Barbara M. Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 59–88; and Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 3–6, 16–20.
31. "Hempstead Park Detached," *Amsterdam News*, July 12, 1947.
32. "Pacoima's Quality Circle," *Crown City Press* (Pasadena), February 7, 1957, 5.
33. Adams, interview.
34. Jayne, "First Families" (summary), 1, 4.
35. "Interracial Unit Ready," *New York Times*, August 22, 1950; advertisement, *New York Daily News*, October 14, 1951; Eardlie John, "Bring Up Your Children in This Suburban Paradise," *Amsterdam News*, December 31, 1949, 25.
36. "It's Cheaper to Own than to Pay Rent," 2.
37. Grier and Grier, *In Search of Housing*, 17.
38. Chelsea Carter, "Unlikely Musical Mecca: Jazz Fans Take Journey through Neighborhoods Where the Greats Lived," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, January 10, 1999, 2G.
39. On black middle-class values related to children, see St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945), 663–68.
40. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearings before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: Hearings Held in New York, February 2–3, 1959* (Washington, DC, 1960), 272.
41. "Poitier Says Bias Exists on Coast," *New York Times*, August 19, 1960, 14.
42. Winston Richie, "Pro-Integrative Policy and Incentives," transcript in the author's possession, National Federation for Neighborhood Diversity Conference, Cleveland, Ohio, June 15, 1990.
43. Mary Pattillo-McCoy, *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 19.

44. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearings before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: Hearings Held in Los Angeles, January 25–26, 1960* (Washington, DC, 1961), 260–61. See also John Kain, "Housing Market Discrimination, Homeownership and Savings Behavior," *American Economic Review* 62 (June 1972): 263–77.

45. Eunice and George Grier, *Negroes in Five NY Cities: A Study of Problems, Achievements and Trends* (New York: New York State Commission Against Discrimination, 1958), 78; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearings before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: Hearings Held in Detroit, Michigan, December 14–15, 1960* (Washington, DC, 1961), 259; Jayne, "First Families" (summary), 3; Council for Civic Unity of San Francisco, *San Francisco's Housing Market—Open or Closed?* (San Francisco, 1960), 9.

46. Grier and Grier, *In Search of Housing*, 41–42; Council for Civic Unity of San Francisco, *San Francisco's Housing Market*, 9. Gwendolyn Brooks also pointed to the internalization of harm caused by housing discrimination in her poem "Beverly Hills, Chicago."

47. Jayne, "First Families," 68–69.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*, 37, 40–41, 57.

50. *Ibid.*, 32, 70. See also Marvin Bressler, "The Myers' Case: An Instance of Successful Racial Invasion," *Social Problems* 8 (Fall 1960): 126–42.

51. Jayne, "First Families," 45, 70.

52. *Ibid.*, 48, 73.

53. Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 531.

54. Jayne, "First Families," 52; Harold Goldblatt, "Open Occupancy Housing in Westchester County," Urban League of Westchester County, New York, November 1954, p. 36, box 96, Housing and Home Finance Agency Files, National Archives, Washington, DC.

55. Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, *Some Factors Affecting Housing Desegregation*, 1–6.

56. Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, *With Ossie and Ruby: In This Life Together* (New York: William Morrow, 1998), 302–3.

57. Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, *Some Factors Affecting Housing Desegregation*, 5.

58. See, for example, Molly McCarthy, "North Amityville: Where Freed Slaves Could Make a Home," *Newsday*, February 22, 1998, H7–8; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearings Held in Los Angeles*, 244, 279–80.

59. Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, *Some Factors Affecting Housing Desegregation*, 5.

60. May, *Homeward Bound*, 3. See also Margaret Marsh, *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); and Mary Corbin Sies, *The American Suburban Ideal: A Cultural Strategy for Modern American Living, 1877–1917* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, forthcoming).

61. Bart Landry, *The New Black Middle Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 59.

62. "St. Alban's," 34–39; "Period Styles for Elegance," 64; "Louis Jordan Birthday Party," 91–92; "Designer for Living: America's Ace Architect Paul Williams Attains Fame and Fortune Blueprinting Stately Mansions," *Ebony*, February 1946, 24–28.

63. "St. Alban's," 34–39.

64. Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880–1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), x, 182–90.
65. *Ibid.*
66. Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, quoted in Pattillo-McCoy, *Black Picket Fences*, 26; Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 194–95. See also Gregory, *Black Corona*, 17–18; and Arthur S. Evans, Jr., “The New American Black Middle Classes: Their Social Structure and Status Ambivalence,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 7 (Winter 1993): 209–28.
67. Pattillo-McCoy, *Black Picket Fences*, 23; see also 27.
68. Grier and Grier, *In Search of Housing*, 17.
69. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearings Held in San Francisco*, 575.
70. Goldblatt, “Open Occupancy Housing in Westchester County,” 23.
71. Grier and Grier, *In Search of Housing*, 17; Clarence Q. Pair, *The American Black Ghetto* (New York: Carlton Press, 1969), 13; Joseph Moore, *Pride against Prejudice: The Biography of Larry Doby* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 88.
72. Leslie Gourse, *Unforgettable: The Life and Mystique of Nat ‘King’ Cole* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 104.
73. Jayne, “First Families,” 35, 50.
74. *Ibid.*, 46.
75. Preston H. Smith II, “The Quest for Racial Democracy: Black Civic Ideology and Housing Interests in Postwar Chicago,” *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 2 (January 2000): 133; Carl Fuqua, Executive Secretary, Chicago NAACP, testimony to U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearings before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: Hearings Held in Chicago, May 5–6, 1959* (Washington, DC, 1959), 828.
76. See, for example, Fred E. Case and James H. Kirk, *Housing Status of Minority Families, Los Angeles, 1956*, Los Angeles Urban League (Los Angeles, 1958), 78.
77. Grier and Grier, *In Search of Housing*, 17.
78. Council for Civic Unity, statement to U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearings Held in San Francisco*, 575.

## CHAPTER NINE

1. This literature is rich but hard to summarize, because historians have covered such different ground and emphasized so many different things. For some of the most cutting-edge books on the South and the North, however, see Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919–1950* (New York: Norton, 2008); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233–63; Lance Hill, *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Steven F. Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945–1968* (Lanham,

MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

2. The most comprehensive study of the northern civil rights movement can be found in Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

3. While it is important to note the ways in which the rhetoric and posture of the civil rights movement evolved, it is equally important not to exaggerate the differences that existed between the civil rights movement that flourished in the 1950s and early 1960s and that which was still struggling for equality long after landmark moments such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and passage of the civil rights acts of 1964 and 1965—commonly dubbed the Black Power movement. While it is true that over time civil rights activists increasingly came to think about their goals in a Black Power framework, and to articulate them in the far more militant language of Black Power, in the most substantive ways the civil rights movement that was still thriving across the nation well into the 1970s embraced the same goals and the same strategies that it had from the beginning. It still sought full equality, and it still used marches, rallies, boycotts, strikes, letters, petitions, and lawsuits to accomplish this goal. This is not an insignificant point, because those who became strong opponents of civil rights, and those who became particularly hostile to the civil rights movement after 1965—the Black Power movement—claimed that activists had completely broken with the earlier movement. They portrayed the Black Power movement as dangerous, and they suggested that it was demanding new and wholly unreasonable things—completely unlike their reasonable predecessors, who had marched, picketed, boycotted, and called strikes. For other views, and a comprehensive treatment of the Black Power movement, see Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights–Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006). See also Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006).

4. The section of this essay on the militancy of black autoworkers in Detroit draws heavily from, and portions of it are excerpted from, Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001). The section of this essay on the militancy of prisoners comes out of a larger book on the Attica prison rebellion of 1971 and its legacy (forthcoming, Pantheon Books).

5. See Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940–1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); James Ralph, *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Rusty L. Monhollon, *This Is America? The Sixties in Lawrence, Kansas* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); and Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). On an even earlier civil rights movement in Detroit, see Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004).



6. For more on African American urban life and labor in Detroit, see Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Victoria Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Karen Miller, “Civil Rights or Labor Rights? Detroit’s Predominantly Black Unions and Labor Militancy in the Early 1930s,” manuscript; Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); and Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945–1968* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

7. The TULC was part of a much larger civil rights struggle that had been taking place within the American labor movement—and specifically within the AFL-CIO—from the mid-1950s on.

8. William Serrin, *The Company and the Union: The “Civilized Relationship” of General Motors Corporation and the United Automobile Workers* (New York: Knopf, 1973), 151.

9. See James A. Geschwender, *Class, Race, and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 40.

10. UAW Grievance #70–482, submitted to third-step arbitration, June 16, 1970, box 3-13, Dan Georgakas Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

11. *Ibid.*

12. See the DRUM newspaper collection and the Dan Georgakas Collection for an almost complete run of all RUM publications, in the Reuther Library.

13. League of Revolutionary Black Workers Constitution, box 4, series 1, Dan Georgakas Collection, Reuther Library.

14. *ELRUM*, 1970, 2, DRUM newspaper collection, Reuther Library.

15. Philip S. Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619–1981*, 2nd ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1982), 419. See also Geschwender, *Class, Race, and Worker Insurgency*, 104–5.

16. Steve Jefferys, *Management and Managed: Fifty Years of Crisis at Chrysler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 153.

17. DRUM Collection, subseries 2-A, box 4-34, Reuther Library.

18. Ken Simmons, Secretary, Credentials Committee UAW, telegram to Aaron Pitts, April 17, 1970, DRUM Collection, subseries 2-A, box 4-34, Reuther Library.

19. Quoted in Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1975), 50.

20. Open letter to Local 961 members from the leadership of Local 961, box 3-12, Dan Georgakas Collection, Reuther Library.

21. *Detroit Free Press*, May 23, 1971.

22. Testimony of David Addison, April 17, 1972, in New York State Special Commission on Attica, “In the Matter of the Public Hearings at Rochester, New York,” transcript, p. 57, Government Publications, SUNY-Albany University Library.

23. WBAI, transcript of speeches made in D Yard, McKay Commission Collection, 15855-90, box 84, New York State Archives, Albany.
24. Attica Liberation Faction, letter to Russell Oswald, read by David Addison, in New York State Special Commission on Attica, "In the Matter of the Public Hearings at Rochester, New York," p. 95.
25. *Attica: The Official Report of the New York State Special Commission on Attica* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 138.
26. The jails of New York City had erupted in a series of riots over the issue of inmate overcrowding in the summer and fall of 1970, and in November of that same year, inmates in Auburn State Prison also rebelled. Serious reprisals followed the inmates' surrender in all cases.
27. Letter to editor from "Wife of a Correction Officer," September 16, 1971, McKay Commission Collection, 15855-90, box 85.
28. Rockefeller had long had ambitions for the U.S. presidency and still did in 1971. He could ill afford to have his party think that he was at the beck and call of criminals.
29. Confidential memo, "Events at Attica: September 8–13, 1971," 1, Office of the Clerk, Erie County Courthouse, Buffalo, New York. This report of almost seventy pages was compiled by Governor Rockefeller's closest aides so that he would have a full account of all that was happening at Attica from their perspective. It includes much confidential information regarding what was happening at the highest levels of power in New York state during this crisis.
30. See conversation no. 571-10, Nelson Rockefeller and Richard Nixon, September 13, 1971, 4:36 p.m. to 6:40 p.m., Oval Office; and conversation no. 9-6, September 14, 1971, 6:13 p.m. to 6:18 p.m., White House telephone, Presidential Recordings Program at the University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs.
31. After doing a series of autopsies, local pathologist John Edland insisted publicly that all of the dead hostages and inmates had in fact been killed by trooper bullets. In media coverage, *New York Times* subscribers read that "in this worst of recent American prison revolts, several of the hostages—prison guards and civilian workers—died when convicts slashed their throats with knives." They also read that inmates' acts "reflect a barbarism wholly alien to civilized society. Prisoners slashed the throats of utterly helpless, unarmed guards." *New York Times*, September 13, 14, 1971. According to the *Los Angeles Times* on September 13, "nine hostages were slain by inmates."
32. Thousands of telegrams sent to the Attica prison after the retaking expressed extraordinary dismay and hostility toward the inmates. They are preserved in the Archives of the Attica State Correctional Facility, Attica, NY.
33. See Hill, *Deacons for Defense*. On the activism of an even earlier period, see Claudrena Harold, "The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918–1942" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2004).
34. For more on the history of the civil rights struggle in Charlotte, see Lassiter, *Silent Majority*; Stephen Samuel Smith, *Boom for Whom? Education, Desegregation, and Development in Charlotte* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Davison Douglas, *Reading, Writing & Race: The Desegregation of the Charlotte Schools* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Thomas Hanchett, *Sorting Out the*

*New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875–1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

35. Reddy had actually been born in Savannah, Georgia, and spent quite a bit of time as a teenager in Brooklyn, New York; he had moved to Charlotte to attend the university. "In the Matter of Thomas James Reddy, James Earl Grant, Jr., and Charles Parker, Petition for Pardon, Submitted to the Honorable James B. Hunt, Jr., Governor of North Carolina," December 30, 1977, T. J. Reddy Papers, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

36. "The Lazy B: New Facts Call for Review," *Charlotte Observer*, March 26, 1974; Frye Gaillard, "North Carolina Justice," *Encore*, November 1974, both in clippings file, Reddy Papers.

37. Coleman McCarthy, "Is Justice for Sale?" *Washington Post*, December 7, 1974.

38. "In the Matter of Thomas James Reddy."

39. For a comprehensive account of the Marrow murder and the aftermath for the residents of Oxford, see Timothy B. Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name: A True Story* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2004).

40. "The Lazy B: New Facts Call for Review"; Gaillard, "North Carolina Justice."

41. "The Lazy B: New Facts Call for Review."

42. According to an amicus brief filed in support of the Charlotte Three in 1977, Hood and Washington's deal "was approved by U.S. Assistant Attorney General Robert Mardigan, now on trial in the Watergate Conspiracy charges." North Carolina Civil Liberties Union Legal Foundation, brief for amicus curiae, filed April 27, 1977, Reddy Papers.

43. See Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, "Contract for the Purchase of Information and Payment of Lump Sum Therefore," which lists all of the exact testimony the government wanted from Washington against Grant and Chavis; the contract is referred to in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, Raleigh Division, *United States of America v. James Earl Grant, jr.* no. 63-71 CR, "Motion to Vacate Judgment and Sentence," July 10, 1974, Reddy Papers.

44. When Hood and Washington were originally arrested, so was a man named Joseph Preston Goins—who, it turned out, was an FBI informer. For the FBI's account of Hood and Washington's claims regarding how Grant and Chavis helped them flee the country, see Chief Special Investigator, Charlotte, NC, "Report of Special Investigator William S. Walden, Raleigh, North Carolina, Re May 14, 1970 Disturbance in Oxford, NC," June 28, 1971, Reddy Papers.

45. *Ibid.*, 3.

46. For a comprehensive account of the case of the Charlotte Three, see J. Christopher Schutz, "The Burning of America: Race, Radicalism, and the Charlotte Three Trial in 1970s North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 76 (January 1999): 43–65.

47. North Carolina Civil Liberties Union Legal Foundation, brief for amicus curiae, April 27, 1977, 2, 9.

48. See U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, No. 77-1480, *Thomas James Reddy, James Earl Grant, Jr. and Charles Parker, Appellants, v. David L. Jones, Secretary, North Carolina Department of Corrections, et al., Appellees*, "Brief for Appellants," Reddy Papers.

49. Chief Special Investigator, Charlotte, NC, "Report of Special Investigator William S. Walden," 2.
50. North Carolina Political Prisoners Committee (NCPPEC), press release, August 1972, Reddy Papers.
51. Ibid.
52. "The Sentences in the Stable Fire," editorial, *Charlotte Observer*, c. 1972, box 1, folder 10, "Clippings," Reddy Papers.
53. Joan K. Scott, letter to editor, *Charlotte Observer*, July 23, 1972, box 1, series 3, Letters of Support (1972–January 1974), Reddy Papers.
54. "The Lazy B: New Facts Call for Review."
55. Ibid.
56. Scott, letter to editor.
57. "North Carolina Justice," *Washington Post*, March 5, 1974.
58. "The Sentences in the Stable Fire."
59. NCPPEC, press release, August 15, 1972, Reddy Papers.
60. NCPPEC, press release, July 24, 1972, Reddy Papers.
61. "The Lazy B: New Facts Call for Review."
62. Specifically, the attorneys pointed out that not only had the government made cash payments to Washington and Hood, it had also sent Assistant U.S. Attorney David W. Long to "urge the court to relieve Washington from his probationary judgment." See U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, Raleigh Division, "Motion to Vacate Judgment and Sentence." See also Richard Rosen, memo to James Ferguson, "Motion for New Trial in Federal Court for James Grant," June 10, 1974, Reddy Papers.
63. For a full chronology of this case, see "In the Matter of Thomas James Reddy."
64. Mr. and Mrs. James Grant, Sr., letter to Governor James Holshouser, n.d., Reddy Papers. See also Howard L. Warring, M.D., letter to James Holshouser, November 19, 1973, Reddy Papers.
65. See, for example, Keith R. Allen, letter to James Holshouser, August 16, 1973, Reddy Papers.
66. Robert Rieke, letter to James E. Holshouser, Jr., January 10, 1974, Reddy Papers.
67. Ralph Grosswald, letter to James E. Holshouser, Jr., January 18, 1973, Reddy Papers.
68. Joan Scott, letter to Robert Morgan, Attorney General, State of North Carolina, n.d., Reddy Papers; Alice Tate, letter to James E. Holshouser, Jr., January 25, 1974, Alice Lindsay Tate Papers, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.
69. "What Is Subversive?" *New York Times*, box 1, folder 10, "Clippings," Reddy Papers.
70. "Justice in North Carolina Is Once More Old South," *New York Times*, March 9, 1975.
71. McCarthy, "Is Justice for Sale?"
72. There are various schools of thought within the history profession that seek to explain the dramatic weakening of postwar liberalism. Each offers invaluable insights, but all fail to take seriously the extent to which liberals themselves played a role, albeit unwittingly, in weakening their own hold on political power. For scholarly arguments that center on the corrosive effects of civil rights and New Left militancy on postwar

liberalism, see Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), as well as some older monographs such as Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against Liberalism* (1985; reprint, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Perennial, 1987); Fred Siegel, *The Future Once Happened Here: New York, D.C., L.A. and the Fate of America's Big Cities* (New York: Encounter Books, 1997); Thomas Byrne Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1992); and Tamar Jacoby, *In Someone Else's House* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). Two of the best-known works that illuminate the ways in which the racial conservatism of white working-class New Dealers eventually opened an unsealable crack in postwar liberalism are Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (1983; reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998). For some top accounts that locate liberalism's collapse in the determination and political savvy of longtime conservatives in America, see Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Finally, see the essays in the recent collection edited by Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

#### CHAPTER TEN

1. Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 98–99. I use the term “riot” because it suggests historical continuity with a tradition of civil disobedience. On bystanders' testimony, see Timothy Still and Mayor John Lindsay, “Newark Group,” August 9, 1967, 236–38, box 5, series 1, Papers of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner Commission; hereafter cited as KCP), Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, TX.

2. Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report for Action* (Trenton, 1968); *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington, D.C., 1968), 1.

3. Michael B. Katz, “Why Aren't U.S. Cities Burning?” *Dissent*, Summer 2007, 27.

4. An important, pioneering example of critical urbanism is Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), esp. 11–12.

5. Arthur I. Waskow, *From Race Riot to Sit-In, 1919 and the 1960s* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 224; Dennis E. Gale, *Understanding Urban Unrest: From Reverend King to Rodney King* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996), 17–18, 107–11;

Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995); Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Sidney Fine, *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanaugh Administration, Race Relations, and the Detroit Riot of 1967* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989); Max Arthur Herman, *Fighting in the Streets: Ethnic Succession and Urban Unrest in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

6. Robert M. Fogelson, *Violence as Protest: A Study of Riots and Ghettos* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 13, 14–15, 22; Vernon Allen, "Understanding Riots: Some Perspectives," *Journal of Social Issues* 26, no. 1 (1970): 1–18; Gary T. Marx, "Civil Disorder and the Agents of Social Control," *Journal of Social Issues* 26, no. 1 (1970): 19–57; Oscar Handlin, "Fire-Bell in the Night," *New York Review of Books*, October 2, 1964, 15.

7. Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 160–61. On Detroit, see Thompson, *Whose Detroit?*

8. Jon K. Meyer, *Bibliography on the Urban Crisis: The Behavioral, Psychological, and Sociological Aspects of the Urban Crisis* (Chevy Chase, MD: National Institute of Mental Health, 1968); Meyer, *Bibliography of the Urban Crisis: The Behavioral, Psychological, and Sociological Aspects of the Urban Crisis* (Chevy Chase, MD: National Institute of Mental Health, 1969).

9. Fogelson, *Violence as Protest*, 159; Robert C. Wood, *The Necessary Majority: Middle America and the Urban Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 7.

10. Paul Wellstone, review of *Race and Social Sciences*, ed. Irwin Katz and Patricia Gurin, *Public Opinion Quarterly* 34 (Winter 1970–71): 645–47.

11. Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

12. Joseph Boskin, *Urban Racial Violence in the Twentieth Century* (Beverly Hills, CA: Glencoe Press, 1969), 64–66.

13. Hugh Davis Graham, ed., *Violence: The Crisis of American Confidence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970).

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15. Jeffrey H. Goldstein, *Aggression and Crimes of Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 145; Carl Akins, "The Riot Commission Report and the Notion of Truth," *Social Science Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (December 1968): 471–73.

16. Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), 174–75.

17. Lynne B. Iglitzin, *Violent Conflict in American Society* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1972), 72.

18. William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs, *Black Rage* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 26, 72–73; Oscar Lewis, *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty—San Juan and New York* (New York: Random House, 1968), xlvi. On culture of poverty and policy, see James Carl McCluskey, "Social Science and Public Policy: An Examination of the Economic Opportunity Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the

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20. Virginia M. Esposito, ed., *Conscience and Community: The Legacy of Paul Ylvisaker* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999); Paul N. Ylvisaker to R. Sargent Shriver, February 7, 1964, box 11, file 3, Paul N. Ylvisaker (PNY) Papers, Harvard University Archives. For Ylvisaker's views on poverty, see Ylvisaker, "Black Politics," February 13, 1964; and Howard W. Hallman to Paul N. Ylvisaker, February 17, 1964, both in box 11, file 3, PNY Papers.

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23. Paul N. Ylvisaker to the President, "New Jersey Dept. of Community Affairs," July 7, 1967, box 12, file 11, PNY Papers.

24. Lewis M. Killian, *The Impossible Revolution! Black Power and the American Dream* (New York: Random House, 1967), 147–49; August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, "Negro Protest and Urban Unrest," *Social Science Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (December 1968): 440–42.

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37. John V. Lindsay, "The Commission Report—An Unanswered Challenge," *Harvard Review* 4, no. 3 (second quarter 1968): 22–23.

38. Robert Shellow et al., "Harvest of American Racism: The Political Meaning of Violence," box 1, series 7, KCP.

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42. Testimony of Lerone Bennett, p. 1032, box 2, series 1, KCP.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 1055. On the irrationality of prejudice, see Lerone Bennett, *The Negro Mood and Other Essays* (Chicago: Johnson, 1964), 80–81.

44. Testimony of Lerone Bennett, pp. 1008–9, 1002, box 2, series 1, KCP.



45. Testimony of Martin Luther King, Jr., pp. 2776, 2779, box 5, series 1, KCP.
46. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 44–50; Testimony of Martin Luther King, Jr., pp. 2776, 2783, 2791, 2794, box 5, series 1, KCP.
47. Joseph Califano, “President’s Night Reading,” August 1, 1967, White House Office Files of Joseph Califano, box 11, LBJ Papers; Harry McPherson to Douglass Cater, August 1, 1967, White House Office Files of Harry McPherson, box 32, LBJ Papers.
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56. Jewel Prestage, “Black Politics and the Kerner Report Concerns and Direction,” *Social Science Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (December 1968): 480–85. See also Amitai Etzioni, *Demonstration Democracy* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1970), 26; and Gary T. Marx, “Two Cheers for the Commission Report,” *Harvard Review* 4, no. 3 (second quarter 1968): 4–6.
57. Shellow et al., “Harvest of American Racism,” p. 163.

58. *Ibid.*, 171.

59. Joe Califano, "For the President," July 15, 1967, White House Office Files of Joseph Califano, box 11, file 1, LBJ Papers.

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61. M. C. Miskowsky, Director of Investigations, to David Ginsburg, November 17, 1967, White House Office Files of Joseph Califano, box 11, file 1, LBJ Papers.

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74. Harlan Hahn, "Ghetto Sentiments on Violence," *Science and Society* 33, no. 2 (1969): 208; see also T. M. Tomlinson, "Riot Ideology among Urban Negroes," in *Riots and Rebellion: Civil Violence in the Urban Community*, ed. Louis H. Masotti and Don R. Bowen, 417–28 (Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, 1968).

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78. Captain Edward Williams, Director of Police Community Relations, interview, October 5, 1967, box 4, series 59, KCP.
79. Willie Wright, interview by Lee Satterfield, pp. 3–4, box 4, series 59, KCP.
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81. LeRoi Jones, interview by Lee Satterfield, October 9, 1967, boxes 4–6, series 59, KCP.
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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

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54. “Negro Groups Step Up Militancy in Drive to Join Building Trade Unions,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1969; “20 Chicago Building Projects Shut Down by Hiring Protest,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1969; “Job Protest Spurs Pittsburgh Clash,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1969; “Job Rights Panel Warned of Need to Check Unrest,” *New York Times*, August 30, 1969; “Nationwide Black Walkout Urged to Back Job Demand,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1969; Archie Robinson, *George Meany and His Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 290; *Proceedings of the Fifty-fifth Convention of the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO, 1969, Atlantic City, New Jersey, September 22–24, 1969* ([Washington, DC], n.d.), 117–18; “Unions Voice ‘Unalterable Opposition’ to Phila. Plan,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 22, 1969; *Proceedings of the Thirty-first General Convention of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, San Francisco, August 24–28, 1970* (n.p., n.d.), 13.

55. Clinton C. Bourdon and Raymond E. Levitt, *Union and Open Shop Construction, Compensation, Work Practices, and Labor Markets* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1980), 5–6; Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 190–95; Freeman, “Hardhats”; Jefferson Cowie, “Nixon’s Class Struggle: Romancing the New Right Worker, 1969–1973,” *Labor History* 43 (August 2002): 257–83. On white resistance to civil rights in Philadelphia, see Peter Binzen, *Whitetown, U.S.A.* (New York: Random House, 1970).

56. “Shultz Defends Minority Hiring,” *New York Times*, August 7, 1969; “Construction Job Rights Plan Backed at Philadelphia Hearing,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1969; Judith Stein, *Running Steel, Running America: Race, Economic Policy, and the Decline of Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 148–52; William Safire, *Before the Fall: An Inside View of the Pre-Watergate White House* (Garden City, NY: Belmont Tower Books, 1975); Kotlowski, “Richard Nixon and the Origins of Affirmative Action”; Joan Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 90–92; *Contractors Assn. of Eastern Pennsylvania v. Shultz*, 311 F. Supp. 1002 (E.D. Pa. 1970); 442 F. 2d 159 (3d Cir. 1971); *cert. denied*, 404 U.S. 854 (1971); William B. Gould, *Black Workers in White Unions: Job Discrimination in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 297–362; Steven M. Gillon, “That’s Not What We Meant to Do”: *Reform and Its Unintended Consequences in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Norton, 2000), 147.

57. Hochschild, “Affirmative Action as Culture War.”

## CHAPTER TWELVE

1. See Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great Migration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 1–8.

2. On the traditions and history of the black church in America, see W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899), 197–234; Du Bois, ed., *The Negro Church* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903); Lewis G. Jordan, *Negro Baptist History, USA, 1750–1930* (Nashville, TN: Sunday School Publishing Board, 1930); Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (Washington, DC: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1945); Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph William Nicholson, *The Negro’s Church* (New York: Institute of Social and

Religious Research, 1933); Arthur H. Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Cults in the North* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944); St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (New York: Harper and Row, 1945), 398–429; E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964); John A. Saunders, *100 Years after Emancipation: History of the Philadelphia Negro, 1787 to 1963* (Philadelphia: Free African Society, 1964); Leon H. Sullivan, *Build, Brother, Build* (Philadelphia: Macrae Smith, 1969); Hart M. Nelson, Raytha L. Yokley, and Anne K. Nelson, eds., *The Black Church in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1971); William J. Walls, *The African Methodists Episcopal Zion Church: Reality of the Black Church* (Charlotte, NC: AME Zion Publishing House, 1974); C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church since Frazier* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974); Gary Jerome Hunter, "'Don't Buy From Where You Can't Work': Black Urban Boycott Movements during the Depression, 1929–1941" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1977); Howard D. Gregg, *History of the A.M.E. Church: The Black Church in Action* (Nashville, TN: A.M.E. Sunday School Union, 1980); Dennis C. Dickerson, "The Black Church in Industrializing Western Pennsylvania, 1870–1950," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 64 (October 1981): 329–44; Ralph H. Jones, *Charles Albert Tindley: Prince of Preachers* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1982); Robert Weisbrot, *Father Divine and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983); Hans A. Baer, *The Black Spiritual Movement: A Religious Response to Racism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); Allen B. Ballard, *One More Day's Journey* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984); Arthur C. Willis, *Cecil's City: A History of Blacks in Philadelphia, 1638–1979* (New York: Carlton Press, 1990); C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990); Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer, *African American Religion in the Twentieth Century: Varieties of Protest and Accommodation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); Robert Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression: Philadelphia's African Methodists and Southern Migrants, 1890–1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1850–1979* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1998); Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land*; Leonard L. Bethel and Frederick A. Johnson, eds., *Plainfield's African-American: From Northern Slavery to Church Freedom* (New York: University Press of America, 1998); Clarence Taylor, *Black Religious Intellectuals: The Fight for Equality from Jim Crow to the 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2002); and Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

3. On Richard Allen and the early history of the Bethel church, see Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro, 197–201*; Charles H. Wesley, *Richard Allen, Apostle of Freedom* (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1935); and especially Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 95–134, 169, 192–200.

4. Ira Berlin, "The Revolution in Black Life," in *The American Revolution*, ed. Alfred F. Young (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 374. See also David Robertson, *Demark Vessy: The Buried Story of America's Largest Slave Rebellion and the Man Who Led It* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 50–51.

5. By "black church," I am generally referring to the independent black Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, and Holiness churches that accounted for the majority of black churchgoers by 1960. Black Presbyterian, Protestant Episcopal, Lutheran, and Congregational churches are not usually considered black churches unless they declared independence from their white-controlled denomination sponsors, which was uncommon; and predominantly black Catholic churches were not independent. The so-called black cult leaders, such as Father Divine and Daddy Grace, deserve a separate examination; see Fauset's *Black Gods of the Metropolis*. In Philadelphia, Father Divine was a large property owner and helped to fight discrimination against blacks at the public swimming pools. The Nation of Islam became a viable alternative to Protestantism by 1960 and did have a presence in Philadelphia by the mid-1950s, but it would not make significant membership gains until the 1960s. See C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

6. Sullivan, *Build, Brother, Build*, 57, 65–69; "'Buy Where You're Hired' Campaign Getting Results," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 11, 1960; Peter Binzen, "The Boycott in the 1950s Opened the Job Market for Blacks," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 28, 1990, 9A; Countryman, *Up South*, 83–86, 101–19.

7. "Housing for Negroes in Philadelphia—Data from 1940 U.S. Census," November 10, 1947, box 47, folder 256, Housing Association of Delaware Valley Papers (Philadelphia Housing Association Papers), Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia; John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920–1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

8. Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 45–46, 74–75.

9. In 1932, Benjamin Mays found that there were 205 black churches in Philadelphia, with half being of the storefront variety. See Mays and Nicholson, *The Negro's Church*, 34, 219; and Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression*, 214. The best estimate on black churches in Philadelphia comes from *The Bulletin Almanac and Year Book for 1955* (Philadelphia). In that year, the black Baptist church alone was estimated to have 362 churches and 225,000 members in the city. Including storefront churches and the large AME church population, along with the growing Pentecostal churches and the Holiness movement, the number of black churches easily surpassed five hundred; see *Almanac and Year Book*, 371. The problem in estimating the number of black churches has always been counting the plethora of storefront or small churches that do not have established edifices and might not show up in a census. It is common knowledge among residents of black cities that there are, even today, just as many storefront churches as established ones. In examining many church histories, I found that most of the so-called established churches began in homes and storefronts, moving frequently until they could attract enough members or money to buy an edifice. In some cases it took years, so it is not likely that local government records would reflect even a small portion of these churches. Churches were continuously being formed during the migration era; as some became too

large, they sent out missions in other parts of the Philadelphia area that eventually turned into churches. Disgruntled members left congregations to form their own churches, and black migrant groups also had a tendency to start their own churches. For example, Zion Baptist Church in North Philadelphia, founded in 1882, sent out missions that were directly responsible for the founding of eight other churches around the Philadelphia area. In addition, one other church in Philadelphia was formed by members that left Zion Baptist, and two others were started after inspiration by Zion Baptist's founder. See "The Living History of Zion Baptist Church," updated draft, 1988, p. 8, Papers of the Historical Committee of 1999, Zion Baptist Church, Broad and Venango Streets, Philadelphia.

10. Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 117–26, 138.

11. Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression*, 15–16.

12. *Ibid.*, 50–57.

13. "Sick Methodist Church Nursed to Health in 5 Years," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, January 11, 1947, 24.

14. J. W. Woods, "Saving People's Money Mania with St. Matthews Pastor," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, January 25, 1947, 20.

15. J. W. Woods, "St. Paul Has Had Only Two Pastors in 57 Years: Reverend E.L. Cunningham Marks 11th Year; Church Membership Now Exceeds 1600," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, February 8, 1947, 20.

16. *Ibid.*

17. "Vine Memorial Baptist Attains Prominence in 14 Years: Church Founded by Present Pastor, Has 1000 Members, \$30,000 Budget: Clinic, Community Center among Projects; Minister, Rev. L.G. Carr, a National Leader," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, April 12, 1947, 16.

18. See V. P. Franklin, "The Philadelphia Race Riot of 1918," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biology* 99, no. 3 (1975): 336–50; and Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression*, 63–64.

19. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 197–220; Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression*, 213–14.

20. At that time, the process of forming a Baptist church was much easier than for other churches. For example, any Baptist minister or elder member could start a new church with a small group of followers. Hence, many churches began in homes or storefronts. The same could be said of Pentecostal and Holiness churches, which had few or no bureaucratic roadblocks to the formation of new churches. For the AME churches, it was much more difficult, because a church had to be approved by a regional bishop.

21. "Vine Memorial Baptist Attains Prominence in 14 Years"; Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression*, 213–14.

22. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 203–20.

23. Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression*, 8, 46–47, 213–14.

24. For details on the 1944 transit strike, the MOWM, the FEPC fight, police brutality, and the increasing incarceration of blacks in Philadelphia, see Karl Johnson, "Black Philadelphia in Transition: The African American Struggle on the Homefront during World War II and the Cold War Period, 1941–1963" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 2001). On the inability of elite and middle-class blacks to get preferential treatment from whites in comparison to treatment of the working poor (white police raided elite and

middle-class homes as well as poor ones), see Johnson, "Black Philadelphia in Transition," chap. 4. For a black-church view on the Girard College fight and civil rights in general, see "Girard Ruling a Blow to Bias," *AME Review* 73 (April–June 1957): 21–23; and "The South—Attack on the Conscience," *AME Review* 73 (April–June 1957): 35–43.

25. Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 275.

26. J. W. Woods, "Mt. Olive Holy Temple Nerve Center of Denomination: Founded by Woman Bishop 28 Years Ago, Now Controls 15,000 Members," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, July 19, 1947, 14; Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, 13–21.

27. Collier-Thomas, *Daughters of Thunder*, 197–98, 203–5 (quotation on p. 204).

28. Harold D. Trulear, "Reshaping Black Pastoral Theology: The Vision of Bishop Ida B. Robinson," *Journal of Religious Thought* 46, no. 1 (Summer–Fall 1989): 17–31; Woods, "Mt. Olive Holy Temple."

29. Trulear, "Reshaping Black Pastoral Theology"; "History," <http://www.mtsinaiholychurch.org>.

30. Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1984), 64. For a critical assessment of the role of gender issues in the black religious institutions, see Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice* (New York: Knopf, forthcoming).

31. Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression*, 87–104.

32. *Ibid.*, 71; "Girard Ruling a Blow to Bias," 23.

33. "Girard Ruling a Blow to Bias," 23.

34. "Living History of Zion Baptist Church"; "Tindley Temple Methodist Has Congregation of 6,455," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, June 28, 1947, 16. E. Washington Rhodes, the owner of the *Philadelphia Tribune*, was said to be a member of Union Baptist Church as well, but I have not found enough evidence to be certain. On Marshall Shepard's political influence, see Countryman, *Up South*, 23–24.

35. V. P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia: The Social and Educational History of a Minority* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 122–25; "10,000 Marchers in Elk Parade: 250,000 View Elks Turnout," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, August 30, 1947, 1. On the connection of fraternal lodges with the black church, see Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 242–43, 249.

36. Ruby Smith, "Mt. Carmel Provides Full Scale Community Program: Under Progressive Pastor, Church Is Geared to Serve All Age Groups," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, March 8, 1947, 16. On Rev. Dennie Hoggard's political career, see Saunders, *100 Years after Emancipation*, 114. For examples of Raymond Pace Alexander's civil rights activism, see Johnson, "Black Philadelphia in Transition," 44–46. For examples of John Frances Williams's civil rights work in fighting discrimination against black teachers, see Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, 144.

37. Ruby Smith, "Mount Olivet Continues on Road to Success, Prosperity: Baptist Congregation Undergoes Only One Period of Distress in 46 Years," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, February 7, 1948, 16; Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 121.

38. Smith, "Mount Olivet."

39. "Living History of Zion Baptist Church," 13; "Historic Church Landmark Acquired by Zion Baptist Church," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 20, 1955, 5; Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 214. Thus, Zion Baptist helped in the beginning with the movement



of blacks from South Philadelphia; it was part of the initial black enclave and cultural center in North Central Philadelphia when it moved there by 1940.

40. "Living History of Zion Baptist Church," 16. On the involvement of Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., with civil rights and politics, see Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, 190. Powell was one of the early members of the NAACP in 1919, and his megachurch of fourteen thousand members developed a number of programs that offered social services for black southern migrants.

41. "Living History of Zion Baptist Church," 15–16.

42. *Ibid.*, 18; Sullivan, *Build, Brother, Build*, 43–46.

43. Sullivan, *Build, Brother, Build*, 58.

44. "Historic Church Landmark Acquired by Zion Baptist Church."

45. Sullivan, *Build, Brother, Build*, 58–66.

46. "Negroes in S.C. County Starving but Europeans Getting Free Food," *Philadelphia Tribune*, November 19, 1955, 1–2; "'Lord Will Protect Us,' Say Clerics Going South," *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 10, 1955, 1–2; "Food and Clothes from Philly Cause Southerners to Rejoice," *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 13, 1955, 1–2.

47. Sullivan, *Build, Brother, Build*, 76; Binzen, "Boycott."

48. Countryman, *Up South*, 102–3.

49. Binzen, "Boycott."

50. Countryman, *Up South*, 107; "Spreading Negro Boycott," *Greater Philadelphia Magazine*, May 1962.

51. Sullivan, *Build, Brother, Build*, 88.

52. *Ibid.*, 67. Sullivan saw the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations as rather helpless or weak in enforcing fair employment practices in the private sector.

53. *Ibid.*, 78–79.

54. *Ibid.*, 76–77, 82–83; Countryman, *Up South*, 104–10; "Ministers Apply Heat to Breyer's Ice Cream," *Philadelphia Independent*, July 29, 1961; "'400 Local Pastors' Cease Boycott on Sun Oil Company," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 13, 1961; "Daily News Yields to Ministers' Selective Patronage Movement," *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 18, 1962; "A&P Meets Demands of 400 Ministers; Food Firm Boycott Called Off," *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 5, 1963; Binzen, "Boycott"; Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 263.

55. Countryman, *Up South*, 108–9; "30 More Towns Join in Drive against Sunoco," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 2, 1961; "Sun Oil Company Fails to Torpedo Preachers' Selective Patronage Drive," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 23, 1961; "'400 Local Pastors' Cease Boycott."

56. Sullivan, *Build, Brother, Build*, 76–77, 82–83; Countryman, *Up South*, 109–10; "Breyers Begins Hiring Negroes," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 24, 1962; "1000 New Jobs Worth \$4 Million Won by Drive," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 22, 1962; "Food Fair Stores Hire 42, Upgrade 29 in New Program," *Philadelphia Independent*, July 3, 1963.

57. "The Church and the NAACP," *AME Review* 73 (October–December 1959): 6–7. The prominent AME bishop Reverdy Ransom was present in 1906 when the NAACP was founded; W. E. B. Du Bois was given his first teaching job at Wilberforce University, an AME institution; and the father of NAACP executive secretary Roy Wilkins was an AME preacher.

58. "Statement by A. Philip Randolph to the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom at the Lincoln Memorial, May 17, 1957," *AME Review* 73 (July–September 1957): 33–36; "Remarks of Roy Wilkins, Executive Secretary, NAACP, at the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom, Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C., May 17, 1957," *AME Review* 73 (July–September 1957): 37–40.

59. "Girard Ruling a Blow to Bias"; Willis, *Cecil's City*; Countryman, *Up South*, 170–71.

60. "The South—Attack on the Conscience"; Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, 207–9.

61. "Minutes of the First Annual Session of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.," September 4–9, 1962, Center for African American History and Culture, Weiss Hall, Temple University, Philadelphia (microfilm, Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN), 5, 61; Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 36–37.

62. "Local Ministers Organize for Youth Employment Opportunity," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 4, 1960.

63. Countryman, *Up South*, 117–19.

#### CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. It should be noted that, following the critique of the flawed conception and usage of the term "underclass," Wilson and others dropped its use. See Herbert Gans, *The War against the Poor: The Underclass and Antipoverty Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 58–73.

2. See Daniel P. Moynihan, "The Schism in Black America," *The Public Interest*, no. 27 (Spring 1972): 3–24.

3. William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 144–54.

4. See two of William Julius Wilson's books: *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York: Knopf, 1996).

5. See Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

6. Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Race and Class in the 1980s: An Interactive View," *Daedalus*, Spring 1981, 233–55.

7. Raymond S. Franklin, *Shadows of Race and Class* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 117–35.

8. See the neo-Weberian theoretical work of Randall Collins, *Weberian Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); and Bryan Turner, *Status* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1988.

9. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 53–76.

10. See Norman Fainstein, "Race, Class, and Segregation: Discourses about African Americans," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 17, no. 3 (1993):

391–92; Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Gary Orfield and Carole Ashkinaze, *The Closing Door: Conservative Policy and Black Opportunity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and Mary Pattillo-McCoy, *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

11. Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 6–8.

12. *Ibid.*, 148–85.

13. See Nancy A. Denton, “Are African Americans Still Hypersegregated?” in *Residential Apartheid: The American Legacy*, ed. Robert Bullard et al., 49–81 (Los Angeles: CAAS, 1994).

14. Fainstein, “Race, Class, and Segregation,” 387.

15. *Ibid.*

16. See Eric S. Brown, “Black Ghetto Formation in Oakland, 1852–1965: Social Closure and African American Community Development,” *Research in Community Sociology* 8 (1998): 255–74.

17. By *pre-civil rights era*, I mean the period of U.S. history until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The *civil rights era* constitutes the period from 1964 through the end of the 1970s, when “civil rights” issues remained on the federal radar screen, including in the Nixon and Carter administrations. The *post-civil rights era* is the period since about 1980, when the Reagan administration came to power. Since then, with the possible exception of the Clinton administration, the federal government has been increasingly indifferent about civil rights issues. Indicatively, basic civil rights and affirmative action policies have been increasingly challenged at the state level (e.g., in California, Florida, Texas, and Washington).

18. E. Franklin Frazier, *The Black Bourgeoisie: The Making of a Middle Class* (New York: Free Press, 1957).

19. Wilson’s most recent book, co-authored with Richard Taub, corrects this assumption. His revised thinking is heavily influenced by a book written by his former graduate student Mary Pattillo-McCoy, *Black Picket Fences*. See William Julius Wilson and Richard P. Taub, *There Goes the Neighborhood: Racial, Ethnic, and Class Tensions in Four Chicago Neighborhoods and Their Meaning for America* (New York: Knopf, 2006).

20. For examples for the postindustrial era, see Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., “Social Transformation Theory, African Americans, and the Rise of Buffalo’s Postindustrial City,” *Buffalo Law Review*, no. 39 (1991): 587–600; and Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 181–207. On the relationship of this process to suburbanization, see Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 159–63, 269–92.

21. Brown, “Black Ghetto Formation,” 267–71.

22. Pattillo-McCoy, *Black Picket Fences*, 13–25.

23. Notable contributions to the history of African Americans in West Coast cities include Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Quintard Taylor, *The Forging of*

*a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

24. This finding is consistent with research indicating that despite substantial economic growth in the Sunbelt, increasing employment opportunities there, and the ascendancy of local black political leadership in Atlanta, the substantive socioeconomic status of blacks locally remained notably poor relative to that of their white peers. General economic growth does not readily alter entrenched patterns of racial inequality. See Orfield and Ashkinaze, *The Closing Door*, 45–68.

25. See Joe R. Feagin, "A House Is Not a Home: White Racism and U.S. Housing Practices," in Bullard et al., *Residential Apartheid*, 17–48.

26. Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth, White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 108–11.

27. Hayward Derrick Horton, "Race and Wealth: A Demographic Analysis of Black Ownership," *Sociological Inquiry* 62, no. 4 (November 1992): 488.

28. Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 84–88. See also Joe T. Darden, "African American Residential Segregation: An Examination of Race and Class in Metropolitan Detroit," in Bullard et al., *Residential Apartheid*, 82–94.

29. Laura Counts, "Brown's Newest Cause Close to Home," *Oakland Tribune*, August 22, 2003.

30. Bart Landry, *The New Black Middle Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 67–93.

31. Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 60–112.

32. Douglas Massey and Eric Fong, "Segregation and Neighborhood Quality: Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians in the San Francisco Metropolitan Area," *Social Forces* 69 (1990): 15–32.

33. John Yinger, *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost: The Continuing Costs of Housing Discrimination* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995), 187–88.

34. Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 214.

35. Clarence Y. H. Lo, *Small Property versus Big Government: Social Origins of the Property Tax Revolt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 121–22.

36. What occurred in Oakland is similar to the aggregate process in Cleveland in the 1970s. See George C. Galster, "White Flight from Racially Integrated Neighborhoods in the 1970s: The Cleveland Experience," *Urban Studies* 27, no. 3 (1990): 385–99.

37. Chris Rhomberg, *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 50–62.

38. Joe R. Feagin and Robert Parker, *Building American Cities: The Urban Real Estate Game* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 129–53.

39. George Galster, "Racial Steering by Real Estate Agents: Mechanisms and Motives," *Review of Black Political Economy* 18 (1990): 39–63.

40. John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 116–34.

41. Fainstein, "Race, Class, and Segregation," 387.

42. Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth, White Wealth*, 136–50.
43. See Bruce D. Haynes, *Red Lines, Black Spaces: The Politics of Race and Space in a Black Middle-Class Suburb* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
44. Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, 116–22.
45. Joe R. Feagin applies this concept specifically to the black middle class in a work co-authored with Melvin P. Sikes, *Living with Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 100.
46. Thomas M. Shapiro links the significant differences in transgenerational wealth to these advantages for middle-class whites. See his *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 87–154.
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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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#### CHAPTER FIFTEEN

I always have people to thank for their gracious gift of time, intellectual energy, and support. First, I would like to thank Joe Trotter and Ken Kusmer for supporting my scholarly work and patiently awaiting my article’s arrival. Cheryl D. Hicks and Lisa Levenstein provided me with copies of their scholarly work to examine while I was writing this article. Finally, I want to acknowledge Christina Greene, Lisa Levenstein, Karen Sotiropoulos, Barbara Wallace, and my colleague at Case Western Reserve University, Kenneth F. Ledford, for reading parts or all of this essay in draft form and offering useful comments for revision.

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13. *Ibid.*, 105.

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17. “US Supreme Court Rules on Durham Case,” *Journal of Housing* 26, no. 1 (1969): 35.

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19. Temma Kaplan, *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1.

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23. *Ibid.*

24. “US Supreme Court Rules on Durham Case.” While Thorpe’s case was the most well known, she would not be the sole, nor the last, tenant to legally challenge housing officials’ eviction practices. More research needs to be done on the various and explicit claims and judicial cases brought by tenants and tenant advocates and on the resulting

legal decisions' concrete and long-term effects on tenant protections and rights. For other cases, see, for instance, "San Antonio Eviction Suit Dismissed by Federal Court" and "New York Authority Eviction Policies Upheld," both in *Journal of Housing* 27, no. 3 (1970): 149.

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26. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing*, 208.

27. National Welfare Rights Organization, "Bill of Welfare Rights," box 8, folder 5, "Membership Miscellany, 1967–1972," George Wiley Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

28. "A CORE Charge to the White House Conference," November 17–18, 1965, box 7, folder 1, "White House Conference on Civil Rights—1965—Papers by Participants," Wiley Papers.

29. The use of male pronouns to represent the interests of the black community has been the subject of feminist scholarly critiques. In the book-length 1967 political manifesto *Black Power*, Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton also talked primarily about men in the couple of instances when they did critique the government's social-service and welfare programs. When I, as a panelist of a 2007 American Historical Association roundtable session reprising *Black Power*, raised this critique, Hamilton acknowledged the un-interrogated chauvinism infusing the book. See Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage, 1967), 18, 21. Moreover, Michael Flug, a CORE organizer who worked with black women low-wage workers to establish the first chapter of the Maryland Freedom Union in 1966, has discussed how male CORE organizers often viewed these black women as a potential problem and tended not to value women as leaders as much as they should have. Michael Flug, "Organized Labor and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s: The Case of the Maryland Freedom Union," *Labor History* 31 (Summer 1991): 322–46. However, scholars such as Jennifer Mittelstadt, in *From Welfare to Workfare: The Unintended Consequences of Liberal Reform, 1945–1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), have also shown that black (and white) middle-class leaders sometimes consciously decided to avoid focusing on black single mothers because of the public stigma of deviancy—a stigma that often extended to the entire black community. Whether CORE consciously deployed such a strategy would require more research. I would like to thank Lisa Levenstein for encouraging me to think more about this issue.

30. "A CORE Charge to the White House Conference."

31. The modernization program became operational with the establishment of its first program in Minneapolis. Other programs were established in Winston-Salem, Atlanta, Philadelphia, and Columbus, Ohio. See Jack Bryan, "Public Housing Modernization," *Journal of Housing* 28, no. 4 (1971): 169.

32. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing*, 173. Most of the information on Baltimore is drawn from my book.

33. See, for instance, Howard, "'More than Shelter,'" 56 n. 83.

34. "Rhode Island Enacts Tenants' Rights Laws," *Journal of Housing* 25, no. 5 (1968): 259; "Tenants' Rights Boosted in Michigan," *Journal of Housing* 25, no. 8 (1968): 423;

quotation appears in “New Baltimore Resident Advisory Board Active,” *Journal of Housing* 26, no. 1 (1969): 78.

35. “Public Housing Tenants in St. Louis Have Been on Rent Strike for Six Months,” *Journal of Housing* 26, no. 7 (1969): 351.

36. *Ibid.*, 352.

37. *Ibid.*, 351, 352.

38. “Tenant-Management Issues,” *Journal of Housing* 27, no. 10 (1970): 534.

39. Rose Wylie, news release, February 24, 1972, box 30, folder 7, “National Tenants Organization, 1972 (cont.),” Wiley Papers. See also Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 279. On the \$25,000 grant, see “Philadelphia Housing Authority Contracts with Residents,” *Journal of Housing* 27, no. 3 (1970): 144–45.

40. Venkatesh, *American Project*, 59. San Francisco also established a citywide Public Housing Tenants Association (PHTA), in 1971. See Howard, “More than Shelter,” 58.

41. Biography of Rose Wylie, n.d., box 30, folder 6, “National Tenants Organization, 1972,” Wiley Papers. In 2001, Rose Wylie served as chair of the board of directors of the National Housing Law Project in Oakland, California. On the second migration, see James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). Gregory’s book, while discussing how black people in northern cities “leveraged civil rights” and outlining the tools of black political activity, focuses (like most studies of civil rights) on traditional or well-known organizations and people. The voices of the most economically marginalized sectors of black urban communities are absent.

42. Don McDonough, “Mrs. Wylie Arrested on Forgery Charge,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 23, 1972, box 30, folder 7, “National Tenants Organization, 1972 (cont.),” Wiley Papers.

43. Paula Herbut, “Lawyer for Mrs. Wylie Calls Charges ‘Political,’” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 24, 1972, box 30, folder 7, “National Tenants Organization, 1972 (cont.),” Wiley Papers. See also McDonough, “Mrs. Wylie Arrested on Forgery Charge.”

44. Herbut, “Lawyer for Mrs. Wylie Calls Charges ‘Political.’”

45. Len Lear, “Mrs. Wylie Harassed for Aiding the Poor, Her Followers Charge,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 26, 1972, box 30, folder 7, “National Tenants Organization, 1972 (cont.),” Wiley Papers.

46. *Ibid.* See also Countryman, *Up South*, 264.

47. Lear, “Mrs. Wylie Harassed for Aiding the Poor.”

48. Wylie, news release, February 24, 1972.

49. *Ibid.*

50. For further discussion of these overlaps, see Countryman, *Up South*; Greene, *Our Separate Ways*; and Williams, “Black Women, Urban Politics, and Engendering Black Power.”

51. Wylie, news release, February 24, 1972.

52. Don McDonough, “Rizzo Seeks to Put Housing Authority into Receivership,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 15, 1972, box 30, folder 7, “National Tenants Organization, 1972 (cont.),” Wiley Papers.

53. Ibid.
54. "A Brief Description of NTO," box 30, folder 6, "National Tenants Organization, 1972," Wiley Papers.
55. Biography of Rose Wylie.
56. "N.T.O. Supports Rose Wylie, Condemns [sic] Rizzo Attack on R.A.B.," news release, March 18, 1972, box 30, folder 7, "National Tenants Organization, 1972 (cont.)," Wiley Papers.
57. Ibid.
58. American Friends Service Committee, news release, April 12, 1972, box 30, folder 7, "National Tenants Organization, 1972 (cont.)," Wiley Papers.
59. "Tenant-Management Issues," 534–43.
60. National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, NAHRO History, <http://www.nahro.org/about/history.cfm>.
61. "Tenant-Management Issues," 535.
62. Ibid., 536.
63. Ibid., 540.
64. Ibid., 542.
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66. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing*, 178, 181.
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a prominent black economist and, among other things, the founding editor of *The Review of Black Political Economy*) to Emmer M. Lancaster, January 15, 1949, box 3, folder M; Thelma Dale (assistant campaign manager of the Progressive Party) to Emmer M. Lancaster, June 6, 1952, box 1, folder D, all in RG 40, Records of the Advisor on Negro Affairs.

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INDEX

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---

- Abernathy, Ralph D., 295  
abortions, publicly funded, 159  
*Abramowicz v. Lefkowitz*, 77–78  
Abramowitz, William, 395  
Abyssinian Baptist Church (New York), 256, 257  
Acme supermarket chain, 260  
Adams, Carolyn, 106–7, 109  
Adams, Clara, 165  
Adam's Mark hotel chain, 399  
Addisleigh Park, Queens (NY), 166–67, 174  
*Advertising Age*, 372  
advertising, class, 384–85, 392–93  
advertising to black consumers, 359, 361–62, 363, 379–83; alcohol and liquor ads, 369; beauty products, 390; black advertising executives, 381, 382, 387, 389–90; Black Power movement and, 388–90; “buppie” and underclass marketing, 390–93; class-specific, 368; in media publications, 380, 381–82; by real estate agents, 136, 164–65, 167  
affirmative action: bureaucratic interpretation of, 221; in California, 55; and class-determined racial inequality theory, 263; in construction industry, 219, 235–44; numerical targets, 220; public-sector jobs, 306; symbolic/national drive, 11; for whites, 299; and women, 305, 311  
African American Coordinated Marketing Agency, 383–84  
African American heritage-tourism industry. *See* tourism industry  
African American Parents for Quality Education, 93  
*African American Urban Experience: Perspectives from the Colonial Period to the Present, The*, xii  
African American women: beauty culture for, 400–2; and black church activism, 246, 252–54, 258–59; black women's labor, 12; and chauvinism, 493n29; citizenship struggles of, 316–36; death rates, 155; and deindustrialization, 11; domestic violence, 342, 348–49; female-headed households, 301, 305, 311, 312, 315; and HIV/AIDS, 154; homeless, 11; in HOPE VI projects, 155; “Invisible revolution,” 320–21; labor-organizing activities, 12; participation in public housing management decisions, 324–30; prisoners, 157; and public housing inequalities, 12; and public welfare programs, 319–24; and Second Great Migration, 27–29, 35, 36; service workers, 104, 107–8, 295–315; single mothers, 339, 342–43, 353–54; unemployment rates, 299; and white working women, 308  
African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church (Bethel), 245  
*Afro-American* family of newspapers, 383  
Afro Sheen advertisements, 390  
Agran, Nathan, 130–31  
agricultural labor, 346; and seasonal migration, 99–4; and Second Great Migration, 23–24, 29; of the third world, 64–65  
agriculture, corporate, and price supports, 450n16  
Aid for Southern Oppressed, 257–58



- AIDS. *See* HIV/AIDS
- Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), 337–55, 496n2
- Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), 11, 275, 496n2; in Nevada, 295–97; and NWRO, 303; and “politics of disgust,” 317, 318; and public housing, 325–26; TANF replacing, 311–12
- air-traffic controller strike, 305
- Alabama, and Second Great Migration, 24
- Alberto-Culver, 402
- alcoholic beverages industry, and consumer behavior, 13–14
- alcoholism, 341, 349
- Alexander, Belle, 27–28, 29, 32
- Alexander, Raymond Pace, 255, 256, 349
- Alienation: of black militants, 215; of black poor, 206
- Allen, Jesse, 215–16
- Allen, Richard, 245
- Alonzo, Blanca, 311
- Amalgamated Clothing Workers, 299
- ambulance services, 68
- AME Review*, 255
- America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible*, 218
- American Apartheid*, 265
- American Creed, 207
- American Demographic*, 391
- American Dilemma, An*, 222–23
- American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), 240, 241, 259; Building and Construction Trades Department, 239; Human Rights Committee, 231
- American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, 305
- American Friends Service Committee. *See* Quakers
- American Journal of Public Health*, 69
- American Marketing Association, 383
- Amsterdam News*, 164, 384–85
- ANC Mothers Anonymous of Watts, 333
- Anderson, Elijah, 116–17
- Anderson, Marian, 255
- Anderson, Reuben, 57–58
- anemia, 144
- Angolan immigrants, 63
- anticommunist sentiment, and labor recruitment, 101
- anti-poverty activists, and tenant activism, 333
- anti-poverty programs, 70
- antisemitism, 227
- antisocial behavior, of the underclass, 116
- A&P company, 226, 260, 396
- Apex Company, 401
- Appalachian migrants, 81, 118
- appraisal of real estate, and race, 282
- apprenticeship training programs, 228, 230, 231, 235, 238, 239
- Arendt, Hannah, 205–6
- Arizona: college education in, 95; fraternities and sororities in, 87; schools in, 90–92, 93
- Arizona Hispanic Community Forum, 96
- Arizona State University, 90, 95, 96
- Arizona Sun*, 83, 84
- Arkansas: migration from, 24, 274
- Armstrong Association, 223, 229
- Arquiro, Bonny, 311
- arthritis, 155
- Asian immigrants, 5–6, 41, 60; in California, 42, 43, 44, 45, 48–49; in Philadelphia, 111
- assimilation of migrants, 114
- Asthma, 155
- Atlanta, 4; African American mayor, 411, 419–20; black suburban population in, 8; Freaknik, 14–15, 404–5, 418–21, 422; multiracial organizations in, 40; and Second Great Migration, 25; tourism in, 406, 407, 408, 409–11, 419–20, 422–23
- Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 404–5
- Atlanta University, 418
- Atlantic Richfield, 260
- AT&T, 311, 392
- Attica State Correctional Facility: black activism in, 10; Puerto Rican inmates, 189; rebellion, 68, 188–94, 459n31
- attorney, profession of, 288
- Autobiography of Malcolm X, The*, 66
- automation, and job loss, 300
- automobile plants, black activism in, 10, 183–89
- Avon, 390, 400
- Ayers, Roy, 366
- Baldwin, James, 36
- Baltimore, Maryland, 4, 317; Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) conference in, 323; public housing in, 332; Resident Advisory Board, 325; tenant activism in, 324–30, 332; welfare-rights organization, 319–22

- Bank of America, 304  
 Banks, Carolyn Long, 419  
 bank teller jobs, 306  
 Baptist churches, 249–51, 255, 479n5;  
   community activism, 245–62;  
   community activism, 289–90; formation  
   of, 480n20; political influence of, 254–61.  
   *See also* names of specific churches  
 Baraka, Amiri, 214, 216, 217  
 Barkan, Bernard, 138  
 Barkley, L. D., 190  
 Barnes, Barbara, 330  
 Barnes, Sue, 142, 147  
 Bartelt, David, 109  
 baseball, 360–61; youth baseball leagues,  
   290–91  
*Baseball* (documentary), 361  
 Basie, Count, 166  
 Batten, Barton, Durstine, and Osorn, 387  
 Bauman, John, 140  
 Bauman, John F., 411  
 Baxter, Norman W., 362  
 beauty-culture industry, 14, 378, 387, 390,  
   400–2  
 Bell, William, 375  
 Bennett, Lerone, Jr., 210, 211  
 Berkeley, California, 164, 272  
*Bibliography on the Urban Crisis*, 205  
 Bill of Rights: and government actions, 321;  
   and tenant activism, 334  
 “Bill of Welfare Rights,” 334  
 Binzen, Peter, 130  
 Birmingham, Alabama, 219, 234  
 Birmingham church bombing, 398  
 “Black Belt,” 24  
*Black Caesar*, 366  
 Black Elks fraternal organization, 255  
*Black Enterprise* magazine, 368–69, 389, 392  
 Black Masons, and boycotts, 260–61  
*Black Metropolis*, 1, 36  
 Black Muslims, 479n5; Arabic taught by,  
   216–17; Attica inmates, 190–91; religious  
   interventions in prisons, 66–67  
 Black Panther Party, 7, 65, 277, 388; and  
   Attica rebellion, 190–91; in Chicago,  
   81; survival programs of, 68; and Young  
   Lords Organization, 61, 67  
 Black, Patricia, 342  
 Black Power movement, 182, 305, 378; and  
   advertising to black consumers, 388–90;  
   and Attica State rebellion, 189–94; and  
   auto industry, 183–89; and beauty-  
   culture industry, 390; “buying black,”  
   367; and Charlotte Three, 194–201; and  
   civil rights activism, 10, 457n3; and  
   consumer activism, 399; and consumer  
   behavior, 14; in Detroit automobile  
   plants, 183–89; and DRUM, 185–86;  
   King’s critique of, 211; and riots, 212–18;  
   and tenant activism, 319–36, 333; and  
   white liberals, 182, 185, 188, 193, 200,  
   201–2, 204, 205, 207–8; and Young Lords  
   Organization, 62, 72  
*Black Rage*, 206  
*Black Scholar, The*, 215  
 black vs. Negro, 214  
 Blackwell, Molly, 352–53  
 Black, William G., 382  
 Blanc, Victor H., 351  
 Blauner, Robert, 215  
 “blaxploitation” movies, 364–66  
 bling-bling culture of consumption, 13–14,  
   359, 370–73  
 blockbusting, 44; in California, 45, 47, 278; in  
   Philadelphia, 123, 124, 125, 136  
 Boeing Airplane Company, 28, 32  
 Boesel, David, 209  
 Bok, Curtis, 223  
 Bok, Derek, 286  
*Bolling v. Sharpe*, 148  
 Bonner, Nathaniel H., Jr., 402  
 Boston, multiracial organizations in, 40  
 Bowen, William, 286  
 Bowery Bank of New York, 129  
 boycotts. *See* selective-patronage campaigns  
 Bradley, Omar, 54–55  
 brain drain, 6, 29  
 Braithewaite, Ann, 160–61, 170  
 Braithewaite, Jim, 160–61, 170–71  
 Branch, Taylor, 181  
 Breyers Ice Cream Company, 226, 260  
 Bronx, Young Lords Organization in, 68–80  
 Brooke Amendment, 335  
 Brooke, Edward, 210  
 Brooklyn Dodgers, 360, 361  
 Brooklyn, government-funded construction,  
   236  
 Brooks, George, 83  
 Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 222  
 Brown, Eric S., 10–11, 263–91  
 Brown, H. Rap, 213, 214, 215  
 Brown, James, 138, 366  
 Brown, James A., 131–32  
 Brown, Jerry, 274

- Brownlow, Curly, 331  
 Brown Power movement, 72, 89  
*Brown v. Board of Education*, 91, 194, 252, 287, 331  
 Bryn Mawr College, 339  
 Buchanan, Mattie, 330  
 Buffalo, New York, 268, 300  
 Buick, 382  
 "buppies," 368, 390-93  
 Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, 362  
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, 65  
 Burke, Joseph, 237  
 Burns, Ken, 361  
 Burress, Thomas H., 227, 231  
*Business Week*, 139, 364  
 Busta Rhymes, 372  
 Butler, Ernest, 135  
 Butler, Helen, 135
- Caesars Palace Hotel, 295, 317  
 Califano, Joseph, 213  
 California: affirmative action plans in, 55; demographic transformations in, 41-43; new racial frontier in, 6; public schools in, 53-54; racial minorities in, 39-59; residential segregation in, 44-49; schools in, 56; and Second Great Migration, 23; suburbanization of, 43-46  
 California Welfare Rights Organization, 296  
 Camarillo, Albert M., 6, 39-59, 60  
 Camden, New Jersey, 63  
 Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, 372-73  
 Campanella, Roy, 166  
 Campbell, Bill, 404, 418, 419-20, 421  
 Campbell, Cloves, Sr., 83  
 Campbell Soup Company, 100, 101  
 Canty, Hattie, 296, 297  
 capitalism, and racism, 388  
 Caribbean immigrants, 5-6, 60, 62-63  
 Carmichael, Stokely, 212, 214, 215, 399, 493n29  
 Carnegie Mellon University, xi, xii  
 carpenters union, 259  
 Carter, Jocelyn, 345  
 Carter-Lewis, Linda, 314  
 Carter, Loretta, 342  
 Case Western University, xii  
 casinos, union organization of, 296  
 Catholic Church, 53; and AFDC rights, 296
- CAUSE, xii  
 Cave, Clarence L., 131  
 Cayton, Horace R., 1, 36, 172, 175  
 Census Bureau, 20, 26, 28  
 Center for African American History and Culture, xi-xii  
 Center for African American Urban Studies and the Economy (CAUSE), xi  
 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 153  
 Central American immigrants, 63, 311; in California, 42; and Young Lords Organization, 62  
 Certaine, Joe, 415  
 Chagrin Falls Park (OH), 163, 165  
 chamber of commerce, 408  
 Chambers, Julius, 194  
 Charleston, South Carolina, hospital workers in, 301  
 Charlotte, North Carolina, 4, 10; violence and intimidation in, 194  
*Charlotte Observer*, 197-98, 199  
 Charlotte Three, 194-201  
 chauvinism, and the black community, 493n29  
 Chavis, Ben, 196  
 Cherry, Charles, 419  
 Cherry, Wesley, 137-38  
 Chicago, 4, 183; Black Panthers in, 81; black suburban population in, 8; building lots, 164; census data, 30, 31; class-segregated middle class black neighborhoods, 268; European immigrants in, 66; gangs in, 65-66; housing segregation in, 2; public housing in, 326, 331; Puerto Rican immigrants in, 63, 65; and Second Great Migration, 23, 25, 30; suburbs of, 279-80; tenant activism in, 326, 330; urban renewal projects in, 67; violence in, 66; Young Lords Organization in, 61, 65, 68, 81  
*Chicago Defender*, 164, 383-84, 385  
 Chicago Housing Tenants Organization, 331  
 Chicago Metropolitan Assurance Company, 367  
 Chicano movement, 7, 83, 84, 89, 90, 93  
 Chicanos, 64, 437n2; and blacks, 85, 90-93, 96-97; defined, 437n2; and discrimination, 96-97; in Phoenix, 93-94, 96; in politics, 89, 92; in schools, 91-92; and Young Lords, 7

- Chicanos por la Causa, 90
- child care, 81, 144, 145, 317; lack of, 338, 341-42, 347; subsidies for, 312
- child care centers, 255; in public housing, 319-24
- child care workers, 302, 308
- children: breakfast program, 68; homeless, 11; illegitimate, 303, 339, 342, 351-52, 353-54; poverty and illness, 144; in suburban advertising, 168-69
- child support payments, 337, 344
- Chin, Elizabeth, 14, 392
- Chinese immigrants, 49, 306; in California, 44
- Chisholm, Terry, 131
- Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, 57
- Chrysler Corporation, 183, 184, 186
- churches and religious groups: activism in postwar Philadelphia, 245-62; black churches defined, 479n5; black cult leaders, 479n5; boycotts and picketing by ministers, 395-96; civil rights activism by, 194, 223, 225, 245-46, 253, 256-62, 395; community service of, 246, 249-50, 253-54, 256-58, 289-90; and conflict resolution, 57; and construction industry hiring, 230; and fraternal lodges, 255; mainline and storefront compared, 246; Mexican American churches, 86, 87; "Mothers of the Church," 253; in Philadelphia, 479n9; political activism of black churches, 11; as social-service centers, 74-75, 87; suburban, 172, 173; and Young Lords, 74-75. *See also* specific groups, e.g., Black Muslims
- Cincinnati, and Second Great Migration, 23
- Cinematation Industries, 365
- Citizens Action Campaign (ACT), 89
- Citizens and Southern Bank, 254
- Citizens Committee Against Juvenile Delinquency, 257
- citizenship, and labor migrants, 98, 100
- city council races, 215
- City University of New York, 68
- civic organizations, 172
- Civic Welfare League, 87
- civil disobedience, 208; and antiwar dissent, 208; rioting as form of, 211-12
- civil disorders of 1964-1968. *See* riots
- civil rights activism, 181, 182, 320, 378; "ask don't demand," 194; by black middle class, 267; and Black Power movement, 10, 457n3; and black spending power, 359; and consumer activism, 393-400; and consumerism, 383-90; and migrants, 38; and riots, 207, 210-11; and tenant activism, 319-36; by Vietnam veterans, 195; and welfare politics, 353-54; and white liberals, 182, 188, 199-200, 201-, 207-8; by World War II vets, 222
- Civil Rights Act of 1964, 201, 302, 304, 320, 364, 457n3
- Civil Rights Act of 1965, 201, 302, 457n3
- civil rights attorneys, 256
- Clairol, 390, 400
- Clarendon County, South Carolina, 257-59
- Clarke, Darrel, 416-17
- Clark, Joseph S., 349-50
- Clark, Kenneth, 210, 211
- class culture, suburbanization of. *See* suburbanization
- class-determined racial inequality theory, 263-64, 265
- class distinctions, 175-78
- class formation, 4; racialized class formation theory, 264-67
- class structure of black communities, 2; advertising aimed at, 368
- Cleaver, Eldridge, 389
- clerical jobs. *See* sales and clerical jobs
- Cleveland, Ohio, 236, 240; and Second Great Migration, 23
- Clinton, Bill, 40, 311
- clothing, spending on, 385
- Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), 306
- Coalition of Minority Organizations (Seaside, CA), 58
- Cobbs, Price M., 206
- Coca-Cola Company, 259, 260, 382, 392
- "code-switching," 307, 308, 309
- Coffy*, 366
- Cohen, Lizabeth, 374, 377
- Coleman, Bessie, 301
- Cole, Nat "King," 176-77
- college education: in Arizona, 90, 95; in New York, 68
- colleges and universities, federally funded construction of, 229
- Collier-Thomas, Bettye, 253, xii
- Collins, E. Steve, 412
- Colombian immigrants, and Young Lords Organization, 62

- colonial military struggles, 215  
*Color*, 381  
 "color blindness," 220  
 Columbia University, 257  
 Columbus, Ohio, 165  
 Commerce Department, Division of Negro Affairs, 362–63  
 Committee of 400, 226, 243  
 Committee on Equal Job Opportunity (CEJO), 223, 230–31  
 Communist Party USA, 277  
 community empowerment, 212  
 community outreach programs, of black churches, 245–62  
 community problem, African Americans and Puerto Ricans viewed as, 118  
 community reinvestment, 374–75  
 Compton, California, 6; as "black city," 45; city politics in, 51–52; Compton Community Partners, 58; conflict resolution in, 57–58; demographics, 42, 43on10; economic change in, 48; employment discrimination, 304; residential segregation in, 44; schools in, 54–55, 55, 56; white exodus, 47  
 concentration camps, ghettos compared to, 211  
 Congregational churches, 479n5  
 Congressional Black Caucus, 333  
 Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), 215, 217, 219, 228, 298; boycotts and picketing used by, 395, 398; chauvinism in, 493n29; critique of government institutions, 323; and employment discrimination, 232, 233, 234, 238, 243; 226–27; and low-income women's activism, 323  
 Connerly, Ward, 93  
 conservatives, black, 93–94, 284, 285, 290  
 conservatives, white, 94, 182; and Charlotte Three, 199–200; and civil rights activism, 201, 208, 213; and Kerner Report, 218; language of black pathology, 211; modern conservatism, 462n72; and welfare policy, 339; working-class New Dealers, 462n72  
 conspicuous consumption, 370–73  
 construction employment, 259; actions against discrimination in, 219–20, 228–34; and affirmative action, 235–44; women workers, 304  
 consumer activism, 13–15, 345–46, 359, 378, 379–83, 393–400; buy black vs. buy white, 367; and civil rights activism, 383–90; post–World War II, 359–75  
*Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, A, 374  
 consumption-oriented social life, 166–67  
 Cook, Barbara, 349  
 Cooperative Produce Foods, 216  
 Copeland, Madge, 87–88  
 Coppin, Levi, 254  
 corporate hiring practices, racism in, 3  
*Corrigan v. Buckley*, 126  
 Cosmair, 402  
 country clubs, segregated, 282, 283  
 Counts, Emma, 343  
*Crash*, 60  
 credit practices of merchants, 398–99  
*Crises of the Republic*, 205–6  
 Crowder, Kyle, 36  
 Cuban immigrants, 63, 311; and Young Lords Organization, 62  
 Culinary Workers Union Local 226, 296  
 cultural identity, 63  
 cultural nationalism, 216  
 culture of poverty, 99, 113, 115–16, 206, 339–40; in Philadelphia, 7; and the underclass, 117–19  
 Cunningham, E. Luther, 249–50  
 Curry, George, 371  
 Curvin, Robert, 216, 217  
 custodial workers, 308  
  
 Daddy Grace, 479n5  
 Dagen, Irvin, 325–26  
*Daily News*, 260, 414, 415, 416  
 Da Streetz, 392  
*Daughters of Thunder*, 253  
 Davidoff, Sid, 76  
 Davis-Bacon laws, 228  
 Davis, Ossie, 173  
 D.C. General Hospital, 157, 158  
 D.C. Health Care Alliance, 158  
 DDB Worldwide, 392  
 Dead Prez, 370  
 Dean Witter Reynolds, 368–69  
 death of autoworkers, 186  
 death rates, of women in Washington, D.C., 155  
 DeDorantes, Esteban, 85  
 Dee, Ruby, 173  
 defense-industry jobs, 298  
 deindustrialization, 3, 4, 8, 9, 80, 305, 338; in

- California, 47; and consumer behavior, 14; in Philadelphia, 105–7, 112; and Puerto Rican migrants, 61, 65; and urbanization, 406; and women, 11, 306
- Delaware, and Second Great Migration, 24
- Democratic Party: black membership in, 255; and welfare rights groups, 296
- Denton, Nancy, 265
- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 321, 324, 332–33; HOPE VI project, 154–55
- Department of Labor, 236, 239; Office of Federal Contract Compliance, 239–40
- Depression, 155, 341
- deprivation and frustration invoking crisis, 205–6, 207
- Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century*, 377, 391–92
- Detroit, 4; black activism in automobile plants, 10, 71–72, 183–89; black suburban population in, 8; building lots, 164; class-segregated middle class black neighborhoods, 268; racism in, 3; riots, 204, 207, 210, 212; and Second Great Migration, 23, 26, 27, 28–29; semiskilled jobs, 300; tenants' affairs board in, 325
- Deutsch, Inc., 392
- diabetes, 143, 145–48, 155, 309
- DiCicco, Frank, 415
- Dickey, William, 85
- Dilworth, Richardson, 126, 350
- discrimination in reverse, 225–26
- Divine, Pat, 67
- Doctors Community Healthcare, 158
- Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), 185–87
- Doles, David, 163
- domestic service workers, 12, 298, 347, 348; and Second Great Migration, 29
- Dominican Republic immigrants, 63; and Young Lords Organization, 62
- "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaign, 221–22, 225–26, 394, 398
- Dougherty, Philip, 385
- Douglass Hospital, 250
- Douglas, William O., 321
- Downington Industrial School, 250
- Drake, St. Clair, 1, 36, 172, 175
- drug addiction, 11, 143, 341, 349; crack and methamphetamine epidemics, 310; as crime, 154, 155–56; health insurance coverage, 154; and HIV/AIDS, 153; scapegoating, 153–54
- Drug, Hospital, and Health Care Employees Union, 70, 72
- drug treatment centers, 69, 79
- Du Bois, W. E. B., 250–51, 252, 363; *The Philadelphia Negro*, 1
- due process clause, and restrictive covenants, 127
- Dugan, Thomas, 234, 236–37
- Duncan, Ruby, 296, 312
- Dunston, Alfred, 259
- Durham, North Carolina, 317, 319–24
- East Bay area, California, 268; household income and poverty rates, 270; pre-civil rights era middle class, 274–76; professionals living in, 271; racialized class formation theory, 266
- Eastern European immigrants, 60
- East Harlem, 68, 69, 74–75
- East Oakland, California: police aggression in, 68
- East Oakland Redevelopment Center, 287
- East Oakland Youth Development, 287
- East Orange, New Jersey, 164
- East Palo Alto, California, 6; as "black city," 45; city politics in, 51; conflict resolution in, 56–57; demographics, 42, 51, 431n11; economic change in, 48; Mural Art Project, 57; One East Palo Alto group, 57; residential segregation in, 44, 45; schools in, 54, 56
- Ebony* magazine, 166–67, 174, 376, 381, 388–89, 391, 400, 401
- Economic Opportunity Act, 302
- economic restructuring, following World War II, 64–65, 98, 99–104
- "economic rights," 222
- Edland, John, 459n31
- Edley, Alexander, 227
- Edley, Christopher, 227
- education: inadequate, 338; of men, 307, 309; of migrants in Second Great Migration, 29; and racial inequality, 264, 265; and Second Great Migration, 33, 34; and welfare recipients, 346–47; of women, 307, 310
- Eldon League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 186–88
- electricians union, 259
- Ellington, Mercer, 166

- Ellis, Opal, 83
- Elmira Jeffries Memorial Home, 254
- Embry, Robert, Jr., 324–25
- Emerge* magazine, 371
- employment discrimination: and affirmative action, 220–21; and black activism, 10–11; and black church activism, 246, 258–61; in construction industry, 219–44; and gradualist liberalism, 222–25; labor force statistics, 429n33; militancy campaigns, 225–28; in Philadelphia, 219–44
- Employment Security Review*, 101–2
- Englewood, New Jersey, 398
- Envision Hospital Corporation, 158
- Episcopal churches, 251, 479n5
- Epstein, Henry, 397
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 239, 302; Latinos filing complaints with, 55
- Equality of outcome and equality of opportunity, 220
- Esso (Exxon), 259
- Ethiopian migrants, 311
- Ethnic identity, 63
- Ethnicity, and race, 7
- Ethridge, Mark, 199
- European immigrants, 55; in California, 45; in Chicago, 66
- Evanston, Illinois, 164
- eviction from public housing, 320, 321, 322, 333
- Executive Leadership Council, 287
- Executive Order 8, 802, 222
- Executive Order 11, 114, 219, 236
- Executive Order 11, 246, 239–40
- Eyes*, 381
- Fainstein, Norman, 265
- Fair Employment Commission, and housing discrimination, 130–31
- Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), 298
- Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), 222, 223–24, 246
- Fair employment practices laws, 231, 246
- Fair Housing Act of 1961, 131
- Fair Housing Act of 1968, 276, 277
- Fair Housing Council of the Delaware Valley, 133, 137
- Fair Play*, 223
- family disorganization, 342, 349; of the underclass, 116
- family members, and construction industry hiring practices, 230, 237
- Fanon, Frantz, 215
- farm bill, 450n16
- Farmer, James, 235
- Farmingdale, New York, 164–65
- farmwork. *See* agricultural labor
- Father Divine, 479n5
- Federal Bureau of Investigation, 460n44
- Federal Housing Administration (FHA), 2, 109, 124, 125, 126–27, 128, 228, 246, 276; in California, 44, 47
- Federal housing policy, 80
- Federal Public Housing Authority, 228
- Fellowship House (Philadelphia), 250
- feminization of poverty, 343
- Ferguson, James, 461n62
- Fernández, Johanna, 6–7, 60–82
- 15 Million Negroes and 15 Billion Dollars*, 375
- Filipino immigrants, 49; in California, 45, 53
- film industry, and consumer behavior, 13–14
- financial-services companies, 368–69
- fire department, in Philadelphia, 328
- firefighters, affirmative action in hiring, 306
- first amendment, and tenant activism, 334
- Fitch, Dave, 414
- Fitzgerald, Ella, 166
- five percenters, 190
- Flamm, Michael, 207
- Fletcher, Arthur, 220, 242
- Florida, and Second Great Migration, 24
- Flug, Michael, 493n29
- Fogelson, Robert, 204–5
- Fonda, Jane, 295
- Foner, Nancy, 6
- food banks, 148, 158
- Food Fair, 260
- food insecurity, in Washington, D.C., 147–48
- food processing industry, 99–104
- food-stamp benefits, 303
- Forbes* magazine, 371
- Ford Motor Company, 183, 382
- Fort Ord, and Seaside, 42, 45–46, 48, 58
- 40 Acres and a Mule production company, 392
- fourteenth amendment: and government actions, 321; and restrictive covenants, 127; and tenant activism, 334
- 400 Ministers, 225
- Franchise Boys, 372
- Franklin, John Hope, 210

- fraternal organizations: and boycotts, 260-61;  
and church membership, 255
- fraternities and sororities, 172, 299,  
404-5, 411-17; in Arizona, 87. *See also*  
Freaknik; Greek Picnic
- Frazier, E. Franklin, 36, 266
- Freaknik, 14-15, 404-5, 418-21, 422
- Fredrickson, George M., 6
- Friends Neighborhood Guild Settlement  
House, 250
- full employment, calls for, 211
- Fuqua, Carl, 177
- Gaddis, Henry "Poison," 67
- Gaillard, Robin Rucker, 308
- gangs: in California, 53; in Chicago, 65-66;  
transformation to political organizations,  
67
- garbage collection, 40; in New York, 68-69, 73
- Garcia, Rory, 66
- Gatewood, Willard, 175
- Gawande, Atul, 151
- Gaye, Marvin, 366
- Gay, Eustace, 255
- gender issues, 2, 214; labor markets and, 104;  
and social-welfare policy, 11-15. *See also*  
African American women
- General Motors, 183
- Geneva Convention, 192
- geriatrics, 151
- ghetto, CORE targeting, 323
- ghetto riots. *See* riots
- Gibson, D. Parke, 366, 383, 386, 389
- "gilded ghetto," 268
- Gilhool, Thomas, 328
- Gill-Olivarez, Grace, 90, 97
- Gilmore, Glenda, 181
- Girard College, 252, 261
- Glazer, Nathan, 220
- Global labor competition, 80, 305
- Goins, Joseph Preston, 460n44
- Gola, Thomas, 328
- Goldberg, Louis, 209
- Goode, Bill, 329-30
- Goode, Calvin, 92
- Goode, Judith, 135
- Goode, W. Wilson, 411, 412
- Gordon, Delores, 234
- Go Tell It on the Mountain*, 36
- Gotham, Kevin Fox, 127
- government-funded construction, 228-31,  
235-36, 242
- Graham, Delores, 349
- Graham, Hugh, 205
- Graham, Hugh Davis, 221
- Graham, Lawrence Otis, 419-20
- Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five,  
369-370
- Granger, Lester, 353
- Grant, Elizabeth, 14, 404-23
- Grant, James, 195-201
- Gray, Jesse, 333
- Greater Philadelphia Magazine*, 231
- Greater Philadelphia Movement, 106
- Greater Southeast Community Hospital,  
158
- Great Migration, 3, 5, 19, 268, 274; destina-  
tions, 21-23; numbers, 20-21; white  
attacks on black migrants, 204
- Great Society programs, 213, 214, 215-16,  
302, 324
- Greekfest '88, 412
- Greek Picnic, 14-15, 405, 411-17, 419-21,  
422
- Greene, Christina, 317
- Greensboro, North Carolina, 183
- Green, William, 415
- Gregg, Robert, 247-48, 251, 252
- Gregory, James N., 6, 19-38
- Grier, Eunice, 134-35, 165, 176, 178
- Grier, George, 134-35, 165, 176, 178
- Grier, William H., 206
- Grigsby, William G., 127, 134
- Guatemalan migrants, 311
- Gulf Oil company, 226, 260
- Gutierrez, Alfredo, 89, 92, 95
- Gutierrez, Rosendo, 92, 97
- Guzman, Pablo, 77
- Guzman, Paolo Yoruba, 62
- Haggerty, C. J., 241-42
- Hagler, William, 165
- Hahn, Harlan, 215
- Haitian migrants, 311
- Hall, Calvin, 128
- Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, 181
- Hamilton, Art, 92
- Hamilton, Charles, 399
- Hamilton, Charles V., 493n29
- Hampton, Fred, 67, 81
- Hampton, John, 334
- Hancock, Ange-Marie, 317
- Handlin, Oscar, 207
- Handsaker, Morrison, 103



- Hansberry, Lorraine, 163–64
- Harlem: liquor store boycott, 396–98; Sugar Hill, 166; urban renewal in, 68
- Harlem Hospital, 236
- Harper, Kevin, 152
- Harper, Will, 147, 152
- Harris, Ernest, 129–30
- Harris, Gery, 129–30
- Harrison, Claude, 415–16
- Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965, 49, 63
- Hartsfield, William B., 409–10
- Harvest of American Racism report, 209–10, 213, 214
- Harvey, David, 406
- Hassan, Colonel, 216
- Havens, Ralph, 351
- Hawkins, Octavia, 299
- Hawkins, Reginald, 194
- Hayden, Dolores, 413
- Hayes, Isaac, 366
- Haynes, Ruby, 32
- Health and Hospitals Corporation, 71, 77
- health care, 40, 309, 317, 341, 349; low-wage jobs and, 338; in Washington, D.C., 8–9, 142–59. *See also* hospitals
- health insurance, 151, 158, 207, 313; for hospital workers, 301
- Health Revolutionary Unity Movement, 71, 72, 76, 78–79
- heart disease, 143, 144, 148–51
- Helene Curtis, 400
- Hempstead, Long Island, 395
- Hempstead Park, New York, 167
- Henderson, Rickey, 290
- Henry, Anthony, 331
- Herman, Ellen, 210
- Hershberg, Theodore, 112
- Higginbotham, A. Leon, 227, 287
- high-technology industry, 9, 310, 311, 313
- Highway Act of 1944, 106
- Highway Act of 1956, 106
- Hiler, Peter, 414
- Hilfiger, Tommy, 371, 392
- Hill, Herbert, 228, 236
- Hill, Lenora, 346–47
- Hill, Panathy, 311
- Hilton Hotels, 313
- Hinton, Milt, 169
- hip-hop culture, 13–14, 359, 369–73
- Hirsch, Arnold R., 2, xii
- Hispanic, defined, 437n2
- Historic preservation, 410
- HIV/AIDS, 143, 152–59
- Hochner, Arthur, 107
- Hoggard, Dennie W., 255, 256
- Holiday, Billie, 166
- Holiness churches, 253–54, 479n5
- Holshouser, James, 199–200
- Holte, Clarence, 387, 389
- Home for the Aged and Infirm Colored Persons, 250
- homelessness, 11, 144; domestic violence leading to, 338; and tuberculosis, 157; in Washington, D.C., 154, 155
- Home Owners' Loan Corporation, 109, 126–27, 228
- homicide, 11
- Hood, Alfred, 196–99
- Hoover, Bob, 56–57
- hospitals: access to, 158; in California, 53; code of ethics, 73; construction employment discrimination, 241; government-funded construction, 229, 236; Lincoln Hospital, and Young Lords Organization, 68–80; in Los Angeles, 55–56; in New York, 61
- Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE), 296, 297
- hotels, discrimination by, 399
- hotel workers, 296, 313
- household furnishings, spending on, 385
- House Judiciary Committee, 235
- Housing Act of 1937, 333
- Housing Act of 1949, 140, 330
- Housing Act of 1972, 332–33
- Housing segregation. *See* residential segregation
- Houston, United Concerned Citizens of Baytown, 40
- Hue*, 381
- Hughes, Richard, 207
- hunger: anti-hunger programs, 158; foreign v. domestic aid, 257–58; “The New Food Stamp Bill of Rights,” 335; “The New School Lunch and School Breakfast Bill of Rights,” 334; in Washington, D.C., 147–48
- Hunter, Tera W., xii
- Hunt, James, 200–1
- Hurricane Katrina, 4–5, 318
- Hutch, Willie, 366
- hypersegregation, patterns of, 265
- hypertension, 143, 144, 149–51, 155, 309, 450n18

- identity politics, 220  
immigration policy, 63  
Immigration Reform Act of 1965, 306  
*Impossible Revolution, The*, 207  
incarceration: and health, 144; rates of, 11.  
*See also* prisoners  
income, 310; household income and poverty rates, 270; racial inequality, 264, 265; and residence, 284  
income levels, 380–81; gender differences, 35; and Second Great Migration, 33, 34–35, 34–36; skin-color effects, 34–35  
income-maintenance welfare, 207  
Indianapolis, and Second Great Migration, 23  
Indian immigrants, 49  
individual pathology, racism as, 222–23  
Indonesian immigrants, 311  
industrial and blue-collar jobs, immigrants holding, 37  
industrial proletariat, 2  
Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America, 222  
infant mortality, 143, 144, 448n6  
initiative on Race, 40  
Inkster (MI), 165  
*Inquirer*, 418  
installment payments for purchases, 345  
insurance companies, 366–68, 374–75; and consumer behavior, 13–14  
Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), 20  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), 230–31  
International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), 300–1, 306, 310  
International Monetary Fund, 63  
Interstate United Newspapers, 382  
Intimidating actions. *See* violent or intimidating acts  
“invisible revolution,” 320–21  
Ip, Alice, 310–11  
Iranian immigrants, 63, 311  
Irvin, Dona, 19, 27, 29, 32–33, 37  
Italian Americans, in Newark, 212  
  
Jackson, Bell, 341, 342, 344  
Jackson, Jesse, 81, 399  
Jackson, Mary, 254  
Jackson, Maynard, 411  
Jackson, Thomas, 118  
Jacquet, Illinois, 166  
Jaguar, 392  
  
Jamaican immigrants, 63  
James, Kathy, 415  
James, Sherman, 450n18  
Japanese Hawaiian immigrants, and Young Lords Organization, 62  
Japanese immigrants, in California, 45  
Jayne, Dorothy, 165, 171, 177  
Jeffries, Elmira, 254  
*Jet*, 381, 390–91  
Jim Crow, 181, 183; in Atlanta, 408, 409, 410; Birmingham protests, 219; and Black College Reunion, 419; boycotts fighting, 364; Charlotte segregation, 194; and consumer activities, 370, 379, 393; employment issues in Philadelphia, 231–33; Great Society programs, 302; in insurance companies, 367; and management of Freaknik, 15, 419; and NWRO, 297; Phoenix segregation, 86, 89; racism and riots, 210; restrictive covenants, 46; and Second Great Migration, 19  
Jim Crow economy, 12, 315; black women's role in, 12, 304, 307; in the South, 33, 246  
Jimenez, Jose “Cha Cha,” 66–67  
job training, 207, 214  
“John Henryism,” 450n18  
Johnson, A. Benjamin, 327–28  
Johnson, Alfreddie, 58  
Johnson, John, 391  
Johnson, John H., 381, 384  
Johnson, Karl Ellis, 11, 245–62  
Johnson, Lyndon B., 207, 208, 210, 213, 239–40, 243, 302  
Johnson, Margaret E., 324–25  
Johnson Products Company, 390, 401, 402  
Jones, Buck, 325  
Jones, Caroline, 389  
Jones, Jacqueline, 11–12, 118, 295–315  
Jones, James, 233–34  
Jones, Lillian, 332  
Jones, O. T., 259  
Jones, Roxanne, 334  
*Journal of American History*, 5  
*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 419  
*Journal of Urban History*, xii, 5  
juries, racial composition of, 197  
juvenile crime, 257, 350; and black church activism, 249  
  
Kallick, Edward A., 351  
Kansas City, and Second Great Migration, 23  
Kaplan, Temma, 320–21

- Katz, Michael B., 2-3, 104, 204, xii
- Kee, Frostena, 332
- Kelley, Robin D. G., 93
- Kennedy, John F., 219, 229, 235-36
- Kerner Commission report of 1968, 1, 203-18, 208-12, 212-18
- Kerner, Otto, 208
- Killian, Lewis M., 207
- King, Jean, 325, 326, 330, 331-32
- King, Martin Luther, Jr., 181, 185, 205, 209, 252, 261; on discrimination, 211, 212
- King, Rodney, 419
- Kiplinger Washington Letter*, 363
- Kline, David, 137, 138
- Kool Moe Dee, 370
- Kornbluh, Felicia, 399
- Kresge, boycott of, 393
- Kress, boycott of, 393
- Kronick, Jane C., 339
- KRS-One, 370
- Ku Klux Klan, 278
- Kunstler, William, 190
- Kunzig, Robert Lowe, 350
- Kusmer, Kenneth, xii
- Labor Department, Bureau of Employment Security, 101-2
- labor markets, global, 80
- labor organizing, women's role in, 12
- Lacot, Antero, 73, 74, 76, 79
- Lamb, James, 67
- Lancaster, Emmer, 362, 363
- Lane, Roger, 117
- Langston, Robert J., 256-57
- language issues, limited-English proficient students, 54
- Las Vegas, 4; black women's labor in, 12; protests in, 295-97; public housing in, 332; tenant activism in, 332
- Latin American Club of Arizona, 87
- Latinas/os, 5-6, 41, 60, 62-63, 306, 310, 314; in California, 6, 39-59, 41-43, 48-49, 49-59; defined, 437n2; labor force participation, 309; in Philadelphia, 111; in Phoenix, 7, 83-97; as underclass, 440n1; and Young Lords Organization, 62
- Laurenti, Luigi, 139
- Lawson, Steven F., 221
- lawyers. *See* middle class
- Lazy B Stables, and the Charlotte Three, 195-99
- lead poisoning, 40; anti-lead poisoning legislation, 69; detection program, 68
- League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 185-86
- League of Women Voters, 296
- Leal, Annette, 311
- Lee, Bobby, 67
- Lee, Spike, 392
- Lefebvre, Henri, 413
- Legal Service lawyers, and tenant activism, 324-25
- Legal Services lawyers, and tenant activism, 328, 332
- Lemann, Nicholas, 3, 30, 32, 37
- letter carriers, affirmative action, 306
- Levenstein, Lisa, 11-12, 12-13, 317, 337-55
- Levittown, 127-28, 129, 138-39, 171-72
- Lewis, Earl, xii
- Lewis, Mahlon M., 249
- Lewis, Oscar, 113-14, 206
- Licorish, Joshua, 259
- Lieberman, Barnet, 232-33
- Liebersohn, Stanley, 36
- Lincoln Hospital, and Young Lords Organization, 68-80
- Lindsay, John V., 73-74, 76, 77, 209
- Liquor Action Committee, 397
- liquor companies, 385, 399; advertising by, 369, 392
- liquor store boycott of 1959-61, 396-98
- Liska, Ed, 187
- Little Rock, Arkansas, 252
- living-wage campaigns, 312, 313, 314
- Long Beach, demographics, 41
- Long, David W., 461n62
- Long, Larry, 36
- Long, Lester, 216
- López, Marcelino, 51
- Lopez, Omar, 62
- L'Oréal, 402
- Los Angeles, 6, 62, 64; billboard advertising in, 369; black suburban population in, 8; demographics, 41, 42, 60; employment rates, 309; hospitals in, 55-56; public housing in, 333-34; residential discrimination in, 43-44; schools in, 54; and Second Great Migration, 23, 28-29; tenant activism in, 333-34
- Los Angeles County Civil Service Commission, 56

- Los Angeles County Office of Affirmative Action Compliance, 55–56
- Los Angeles County Welfare Rights Organization, 333–34
- Los Angeles Times*, 52, 54, 370, 459n31
- Louisiana, migration from, 24, 274
- low birth weight, 143, 144
- low-wage jobs, 259; and health insurance, 158; and health issues, 338; and stress, 150–51; and welfare assistance, 346–48; women workers, 295–315
- Luckett, Frances, 308
- Luckingham, Bradford, 84, 87, 94
- Lutheran churches, 479n5
- Lynchburg News*, 364
- Lynwood: city politics in, 52; conflict resolution in, 58–59; white exodus, 47
- Madame C. J. Walker Company, 400, 401
- Mack, The*, 366
- Madden, Janice, 110–11
- magazines published by blacks, 381–82. *See also* names of magazines
- maids, hotel, 296
- major league baseball, 360–61
- Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939*, 377
- Making the Second Ghetto*, 2
- Malaysian migrants, 311
- Malcolm X, 66
- Manpower Development and Training Act, 302
- manufacturing jobs: in Philadelphia, 104–5, 107–9, 111; Puerto Rican women workers, 107–9
- March on Washington in 1963, 394
- March on Washington Movement, 252, 298
- March, Ron, 187
- Marcus Foster Education Institute, 287
- Mardigan, Robert, 460n42
- Mardi Gras celebrations, 416–17
- marijuana, medical, 159
- Marrow, Henry, 195, 196
- Martin, I. Maximilian, 138
- Martin Luther King Historic Site, 410
- Martin, Rudell, 334
- Marx, Gary, 209
- Maryland, and Second Great Migration, 24
- Maryland Freedom Union, 493n29
- Masquat, Ellen, 311
- Massey, Douglas, 104, 265
- maternity leave, 145
- Mathews, Ethel Mae, 334
- Maven Strategies, 372, 373
- Max Robinson Clinic, 158
- May, Elaine Tyler, 174
- Mayfield, Curtis, 366
- McAllister, David, 8
- McBride, Thomas, 133
- McCarthy, Coleman, 200
- McCarthyism, 80
- McCone Commission report, 214
- McDevitt, James L., 230
- McDonald's, and hip hop, 372–73
- McIlhinney, John J., 132
- McKinnon, Frank, 188
- McLeod, Rose, 157
- McPherson, Harry, 212, 213–14
- Meany, George, 241
- Medicaid, 302
- medical care. *See* health care; hospitals
- Medicare, 302
- Memphis, and Second Great Migration, 24
- mental illness, 150, 341, 349; and ghetto riots, 205; health insurance coverage, 153–54; in prisoners, 156
- merit employment projects, 223
- Merton, Thomas, 66
- Mestizos, 85–86
- Methodist churches, 245, 250–51, 479n5
- Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 365
- metropolitan region, as unit of analysis, 4
- Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 57
- Mexican American Political Association, 89
- Mexican Americans: and blacks, 84–86, 88, 94, 95, 97; in Chicago, 81; and civil rights activism, 55, 57, 62, 83, 88, 90, 97; in Compton, 51; defined, 437n2; in Los Angeles county, 43–44, 64; in Phoenix, 7, 83–95; in Seaside, 52
- Mexican American Student Organization, 90
- Mexican immigrants, 40, 49, 64, 311; in California, 42, 44, 45, 48, 52–53; in Chicago, 81; in Phoenix, 83–97; and Young Lords Organization, 62
- Miami, 62
- Michigan Civil Rights Commission, 188
- Michigan State University, xii
- middle class: advertising to, 384; affluent neighborhoods, 282–83; civic activities of, 286–91; civil rights activism by, 267; civil rights–era professionals, 266; late

- middle class (*continued*)  
 civil rights period black middle class, 276–79; marginal status of, 283; post-civil rights era, 279–86; pre-civil rights era, 274–76; professional employees, 266–67, 283, 286–87, 288–89; racial inequality theory, 263–64; racialized class formation theory, 264–67; segregated communities, 267–72; self-employed professionals, 266–67, 283, 286, 288, 289–90; welfare programs for, 352. *See also* specific cities, e.g., Oakland, California
- middle class culture, 116, 117. *See also* suburbanization
- Middle Eastern immigrants, 60
- Midwest Consortium for Black Studies, xi, xii
- migration patterns, 2
- Milgram, Morris, 128–29
- military service, and Second Great Migration, 29–30
- Miller, Loren, 170
- Milwaukee, Wisconsin: black suburban population in, 8; employment rates, 309; riots, 210
- Minar, Vicky, 196
- Minneapolis, multiracial organizations in, 40
- Minnesota Population Center, 20
- minority-majority communities, 39, 41, 47, 49–59, 60
- Mirage Hotel, 296
- Mississippi, and Second Great Migration, 24
- Mitchell, Parren, 333
- Miyamoto, Terry, 311
- “mommy wars,” 308
- Monterey Bay area, segregation in, 44. *See also* Seaside, California
- Montgomery, Alabama, 183, 185
- Montgomery Bus Boycott, 363–64
- Moon, Henry Lee, 397
- Moore, Cecil B., 227–28, 233, 234, 243, 261
- Morales, Iris, 62
- Morgan, Joe, 290
- Morris, Ada, 337
- mortality rates. *See* death rates
- mortgage loans, 374–75; black churches giving, 255–56; FHA (*see* Federal Housing Administration)
- Moses, Jax, 137–38
- Mossell, Sadie, 227, 255
- Mother Bethel AME Church (Philadelphia), 254
- Mothers’ Assistance programs, 340
- mothers clubs, 319
- motion picture industry, 364–66
- Mount Sinai Holy Church of America, Inc., 253–54
- Mount Vernon, New York, 169
- Mouton, Barbara, 51
- MOWM, 257
- Moynihan, Daniel Patrick, 263, 265, 268
- Mt. Carmel Baptist Church (Philadelphia), 255–56
- Mt. Olive Holy Temple (Philadelphia), 253, 254
- Mt. Olivet Tabernacle Baptist Church (Philadelphia), 255, 256
- Mt. Sinai Holy School (Philadelphia), 254
- Mt. Vermont, New York, 163
- Mt. Zion Baptist Church (Philadelphia), 255
- Muller, Peter, 105
- multiracial coalitions, 40, 81; and affirmative action, 220; in Phoenix, 83, 85, 87, 89, 94–95, 97
- Mumford, Kevin, 10, 203–18
- Murray, Pauli, 302
- music industry, 366; and consumer behavior, 13–14
- Myers, William, 171–72
- Myrdal, Gunnar, 222–23
- Nadasen, Premilla, 317
- Nadinola, 390, 401
- Nameroff, Claire, 136
- Nash, Gary, 407
- Nashville Tenants Organization, 330
- National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (NACCD), 208
- National Alliance of Postal Employees, 222
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 210, 258, 298, 419; black middle class membership in, 286, 287; boycotts and picketing, 394, 395; and consumer activism, 398–99; and consumer behavior, 362; and employment discrimination, 57, 219, 222, 223, 227–28, 231, 233, 234, 236, 239, 243; Harlem liquor store boycott, 396–98; and Newark riots, 214; and the NWRO, 303; Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom, 261; and “reverse discrimination,” 396–98; and welfare issues, 353
- National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, 330–32

- National Baptist Convention, 256
- National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, 205
- National Council of Negro Women, 299
- National Institute of Health, 209
- National Institute of Mental Health, 205
- nationalism, 81
- National Negro Labor Council (NNLC), 299, 300
- National Organization for Women, 303
- National Pan-Hellenic Council, 412, 413, 414, 417, 420, 421
- National Park Service, 410
- National Review*, 207–8
- National Tenants Organization, 327, 329–30, 333
- National Union of Health Care and Hospital Employees, 301
- National Urban League, and the NWRO, 303
- National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), 295, 296, 297, 302–3, 304, 317, 333, 334, 335
- National Youth Administration, 27
- National Youth Committee project, 398
- Nation of Islam. *See* Black Muslims
- Native American workers, 311
- Native Son*, 36
- needle sharing, 153, 159
- Negro American Labor Council, 228
- “Negrocons,” 93
- Negro Digest*, 381
- Negro Family in Chicago, The*, 36
- “Negro market,” 402
- Negro Market Organization, 382, 386
- “Negro problem,” 222–23
- “Negro removal” projects, 7, 229, 340
- Negro Trade Union Leadership Council, 231
- Negro vs. black, 214
- neighborhood, as unit of analysis, 4
- neighborhood improvement associations, and residential segregation, 125
- Neighbors of the 2100 Block*, 135
- Nelson, Jill, 307
- Nevada, and AFDC, 295–97
- Newark, New Jersey, 4, 374; government-funded construction, 236; Puerto Rican immigrants in, 63; riots of 1967, 10, 203–18
- New England Journal of Medicine*, 373
- “New Food Stamp Bill of Rights,” 335
- New Jersey: Community Relations Adviser, 207; seasonal migration for food processing jobs, 99; Urban Affairs Adviser, 209
- New Left activists, and tenant activism, 333
- Newman, B. T., 57
- Newman, Harvey K., 409
- Newman, Kathy, 381
- New Orleans, 4–5; radio stations in, 362; and Second Great Migration, 24
- new racial frontier, 6
- New Right, and affirmative action, 220
- New Rochelle, New York, 164, 173
- “New School Lunch and School Breakfast Bill of Rights,” 334
- Newsweek*, 52, 58–59, 370
- New York, 4, 62; anti-lead poisoning legislation, 69; black suburban population in, 8; building lots, 164; college education in, 68; garbage pickup in, 68–69, 73; hospitals in, 61; hospital workers in, 301; multiracial organizations in, 40; prison rebellions, 68; Puerto Rican immigrants in, 63, 65, 113–14; schools in, 68, 71; and Second Great Migration, 23; teachers’ strike of 1968, 68; urban renewal in, 68; Young Lords Organization in, 68–80
- New York Times*, 190, 200, 383, 384, 385, 388–89, 391, 392, 394, 402, 459n31
- Ngai, Mae, 207
- Nicaraguan immigrants, 311
- Nicholas, H. H., 248–49
- Nichols, Henry H., 259
- Nigerian immigrants, 63
- “nigger,” 373
- “Niggermation,” 71–72
- Nite Life*, 259, 260
- Nix, Andrew, 128
- Nixon, Richard M., 193, 205, 208, 219–20, 241, 242, 243, 329
- Nix, Robert N. C., Jr., 131
- North Amityville, New York, 168
- North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, 362
- North Carolina Political Prisoners Committee (NCPPC), 199
- North Richmond, California, 165
- Norton, Eleanor Holmes, 302
- Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race and Ethnicity in the United States* (2004), 6

- Noxzema, 400  
 nursing home workers, 308  
 nursing profession, 304  
 nutrition, inadequate, 144
- Oakland, California, 4; affluent communities, 282–83; black middle-class neighborhoods, 272–74; black suburban population in, 8; churches in, 32; civic activities of black middle class, 286–91; demographics, 41, 269; gentrification of, 273–74; household income and poverty rates, 270; late civil rights period black middle class, 276–79; post-civil rights era black middle class, 279–86; pre-civil rights era middle class, 274–76; professionals living in, 271; public housing in, 275; racialized class formation theory, 266; residential segregation in, 44; Second Great Migration to, 19; segregated communities in, 268–72; suburbanization of, 276
- Oakland Public Library, 266
- obesity, 155, 159, 372–73
- occupational status, racial inequality in, 264
- occupations by race, Philadelphia, 105, 106
- Ocean Hill–Brownsville school—  
 decentralization movement, 68, 71
- O’Kedas, Aurelia, 234–35
- Oliver, Denise, 62
- Olympics of 1996, 410, 411
- Omi, Michael. *See* racialized class formation theory
- O’Neal, Erma Lee, 332
- One Hundred Black Men, 420
- Operation Bootstrap, 64–65
- Operation Life, 296
- Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons, 230
- Orleck, Annelise, 317
- Omi, Michael, 264
- Origins of the Urban Crisis, The*, 3, 205, xii
- Osofsky, Gilbert, 1
- Oswald, Russell, 190, 200
- Our Separate Ways*, 317
- Our World*, 381
- Overton, L. Joseph, 396, 397
- Oxford, North Carolina, 195, 196
- Pablo, Petey, 372
- Pacific Islander immigrants, 57, 111
- Paige, Jeffrey, 214
- Painter, Nell, 33
- Pakistani immigrants, 311
- Palante*, 74, 78
- ¡Palante, Siempre Palante!*, 62
- Panamanian immigrants, and Young Lords Organization, 62
- Parker, Charles, 197
- Parliament (Music group), 364
- Pasadena, California, 163, 164, 167–68
- Pastors for Compton, 57
- Pattillo-McCoy, Mary, 169, 175–76
- Patton, Clarence, 327
- Pena, Manuel, 89, 96, 97
- Pena, Manuel, Jr., 89
- Penn Fruit, 260
- Pennsylvania Economy League, 113, 114
- Pennsylvania Fair Employment Practices Commission, 259, 260
- Pennsylvania, fair employment practices legislation in, 224
- Pennsylvania Farm Placement Program, 103
- Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, 224–25, 238
- Pennsylvania Real Estate Licensing Commission, 136
- Pentecostal churches, 479n5
- “People Before Politics,” 334
- Pepsi-Cola Company, 259, 260, 362, 382, 395–96; boycott of, 226
- Perez, Alexander, 93
- “Performance,” 175
- Perma-Strate, 390
- personal-care products, spending on, 385
- Pettis, Gary, 290
- Philadelphia, 4; African American mayor, 411, 412; black religious institutions in, 11; blockbusting in, 123, 124, 125, 136; boycotts and picketing in, 393–94; boycotts and picketing in, 395–96; church activism in postwar Philadelphia, 245–62; churches in, 479n9; Commission Human Rights, 235; Commission on Human Relations, 123, 224, 232, 416; Concerned Communities Coalition, 412, 415, 417; construction industry in, 219–44; deindustrialization of, 105–7; demographics, 111, 133–34, 340; Department of Public Assistance, 343–44; displaced labor migrants in, 103–13; Fair Employment Practices, 252; fair employment practices ordinance, 224; federally funded construction, 229–30;

- FEPC, 259; gentrification of, 109–10, 229, 415; Greek Picnic, 14–15, 405, 411–17, 419–21, 422; hospital workers in, 301; Multicultural Affairs Congress, 408; occupations by race, 105, 106; occupations by race and sex, 112; Opportunities Industrialization Center, 238; police and fire in, 328–29; police brutality in, 252; political reform, 349–50; public housing in, 109, 140, 326–30, 332; Puerto Rican immigrants in, 7, 63; real estate agents and racism in, 123–41; redlining in, 109; reform era, 106–7; Resident Advisory Board, 326, 328, 329, 332; residential segregation in, 8, 104, 109–10, 111, 123–41, 350; and Second Great Migration, 23; suburbanization of region, 106; tenant activism in, 324, 325, 326–30; tourism in, 405, 406–7, 408–9, 417, 419–21, 420, 422–23; transit strike of 1944, 252; unemployment rates, 225; urban renewal programs in, 109–10, 340; welfare programs in, 13, 337–55, 497n10; white flight, 110, 112, 115
- Philadelphia Afro-American* newspaper, 133, 248, 260, 352–53
- Philadelphia Baptist Minister's Conference, 257–58
- Philadelphia Board of Realtors, 138, 139
- Philadelphia Building and Construction Trades Council, 241
- Philadelphia Bulletin*, 260, 327; boycott of, 226
- Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, 128, 130, 135, 136, 138
- Philadelphia Daily News*, 327
- Philadelphia District Health and Welfare Council, 114–15
- Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 131, 351
- Philadelphia Federation of Churches, 250
- Philadelphia Fellowship Commission, 131, 133
- Philadelphia Housing Association, 128, 130, 345
- Philadelphia Housing Authority, 140
- Philadelphia Independent*, 260, 353
- Philadelphia Inquirer*, 260, 327, 413, 416
- Philadelphia Negro, The*, 1, 250–51
- Philadelphia Plan, 219–20, 238, 240, 243
- Philadelphia Transit Corporation, 222
- Philadelphia Tribune*, 255, 260, 261–62, 327, 421
- Philadelphia Urban League, 353–54
- Philippine migrants, 311
- Phoenix, Arizona, 4, 7; city politics in, 92, 94–95, 97; demographics, 85; Greater Phoenix Council for Civic Unity, 97; Latino immigrants in, 83–97; Leadership Enrichment Arts Program, 84; multiracial coalitions in, 83, 85, 87, 89, 94–95, 97; schools in, 93, 95
- picketing: civil rights and consumer activism, 393–400; employment discrimination, 304; and employment discrimination, 232, 234, 236, 239, 241, 244
- Pinson, Vada, 290
- Pittsburgh: hospital workers in, 301; and Second Great Migration, 23
- Pittsburgh Courier*, 260, 383, 384, 386
- Plessy v. Ferguson*, 287
- plumbers' union, 237, 259
- pluralism, and riots, 207
- pneumonia, 144
- Poitier, Sidney and Juanita, 169
- police: affirmative action, 306; and black nationalists, 216–17; and black separatists, 215; civilian monitoring of, 68; dogs used by, 216; in Houston, 40; and the Newark riots, 203–4; in Philadelphia, 252, 328–29; and riots, 204, 206, 212, 215, 216, 217; in Seaside, 53
- Politics of Public Housing, The*, 317
- Poor People Pulling Together, 332
- "Poor People's Platform of the National Welfare Rights Organization, National Tenants Organization, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference," 335
- Poroc company, 401
- Portland, and Second Great Migration, 23, 28–29
- post offices, employment discrimination, 222
- Poussaint, Alvin F., 372–73
- Powell, Adam Clayton, Jr., 11, 257, 364, 393, 397–98
- Powell, Adam Clayton, Sr., 11, 256, 257
- Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom, 261
- Presbyterian church, 251
- pride, 214
- Printer's Ink*, 384, 386
- prisoners, 252; in Attica State (*see* Attica State Correctional Facility); and HIV/AIDS, 152, 154, 155–56; jobs for former prisoners, 155, 156; and mental illness,



- prisoners (*continued*)  
 156; migrants, 36; Nation of Islam  
 religious interventions, 66–67; in New  
 York, 68; radicalization of, 66–67; rates  
 of incarceration, 156; tuberculosis,  
 156–57; and the unemployed, 81; women  
 prisoners, 309; 157
- Pritchett, Wendell, 4
- Privatization policies, 72, 80
- Proefrock, C. Kenneth, 140
- Professional service jobs, 9
- Proletarianization, and migrants, 37–38
- Pro-Line Corporation, 402
- Promised Land, The*, 3, 30, 32
- Providence, Rhode Island, NWRO convention  
 in, 334
- public accommodations, segregation in, and  
 black church activism, 246
- Public Enemy, 370
- public housing, 11; AFDC families, 325–26;  
 eviction from, 320, 321, 322; man-in-the-  
 house rules; no men in the house rule,  
 348; no-men-in-the-house rule, 339; in  
 North Carolina, 319–24; in Oakland, 275;  
 in Philadelphia, 109, 140; prohibitions  
 against men in, 13; tenant participation  
 in management decisions, 324–30; in  
 Washington, D.C., 154–55; and welfare  
 programs, 319–24; and women, 12,  
 318–36
- public schools: in Arizona, 90–92; in  
 California, 53–54, 56, 58; competition for  
 jobs in, 314; construction employment  
 discrimination, 241; government-funded  
 construction, 229–30, 236; in New  
 York, 68, 71; in Phoenix, 93, 95; school-  
 decentralization movement, 68; school  
 meals, 450n16; segregation in, 88
- public-sector jobs, 297, 305, 306, 314
- public transportation, 148, 150, 151, 159
- public-welfare programs, and low-income  
 black women, 319–24
- Puerto Rican immigrants, 7, 61, 306; culture  
 of poverty, 113–14; and deindustrializa-  
 tion, 61; and global economic restruc-  
 turing, 64–65; in New York, 113–14;  
 in Philadelphia; prison inmates, 189;  
 recruitment of, 99–104
- Puerto Rican women: hospital workers, 301;  
 in manufacturing jobs, 104–5, 107–9;  
 percentage in the labor force, 111
- Puerto Rico: compulsory-labor laws in, 433n5;  
 unemployment in, 434n15
- PUSH [People United to Save Humanity], 399
- Quakers, 130; and employment  
 discrimination, 223, 226–27; and  
 residential segregation, 161; and tenant  
 activism, 330
- Quarles, Benjamin, 210
- race relations, 4
- racial identification, 63
- racialized class formation theory, 264–67;  
 research methods, 265–67
- racial preferences, 93–94
- racism. *See* specific manifestations, e.g.,  
 restrictive covenants
- Radio stations, “Negro-appeal” stations,  
 361–62
- Ragsdale, Eleanor, 83, 85, 90, 95, 96, 97
- Ragsdale, Lincoln, 83, 85, 89, 95, 96, 97
- Rainbow Coalition, 81
- Raisin in the Sun, A*, 163–64
- Ralph, James, 183
- Ramos, Manuel, 67
- Randolph, A. Philip, 222, 228, 257, 261, 298
- Ransby, Barbara, 181
- Ransom, Reverdy C., 255
- Rapkin, Chester, 127, 134
- rappers, 370
- Reagan administration, 369, 370
- Reagan Revolution of the 1980’s, 305
- Reagan, Ronald, 306
- real estate covenants, 44, 46
- real estate agents, 176, 281; activist, 277,  
 278; advertising by, 136, 164–65, 167; on  
 housing authority’s board of directors,  
 332; in Philadelphia, 123–41. *See also*  
 specific terms, e.g., blockbusting
- Reddy, Thomas James, 194–201, 460n35
- redlining, 2, 126–27, 246; in California, 44,  
 47; in Philadelphia, 109; and restrictive  
 covenants, 127
- Red Summer of 1919, 204
- Reed, Adolph, 409
- religion: black urban, 2; and the civil rights  
 movement, 11
- Rendell, Ed, 412, 419, 420, 421
- rent strikes, 325–26
- Report for Action* (1968), 203
- Republican Party, black membership in, 255

- Research Company of America, 382
- residential segregation, 4, 8, 104, 291; and black church activism, 246; and the black middle class, 267–72, 272–74; in California, 44–49; in Chicago, 2; class-segregated black middle-class neighborhoods, 279; in Detroit, 3; in Los Angeles, 43–44; multiclass black neighborhood, 273, 279, 283–86; neighborhood improvement associations promoting, 125; in Philadelphia, 104, 109–10, 111, 123–41, 350; predominantly white middle-class neighborhood, 273–74; Quakers resisting, 161; race-and class-segregated predominantly black middle-class neighborhood, 272–73; restrictive covenants maintaining, 126; in suburbs, 160–78; violence and intimidation maintaining, 125, 129–30, 171–72; and white liberals, 276–77. *See also* redlining
- restaurants: segregation of, 85, 88; workers, 296, 308, 310
- restrictive covenants, 126, 148, 159; and FHA-secured loans, 127; and redlining, 127
- retail and sales jobs: women workers, 308
- retail establishments, 374, 398–99; boycotts of, 216; development of, 215; in Philadelphia, 223; quality of, 148, 204, 345
- Reuther, Walter, 185
- Revlon, 402
- Revolutionary Action Movement, 234
- Revolutionary Union Movements (RUM), 71–72, 185–89
- Reynolds, Hobson R., 255
- Rhode Island, tenants' affairs board in, 325
- Rice, Florence, 300–1
- Richardson, Elroy, 187–88
- Richie, Winston, 169
- Richmond, California, 272
- Rickey, Branch, 360–61
- riots, 1, 2, 205, 462n1; and consumer activism, 398–99; as crisis, 204–8; as a crisis, 10; as racism, 10, 204, 208–12; as rebellion, 10, 204, 212–18; and separatism, 215; and white liberals, 207–8, 215–16
- Rizzo, Frank, 328, 329, 330
- Robbins, Illinois, 168
- Robinson, Ida, 253–54
- Robinson, Jackie, 166, 169, 360, 361
- Robinson, Rachel, 169
- Rockefeller, Nelson, 190, 191, 192, 193
- Rodney King–police brutality case, 432n38
- Rodriguez, Carmen, 77–78
- Rome, Tony, 372, 373
- Roosevelt, Franklin D., 222, 255, 298
- Rosales, F. Arturo, 88
- Rosen, Richard, 461n62
- Rothman, Jack, 138
- Rouse, James, 411
- Rubio, Ralph, 53, 58
- Run-DMC, 372
- rustic ethic, and suburbanization, 163–64, 164–65, 168
- Rustin, Bayard, 214
- Rutheiser, Charles, 409–10
- sales and clerical jobs, 299, 300, 304, 306, 307; in Philadelphia, 109, 111
- Sales Management*, 363, 389
- Salvadoran immigrants, 63, 311
- Sanders, Beulah, 335
- San Diego: residential segregation in, 44; and Second Great Migration, 23, 28–29
- San Francisco: construction workers, 240; Council for Civic Unity of San Francisco, 178; multiracial organizations in, 40
- San Francisco Bay area: residential segregation in, 44; and Second Great Migration, 23, 28–29
- San Jose, California: demographics, 41; residential segregation in, 44
- San Jose Mercury News, 51
- Satterwhite, Omowale, 56
- Saypol, Irving H., 397
- Scarles, Charles, 259
- Schermer, George, 130, 136, 137, 232
- Schneider, Jo Anne, 135
- Schoemann, Peter, 237
- Scholarships for higher education, 256
- Schwartz, Michael, 199
- Scott, Joan, 198
- Scruggs, Donald Lee, 209–10
- Scully, James, 128
- Seagram's, 382
- Seale, Bobby, 190
- Sears, boycott of, 299–300, 399
- Sears, David, 209
- Seaside, California, 6; city politics in, 52–53; conflict resolution in, 58; demographics, 42–43, 45–46; economic change in, 48; residential segregation in, 44; schools in, 58; white flight, 47

- Seaside Concerned Citizens Committee, 58
- Seasonal migration, 98; and citizenship status, 98, 100; in the New Jersey area, 99; and Philadelphia, 103–13
- seasonal workers, 300
- Seattle, and Second Great Migration, 23, 27, 28–29
- “Second Bill of Rights,” 222
- Second Great Migration, 5, 6, 19–38, 64; destinations, 21–23; educational levels of migrants, 29, 33; income levels of migrants, 33, 34–36; and military service, 29–30; numbers, 20–21; selectivity of the migrants, 27–30
- secretarial jobs, 300
- segregation. *See* specific instance, e.g., residential segregation
- Seibert, Maude, 345
- selective-patronage campaigns, 216, 221–22, 225–26, 364, 377; and black church activism, 246, 258–61; civil rights and consumer activism, 393–400; and employment discrimination, 233; sympathy boycotts, 393; women organizing, 258–59, 299–300
- self-defense, armed, 215, 216
- self-determination, 212, 214
- self-esteem, 214
- Self, Robert, 4
- Seligman, Amanda, 135
- Selma, Alabama, 185
- Selma to Montgomery march, 404
- Separatism, 212, 215, 216–17
- Sepia*, 381
- Service Employees International Union (SEIU), 297, 311, 313, 314
- service workers, 47–48, 259, 312; male workers, 105, 108; Puerto Rican men, 105; women workers, 104, 107–8, 295–15
- Seven Story Mountain*, 66
- \$70 Billion in the Black: America's Black Consumer*, 366
- 7-Up Company, 259
- Sewell, Stacy, 394–95
- sex discrimination, 338. *See also* African American women
- sexual assaults, 418
- Shaft*, 365, 366
- Shaker Heights (OH), 169
- Sheet Metal Workers Locals, 230, 237
- Sheet Metal Workers Union, 238
- Shelley v. Kraemer*, 46, 127
- Shellow, Robert, 209
- Shepard, Lorenzo, 259
- Shepard, Marshall L., 255, 256
- Shiloh Baptist Church (Philadelphia), 251
- shipyards, employment discrimination, 222
- Shultz, George, 242
- Silberman, Laurence, 243
- Sims, Jordan, 187–88
- Singer, Merrill, 153–54
- sit-ins: early 1960s movement, 364; and employment discrimination, 232
- skin-color effects, 34–35, 88
- Skrentny, John David, 221
- Smith, Clydie, 163, 165
- Smith, Gray, 416
- Smith, Jerry, 58
- Smith, John, 203
- Smith, Louis, 232, 243
- Smith, Preston, 177
- Smith, Ruby, 248, 250
- Smorto, Noel, 132
- Snepp, James, 197, 198
- Snipes, Daisy, 319–22
- social class categories, racial inequality, 264
- social inequality, racial inequality based on, 264–67
- social organizations, 172
- social security, 299, 352
- Social Security Act of 1935, 340
- social-welfare services. *See* welfare programs
- social workers, 304
- socioeconomic status, and racial inequality, 264
- Soft Sheen Company, 402
- Soja, Ed, 423
- sororities. *See* fraternities and sororities
- Soul on Ice*, 389
- “Soul power” union, 72
- Southeast Asia, jobs flowing to, 305, 310
- Southeast Asian migrants, 306, 310
- Southern, 4; defined, 20
- Southern black communities, 2
- Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 246, 261, 295, 335, 404
- Southern states, and church affiliation, 251–52
- South Gate, white exodus, 47
- Sowell, Thomas, 93
- spatial dynamics of inequality, 264–67
- Spear, Alan, 1
- Specter, Arlen, 328, 329

- spending power, 360, 362, 366, 373, 374, 376, 389, 391; and spending weakness, 359, 373–74  
 Spielvogel, Carl, 384  
 Spirit House, 214, 216  
*Sponsor*, 361–62, 363  
 sports organizations, and consumer behavior, 13–14  
 Staats, Elmer, 240  
*Stay Free! Daily*, 373  
 Steamfitters Union, 234, 236–37  
 Steele, Edgar, 382, 383, 384  
 Steele, Shelby, 93  
 Steinem, Gloria, 335  
 sterilization, forced, 351  
 Stern, Oscar I., 123  
 Stevens, Amy, 254  
 Stewart, Dave, 290  
 St. Louis, Missouri, 240; billboard advertising in, 369; public housing in, 325–26; and Second Great Migration, 23; tenant activism in, 324, 325–26  
 St. Matthews AME Church (Philadelphia), 249  
 Stokes, Carl, 333  
 Stokes, Louis, 333  
*Storming Caesars Palace*, 317  
 St. Paul Baptist Church (Philadelphia), 249–50  
 St. Paul's Reformed Episcopal Church (Philadelphia), 257  
 streetcars, segregated, 364  
 street gangs. *See* gangs  
*Streetwise*, 116  
 stress: in finding housing, 170–71; and health, 140–51, 152  
 strikes by autoworkers, 185, 186  
 Stroebel, Nancy, 131  
 stroke, 149, 155  
 Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers' Locals, 230  
 St. Thomas Methodist Church (Philadelphia), 248–49  
 Students for a Democratic Society, 215  
 Stull, William, 110–11  
 substance abuse. *See* drug addiction  
 suburban decline, 40  
 suburbanization, 4, 7–9, 300; of California, 43–46; definition of suburbanites, 451n3; government-funded construction, 228–29; ideals for home and landscape, 160–78; and jobs, 305; and middle class, 276; multifamily occupancy of homes, 164; of Philadelphia area, 106; post–World War II, 162–69; of Washington, D.C., 148; and white flight, 364; and women's employment, 301–2  
 Sugarman, Robert, 328  
 Sugrue, Thomas J., 3, 10, 205, 219–44, 338, xii  
 Sullivan, David, 382, 386, 400  
 Sullivan, Leon H., 11, 225–26, 243, 246, 257–61, 395–96  
 Sun Oil Company, 260, 261, 395–96; boycott of, 226  
*Superfly*, 366  
 Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, 284  
 Supreme Beauty Products company, 390, 401  
*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 194  
*Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*, 364–65, 366  
 Swibel, Charles, 326  
 symbolic economy, 407–8  
 Tacoma, and Second Great Migration, 28–29  
*Tan*, 381  
 Tanner, B. T., 255  
 Tanqueray Gin advertising, 392  
 Tasty Baking Company, 226, 260  
 Tate, Alice Lindsay, 200  
 Tate, James J., 219, 232–33, 236  
 tax credits: earned income tax credit, 312  
 taxpayer, self-identification as, 352–53  
 tax policies, 207; historic preservation credit, 109; interest deductions on mortgages, 109  
 tax revolts of white suburbanites, 305  
 Taylor, Quintard, Jr., 94–95  
 Taylor, Richard K., 133  
 Taylor, William, 229  
 teachers, 304; affirmative action hiring, 306; strike of 1968 [NY], 68  
 telephone company, employment discrimination, 222  
 television industry, 364, 375, 392  
 Temple University, 256–57, xi  
 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), 312  
 temporary workers, 300  
 tenant groups, activism by, 319–22, 324–30  
 Tenants and Workers United, 312  
*Tenants Outlook*, 329  
 tenants' rights, 317  
 Tennessee, and Second Great Migration, 24

- Texas, migration from, 24, 274
- textile workers, 107
- theaters, segregation of, 87, 88
- Thernstrom, Abigail, 218, 220
- Thernstrom, Stephan, 220
- Thernstrom, Stephen, 218
- Thirdspace*, 423
- \$30 Billion Negro, The*, 366
- Thomas, Richard W., 97
- Thompson, Gary, 184, 186
- Thompson, Heather Ann, 3, 10, 181-202
- Thorpe, Joyce, 319, 321, 322
- Tide*, 381
- Tile Layers' Locals, 230
- Tillmon, Johnnie, 295-96, 303-4, 312, 333-34, 335
- Time*, 385, 386
- Title VII. *See* Civil Rights Act of 1964
- tobacco companies, 399; advertising by, 369, 392
- tobacco industry, 385; and consumer behavior, 13-14
- Tolnay, Stewart, 29, 36
- Tombs prison (NY), 68
- Tompkins, Mercedes, 304
- tourism, in Atlanta, 407
- tourism industry, 5; in Atlanta, 404-5, 406, 408, 409-11, 419-20, 422-23; in Philadelphia, 405, 406-7, 408-9, 417, 419-21, 420, 422-23
- Trade Union Leadership Conference (TULC), 183-84, 185
- Transport Workers Union, 222
- Trenton, New Jersey, 236
- Trotter, Joe W., xii
- Trouble Man*, 366
- Truly Disadvantaged, The*, 265
- Tsucas, John, 138
- tuberculosis, 143, 152-53, 156-57
- Turner, Doris, 301
- Twista, 372
- two-parent families, of migrants, 36
- underclass, 99, 104, 113, 115-16, 368; advertising to, 391-92; blacks and Latinas/os, 440n1; and the culture of poverty, 117-19; debate, 2-3; and the middle class, 263, 265
- Underground Railroad, 69
- underprivileged migrants, 114
- undocumented immigrants, 310, 314, 431n11
- unemployment, 299, 305, 309, 338, 340, 341; in Philadelphia, 225; in Phoenix, 93. *See* specific groups, e.g., Puerto Rican immigrants
- Union Baptist Church (Philadelphia), 251, 255
- unions, 3, 214; and boycotts, 396, 397; building trades, 219-44; and welfare issues, 354
- Union Theological Seminary, 257
- United Automobile Workers, 297, 300
- United Autoworkers Union (UAW), 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 200
- United Community Corporation, 215
- United Mine Workers, 305
- United Negro College Fund, 287
- United Organizations for Community Improvement(UOCI), 320-21
- United Packinghouse Workers of America, 301
- United States Housing Authority, 124
- UNITE-HERE, 313
- Unity Summit of 1994 (Compton, CA), 57
- universities. *See* colleges and universities; name of specific institution
- University of California, Berkeley, 266
- University of Michigan, xii
- University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 194-95, 200
- University of Pennsylvania, 241
- University of Wisconsin, xii
- Upscaling Downtown*, 142
- urban crisis, 61
- urban crisis thesis, 3
- "urban growth machine," 406
- urbanization, 368; and consumer behavior, 359-60, 361, 364; and deindustrialization, 406; and migrants, 37-38
- Urban League, 223, 228; boycotts and picketing, 395; and employment discrimination, 238; and welfare issues, 353-54
- urban renewal programs, 7-8, 215, 229, 321; in Chicago, 66, 67; "iron ring of suburbia," 207; in Philadelphia, 109-10, 340; in Washington, D.C., 148
- Urban Studies Colloquium, xi
- U.S. Employment Service, 102
- U.S. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 203, 208-12, 212-18
- U.S. News & World Report*, 138
- U.S. West, 311

- Valenzuela, Edward, 96
- Van Peebles, Melvin, 364–65, 366
- Vásquez, Leticia, 52, 58–59
- Vaughn, Kevin, 416
- Venezuelan migrants, 311
- Veterans Administration: housing program, 125, 127; loans, 47, 276
- Vibe History of Hip Hop, The*, 370
- Vietnamese immigrants, 49, 63, 311
- Vietnam veterans, and civil rights activism, 195
- Vietnam War, 207, 209, 242; dissent, 197, 208; and Young Lords Organization, 72
- Vine Memorial Baptist Church (Philadelphia), 250, 251
- violence, domestic, 342, 348–49
- Violence: The Crisis of American Confidence*, 205
- violent or intimidating acts, 2, 3; in Charlotte, NC, 194; in Chicago, 66; Fanon on, 215; ghetto riots/dissent, 205–6, 213, 215; maintaining residential segregation, 125, 129–30, 171–72; in minority-majority cities, 54; Philadelphia housing conflicts, 350
- Violent Society, The*, 205
- Virginia Union University, 256
- Vishab, Jack H., 132
- VISTA, 195, 196
- Vivan, C. T., 214
- voter participation, 89
- Voting Rights Act of 1965, 181, 320
- wage and hour laws, 299, 313
- waiting, as source of stress, 150
- Walker, Pamela, 308
- Walker, Susannah, 14, 376–403
- Wallace, Phyllis, 302
- War Manpower Commission, 99, 100, 101
- War on Poverty program, 67, 207
- Warrington, Karen, 417
- Washington, David, 196–99
- Washington, D.C., 4; boycotts and picketing in, 397; demographics, 149; employment rates, 309; gentrification of, 142, 155; health care in, 8–9, 142–59; HIV/AIDS in, 152–53; homelessness, 154, 155; home-rule movement, 398; hunger in, 147–48; infant-mortality rates, 448n6; poverty rate, 143–44; public housing projects, 154–55; suburbanization of, 148; urban renewal in, 148; white flight, 148
- Washington Post*, 100, 198, 200, 307
- Wasserman, Gil, 131–32
- Waterston, Alise, 153
- Watson, John, 187
- Watts riots of 1965, 44, 47, 204, 214, 398–99
- Watts/Willowbrook area, 55–56
- Wayland, Horace B., 256
- Wayland Temple Baptist Church (Philadelphia), 255
- wealth, racial inequality in accumulating, 265, 273
- Weber, Max, 272
- Weems, Robert, 388, 391–92, 399
- Weems, Robert E., Jr., 13–14, 359–75, 377
- welfare programs, 11, 81, 207; and black activism, 10–11; “chain reaction relief,” 351–52, 353; dependency on, 99; and gender, 11–15; and migrants, 36; in Philadelphia, 13, 337–55, 497n10; and public housing, 319–24; reform of, 215, 311–12; requirements, 344–48; residency requirement, 497n10; and women, 11–12, 12–13, 335, 337–55
- “welfare queen,” 306
- welfare rights, 68, 317, 334; and documentation required for assistance, 344. *See also* National Welfare Rights Organization
- Westchester County, New York, 168
- Western communities, 4; black communities, 2; and Second Great Migration, 23
- West, Kanye, 372
- West Oakland, California, 268
- West Virginia, and Second Great Migration, 24
- West Virginia State College, 257
- Whalen, Carmen Teresa, 6, 7, 98–119
- Whitaker, Matthew C., 6, 7, 83–97
- “White Citizen Councils,” 258
- white flight, 47, 364; and *Brown v. Board of Education*, 91; in California, 45, 46–49, 48; in Philadelphia, 110, 112, 115; in Washington, D.C., 148
- White House Conference on Civil Rights, 323
- white liberals: and Black Power activism, 204, 205, 207–8; and civil rights activism, 182, 185, 188, 193, 199–202; and NAACP, 227; and residential segregation, 276–77; and riots, 207–8, 215–16; weakening of postwar liberalism, 461n72
- “whiteness” studies, 134–35

- white supremacy, 162  
*Whitetown*, 130  
 Wichita, Kansas, 183  
 Wicker, Tom, 190  
 Wiese, Andrew, 8–9, 160–78  
 Wiley, George, 295, 303, 333  
 Wilkins, Roy, 210, 261, 353, 396, 398  
 Williams, Brett, 8–9, 142–59  
 Williams, Edward, 216  
 Williams, Hank, 191–92  
 Williams, Hardy, 328  
 Williams, Hosea, 404  
 Williams, John Frances, 256  
 Williams, Rhonda Y., 11–12, 12, 316–36  
 Willowbrook, 44  
 Wilmore, Jacques, 223  
 Wilson, Cassandra, 346  
 Wilson, William Julius, 263, 265, 268  
 Winant, Howard, 264  
 Wirtz, Willard, 235–36, 240  
 Wise, Shirley, 332  
 Wolf, Eleanor, 139  
 women. *See* African American women; Puerto Rican women  
 Woods, J. W., 248, 250  
 Woolworth's, boycott of, 393  
 Work Incentive Program, 302  
 workplace discrimination. *See* employment discrimination  
 World War II veterans, activism by, 222  
 Wright, Richard, 36  
 Wright, Richard R., Jr., 254  
 Wright, Willie, 216–17  
 Wylie, Sarah Rosetta "Rose," 327–30  
 Yellow Jacket group, 58  
 Yivisaker, Paul, 207, 209  
 Young, Andrew, 410, 411  
 Young, John, 397  
 Young Lords Organization, 6–7, 61; and Black Panther Party, 67; and Black Power movement, 62, 72; in Chicago, 61, 65, 68, 81; in New York, 61, 68–80; rise of, 61–67  
 Young Patriots, 81  
 Young, Whitney M., Jr., 210, 353  
 Zebra Associates, 389–90  
 Zepp, Edward G., 123, 138, 139  
 Zibman, Daniel, 107  
 Zion AME Church (Philadelphia), 259  
 Zion Baptist Church (Philadelphia), 246, 256–61, 395–96, 480n9  
 Zukin, Sharon, 406, 407

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