Black Power in the American Political Tradition

Thomas Adam Davies

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Shedding new light on the relationship between Black Power and mainstream American politics and society, this thesis explores the ways in which white politicians, institutions, and organizations engaged with, and responded to, African Americans' demands for economic and political empowerment during the mid-to-late 1960s through the mid-1970s. At the same time, it considers how these demands themselves reflected urban African American communities' own responses to, and engagement with, Black Power ideology. The final and broadest concern of this study is how these two processes – along with the political and economic pressures created by white mainstream resistance to demands for racial and socio-economic change – affected urban African American society and politics during the Black Power era and beyond.

This story is traced by exploring the nexus of public policies, black community organizations, white and black elected officials, liberal foundations, and Black Power activists in New York, Atlanta, and Los Angeles during the mid-to-late 1960s through the 1970s. By considering throughout how African American community activists in the three cities fought to capitalize on, and create, new opportunities through public policies, this project details the impact that Black Power had upon existing grassroots community activism, illuminating Black Power's development at the local level. Finally, focusing on the evolution and longer term trajectory of public policies intended to negotiate and control the meaning of Black Power, this thesis explains how and why those policies sought to cultivate a mainstream, middle-class interest oriented brand of Black Power politics that aimed to reinforce the nation's existing political and social order. Highlighting the relationship between these policies and black middle-class progress of the period, this thesis underscores the enduring capacity of mainstream whites to successfully defend and assert their interests and resist transformative socio-economic and racial change, and ultimately, to dictate the scope and direction of black progress.

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List of Abbreviations

AATA	Afro-American Teachers Association
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
ANVL	Atlanta Negro Voter's League
ASLC	Atlanta Summit Leadership Conference
AUC	Atlanta University Center
BPP	Black Panther Party for Self-Defence
BSRC	Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation
CAA	Community Action Agency
CAEHT	Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle
CAP	Community Action Programme
CAPC	Community Antipoverty Committee
CAtP	Central Atlanta Progress
CATPL	Community Alert Patrol
CBC	Congressional Black Caucus
CBCC	Central Brooklyn Coordinating Council
CCAP	Citizens Crusade Against Poverty
CCC	Community Conservation Corps
CDA	Community Development Agency
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
CDC	Community Development Corporation
CHIP	Community Home Improvement Program
CORE	Congress on Racial Equality
CUNY	City University of New York
D&S	Bedford-Stuyvesant Development and Services Corporation
EHBS	East Harlem Block Schools
EOA	Economic Opportunity Act
EOA Inc.	Economic Opportunity Atlanta, Incorporated
EOF	Economic Opportunity Federation
EYOA	Economic and Youth Opportunities Agency of Greater Los Angeles
FEPC	Fair Employment Practices Commission
FHA	Federal Housing Authority
HCC	Harlem Commonwealth Council
HOLC	Home Owners Loan Corporation
HRA	Human Resources Administration
LAUSD	Los Angeles Unified School District
LCFO	Lowndes County Freedom Organization
LDF	NAACP Legal Defense Fund
MFDP	Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
MFY	Mobilization for Youth
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NAPP	Neighborhood Adult Participation Project
NOI	Nation of Islam
NSC	Neighborhood Service Centre
NUL	National Urban League
NWRO	National Welfare Rights Organization

NYA	National Youth Administration
NYCCAP	New York City Council against Poverty
OB	Operation Bootstrap
OEO	Office of Economic Opportunity
OMBE	Office of Minority Business Enterprise
PPC	Poor Peoples' Campaign
R&R	Bedford-Stuyvesant Renewal and Rehabilitation Corporation
SCBM	Southern Conference of Black Mayors
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SIP	Special Impact Program
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
UCRC	United Civil Rights Committee
UFT	United Federation of Teachers
UPC	United Parents Council
UREC	Urban Residential Educational Center
USCM	United State Conference of Mayors
VISTA	Volunteers In Service To America
WLCAC	Watts Labor Community Action Committee
WNIA	Westminster Neighbourhood Improvement Association
WUCC	Watts United Credit Union
YTEP	Youth Training and Employment Program
YIA	Youth-In-Action
YOB	Youth Opportunities Board of Greater Los Angeles

Introduction: Black Power in the American Political Tradition

In December 1967, Roger Wilkins, the African American head of the United States Department of Justice's Community Relations Service, submitted an assessment of the Black Power movement that Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach had requested he write several months earlier.[1] Controversy had raged over the meaning and import of the inchoate new slogan since the call for 'Black Power!' had first emerged in early June 1966, during protest marches led by Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activists Stokely Carmichael and Willie Ricks in Greenwood, Mississippi. Leading members of the civil rights establishment and federal government had been quick to brand it as a dangerous, radical, separatist and violent ideology. Roy Wilkins, Roger's uncle and head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), America's oldest civil rights group, claimed that Black Power advocates' rejection of nonviolence and integrationism could 'only mean black death.' America's most iconic civil rights leader, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., argued that 'to seek power exclusively for the Negro,' would only mean 'exchanging one form of tyranny for another. Black supremacy would be equally as evil as white supremacy.' Leading politicians, including President Lyndon Johnson and Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, were similarly opprobrious. This condemnation was echoed by much of the nation's white media. For example, an editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* insisted that Black Power was the work of 'extremists'. 'Thiers [*sic*] is a doctrine of vengeance,' it warned, 'which takes little note of the political and social realities, which cares more for self-gratification than understanding.' The 'perverse satisfaction' the author imagined Black Power radicals took from scaring whites would, they concluded, come 'at the expense of advancing racial progress.'[2]

Roger Wilkins's assessment, however, delivered a very different verdict. Although he acknowledged that 'black rage' animated much of its most sensationalist and declamatory rhetoric, in reality, he argued, Black Power was a hugely positive and necessary phenomenon. Built on the 'twin pillars of [racial] pride and unity', Black Power, he explained, represented a vital step toward rebuilding black Americans' self-esteem, which had been shattered by the cumulative weight of

[1] Atlanta, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture, Andrew Young Papers, Subseries C, Box 8, Memorandum for Att. Gen Nicholas Katzenbach from Roger Wilkins, December 18, 1967.
[2] Jack Jones, 'NAACP Director Condemns Moves for "Black Power"' *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 1966, p.16; 'Dr. King Denounces 'Black Power' Talk', *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 1966, p.7; Don Irwin, 'Johnson critical of Black Power Crusades' *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 1966, p.6; William Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) p.11-22 (p.11); 'The Uses of Black Power' *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 1966, p.A4.

centuries of racial oppression. Redefining blackness, and reclaiming and venerating black history and culture, were, he argued, perhaps the Black Power movement's most important features. Indeed, it was better, he contended, to think of Black Power first and foremost as a 'black consciousness movement'. It was also wrong, he suggested, to stereotype Black Power as being the preserve of radicals or extremists. Still in the 'ideology development phase,' he explained, 'the rhetorical range of positions is very wide, starting from militant middle-class system correctors on the right to people who say they are revolutionaries on the left.'[3]

Wilkins did acknowledge that certain significant issues did form dividing lines among what was a diverse and broad group. Some Black Power advocates, he explained, endorsed and planned violence. A greater number talked about violence only in a general way, often articulating 'the rationale for the use of violence rather than very specific advocacy of violence.' For the rest, violence was largely seen as 'silly and self-defeating'. Separatism was another point of divergence. A small minority advocated the formal separation of the races and the establishment of an all-black state in the U.S. or overseas. Most others – many of whom, he explained, called themselves nationalists – 'simply advocate the development of strong, viable black institutions in those communities where great numbers of blacks live.' Important issues also united them. Beyond a commitment to the redefinition of black identity and the promotion of racial pride and solidarity, there was a common focus on black economic empowerment. They had all, he contended, 'turned to an economic analysis' of racial inequality. 'They are tired,' he explained, 'of being objects of the American system and the objects of American institutions. In the American tradition, they want a piece of the action.'[4]

It was therefore imperative, argued Wilkins, that the federal government make an attempt to engage positively with Black Power. 'Up to now,' he suggested, the federal government 'have, as far as I can tell, chosen to ignore the black consciousness movement.' This stance, he believed, was no longer tenable. The most important question the nation's politicians now faced, was 'whether we can discriminate between the broad range' of Black Power supporters and 'pick our way through the rage and the rhetoric' and, 'ultimately, whether we can work with people in the black consciousness movement on new ways to correct the system and to develop institutional solutions' that would meet their aspirations.[5]

[3] Andrew Young Papers, Subseries C, Box 8, Memorandum for Att. Gen Nicholas Katzenbach from Roger Wilkins, December 18, 1967, p. 7.
[4] *Ibid*., p. 9-10.
[5] *Ibid*., p. 12.

Although little of the Johnson administration's response to Black Power's emergence was constructive, Wilkins's call for positive engagement was answered by others. Shedding new light on the relationship between Black Power and mainstream American politics and society, this thesis explores the ways in which white politicians, institutions, and organizations engaged with, and responded to, African Americans' demands for economic and political empowerment during the mid-to-late 1960s through the mid-1970s. At the same time, it considers how these demands themselves reflected urban African American communities' own responses to, and engagement with, Black Power ideology. The final and broadest concern of this study is how these two processes – along with the political and economic pressures created by white mainstream resistance to demands for racial and socio-economic change – affected urban African American society and politics during the Black Power era and beyond.

This story is traced by exploring the nexus of public policies, black community organizations, white and black elected officials, liberal foundations, and Black Power activists in New York, Atlanta, and Los Angeles during the mid-to-late 1960s through the 1970s. This approach allows me to unite national and local perspectives, and to compare and contrast how those relationships unfolded in three regionally distinct cities with significant black populations and long traditions of black political organizing and protest. The divergence and overlaps between the experiences of these three cities highlights the importance of local political and social conditions in shaping the trajectory of black community activism and racial progress. They also reveal the shared, pan-regional contours of the black freedom struggle, as well as the ubiquitous salience of powerful discourses about race, gender, class, and economic inequality and the political responses to Black Power that they informed.

At the heart of this study is a profound interest in public policies. In particular, the principles and assumptions that motivate and inform them; the social and economic change they effect; how their intended subjects or beneficiaries use and challenge them; and how they shape future landscapes of reform. As this thesis illustrates, it was primarily through public policy that mainstream politicians and institutions sought to engage with Black Power ideology, and to meet the demand for black political and economic empowerment that it foregrounded. The Johnson administration's War on Poverty, Democratic Senator Robert F. Kennedy's Community Development Corporation (CDC) programme, Republican President Richard M. Nixon's Black Capitalism initiatives, and local education reforms in all three cities form the primary terrain upon which the evolution and development of that engagement is mapped. Exploring how these policies

developed and were contested at the national and local level reveals a number of the following key themes that emerge from this study.

First, how the War on Poverty both helped to create the urban political conditions from which Black Power emerged, and subsequently became a key site and engine of its development at the local level. Second, how the War on Poverty's limitations and the critical political debates it fueled helped to both inspire alternative political approaches to tackling racial and economic inequality, and to reconfigure the American political landscape. Third, that as policies intended to engage with Black Power, and which turned on meeting the black demand for (as Wilkins termed it) a 'piece of the action', Kennedy's CDC programme and Nixon's Black Capitalist policies targeted the flexibility and breadth of Black Power ideology, and confirmed the vitality of its more middle-class and philosophically conservative strands. Fourth, that the opportunities created by the public policies explored here were a major generator of black community activism and provided an important medium through which African American community activists interpreted and engaged with Black Power, and deployed it in their fight for equality. Finally, that contests over the antipoverty programme, education reforms, and the direction of city policy under black political leadership reveal the enduring and definitive power of mainstream white politicians, institutions, and organisations to dictate the pace and direction of racial progress and socio-economic and political change. This becomes even clearer when contrasted with the swift integration and entrenchment of Kennedy and Nixon's alternative political solutions – which were intentionally solicitous of white class interests – into national and local policy.

In sum, this study reveals that the efforts of mainstream white politicians, institutions, and organizations to engage with Black Power, and to define the scope and character of black empowerment and progress more broadly, were highly successful. It explains the evolution of public policies intended to engage, modify, and sublimate the Black Power impulse, and how and why they sought to cultivate a mainstream, middle-class interest oriented brand of Black Power politics that aimed to reinforce the nation's existing political and social order. Seeking to reconfigure existing political solutions for tackling economic and racial inequality, these policies represented a pan-partisan political project to coopt and nurture Black Power which could be easily adapted to survive the gradual rightward shift in national political culture that took place from the mid-to-late 1960s through the 1970s. As such, they complicate simple and dichotomous narratives concerning the period's liberal and conservative approaches to racial and economic inequality.

Furthermore, by exploring throughout how African American community activists in New York, Los Angeles, and Atlanta fought to capitalize on, and create, new opportunities through public policies, this project illuminates the significant impact that Black Power had upon existing grassroots community activism, revealing the different ways it developed at the local level. Examining how African Americans used public policy to advance their own visions for economic empowerment and urban improvement highlights how white engagement with Black Power impacted upon the everyday lives of urban black communities. In the process, this study reveals complex and often close relationships between moderates and militants, and between civil rights and Black Power organizations, which challenge conventional narratives of the black freedom struggle which often cast them in an oppositional light.[6]

Parsing the longer-term consequences of mainstream white engagement with Black Power, I argue that public policies intended to engage and coopt Black Power ultimately played an important and understudied role in exacerbating intra-racial inequality among African Americans. As early as 1969, Black Power theoretician Julius Lester suggested that 'the principle beneficiaries of Black Power have been the black middle-class.' Those who had 'benefited the least from Black Power,' he argued, were 'those whose needs are the most acute – the black poor. They have gained pride and self-respect, but unlike the black intelligentsia, there has been no opportunity to parlay this new pride and self-respect into something more concrete.'[7] A decade later intra-racial inequality would be even more pronounced, as the black middle-class continued to make significant gains while poor and working-class blacks remained rooted at the bottom of the nation's socio-economic and political order.[8]

While growing intra-racial inequality among African Americans was certainly the product of broader political and economic forces, it was also, I argue, in part the result of the specific efforts to engage and modify Black Power that sit at the centre of this thesis. Consciously bent toward the interests of the black and white middle-classes and economic elites, and subsequently entrenched in national and local politics, these policies reinforced political and economic disadvantage facing poor and working-class blacks (and poor black women in particular). Profoundly shaped by race, class, and gender, the limits and form of black progress during the Black Power era therefore, I

[6] See, for example: Allen Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: a History of Liberalism in the 1960s*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1996); Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); William L. O'Neill, *Coming Apart: An Informal History of America in the 1960's* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005).
[7] Julius Lester, *Revolutionary Notes* (New York: Richard W. Baron, 1969) p.106-107.
[8] Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-1982* (Jackson, Miss.: University of Mississippi Press, 1983) p.198-199.

contend, rested most heavily upon the ways in which whites interpreted, resisted, and engaged with, African Americans' demands for greater political and economic power. Put simply, the most productive paths toward economic and political empowerment made available to blacks were those that overlapped and bolstered white interests and demands.

This argument rests on a particular understanding and view of Black Power and of the broader white engagement with (and resistance to) the ideas and goals it encompassed. As historian Peniel Joseph has suggested, despite its breadth and flexibility as an ideology, Black Power was nevertheless characterized by certain fixed core values and goals. These included pursuing self-determination through black political and economic empowerment, the redefinition of black identity, greater racial pride and solidarity, and a critical emphasis upon a shared African heritage and history of racial oppression.[9] However, this thesis – and its analysis of Black Power's significance and impact – is grounded in the principle that it was an imprecise ideology which was open to interpretation. As Julius Lester explained, while 'Black Power' as a slogan was 'a clarion call, […] a psychological weapon, giving strength to those who yelled [it] and fear to those who heard [it]', as a concept 'it was more ambiguous.' 'Literally,' he continued, 'it meant power for black people, and everyone had his own definition of what that power was to consist and how it was to be obtained.'[10] There was, therefore, no one fixed way to achieve the core goals outlined by Joseph (principally political, economic, and cultural empowerment); no single agreed upon method or approach to pursuing these ambitions that united those that identified themselves with Black Power.

Black Power's inherent ambiguity underpinned and made possible the broad range of political and philosophical positions among its adherents that Wilkins identified. The different ways in which mainstream white politicians and institutions, and black community activists and organizations, interpreted Black Power is an essential theme of this study. The breadth, diversity, and flexibility of Black Power ideology was the fundamental characteristic upon which those interpretations turned and is central to the view of Black Power presented here. Overall, therefore, I am less concerned with trying to produce a comprehensive definition of what Black Power stood for (beyond the general core values identified by Joseph), than I am with exploring two key concepts. One, how the ideas, tactics, and language readily associated with Black Power permeated (in whole or in part) the community activism, and everyday lives, of ordinary African Americans at the local level. And, two, how and why Black Power's flexibility and malleability as an ideology and

[9] Peniel E. Joseph, 'The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 96, Issue 3 (December 2009), pp.1-25 (p.4).
[10] Lester, p.104.

organizing tool was exploited by mainstream politicians and institutions in their efforts to channel black advancement and empowerment in certain directions (and the subsequent impact and meaning of those efforts).

As this thesis demonstrates, local community activists interpreted Black Power ideology (and the public policies intended to engage with it) in their own ways, appropriating those elements of it which fit best with their own agendas, and in the process forged alliances with fellow African Americans from across the political spectrum in their fight against racial discrimination and inequality. It was precisely the breadth and flexibility of Black Power that made it the ideal focal point for the broader mission that informed public policies intended to coopt the Black Power impulse: to shape the character and define the limits of African American political activism. The crescendo of urban black activism (invigorated by the War on Poverty) and the deepening urban crisis, in which Black Power crystallised in the mid-1960s, encouraged mainstream political engagement with the emerging new force within the black freedom struggle. As an ideology with potential for such wide appeal in the black community (few African Americans would not endorse the broad goal of black empowerment), engagement with Black Power became a medium for negotiating the political question of *how* African Americans could achieve the various goals that Black Power encompassed.

Efforts to engage with Black Power built on a long political tradition of mainstream politicians seeking to influence the course of black activism, politics, and progress. Indeed, as historian William Chafe has argued, an essential trait of twentieth century postwar liberalism's relationship with the black freedom struggle (and other insurgent movements for socio-economic and political change) was its 'desire to channel [their] protests into existing political processes and to deny them the resources and support to attack policies from below or outside.'[11] Existing liberal efforts to mollify dissent, legitimise moderate civil rights activism, and shape the course of racial progress sought to channel protest through the courts and the ballot box, and tried to increase black integration into the economic mainstream through support (albeit limited) for fair employment practices and school desegregation. However, the pan-partisan negotiation of Black Power during the mid-to-late 1960s and early 1970s considered here differed from this approach in two especially significant ways. First, it moved away from integrationist goals and existing approaches to mitigating economic inequality, acknowledging the shifting ideological currents (driven by Black Power's emergence) within the black freedom struggle, and the declining support for both among

[11] William Chafe, *Never Stop Running: Allard Lowenstein and the Struggle to Save American Liberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press,1998) p. 467.

white American voters. Second, it sought not only to channel black energy and progress through the nation's political and legal institutions, and its workplaces and schools, but also to bind African Americans to, and physically and emotionally invest them in, the economic practices and political and social principles of America's private economy and capitalist society.

Seeking to define the political parameters of how African Americans would achieve greater political and economic empowerment, the effort to negotiate Black Power's meaning was adapted to, and formed a part of, broader white resistance to political solutions to dealing with economic and racial inequality which stressed the need for fundamental transformation of American society and its political, economic, and legal structures. Such solutions often demanded a far-reaching redistribution of power and wealth and the reordering of society, and identified the federal government as the arbiter of social and economic justice. During the mid-to-late 1960s through the mid-1970s, this kind of leftist social democratic and progressive politics had significant currency within the black freedom struggle. It characterized the political message of leading radical Black Power organizations such as the Black Panther Party (BPP), antipoverty and welfare rights activists, and, in the final few years of his life, it came to dominate the political vision of Martin Luther King Jr., too.[12]

African American advocates of transformative political change, therefore, played an important role in motivating mainstream politicians and institutions' attempts to reform Black Power, much in the same way that liberals' responses to the moderate, nonviolent civil rights movement in the early-to-mid 1960s were guided in part by the apparent threat posed by the growing base of support for black nationalism which existed alongside it. This relationship was perhaps best described by iconic black nationalist leader Malcolm X during a meeting with Coretta Scott King in Selma, Alabama, in January 1965, not long before his death, while her husband, Martin Luther King, was being held in the local jail. During the meeting, Malcolm X reportedly told her that he helped moderate leaders like her husband 'more than anybody. The position I take

[12] For important recent scholarship on the Black Panther Party see: *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* ed. by Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Curtis J. Austin, *Up against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006); Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007); *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities Across America* ed. by Judson Jeffries, (Jackson, Miss.: University of Mississippi Press, 2010). A recent and comprehensive discussion of the politics of the broader antipoverty coalition, see: Gordon K. Mantler, *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition and the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2013). For discussion of the evolution of Martin Luther King's political philosophy see, for example: Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Economic Rights: Martin Luther King Jr., and the Struggle for Economic Justice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

causes many people in the white power structure to make concessions where you are concerned because they know if they don't, they would have to deal with what I'm talking about.'[13]

While many politicians remained steadfast in opposition as the volume of voices (both within and without the Black Power movement) advocating more radical and transformative and social and economic justice politics grew louder in the mid-to-late 1960s, some mainstream white politicians (such as Kennedy and Nixon) and institutions (most notably the Ford Foundation) responded with alternative policies that instead endorsed the capacity of the nation's existing capitalist economic and political structures to mitigate inequality. The path to black economic empowerment they envisaged represented a deliberate shift in public policy consciously intended to draw African Americans away from existing interventionist and redistributive liberal welfare state politics, and toward alternatives that would be more palatable for a white American voting public increasingly hostile to existing liberal policies. These alternative programmes for securing African Americans greater economic power and self-determination, and remedying racial and urban inequality, called for a smaller role for government and an increased reliance instead upon the working of the American capitalist free market mechanism. The key to this would be supporting the development of African American capitalist enterprise and encouraging the nation's private sector to play the major part in meeting urban blacks' employment needs. What black and other minority poor communities needed, they argued, was not more redistributive liberal social spending, but assistance in rehabilitating, and building local economic power, in their own communities. As such, these policies promised to appeal to the millions of African Americans who had battled to attain full economic citizenship and who sought not fundamental political change, but rather the chance to enjoy the fruits of the nation's capitalist consumerist culture as so many of their white counterparts did.

In this way, public policies intended to reform Black Power can be thought of as having been one front of a broader two-front battle – which in places overlapped – to constrain and shape the course of black progress and socio-economic change. On one front, various mainstream organizations and institutions moved to stifle the challenge of black radicals and community activists advocating transformative political solutions for overcoming black poverty and powerlessness. On the second, others strived to redirect and channel African American progress,

[13] Malcolm X quoted in: Jack Nelson, 'The Color Line Closes on King' *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1966; Clayborne Carson, 'Rethinking African American Political Thought in the Post-Revolutionary Era' in *The Making of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement* ed. by Brian Ward & Tony Badger (New York: New York University Press, 1996) pp. 115-127 (p.121).

through public policies, in directions that endorsed the principle structures and values of mainstream American society.

Policies designed to engage with Black Power were also guided by the same broader social mission that had animated the War on Poverty. Echoing the growing sentiment that redistributive welfare programmes (which supported poor inner-city minority single mothers and their children) encouraged social breakdown and dependency on government, they aimed primarily to provide economic opportunity for black men. Increasing black male employment was intended to help reunite black families and alleviate poverty by restoring black men to their culturally idealized place as breadwinners and family heads. Greater incorporation of African Americans into the nation's private sector and business world – a sphere that operated on the premise of near total male leadership and dominance – also implicitly assumed the participation of black men. In the process, these policies explicitly appealed to, and resonated with, the more conservative strands of Black Power ideology, in particular those that emphasized: self-reliance; private enterprise; a rejection of welfare dependency; and the restoration of black manhood through employment, and family, community, and business leadership. These alternative policies, therefore, endorsed middle-class interest focused, pro-business solutions for dealing with economic and racial inequality which privileged male interests, and simultaneously formed a significant stage on the gradual political retreat from existing redistributive solutions which helped poor and working-class women and their children in particular. Mainstream engagement with Black Power, therefore, sought largely to reinforce, rather than challenge, the nation's existing class and gender hierarchies.

The immediate and longer term impact of mainstream white politicians and institutions' engagement with Black Power, the development of Black Power within African American community activism, and the broader influence of white interests over the course of black progress during the mid-to-late 1960s through the 1970s are mapped across four broadly chronological chapters. These begin with an exploration of the War on Poverty, the significance of which stretches across the whole of this thesis. Understanding public policy initiatives that sought to engage with Black Power is not possible, I argue, without a proper examination of President Johnson's antipoverty programme. Chapter one begins by examining the War on Poverty's place in the New Deal liberal tradition, its roots in Cold War liberal economic philosophy and social science of the 1950s and early 1960s, and its evolution from a programmatic concern with urban poverty and social dysfunction in black and other minority communities. In this process, the gendered social and economic assumptions that underpinned it are revealed; guiding principles and ideas which, it is argued, played a centrally important role in both limiting its effectiveness, and informing the

alternative policies intended to engage with Black Power which subsequently emerged. To understand the policies put forward by Kennedy and Nixon, we must first understand the impact that the War on Poverty had on black community activism, the American political landscape, and white public opinion.

By offering a legislative framework which ostensibly endorsed greater self-determination for inner-city poor communities and bolstered poor communities' battles for economic empowerment and urban improvement with federal resources, the War on Poverty had an especially significant impact on black community activism. It sparked, emboldened, and helped to expand movements for social and economic justice, amplifying voices calling for transformative political change and mobilizing urban blacks who sought to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the legislation. At the same time, the War on Poverty became an important incubator of nationalist organizing and racial identity politics in cities such as New York and Los Angeles, forming an important part of the soil from which Black Power grew. The War on Poverty's capacity to support and generate community activism is a theme that is developed further in following chapters.

By addressing the political question of how to remedy black economic inequality, the War on Poverty tapped into, and helped revive and energize, African Americans' longstanding desire for economic citizenship and empowerment; an aspect of black activism which had been shaped by New Deal liberalism and which had been effectively muted by postwar domestic anticommunism. In the process, the War on Poverty became a vital site of political controversy which not only played a central and formative role in inspiring the alternative public policies that emerged in response to Black Power (discussed in chapter two), but which also set in motion developments and debates which would have a lasting influence over race relations and racial politics at both the local and national levels. Mapping how the antipoverty programme unfolded in New York, Los Angeles and Atlanta, and at the federal level, reveals the multiple and contrasting ways in which national and local politicians responded to the redistribution of power to poor communities that the War on Poverty threatened. Predominantly (though not exclusively) characterized by hostility, resistance, and class bias, these histories underline the major and overarching conclusion of this study as a whole: that the influence of mainstream white political power and interests over the character of black progress and political opportunity was definitive. In the process, general frameworks establishing the social and political landscapes in each of the three cities are outlined, which are built on throughout the thesis. As the War on Poverty generated conflict between city executives and the urban poor it became, in the eyes of many American voters, another symptom of permissive liberal domestic policy which had produced the social and political turmoil, and engendered the

cultural upheavals of the 1960s wrought by civil rights protest, urban rioting, and burgeoning antiwar and student movements.

Finally, by unintentionally precipitating a massive expansion of the nation's welfare rolls, and the flourishing of a well-organized, highly vocal and coordinated national welfare rights movement, the War on Poverty was a key driver of white welfare backlash politics. As a primary axis along which the conservative resurgence developed, pervasive and deepening white racial resentment and anger over the cost to taxpayers of urban welfare programmes for inner-city ghettos made the pursuit of redistributive social and economic justice politics increasingly untenable for politicians nationwide. Having played a vital part in inspiring and exacerbating mainstream white hostility to more transformative political solutions to racial and economic inequality, I argue that the War on Poverty had profound ramifications for domestic American politics in both the immediate and longer terms.

Chapter two begins to address the public policies designed to coopt and modify Black Power and reveals how this policy shift was inspired by the limitations and assumptions of the War on Poverty, the deepening of the urban crisis, and the growth of black radicalism during the mid-to-late 1960s and early 1970s. Examining Kennedy's CDC programme and Nixon's Black Capitalism initiatives, these policies are positioned within the context of the political controversies and developments the War on Poverty had helped to generate. Consciously adapted to growing white hostility to existing liberal prescriptions for addressing racial inequality, these pro-business and economic development policies rested on the assumption that the nation's private enterprise system, rather than government, should be relied upon to remedy economic inequality. Where the War on Poverty had energized and politically mobilized the poor, and amplified voices demanding transformative social and economic justice politics, both Kennedy and Nixon's plans instead sought to channel African American energy through business, economic development, and urban regeneration programmes intended to grow the black middle-class, and draw inner-city communities away from protest, radical and redistributive politics, and violent extremism.

The majority of chapter two is dedicated to exploring how the opportunities that these policies created were received, interpreted, and adapted by inner-city African Americans fighting for greater self-determination, economic empowerment and urban improvement. Focusing on the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (BSRC), the nation's first CDC established with Kennedy's help in Central Brooklyn in early 1967, and a number of similar black-run and controlled organizations in New York and Los Angeles, it demonstrates how the principles which

guided Kennedy and Nixon's policies played out at the local level. In the process, it explores the mainstreaming of Black Power as these organizations, in differing ways, fused programmes of cultural enrichment, institution building, and economic and business development in service of building local black political and economic power, and restoring their communities. Probing their local footprint and institutional legacies reveals the lasting contribution that many have made to their communities, and complicates declensional narratives and normative periodizations of the post-civil rights black freedom struggle.

Chapter three maintains the focus on examining Black Power's impact upon the black freedom struggle at the local level, this time in what were often multiracial battles over public education. As powerful signifiers of racial inequality and endemic racism, public schools became an important site of black community activism in all three cities as African Americans, and other minorities, strived to capitalize on legal rulings and define school reforms. Tracing the trajectory of education activism in each city, from the civil rights-era demand for school desegregation forward, this chapter explores the different ways white politicians, institutions, and organizations supported, facilitated, absorbed, subverted, and defeated the challenges to established white authority by grassroots movements for educational change.

In New York and Los Angeles these movements evolved from existing integrationist protest and antipoverty organizing, and the emergence of Black Power, and demanded 'community control' of public schools. This shift brought an insistence upon the need for black principals, teachers, and curricula, as well as the transfer of decision making power away from local white officials to locally elected community school boards. In Atlanta, grassroots education activism sought to empower local black parents and attain educational improvement through different means. Focused on securing busing to achieve school integration, education activism in the Gate City grew out of a Black Power-inflected welfare and tenants' rights activism that privileged social and economic justice over racial identity politics. As with the community groups discussed in chapter two, studying these movements for education reform reveals the different ways in which community level activists interpreted and appropriated Black Power ideology, expanding the cast of actors in Black Power's development at the local level and revealing its place among broader minority liberation struggles.

Exploring the rhythms of education activism in each of the three cities underlines the importance of local political and social landscapes in both the opening up of political opportunity and dictating the course of change. However, the defeat of grassroots activism in all three cities,

despite their different orientations, is instructive. Their common emphasis upon transformative political solutions, which sought the empowerment of the black poor and working-class communities through a redistribution of power away from established authorities, or threatened to infringe on existing white advantage and economic and political interests, came up against staunch and committed white opposition. In New York, education reforms sanctioned by the city's liberal Republican Mayor John V. Lindsay emerged as a response to, and sought to satisfy, Black Power-oriented demands for local black control of black schools. However, despite the support these reforms received from City Hall, the powerful local white teachers' union succeeded in defeating community control and the redistribution of power it threatened. Similar black demands in Los Angeles were skilfully absorbed and deflected by local politicians and education officials who succeeded in largely bolstering their own authority over local public education while making limited concessions to local activists. In the case of Atlanta, divergent class interests in the black community were exploited as middle-class and elite blacks joined with white elites to advance a narrower vision of black empowerment that reinforced educational disadvantage in poorer black neighbourhoods. Events in all three cities demonstrated how African Americans' demands for empowerment through transformative and redistributive political change could be denied, and class interest used to channel black advancement through solutions that would instead reinforce the existing socio-economic and political order. Collectively, they underline the powerful and, ultimately definitive, influence that mainstream white organizations and institutions had upon the character of racial progress and empowerment.

A number of the major themes of this thesis are brought together and converge in the fourth and final chapter which examines black political leadership and the broader political and economic forces, and the public policies, which shaped the progress made by African Americans under it during the 1970s. After first exploring the factors underlying the upsurge in the number of black elected officials that occurred during the period, attention is then primarily focused on local politics and developments in Los Angeles and Atlanta, cities which both elected their first black mayor (Tom Bradley and Maynard Jackson respectively) in 1973. An in-depth analysis of their campaigns for office, elections, and first two terms in office (taking us up to the end of the 1970s) aims to explain the various political debates, economic pressures, and socio-economic trends which shaped their political programmes as mayor.

In the process, the longer term significance of the War on Poverty, and Kennedy and Nixon's alternative policies, becomes clear. Upon taking office both Bradley and Jackson faced considerable economic problems. Persistent white flight and deindustrialization left them with a

declining tax base and a growing cost of social welfare for inner-city poor communities mired in cyclical unemployment and poverty. The broader groundswell of white hostility to the powerful redistributive and transformative politics that the War on Poverty had helped to generate (especially through its inadvertent impact on welfare enrollment) grew further during the early 1970s, as broader national economic pressures squeezed white taxpayers and the profit margins of downtown business interests. Faced with implacable hostility from both of these groups, black mayors such as Bradley and Jackson found their scope for addressing the needs of their poor black constituents severely constrained. Instead, they both pursued pro-growth politics which catered primarily to the interests of middle-class taxpayers and local business elites and saw municipal support for poor black neighbourhoods and social services decline precipitously. While Jackson moved toward this approach in the face of pressure from white elites, Bradley began his tenure as an acolyte of white business interests and his political agenda reflected the dominance of the mainstream pro-business solutions to dealing with inequality and advancing black interests discussed in chapter two. Once more, white interests and pressures, and public policy discourses heavily defined by whites, played the critical role in defining the scope and character of black progress, and in the case of Bradley and Jackson's tenures, the meaning of black political power for the majority of their African American constituents.

For the black middle-class and elite in both cities, however, black city leadership proved to be a wellspring of opportunity. One of the primary reasons for this was the development, and deeper entrenchment in federal policy, of Kennedy and Nixon's pro-business and economic development policies that chapter two examines in depth. At a time when advocates of redistributive social and economic justice politics were increasingly marginalized in national and local politics, public policy initiatives that had been forged in the mission to modify and coopt the Black Power impulse by boosting black middle-class development constituted the most viable avenue for advancing the interests of local African Americans available to both Bradley and Jackson. As the black middle-class and elite enjoyed unprecedented levels of prosperity, poor and working-class blacks generally faced the worst socio-economic conditions in over a generation. While the deepening of intra-racial inequality under black city leadership cannot be solely attributed to those public policies, they nevertheless played an important part in the process. As such, I argue, they represent a largely untold story of Black Power's impact, and offer a new perspective on how Black Power changed America.

By exploring the nexus of public policies, black community organizations, white and black elected officials, liberal foundations, and Black Power, this thesis makes a distinctive contribution

to postwar American social and political historiography in a number of respects. One way it does this is through its analysis of public policy, starting with the War on Poverty. It is only in recent years that historians have begun to pay due attention to the nation's antipoverty battle, which formed the cornerstone of President Johnson's Great Society legislation. Nearly three decades ago, Allen Matusow was one of the first historians to recognise the significance of the War on Poverty – and especially of its most controversial element, the Community Action Programme (CAP) – to politics and protest during the period. The dearth of local studies on its impact that he identified at the time has now been largely remedied.[14] In the last few years the locally-focused approach of historians such as William Clayson, Annelise Orleck, Robert Bauman, Kenneth Jolly, Lisa Hazirjian, Guian McKee, and Rhonda Williams has been vital in developing our understanding of the impact that America's antipoverty battle had on cities and communities across the nation.[15] Looking back to the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s, in many cases, its effects are most clearly visible at the intersection of race and poverty. Indeed, perhaps the most significant characteristic of recent scholarship has been the extent to which it has highlighted a profound link between the War on Poverty – and in particular the CAP – and the struggles of urban minority communities for racial and economic justice and political empowerment.[16]

By revealing throughout the ways in which the War on Poverty fed into and influenced community activism, and encouraged racial identity politics and nationalist organizing in black and other minority communities, this thesis adds to our growing image of how the War on Poverty became intertwined with the African American freedom struggle, and implicated in the ideological shift away from traditional civil rights methods and goals that accelerated from the mid-1960s onwards. However, this study makes a unique contribution to the existing antipoverty literature through its exploration and framing of the longer-term significance of the War on Poverty. Revealing how the Johnson administration's antipoverty legislation both inspired and shaped

[14] Allen Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: a History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 255.
[15] See, for example: Robert Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East L.A.* (Norman, OA.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); William S. Clayson, *Freedom Is Not Enough the War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Kenneth S. Jolly, *Black Liberation in the Midwest: the Struggle in St. Louis, Missouri, 1964-1970* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Lisa Gayle Hazirjian, 'Combating NEED: Urban Conflict and the Transformations of the War on Poverty and the African American Freedom Struggle in Rocky Mount, North Carolina' *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 34, No. 4, (May 2008) pp. 639-664; Guian A McKee, *The problem of jobs: liberalism, race, and deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The politics of public housing: Black women's struggles against urban inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[16] The most important recent publication which explore these themes is a rich edited collection of local case studies in: *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980* ed. by Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

alternative public policies illuminates the centrally important role that the War on Poverty played in creating the legislative framework, and driving the broader political debates, in which white mainstream engagement with Black Power (and broader popular white resistance to redistributive and progressive politics) was grounded. In this way, I add to our understanding of the War on Poverty's impact on both future landscapes of reform, Black Power, and mainstream politics itself.

The other major public policy focus of this study is on those policies intended to engage and reform the Black Power impulse. By considering the relationship between white mainstream politicians and institutions and Black Power, this thesis contributes to what is an embryonic area of the historiography. Indeed, only one historian has explicitly addressed this relationship in any serious and sustained depth. Devin Fergus's 2009 work *Liberalism, Black Power and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980* focuses on the 'interplay' between liberals and Black Power in North Carolina where, he demonstrates, liberals enjoyed considerable success in moderating local manifestations of Black Power in the Tar Heel state. Fergus's work explicitly challenges the normative interpretation that Black Power 'ran amok over liberalism and contributed to, if not instigated, the political and social unraveling of America.'[17] My own findings here build on Fergus's scholarship by revealing how this fascinating and understudied relationship unfolded in different locations, and within different political contexts, and underscores his argument that, contrary to prevailing wisdom, mainstream white politicians and institutions succeeded, to a significant degree, in reforming Black Power.

However, my work differs from Fergus's significantly, and adds to our understanding of the relationship between mainstream America and Black Power in several important ways. First, my thesis is much more specifically focused on public policy. Primarily concerned with excavating the longer history of the public policies I explore, my thesis traces their evolution from existing liberal prescriptions for tackling racial and economic inequality. In the process, it reveals the durability and influence of Cold War liberal economic philosophy and gendered New Deal policy, exposing how they informed the intrinsic racial and class biases that animated mainstream white politicians' engagement with Black Power. Second, I incorporate Kennedy's understudied Community Development Corporation (CDC) programme alongside the Black Capitalist policies of Richard Nixon which Fergus and others, such as Robert Weems and Dean Kotlowski, have discussed. By addressing the alternative policies of both Kennedy and Nixon, united in their desire to coopt and modify Black Power, and exploring the nuanced commonalities and differences between them, this

[17] Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009) p. 8, 7.

thesis helps to complicate our understanding of liberal and conservative responses to racial and economic inequality during the period. Finally, whereas Fergus, overall, is concerned with the broader impact of liberal-Black Power détente on the future course of national politics, (especially in relation to the defeat of moderate Republicanism within the state GOP,) my focus is upon how it played out in black community activism and, more broadly, the longer term implications it has had for African American society and politics.

By exploring the ways in which Black Power translated into community level activism in New York, Los Angeles, and Atlanta, this thesis also adds to what is a vibrant and evolving body of scholarship on Black Power. Writing in 1995, sociologist Charles Payne complained that much of what had been written about the civil rights movement up to that point 'reflected the same underlying analytical frames as did contemporary media.'[18] Arguably, this trend did much to shape the historiographical profile of Black Power too. Attracting the greatest media attention, radical groups like the Black Panther Party (BPP), dissenting black Olympic athletes, and militant African American student-led campus protests demanding Black Studies programmes at leading white private and public universities, became the enduring face of Black Power. Today the popular image of the Black Power movement is still dominated by notions of political radicalism, fierce rhetoric, clashes with authority, and an emphatic advocacy of armed self-defense. Undergirded by the contemporary white media's fixation with these more sensational elements of the movement's history, this largely negative stereotype of Black Power is, though, a shallow and misleading one. Fortunately, two significant trends in recent scholarship have helped to undermine this simplistic view of the Black Power movement. First, radical Black Power organizations have begun to have their historical reputation rehabilitated and have seen their associations with violence, crime, and male chauvinism tempered by a greater appreciation of their nuanced political and philosophical development over time, their changing gender attitudes and dynamics, and their many positive contributions to life in their communities.[19] Second, greater study of Black Power has begun to reveal its many dimensions, demonstrating that the Black Power movement was comprised of much

[18] Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) p.413.

[19] For recent work that has helped undermine stereotypes of radical Black Power groups (in addition to the Black Panther Party scholarship listed in footnote 12) see, for example: Scot Brown, *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* ed. by Bettye Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin (New York: New York University Press, 2001); *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* ed. by Dayo F. Gore et al., (New York: New York University Press, 2009). For work on the Black Studies movement in particular, see: Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

more than just the radical elements it is most commonly identified with. Recent work has illuminated the complex relationships between a wide range of Black Power organizations, advocates, and supporters and, among other things: mainstream white politicians and institutions; African American municipal politics and culture; black economic development; and the educational and social welfare of ghetto communities. Consequently, Black Power's evolution has now been more effectively historicized and its impact, both nationally and internationally, more accurately mapped.[20]

This thesis contributes to this more capacious, and increasingly sophisticated, picture of the Black Power movement – and the black freedom struggle more generally – now reflected in the historiography. Away from the spotlight of the white media, Black Power found expression in a variety of guises as it merged with existing community activism. By exploring how African Americans responded to white efforts to engage with Black Power, I examine numerous organizations and individuals, many of whom are either absent or peripheral in the existing scholarship, and illuminate some of the different ways in which Black Power evolved at the community level. In the process, I uncover the complex and often close relationship that existed between civil rights and Black Power organizations and grassroots activists. This contributes to an ongoing and vital development within the historiography of the black freedom struggle that has taken place over the over the last decade and a half. Much of the scholarship during that period has served to undermine a master narrative of the black push for equality dominated by the southern civil rights movement's battle against Jim Crow, and which privileged a top-down perspective of the period, explaining the struggle of tens of thousands through the lives of prominent individuals like Martin Luther King Jr., and President John F. Kennedy. Recent studies have also fatally weakened the traditional, declensional view of the period in which the progress of a noble southern, nonviolent, civil rights movement (and, indeed, of the nation at large) toward racial equality was interrupted, and this dream ultimately defeated, by an ill-disposed, violent, angry and nihilistic northern Black Power movement. Such a simplistic and dichotomous analysis has become

[20] For important recent scholarship that has dealt with Black Power's impact and place more broadly, see, for example: Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2007); Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Cedric Johnson, *Revolutionaries to Race Leaders: Black Power and the Making of African American Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power and the Making of American Politics*; Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). For the most recent Black Power historiographical survey, see: Joseph, 'The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field'.

untenable. No longer, as Robert Self has suggested, can the South be presented as 'paradigmatic, the North an aberration.'[21]

Much of the historiography now successfully blurs the line between civil rights and Black Power as it reveals more fully the roots, contours, and differing trajectories of African Americans' fight against racial discrimination as it unfolded in local communities across the country. Where once scholars emphasized the difference and change between the civil rights and Black Power eras of the black freedom struggle, and the philosophical positions they were seen to occupy, many historians now insist upon their interrelatedness, and the commonalities and continuities between the two.[22] The exploration of black community activism in New York, Los Angeles, and Atlanta contained within this thesis echoes this interpretative analysis, and adds to our developing and complex picture of the black freedom struggle.

The differing political landscapes in each of the three cities that this thesis focuses upon provide a range of perspectives which demonstrate how local conditions shaped both black community activism and the potential of public policy to effect socio-economic change. In New York, black and other minority groups' efforts to lay claim to public policy was supported by the Lindsay administration, boosting and emboldening grassroots black activism in the process. In Los Angeles, Mayor Yorty took a different approach. Often dedicated to slowing the pace of racial change, and situating himself in opposition to African American community groups, Yorty set the tone for local officials' efforts to limit minority influence over public policy. In Atlanta, where the direction and pace of racial progress was governed by the city's elites, both white and black, the situation was different again. This biracial power arrangement had dominated postwar Atlanta politics and had helped to make the city a haven for business interests and the middle-classes. At the same time, it had reinforced the marginalization of working-class and poor blacks both from the proceeds of public policy, and political power more generally. These contrasting contexts reveal the importance of local conditions in shaping the development and negotiation of Black Power as well

[21] Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Post-war Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) p. 11.

[22] See, for example: Tim Tyson, 'Robert F. Williams, "Black Power", and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No.2, (Sept., 1998) pp.540-570; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 91 No. 4, (March 2005), pp.1233-1263; Simon Hall, 'The NAACP, Black Power, and the African American Freedom Struggle, 1966-1969', *The Historian*, Vol. 69, No.1, (March 2007) pp.49-82; Jeanne Theoharis, 'Black Freedom Studies: Re-imaging and Redefining the Fundamentals' *History Compass*, Volume 4, Issue 2, (March 2006) pp. 348-367; Heather Ann Thompson, 'All Across the Nation: Urban Black Activism, North and South, 1965-1975' in *African American Urban History Since World War II* ed. by Kevin Kusmer and Joe Trotter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) pp. 181-202. Two of the most important collections of essays which explore this argument include: *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* ed. by Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) and *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* ed. by Charles M. Payne, et al., (New York: New York University, 2005).

as the different ways in which national political developments impacted at the local level. The commonalities between the outcomes of the contests over public policies, institutions, and political resources and power in each of the three cities also underline the importance of powerful discourses about race, gender, class, and economic inequality, and the political responses to Black Power that they informed.

Existing scholarship reveals much of the lasting impression that Black Power has made, or helped to make, on American society and politics. It played an important part in driving a paradigmatic shift within American culture whereby overt racism has become largely taboo in mainstream public discourse. It redefined black identity, and provided a linguistic and stylistic blueprint that inspired a broader revolution in affirmative cultural and identity politics among many other minority groups. Black Power's cultural legacy is also reflected in hip hop and rap music, the most dominant cultural and artistic form in contemporary black America. Finally, the trenchant and piercing critique of American society articulated by some of Black Power's most radical elements remains one of its enduring legacies, the echoes of which can still be heard in social and political activism and dissent today.[23]

What is less well recognized, however, is the extent to which public policy initiatives intended to coopt Black Power, and subvert radical black politics, helped to expand economic and political opportunity for those whose sensibilities they were intended to appeal to the most: upwardly mobile, middle-class, and elite blacks. The final, and perhaps most significant aim of this thesis, therefore, is to retrieve, and incorporate in to the history of Black Power, the story of black middle-class success which, to borrow a phrase from historian Alan Brinkley, is 'somewhat of an orphan' in the historiography of the period.[24] This aspect of the era's history is divorced from studies of Black Power largely I believe because such a narrative is at odds with the dominant radical grass-roots struggle oriented image of the Black Power movement. The struggle for social and economic justice, and against racism, state repression, and the broader evils of U.S. imperialism, is a far more romantic, heroic, and seductive story than one of middle-class progress, which might seem prosaic by comparison. In many ways, that middle-class African Americans profited during the mid-to-late 1960s through the 1970s is not surprising. It was, after all, a period of ongoing political realignment during which support for the moral, racial, and economic

[23] Joseph Tilden Rhea, *Race Pride and American Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) pp.102-117; Peniel E. Joseph, *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama* (New York: BasicCivitas Books, 2010) pp.30-32.

[24] This is a phrase that Brinkley applied to scholarship on the American Right in his 1994 essay on the relative paucity of literature on postwar U.S. conservatism. See: Alan Brinkley, 'The Problem of American Conservatism' *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No. 2, (Apr., 1994) pp. 409-429 (p.409).

principles of redistributive liberalism declined precipitously, and was superseded by a homeowner interest-focused, anti-tax suburban conservative politics. As such, despite the highly racialized nature of this realignment, it would not be unreasonable to assume that, in an environment where the legal obstacles to racial progress had been struck down and public policy shifted further towards the interests of middle-class and economic elites, that upwardly mobile African Americans would also benefit from (and, indeed, favour) such policies.

Nevertheless, this thesis argues that, as much as the progress of black middle-class and elites during the mid-to-late 1960s through the 1970s resulted from a number of factors, (not least of which of course was their own talent, application, and industry,) the fact remains that many of the opportunities they enjoyed (and capitalized on) were created as part of a broader political project that aimed to coopt and nurture the Black Power impulse in the nation's inner-cities. Seeking to channel black progress through mainstream middle-class oriented pro-business development politics, this project was undergirded by the aim to reinforce the political and social values of the nation's capitalist economy and social order. To that extent, in the longer term these policies ultimately helped to widen the gap between the African American poor and working-classes and their increasingly affluent middle-class counterparts.

The story of black middle-class success, therefore, is one that reveals the power of white interests to define how racial progress occurred. Opportunities for advancement, strongly shaped by class and gender biases, were made available where they promised to be most compatible with, and beneficial to, dominant white political and economic interests. More radical political solutions favoured by antipoverty and social and economic justice movements, which sought a fundamental transformation of U.S. society and politics that directly threatened entrenched white interests, were strongly and successfully resisted. Ultimately, it is difficult to look beyond the conclusion that black progress toward two of the main goals that Black Power encompassed – political and economic empowerment – was dictated primarily by the degree of white support, consent, and opposition. Essentially, therefore, the most decisive force in the negotiation of Black Power was white power.

To begin understanding the evolution of the mainstream white political responses to Black Power, and how they later came to exacerbate economic inequality among urban blacks, we must now turn our attention to President Johnson's War on Poverty.

Chapter One: 'A mouthful of civil rights and an empty belly': The War on Poverty and the Fight for Racial Equality

In early June 1967, a decision by Washington officials to approve an application for War on Poverty funds from an African American community group in South Central Los Angeles caused uproar among local authorities and voters. The source of their anger was the award of $238, 429 to the Community Alert Patrol (CATPL), an organization set-up in the aftermath of the Watts riots in mid-August 1965. Established as an informal police observation group, since early 1966 CATPL's fifteen member strong team – many of whom were local black youths with criminal records – had monitored the behavior of police patrolmen in the local area with a brief to note and document any instances of police brutality that they witnessed. Unarmed, they sought only to form a "buffer" between police and local residents so that more harmonious relations between the two could be fostered.[1] Indeed, the organization's code of conduct explicitly forbid group members from intervening in police affairs in any way. Their mission was to address police brutality – a major concern of many of the city's black residents and the issue which initially sparked the rioting which had sent Watts up in flames – as well as tackling the problem of juvenile delinquency by rehabilitating and educating local youth through this community service. The CATPL had applied for War on Poverty funds so that they could expand their operations, and diversify by acquiring a garage and relevant work equipment. Not only would their patrol vehicles be serviced at the garage but they would also offer local youths the chance to learn automobile repair trade skills and acquire practical on-the-job experience too. Overall, therefore, they looked to build on their existing vision by trying to help in the local battle to alleviate poverty by providing training and employment opportunities for local black youths.[2]

Once news of the award broke, however, it soon met with mass disapproval among surprised local officials and politicians. State Governor and leading conservative Ronald Reagan implored Sargent Shriver, head of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), the federal agency responsible for coordinating the nation's War on Poverty, to halt governmental support for the

[1] Sacramento, California State Archives, California State Office of Economic Opportunity Records, Series F3751, Box 9, Folder 181, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Press Release, May 18, 1967. Funding for the project was handled and approved by a team of officials working across the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).
[2] California State Office of Economic Opportunity Records, Series F3751, Box 9, Folder 181, Community Alert Patrol Press Release, May 24, 1967.

organization.[3] The city's police chief, Thomas Reddin declared his unequivocal opposition to the prospect of 'nonpolice […] policing the police'. Republican Senator George Murphy expressed his disbelief that a grant for such a project could be 'awarded without formal notification to the Los Angeles Police Department or to Mayor Sam Yorty of Los Angeles.'[4] Yorty was quick to register his anger over the lack of consultation with President Johnson, as well as his dismay with the fact that 'federal tax funds are being used in Los Angeles to finance direct interference with the vital operations of our nationally heralded police force.'[5] Similar sentiments were articulated by the city's voters too. Quite apart from the outrageous misuse of tax funds, one local citizen explained in a letter to Governor Reagan, the organization itself was an unconscionable and perilous experiment that threatened to undermine established authority:

> In order to keep peace with the Negro community the police officer will be forced to abide by the Community Alert Patrol – and the Community Alert Patrol will demand more and more power! Our whole system begins to crumble because of a few.[6]

The furore that the decision to approve the funding provoked swiftly had the desired effect, as Washington officials suspended award of the grant and advised the CATPL that they would no longer support the group's police observation patrols. Funding for the group was eventually rubberstamped on the condition that they cease their law enforcement monitoring activities.[7] The political reaction, and ultimate conclusion, to this episode highlighted a number of key themes which run throughout this chapter, and the thesis as a whole. First, it revealed black communities' commitment to the War on Poverty and to creatively using public policy to advance their struggle against racial discrimination and economic inequality and the oppressive socio-economic conditions of life in the ghetto. With similar police observation patrols also a signature of the early local activism of future Black Power icons the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence (BPP), further north in Oakland, California, the CATPL also highlighted the close relationship between Black Power-oriented, urban community activism and the antipoverty programme. Second, it encapsulated the War on Poverty's capacity for generating political controversy, and highlighted a criticism often leveled at it by conservative opponents: that, like much liberal social policy devised by distant

[3] California State Office of Economic Opportunity Records, Series F3751, Box 9, Folder 181, Ronald Reagan to Sargent Shriver, June 12, 1967.
[4] California State Office of Economic Opportunity Records, Series F3751, Box 9, Folder 181, Senator George Murphy Press Release, June 5, 1967.
[5] Los Angeles, Los Angeles City Archives, Sam Yorty Papers, box C-0280, F: Mayor's Letters 1967, Yorty to Lyndon Johnson, May 26, 1967, p.2.
[6] California State Office of Economic Opportunity Records, Series F3751, Box 9, Folder 181, Thomas W. Edmonds to Ronald Reagan, May 25, 1967.
[7] California State Office of Economic Opportunity Records, Series F3751, Box 9, Folder 181, Memorandum from Jim Barber to Jackie Beam, June 20, 1967, p.3.

federal bureaucrats, it was ill-considered and unnecessary interventionism which did little but stir local trouble.

Last, it demonstrated the strength and success of white mainstream opposition to black activism and the scope of public policy where it threatened established power arrangements or white privilege and authority. In this case, it was the city's police department– a vital organ and symbol of mainstream white political control – whose authority seemed threatened. Worse still, it endangered traditional power relationships by endorsing the attempts of urban black youths, some with dubious records of past conduct, to question the police's conduct – a subversion of established relations which would not be tolerated. As this chapter demonstrates, the War on Poverty's capacity for challenging established urban power arrangements would see this pattern of decisive white mainstream political resistance repeated time and again. Ultimately, as this thesis argues overall, white mainstream politicians and groups, and the pressures they created, would play the definitive role in dictating the boundaries of public policy and the potential for change.

These dynamics are explored across this chapter and emerge from a wide and varied source base. Discussion of the War on Poverty's place in the New Deal liberal tradition; of its role in providing a new outlet for the longstanding black demand for economic citizenship; and of its roots in social science research draws on a rich vein of secondary literature. Mapping the different ways that the antipoverty effort unfolded in New York, Los Angeles, and Atlanta, and its impact on U.S. politics more broadly, engages with a range of primary evidence. The intricacies of local developments are captured through local politicians' and administrative records, the papers of antipoverty activists and agencies, civil rights organizations, and reports from black and white media sources. State and national OEO records, along with national news media, help reveal how the War on Poverty disturbed existing power arrangements, the reaction this provoked, and the broader impact it had on the future of Democratic Party liberalism and the American political landscape.

The grassroots activism, debates, controversies, criticism, and political opposition that the War on Poverty created did much to colour both its contemporary and historical reputation; a reputation born of conservatives' committed efforts to discredit the antipoverty programme, both at the time and in the years since its eventual curtailment in the mid-1970s. Conservatives typically portrayed the Johnson administration's War on Poverty as a costly failure that embodied the excesses of big government and a paternalistic liberal welfare state. The government's misguided attempt to try and mitigate economic inequality, they insisted, had been a failure. As President

Ronald Reagan quipped during his 1988 State of the Union address, 'My friends, some years ago, the federal government declared war on poverty, and poverty won.'[8] This conservative critique of the antipoverty programme – constructed during the 1960s, and reinforced and popularized (by iconic figures like Reagan) in their decades of national political ascendancy since – has proved to be both powerful and persuasive. It is only during the last decade, as historians have begun to reassess the nation's antipoverty effort in closer detail, that the core assumptions of the Right's dominant narrative of the War on Poverty have been substantially undermined.

Peter Edelman, professor of public policy and former legislative assistant to Robert Kennedy, argued in a 2006 article that, far from being a failure, the War on Poverty did a remarkable job with the meager funding it received. Indeed, by 1974, after ten years of antipoverty operations, the number of Americans estimated to be living below the poverty line had been halved. In addition, the Lyndon Johnson administration's Great Society legislation – of which the War on Poverty was a vital part – helped improve the lives of millions of Americans by providing improved education, housing, food, and medical care to communities where they were desperately lacking. Moreover, despite the attempts by conservatives to roll back the War on Poverty, as Edelman has explained, many of its constituent programmes and sub-agencies still remain today (albeit in different guises) and 'continue to make a substantial difference in the quality of life of millions of Americans.'[9]

However, as recent scholarship has ably demonstrated, the significance of the antipoverty programme extends far beyond the question of its success or failure.[10] As Edelman has suggested, 'the War on Poverty energized thousands upon thousands of people across the country and served as a stepping stone into politics, continuing activism, civic participation, and economic success.'[11] While this thesis does explore these aspects of the War on Poverty's impact on black community activism and local politics, more broadly, it is also concerned with uncovering a different perspective on the War on Poverty's legacy which reveals, to a fuller extent, the impression it made on the American political landscape and the black freedom struggle.

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[8] Annelise Orleck, 'The War on Poverty and Politics since the 1960s', in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. by Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (University of Georgia Press, 2011) pp.437-461 (p.437).

[9] Peter Edelman, 'The War on Poverty and Subsequent Federal Programs: What Worked, What Didn't Work, and Why? Lessons for Future Programs' *Clearinghouse REVIEW Journal of Poverty Law and Policy*, (May-June 2006) pp.7-18 (p.10)**;** Annelise Orleck, 'Introduction: The War on Poverty from the Grass Roots Up', in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980,* ed. by Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (University of Georgia Press, 2011) pp.1-28 (p.6).

[10] For a list of recent scholarship on the War on Poverty see, introduction footnotes 15 & 16.

[11] Edelman, p.10.

In this sense, I believe that the War on Poverty is analogous to the United States Supreme Court ruling *Brown v. Board of Education* of May 1954 as it is presented by historian Michael Klarman. That is to say that Klarman's characterization of the *Brown* decision – as a phenomenon which was more significant for the reaction and developments it inspired than it was for its impact or success in achieving the goals, or fulfilling the purpose, for which it was originally created – is applicable to the War on Poverty too.[12] In order to establish how the War on Poverty made a vital and lasting impression on black community activism, mainstream engagement with Black Power, white voters' support for redistributive liberalism, and future landscapes of reform, this chapter sets out and explores a number of important ideas and themes which stretch across the thesis. First, it outlines African Americans' enthusiasm for the War on Poverty, and explores its relationship to historical shifts in conceptions of American citizenship shaped by the New Deal welfare state and, later, by the apotheosis of a Cold War capitalist consumer domestic culture. Racial discrimination and the widespread poverty it helped to produce kept African Americans on the outskirts of the evolving mainstream of national life and culture. Black aspirations to realize a reinvented vision of the 'American Dream', in which the male breadwinner earned a 'family wage', allowing him to support his wife and children in suburban comfort, remained inaccessible to the vast majority of African American families stuck in cyclical poverty. In a story of postwar consumerism and prosperity, their deprivation seemed a distinctly un-American anomaly. Promising to help break the shackles of poverty, African Americans responded energetically to President Johnson's antipoverty legislation. Where the New Deal and postwar public policy had primarily served white (and male) interests, African Americans strived to ensure the War on Poverty would work for them. By engaging with the political question of how to meet African American's desire for economic citizenship, the War on Poverty established the political framework which the alternative policies discussed in chapter two (especially Kennedy's CDC programme) emerged in part as a response to.

Identifying the War on Poverty's roots in the socio-economic problems of inner-city minority communities sheds light on both how, and why, the antipoverty programme became so thoroughly entwined with the black freedom struggle in ghetto communities across the nation, a theme which is developed in subsequent chapters. Exploring the fundamental principles and aims that guided War on Poverty planners and the Johnson administration exposes the sometimes conflicting core assumptions of Cold War liberalism and social policymaking, and helps to explain the limitations of the War on Poverty's approach to combatting economic inequality. As we will see in chapter two, those same assumptions and limitations would play a vital part in shaping alternative

[12] See: Michael J. Klarman, 'How *Brown* Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 81, No. 1, (June 1994) pp.81-118.

public policies which African Americans used to advance their fight against racial inequality and for urban improvement, economic empowerment, and cultural enrichment.

Attention is then turned to the considerable impact the War on Poverty made on the nation's political landscape. While President Johnson was hopeful that the War on Poverty could make a real difference to the lives of millions of American citizens, it engendered challenges to the nation's political equilibrium that he neither expected, nor desired. These challenges often became bound up with battles for racial justice, as black and other minority communities sought to use the War on Poverty as a route to greater empowerment, and to push back against racial discrimination and economic inequality. As one of the bill's supporters on Capitol Hill, Democratic Rep. Sam Gibbons from Florida, warned: 'If you're scared what poor people will do when they get motivated and interested in their government then you ought to be against this legislation because it is going to bring them into the mainstream.'[13] By bringing the poor into the realm of politics, the War on Poverty precipitated a clash between established city power brokers and poor communities struggling for greater self-determination that reverberated from local politics to the corridors of Congress. Conflict over the War on Poverty not only highlighted the desire for greater self-determination among inner-city blacks, it also fueled racial identity politics among minority groups, illuminating the growing vitality of nationalism in the nation's ghettos. As we will see in future chapters, the War on Poverty attracted and channeled nationalist organizing, becoming a key site where Black Power ideology penetrated black community activism, making it a vital stage of Black Power's development at the local level.

Finally, the broader political consequences of the War on Poverty are sketched. While on the one hand the War on Poverty created a vibrant, diverse, and multiracial coalition of antipoverty supporters – including a wide range of religious, labour, civil rights, Black Power, and liberal interest groups – it also created serious conflicts, and raised fundamental political questions, that widened the fissures between conservatives and liberals, and eroded white working and lower middle-class support for the Democratic Party. Popular opposition to the War on Poverty grew over time, as urban unrest became linked to political foment in poor urban ghetto communities, and the expansion of welfare enrollment and protest thrust liberal social policy and government spending further into the spotlight. Controversies sparked, and deepened, by the War on Poverty fueled important debates about government, race and public policy, and economic justice, taxes, and the

[13] Berlin, John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, Friei Universitat, Mark I. Gefland ed., The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 2, Paul Weeks, 'Voices of Poverty are being heard – and City Halls across U.S. quail', *Los Angeles Times*, August 9, 1965. Senator Gibbons floor managed the $1.9 billion extension of the antipoverty program to a 254-158 victory in the House in August 1965.

welfare state that would play a vital role in the development of Black Power and the seismic political realignment that underpinned the three decade long conservative ascendancy in national politics that followed the 1960s. As later chapters also demonstrate, these debates would also play a central role in remaking landscapes of reform and constraining the scope of political possibilities under black mayors such as Tom Bradley in Los Angeles and Maynard Jackson in Atlanta through the 1970s and beyond.

Public Policy, Economic Citizenship, and the Black Freedom Struggle

In order to understand how the War on Poverty became so entwined with the urban black freedom struggle, and the influential role it played in driving divisive political debate and shaping future landscapes of reform, it is necessary to do three things. First, explore its roots in both contemporary crises and the New Deal liberal tradition on which it built. Second, outline the longer history of African American demands for economic citizenship, and the ways those demands were shaped by previous public policy. Finally – and where we now begin – is tracing the unusual trajectory of the War on Poverty's emergence on to the nation's political agenda.

Whereas President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal three decades earlier had been a response to the Great Depression, and the economic crisis and mass poverty it produced, the War on Poverty instead emerged during a period of unparalleled national abundance. Indeed, American society in the 1950s and early 1960s is perhaps most commonly associated with increasing domestic affluence, embodied in the postwar economic boom, the inexorable rise of mass consumerism, and suburbanization. However, this story of increasing material comfort was not shared by all. By 1960 over forty million Americans – twenty-two percent of the population – lived a very different life, below the poverty line.[14] As a group, America's poor were peripheral citizens in almost every sense of the word. They remained largely on the margins of the nation's economy, political landscape, and wider public consciousness, until the publication of two books – economist John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* in 1958 and sociologist Michael Harrington's *The Other America* in 1962 – helped to establish a broader public debate on poverty. Together, these books scandalized the existence and extent of America's 'poverty amidst plenty' and insisted on the need for federal action to correct what was branded a national shame.[15]

[14] Orleck, 'Introduction: The War on Poverty from the Grass Roots Up', p.5.
[15] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The affluent society* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1958); Michael Harrington, *The other America: poverty in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1962).

Harrington's work, in particular, historian Irwin Unger has explained, proved highly influential in Washington, impressing President John F. Kennedy and helping to establish poverty as a current issue, and viable target for action, in government circles.[16] In late 1963, with the presidential election nearly a year away, a group of Kennedy's advisers began to draw up possible domestic programmes to serve as a focus for the president's reelection campaign. It was then that the first steps of planning for what would later become the War on Poverty were taken. Kennedy's assassination on November 22nd 1963, however, saw the embryonic proposal passed on to the stewardship of his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, where it was enthusiastically received. 'That's my kind of program' the new president told Walter Heller (Kennedy's chief economic advisor) upon hearing of the proposed antipoverty legislation. 'I'll find money for it one way or another.' Heller left under instruction to speed up the program's development. Soon after, on January 8th 1964, President Johnson used his first State of the Union address to tell the nation that his administration was declaring 'unconditional war on poverty.'[17]

The War on Poverty's rise from policy idea, to its elevation on to the nation's political agenda, was nothing short of meteoric. Generally speaking, this formative trajectory was most unusual. Unlike most social legislation, the War on Poverty was not the result of organized or public pressure. Rather, it resulted primarily from a convergence of concerned professional academic elites and the activist inclinations of federal government liberals.[18] In light of its relatively unheralded arrival, for some conservative opponents the War on Poverty was proof positive of the creeping socialism of interventionist and interfering liberals intent on subverting the traditional values and foundations of American society through unnecessary (and ultimately damaging) social legislation. As the decade progressed, this kind of sentiment resonated with increasing numbers of white American voters who began to question the moral and political dimensions of activist liberal social spending.

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[16] Irwin Unger, *The Best of Intentions: The Triumphs and Failures of the Great Society under Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon* (New York: Doubleday, 1996) pp. 65-66. Kennedy's own personal interest in tackling poverty had first been sparked by witnessing firsthand the extreme poverty of white Appalachian coal mining communities while on the campaign trail for the Democratic nomination in rural West Virginia in 1960. See, Thomas Kiffmeyer, *Reformers to radicals the Appalachian Volunteers and the war on poverty* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2008) p.1, 37.

[17] Guian McKee, '"This Government Is with Us": Lyndon B. Johnson and the Grass-roots War on Poverty', in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. by Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (University of Georgia Press, 2011), pp.31-62 (p. 35); LBJ Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 8, 1964 online: http://www.lbjlibrary.org/collections/selected-speeches/november-1963-1964/01-08-1964.html [Accessed 27/7/2013].

[18] Daniel P. Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York: Free Press, 1969), pp.21-37.

For the majority of African Americans, however, the arrival of antipoverty legislation was not only welcome, but especially relevant too. Statistical analysis confirmed the unmistakable intersection between race and poverty. Although the vast majority of the staggering forty million Americans living below the poverty line (defined by the government as an annual income of $3,000 or less) were white, over 50 percent of all African American families were classed as poor. This was a grossly disproportionate figure when set against the rate of 20 percent for white families. Indeed, in 1962 the average black family income was $3,023 – barely above the poverty line – whereas the average white family's was nearly double at $5,642.[19] Underpinning these figures was inadequate education, poverty wage employment, joblessness, and the endemic racial discrimination from which they stemmed.

Attending underfunded and underperforming schools, the vast majority of black youth were denied the necessary standard of education required to compete for skilled jobs in an economy witnessing rapid technological advancement. Worse still, those who found employment would more than likely be paid less than their white counterparts for doing the same job. African Americans who did attain four years of college education still faced earning less over their lifetimes than a white person with far less schooling. In the early 1960s, out of a total black population of just under 19 million, 3.6 million black men were unemployed and 40 percent of those who did have jobs worked in low-skilled and low-paid industrial labour or service positions; effectively trapped there by insufficient education and the prejudice of employers and unions.[20] When President Johnson declared that the War on Poverty would produce better education, more jobs training and employment opportunities his words understandably resonated among African Americans.[21]

Debated on Capitol Hill at the same time as the Civil Rights Bill, the arrival of antipoverty legislation seemed, to many black leaders at the time, to be a much needed answer to the racial and economic problems besetting the nation's urban centres. Speaking at congressional hearings in April 1964, Whitney Young, head of the National Urban League (America's largest racial progress and urban interest advocacy group,) made it clear that civil rights legislation would not 'solve the problem of poverty.' 'We're afraid,' he continued, 'that we'll end up with a mouthful of civil rights and an empty belly.' Failure to enact the proposed legislation, he explained, could have dire consequences. 'The alternatives are very clear – either help Negroes to become constructive, useful

[19] Hubert Humphrey, *War on Poverty*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 96.
[20] *Ibid*., pp. 19, 49, 95–98.; US Census by Race, 1790-1990 Table 1, online at: http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/tab01.pdf [Accessed 4/10/2012];
[21] LBJ Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 8, 1964.

citizens or they will become destructive, disgruntled dependents.'[22] In agreement was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who celebrated the War on Poverty and civil rights legislation as 'twins,' and as complimentary parts of the nation's attack on racial discrimination.[23] The strong sense among black leaders that the War on Poverty was designed to address the concerns of poor African Americans had been reinforced by the President's own rhetoric. In announcing the impending antipoverty bill, Johnson had himself explicitly identified the need to tackle black poverty: 'Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope—some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity.'[24] Shortly after, Johnson summoned four of the country's leading black civil rights figures (Martin Luther King, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, James Farmer, the executive director of CORE, and Whitney Young) to the White House to discuss his pending antipoverty legislation. Afterwards, Farmer told reporters that the President had 'made it very clear that he feels the fight on poverty and illiteracy is a vital part of the fight against discrimination.'[25] African Americans across the nation shared the president's vision and seized upon the War on Poverty as a way to advance their struggle for greater self-determination, economic empowerment, and a better standard of living.

Although the War on Poverty was a somewhat unheralded and specific response to the period's myriad socio-economic issues, it was also another chapter in a longer political tradition within domestic liberalism which had promised to help African Americans in their bid for economic citizenship. By reviving this tradition, the War on Poverty would lay the foundations for the alternative policies which followed it which turned on offering blacks different solutions to securing black economic empowerment. Since the New Deal, such initiatives had forged a highly contradictory and problematic relationship between the black freedom struggle, public policy, and the federal government, and encountered persistent white political resistance. On the one hand, New Deal liberalism had done much to invigorate African Americans' battle against discrimination. As historian Anthony Badger has argued, although the New Deal failed to deliver substantial material gains to black Americans, it did help establish civil rights as a genuine political issue. It also reconfigured labour relations and enabled the expansion and empowerment of unions, some of which became an important base of support in blacks' struggle for racial and economic justice. Moreover, it had explicitly attempted to deal with economic inequality. By seeking to reshape the US economy in a bid to create employment opportunities for the working poor, the New Deal gave the federal government an unprecedented stake in the economic well-being of African Americans,

[22] Vincent J. Burke 'Congress Urged to Help Negroes out of Poverty', *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1964, p. 10.
[23] Tomiko Brown-Nagin, *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 258.
[24] LBJ Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 8, 1964.
[25] Robert Thompson, 'Johnson Asks Negroes to Help Battle Poverty', *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 1964, p.D15.

convincing many of the value of interventionist federal support in the struggle against poverty and racism. By bringing blacks into the Democratic fold, the New Deal transformed the Democratic Party, and inspired a political realignment that produced the broad liberal consensus responsible for the legislative civil rights revolution of the mid-to-late 1960s (which ultimately precipitated its demise).[26]

At the same time, however, the two-tier New Deal welfare state created by Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration heavily disadvantaged and marginalized African Americans by helping to reify the nation's white supremacist, male-dominated, socio-economic order. As historian Alice Kessler-Harris has explained, consisting primarily of policies tied to employment (in particular the Social Security Act and unemployment insurance), the top-tier legislation targeted white middle-class men and their families. These 'entitlements' protected the interests of households headed by male breadwinners earning a 'family wage' that supported a housewife and dependent children, enshrining this social paradigm as a cultural ideal. Most jobs available to black men, however, did not pay a 'family wage', cutting most African American families off from the best benefits of the New Deal welfare state. Southern congressmen exerted their political influence to ensure that the two largest sectors of African American employment – agricultural and domestic workers (which included two thirds of all black jobs and 85 percent of employed black women) – were initially excluded from top-tier programmes. Second-tier policies were largely means-tested direct aid 'relief' or 'welfare' programmes – in particular, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) – which became increasingly associated with poor and unmarried or single female-headed families in minority communities. Employment and family structure became hardwired into the celebrated, normative model of American life. As Kessler-Harris argues, when the federal government tied 'wage work to tangible, publicly provided rewards, employment emerged as a boundary line demarcating different kinds of citizenship. Casual laborers, the unskilled and untrained, housewives, farm workers, mothers and domestic servants all found themselves on one side of a barrier not of their own making.'[27] African Americans (and especially women) remained tethered to

[26] Anthony Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933-1939* (Ivan R. Dee: Chicago, 2002), p. 254-255, 301; Cornelius L. Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), p. 164; Alan Brinkley, *Liberalism and its Discontents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp.76-77.

[27] Alice Kessler-Harris, *In pursuit of equity: women, men, and the quest for economic citizenship in 20th century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 4. Political scientist Phillip Abbot has explained Roosevelt's New Deal was one part of a broader project of the 1930s - 'an era of masculine reivention' - in which male responsibility was reconceptualised against the irresponsibility of financial elites which had precipitated the Great Depression. As Abbott explains, 'New Dealers created a new world based on masculine values other than appetitiveness, risk, and self-interest, […] To be a man no longer depended on material acquisition but on public stewardship, no longer on speculation but on public adventure.' While this reimagining of male authority was focused primarily on working for the greater good in public sphere, it rested on the assumed restoration of male authority in the private home. See, Philip Abbott, 'Titans/Planners, Bohemians/Revolutionaries: Male

the bottom of the nation's socio-economic and racial order. This gendered view of economic citizenship underpinned the War on Poverty and also informed the alternative public policies discussed in the following chapter.

The Roosevelt administration proved a reluctant ally of blacks in their growing aspiration to secure access to 'family wage' jobs and the New Deal state largesse and citizenship status they conferred. As America entered the Second World War, millions of blacks left the South for cities in search of the economic opportunity that the demands of wartime production promised. (New York and Los Angeles were two particularly vibrant centres of black migration during this period.) Gains, however, would not be won easily. Persistent and widespread denial of employment opportunities within America's expanding war industries prompted Asa Philip Randolph, the leading figure in the black labour movement, to plan a protest march of black workers on Washington to try and force the government to back their cause. To avoid that scenario, on June 25, 1941 President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 forbidding racial discrimination in defense contract hiring, and creating the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to ensure its implementation.[28] The FEPC promised an unprecedented extension of the federal government's protective legal and moral authority over African Americans' economic rights. Across the country, blacks committed themselves to using it as a tool for racial change and their advancement in the workplace.

The black demand for fair employment practices and greater economic opportunity was a fundamental part of the broader fight to secure the vision of first-class citizenship, that the New Deal welfare state had simultaneously pedestaled, and denied most African Americans. It was, as labour historian Nancy MacLean has suggested, a view of citizenship shaped profoundly by the intrinsic place of the 'work ethic and success myth' at the heart of American culture, that privileged employment and economic empowerment, alongside political and civil rights, as a necessary and fundamental part of full inclusion in national life.[29] As Randolph himself explained in 1942, if African Americans attained legal racial equality but failed to acquire 'equality of opportunity in industry, in labour unions, schools and colleges, government, politics, and before the law' they would remain second-class citizens. Consequently, some in Randolph's March on Washington Movement organization viewed the creation of the FEPC as akin to a 'second Emancipation

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Empowerment in the 1930s', *Journal of American Studies*, Volume 40, No. 3 (December 2006) pp.463-485 (p. 484, 465).

[28] Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: the Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 4.

[29] Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is not enough: the opening of the American work place* (Cambridge, Mass.: R. Sage ; Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 6.

Proclamation'.[30] High hopes among African Americans for a strong FEPC, however, were sorely disappointed. With weak powers of enforcement, and in the face of considerable political resistance (especially in the South), the FEPC did virtually nothing to challenge the persistence of endemic discrimination in the workplace.[31]

During the FEPC debacle, President Roosevelt had appeared to lend support to black demands for a greater share in national abundance when, during his January 1944 State of the Union address, he outlined an 'Economic Bill of Rights.' In his speech, Roosevelt identified economic security as a new, fundamental, right of all American citizens which included, amongst other things, the right to remunerative employment, decent housing, medical care, and a good education. In a resurgent post-Depression U.S., he explained:

> We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. "Necessitous men are not free men." People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made. In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all—regardless of station, race, or creed.[32]

Racial discrimination, however, remained a critical roadblock as, after the war, public policy continued to enable ever increasing numbers of white men and their families to enjoy these 'rights', while deliberately inhibiting their extension to blacks and other minorities. At the same time, poverty became increasingly out of step with a changing national identity. As Lizabeth Cohen has argued in *A Consumers Republic*, the exigencies of the Cold War and the goal of postwar prosperity saw American 'policymakers, business and labor leaders, and civic groups' join together to reshape the nation's image. What they helped create was a national 'economy, culture, and politics built around the promises of mass consumption, both in terms of material life and the more idealistic goals of freedom, democracy, and equality.' Under this changing conception of Americanism, then, truly 'full' citizenship required the economic means necessary to access the material comfort and personal freedoms that this consumer lifestyle seemed to hold.[33]

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[30] Bynum, p. 157; Rod Bush, *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p.140.
[31] Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: the radical roots of civil rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008), pp. 361-364.
[32] FDR Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 11, 1944, Online at: http://www.fdrheritage.org/bill_of_rights.htm [Accessed 10/05/2012].
[33] Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Random House, 2003), p.7, 11.

African Americans' attempts to secure a share of increasing national prosperity were severely setback by the dramatic turn in postwar domestic politics. Despite its ineffectiveness and negligible value to black Americans, the FEPC was soon curtailed by Congress as domestic Cold War politics fell into the grip of a virulent anticommunism which had serious implications for the pursuit of racial and economic justice. As Adam Fairclough has suggested, 'perhaps the most profound effect of the anticommunist fever, and also the one most difficult to measure, was the divorcing of the civil rights agenda from the labour-left agenda.' As a result, Fairclough argues, basic questions of poverty and economic disadvantage became sidelined, omitted from a 'civil rights' message that instead focused on winning legal equality and the franchise. As a consequence, the general focus of civil rights activism shifted toward less controversial targets, in particular litigation aimed at overturning the legal basis of segregation. The result, Fairclough concludes, was that as 'the economic radicalism of the New Deal order faded away, the scope of racial equality narrowed. Few questioned the established economic order in the 1950s, and as a result, existing structural inequalities persisted and became in some respects even more pronounced.'[34]

Efforts to desegregate the nation's hotels, restaurants, cinemas, and stores could open the doors of consumerism and commercial choice for African Americans who could afford to pass through them, but did not promise to improve the economic status of the majority of blacks mired in poverty. Their best hopes for greater prosperity and 'full' citizenship remained access to jobs, and in the early 1960s, as the constrained political atmosphere of the previous two decades was slowly lifting, the focus of black activism began to move back to economic justice. The revival of Randolph's plans on August 28, 1963, saw the 'March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom' bring nearly 250,000 people (the vast majority of whom were black) to the national mall to protest racial discrimination and economic inequality.[35] It was a powerful restatement of black Americans' demand for full citizenship and desire for economic independence.

Perhaps most significantly, it represented the revival of an economic analysis of racial inequality that had been muted by postwar domestic anticommunism. As Thomas Sugrue has explained, on the home front, the Cold War reshaped national discourse on racial inequality, which became centred on the work of Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal. In *An American Dilemma*, his highly influential 1944 study of Southern race relations, Myrdal presented a narrow image of American racism. First, it was seen as a sectional issue, afflicting only the South. Second, it was, he explained, a problem of moral conscience. The eradication of racial injustice, therefore, did not

[34] Adam Fairclough, 'Race and Red-Baiting' in *The civil rights movement: rethinking history* ed. by Jack E. Davis (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp.90-102 (p. 102).
[35] Bynum, p. ix.

require reform of the nation's existing political and economic institutions, only appeals to the better nature of white Americans and the inherently egalitarian 'American Creed'.[36] This analysis became central – at least on the surface – to the nonviolent direct action phase of the civil rights movement during the mid-to-late 1950s and early 1960s. By engendering foment in black urban communities nationwide, and dramatizing the fundamental intersection between race and poverty, the War on Poverty helped to undermine Myrdal's analysis of American racism by revealing its national and structural dimensions. In the process, the War on Poverty played a vital part in an ongoing shift within the black freedom struggle – the drawing of focus away from the rural South to the problems of the urban North - that led to the crystallization of the Black Power movement. Furthermore, as Roger Wilkins explained in the memo discussed at the outset of this thesis, an economic analysis of racial inequality – which the War on Poverty helped to vivify – was consistent across the political and philosophical spectrum of Black Power ideology. In America's ghettos, an emergent Black Power movement would foreground a critique of racial discrimination in the U.S. that heavily emphasized its economic and institutional roots, rejecting the Myrdalian framework and the faith in the value of moral appeals to white America prevalent among civil rights advocates.[37]

Announced just four months after the March on Washington, then, the War on Poverty was nothing if not timely. By positioning the federal government as the protector of black Americans' economic interests in the most meaningful way since the creation of the FEPC, President's Johnson's antipoverty legislation seemed to be a reaffirmation of the 'Economic Bill of Rights' that Roosevelt had proclaimed two decades earlier, and a chance for its full benefits to finally be extended to African Americans. By appealing to the black desire for economic citizenship, the War on Poverty's arrival revived a Democratic liberal political tradition which, since the New Deal, had inspired and shaped black activism, and been a generator white conservative political resistance to state-led efforts to mitigate social and economic inequality. Unsurprisingly, therefore, as the Johnson administration's antipoverty programme unfolded, it reignited both those developments, with significant consequences for contemporary and future American domestic politics. As we will see later in the chapter, by energizing the black struggle for greater self-determination and economic empowerment the War on Poverty produced challenges to established political power arrangements and national political culture that had serious consequences for the liberal consensus. Its impact on the nation's political landscape owed a great deal to the peculiar circumstances and underlying principles which had guided its development.

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[36] Thomas J. Sugrue, 'Affirmative Action from Below: Civil Rights, the Building Trades, and the Politics of Racial Equality in the Urban North, 1945–1969', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No.1, (June 2004) pp. 145-173 (p.149).

[37] David W. Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-white relations the use and abuse of An American dilemma, 1944-1969* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987) pp. 261-265.

Maintaining the Urban Crisis?: Internal conflicts and Competing Visions in the War on Poverty

When Johnson announced his intention to wage 'war on poverty' he had cautioned that the federal government could not succeed in their mission alone. Energy and resources at the local level, he explained, would have to be mobilized in a far reaching and collaborative effort. 'The war on poverty will not be won here in Washington,' he explained, 'it must be won in the field, in every private home, in every public office, from the courthouse to the White House.' The primary weapons in the battle to 'help more Americans […] escape from squalor and misery and unemployment rolls,' he declared, would be 'better schools, and better health, and better homes, and better training, and better job opportunities.'[38] While deepening concern with poverty at the federal level had sped the antipoverty programme's journey from concept to officially-announced policy, the broad-based vision for fighting poverty Johnson outlined was the result of the longer-term and interconnected trajectories of social scientists' academic research into urban problems and liberal domestic policymaking. It was from the contradictions and conflicts between these two groups' respective visions of how the War on Poverty would work, that much of the controversy generated by the antipoverty programme would emerge. Its capacity to politically mobilize the urban poor, and animate community activism and protest nationwide, was especially important. This effect resulted primarily from the social science theory that informed the War on Poverty; a theory which had emerged from many years of research in New York City, the key site of its development.

In the late 1950s, a team of academics from the New York School of Social Science, based at Columbia University, conducted a study of the warring black and Puerto Rican youth gangs of Manhattan's Lower East side. Led by Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin, the team's research grew out of policymakers' concerns over the increasing incidence of juvenile delinquency in the nation's cities, especially among the male youth of poor minority communities. Between 1948 and 1957 (when Cloward and Ohlin's study began) the incidence of juvenile delinquency nationwide had increased 137 percent.[39] Gang violence raised not only the feared spectre of urban racial violence and crime but also seemed to relate to a number of other concerns connected to the inner cities,

[38] LBJ Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 8, 1964.
[39] Robert Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East L.A.* (Norman, OA.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008) p.18.

especially the social impact of mass black urban in-migration, widespread unemployment and deprivation, social disaffection and urban decay. Their focus on black male youth reflected a gendered perspective of solutions to urban problems, inherited in part from the New Deal, that came to characterize the War on Poverty and later public policies aimed at remedying inner-city racial inequality.

Ohlin and Cloward's research fit into a broader change within public policymaking that occurred during the 1950s; one in which their primary non-governmental backer – the Ford Foundation – played a leading role. As historian Alice O'Conner has explained, the Ford Foundation, one of the nation's largest philanthropic institutions, supported the burgeoning social sciences throughout the decade and became a proactive intermediary for Washington officials, providing funding, technical assistance, and academic expertise for research projects. In the process, O'Connor continues, the foundation 'helped to mediate an intellectual and policy shift away from the bricks and mortar concern of early urban renewal and toward the human face of the urban crisis.'[40]

In 1960, after nearly four years of in-depth study, Cloward and Ohlin published their book *Delinquency and Opportunity* which put forward an explanation for the dysfunctional behavior of inner-city youth known as the "opportunity" theory. Put simply, it contended that juvenile delinquency resulted from a lack of opportunity for youngsters to achieve conventional societal goals – principally, gainful paid employment, self-sufficiency and economic independence. Frustrated in their bid to meet these expectations they instead found their manhood, and a sense of self-worth, through a life of crime and violence. It was, they argued, a self-perpetuating vicious circle which eroded traditional moral behavior and threatened to pave the way to an even bleaker – and potentially more violent – future for minority groups in urban America. The lack of opportunity, however, was seen as both a symptom and cause of the myriad inequities of inner-city life that many youngsters had to endure: grinding poverty; urban squalor; broken families; crime; inadequate healthcare; and a substandard education.[41] The solution, they argued, was the creation of opportunities for social mobility through jobs and training programmes along with the improvement of local social services. Furthermore, if lasting success was to be achieved in eradicating the cornucopia of urban social problems it would, they asserted, require the engagement and mobilization of the whole community in service of that aim. This idea, in particular, had radical potential as it rested on the premise that the poor would control their own organizations and

[40] Alice O'Connor, 'Community Action, Urban Reform, and the Fight Against Poverty: The Ford Foundation's Gray Areas Programs', *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 22, No. 5, (July, 1996) pp.586-625 (p. 588).
[41] Moynihan, pp. 45–50.

challenge local power structures to force an improvement in the state of their community. This organizational model and programmatic vision were embodied in the creation of Mobilization for Youth (MFY) set up in the Lower East Side in 1961 to test their theory.[42] Strongly committed to tackling the problems facing America's cities, the Ford Foundation built on their association with Ohlin and Cloward with their experimental 'Gray Areas' programs of the early 1960s which targeted deprived minority communities in cities such as Oakland, New Haven and Boston. The Ford Foundation's programmes, MFY, and the community organizations they created, all reflected the 'opportunity thesis' and were characterized by neighbourhood-based jobs training, education, community organizing, and family services.[43]

The academic theory and work being done by MFY and the Ford Foundation was eagerly embraced by Washington officials. Richard Boone (a Ford Foundation employee) and David Hackett (a close personal friend of Robert Kennedy) were the two lead members of a legislative task force established by President Kennedy in May 1961 to investigate juvenile delinquency. Highly impressed by MFY and the 'opportunity thesis', Hackett and Boone took them as the organizational template and intellectual basis for what would prove to be by far the War on Poverty's most controversial element: the Community Action Program (CAP).[44] Moreover, Cloward and Ohlin's work, profoundly shaped the character of the entire antipoverty programme, as the War on Poverty's legislative foundation stone – the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) – revealed. Signed into law by the president on August 20th 1964, the EOA created the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), a new governmental body charged with coordinating the nation's antipoverty effort and administering a wide range of programmes. In addition to the CAP, other programmes included: Headstart which aimed at improving elementary level education; Jobs Corps to provide jobs training for unemployed young adults and school drop outs; Neighborhood Youth Corps to prolong the education of disadvantaged children and teenagers; Legal Aid which brought legal services and advice to poor communities; and Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA), a domestic version of the Peace Corps that paid volunteers to help deliver services to poor communities.[45]

Washington officials' eager acceptance of the social science theory behind the MFY and the Ford Foundation's work betrayed several important and interlocking assumptions that guided

[42] Unger, pp. 58-59.
[43] O'Connor, p. 599.
[44] McKee, 'This Government Is with Us', p.36. For an in-depth discussion of the place of community action within the broader sweep of social science history in the twentieth century, see: Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century US History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) esp. pp.124-137.
[45] Orleck, 'Introduction: The War on Poverty from the Grass Roots Up', p.9.

Cold War-era domestic liberalism and social policy. As O'Connor has explained, policymakers broadly accepted 'culture of poverty' theories which implied the need for the reforming of attitudes and behavior rather than more substantial change. Urban problems, therefore, were seen as the result of natural and unstoppable socio-economic forces, rather than institutional racial discrimination, which could be successfully managed, if not solved, by the government sponsored application of scientific rationality and academic knowledge. Both of these premises fit perfectly with an antipathy toward structural economic reform that characterized Cold War liberalism (as did the dominant Myrdalian analysis of America's race problem). As a result, O'Connor argues, MFY's 'strategy of reorienting services and empowering poor constituencies,' which so vitally shaped the War on Poverty, 'was at best a partial response to a problem that required more fundamental structural change to address the roots of inequality.'[46] From the outset, therefore, an important contradiction lay at the heart of the War on Poverty: it possessed the radical potential for mobilizing the poor but its fundamentally conservative economic and philosophical foundations would tightly circumscribe its ability to substantially reduce poverty. As chapter two will demonstrate, the question of governmental responsibility for mitigating economic inequality, and the political debates surrounding it, which the War on Poverty raised were fundamental to the alternative public policies intended to coopt the Black Power impulse and meet African American demands for economic empowerment.

The War on Poverty's announcement quickly revealed the lack of broader consensus over how best to deal with poverty. By addressing economic inequality explicitly, Johnson's antipoverty legislation also revived a longstanding, broader, debate about the nature and limits of government responsibility. For some, the government was overstepping the mark. To conservatives and business interests across the country, the War on Poverty seemed to be an extension of the "big government" New Deal liberalism that they had always opposed. Conservative economist Henry Hazlitt gave voice to this sentiment. While the elimination of poverty was a 'laudable aim,' the Johnson administration's plans, he argued, represented little more than the 'age old proposal to take from the rich and give to the poor, to take from the more productive to give to the less productive.' Outlining the Right's vision for combating deprivation, (and echoing conservatives' anti-New Deal rhetoric of the 1930s,) Hazlitt insisted that:

> The way to cure poverty is not … 'share the wealth' schemes, and socialism but by precisely the opposite policies… a system of private property, free markets, and free

[46] O'Connor, p. 593-595, 599.

> enterprise…to keep this system, to reduce government intervention instead of increasing it; to reduce government taxation and punitive taxation.[47]

For others, Johnson's announcement was a positive development. The AFL-CIO executive committee, leaders of America's largest labour union, applauded the Johnson administration's intentions and recognized (as many black leaders did) its importance to the broader fight for racial justice. 'Success in winning civil rights for Negroes and other minority groups,' they asserted, 'is inseparably linked to effectively waging war on want.' Though strongly supportive, they remained concerned that the proposed legislation did not go far enough. Not only was substantial investment in the effort required but there was also, they insisted, a desperate need for legislation that created jobs – in particular public works programs – and an extension of minimum wage coverage to help lift millions out of poverty. Failure to commit enough resources and be bold enough in their designs, they warned, could have lasting consequences. 'If we now engage in merely a token effort – a mere skirmish instead of a war – we will be deluding the millions of impoverished and frustrating the expectations of the nation and of the world.'[48]

The President's view of the War on Poverty, however, was quite different. Subscribing to a core principle of Cold War liberal policymaking, serious structural change to the American economy was never on his agenda. Johnson had strong faith in the nation's free enterprise system and believed that federal job creation programmes were not necessary, affordable, desirable, or politically viable. Jobs, he believed, would result naturally from the $11 billion tax cut his administration passed in February 1964, intended to stimulate economic growth. The War on Poverty would provide the skills training to prepare the poor for those jobs.[49] Indeed, although conservatives criticised the War on Poverty for its redistributive dimensions, its underlying fiscal philosophy was far from radical. As leading Democratic Congressman Wilbur Mills, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, later reflected:

> I have always thought that the concept behind the present strategy against poverty is basically sound. That is, the effort to make it possible for every American who is willing to work to enjoy the economic opportunity available to others. And, thus, to convert those willing to learn and willing to work from tax recipients – through the welfare program and

[47] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 1, Henry Hazlitt, 'How to Cure Poverty', *Newsweek*, January 27, 1964.
[48] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 1 'Waging War on Poverty' AFL-CIO Executive Committee Statement, February 21, 1964.
[49] Marisa Chappell, *The war on welfare: family, poverty, and politics in modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) p.40; Unger, pp.74-75.

> similar efforts – to taxpayers … the structure and strategy of the program is entirely conservative.[50]

The Johnson administration's view of the War on Poverty was also predicated on their commitment to the broader, highly gendered, social and cultural mission shaped by the two-tier welfare state created by the New Deal. During the postwar economic boom, the privileged place of white wage-earning men codified in the New Deal was bolstered further by the GI Bill which made homeownership, credit, and education more affordable and accessible to returning white soldiers and their families, while systematically denying those benefits to black veterans.[51] As MacLean has explained, the idealized cultural norm of the white male breadwinner-headed suburban nuclear family was reinforced by media and advertisers during the 1950s who constructed a powerful narrative of consumerist American domestic life and culture – reflecting a broader, deeply embedded, 'culture of exclusion' – from which African Americans were, quite deliberately, almost entirely absent.[52]

Against this dominant white, middle-class, standard and social model, increasing numbers of African American families in the nation's ghettos appeared dysfunctional. Liberal policymakers naturally, therefore, identified the chronic unemployment and under education of black males (adults and teenagers) as the fundamental problem. Not only was it the root of black poverty, it was also seen as the catalyst for wider social breakdown. In this logic, the psychologically crippling and emasculating effect of being unable to fulfill their expected role as breadwinners led black men to abandon their families, and, in their despair, turn to alcoholism, drug abuse, and crime in increasing numbers. Growing up in the absence of traditional male authority and family leadership, and surrounded by social pathology, juvenile delinquency inevitably abounded among black ghetto youth. Finally, male unemployment led to the spread of welfare dependency as the number of female headed households receiving AFDC support in black urban communities skyrocketed. These interlocking suppositions, as historian James Patterson has explained, saw liberals' solutions to urban poverty, the breakdown of the black family, and the deepening social problems of the ghetto, rest on two main aims: increasing the employment of black men, and the greater education and preparation of black male youth for jobs, and constructive civic duty, in the short and longer-term.[53]

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[50] Andrew Young Papers, Series 1, Subseries A, Box 5, Folder: PPC, OEO 1968, OEO Pamphlet 'The Watershed: A New Look at the War on Poverty', n.d. (1968) p.1.
[51] Cohen, pp. 167-173.
[52] MacLean, pp. 14-16.
[53] James T. Patterson, *Freedom is not enough: the Moynihan report and America's struggle over black family life: from LBJ to Obama* (New York: Basic Books, 2010) pp. 14-18.

This 'Breadwinner liberalism', as historian Robert Self has called it, was encoded in the top-tier programmes of the New Deal liberal welfare state, and had vitally shaped the idealized image of the 'Citizen-Worker' male, earning a 'family wage' and providing for his wife and children in an environment of middle-class domesticity. Making this paradigm of social stability more prevalent among African Americans became a key concern of New Frontier and Great Society policy makers during the 1960s, and vitally shaped the Johnson administration's approach to the War on Poverty. From the outset, Washington officials made it very clear that the antipoverty legislation was chiefly designed to put men back to work, on the way to restoring them to traditional and idealized social, economic, and familial roles. Consequently, as historian Guian McKee explains, Johnson saw most value in the War on Poverty's Jobscorp and Neighbourhood Youth Corps, a view forged by his past experience as head of the Texas arm of the National Youth Administration (NYA) in the mid-1930s. As a New Deal agency dedicated to providing education and work to teenage and young adult (and especially male) Americans, the NYA had kindled Johnson's enthusiasm for helping the poor and disadvantaged, as well as shaping his vision for the antipoverty programme and strong commitment to the gendered politics of breadwinner liberalism.[54]

As the War on Poverty was rolled out nationwide in late 1964 it was at the beginning of what proved to be a highly controversial journey. It did not take long for the fundamental divergence between the visions for the War on Poverty held by the social scientists whose work had helped shape it, and the Johnson administration who oversaw its implementation, to come to the surface. Nowhere was this more evident than in the nation's inner-city ghettos, where the energizing impact that the War on Poverty had on African American demands for greater self-determination, and the response of city politicians to the challenge it posed, came into stark relief.

Making Waves: Community Action Begins

The political impact of the War on Poverty was felt across the country. As the *Los Angeles Times* suggested, 'nationwide the birth pangs of the new effort are indelible from the White House to the human warrens of Harlem, the kindling wood hovels of Atlanta's Buttermilk Bottom, the red brick tenements of Philadelphia's Brewerytown, and the sun-baked shacks of Los Angeles' Willowbrook

[54] Robert Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012) pp. 18-21; McKee, 'This Government Is with Us', p. 40-41, 57. For a detailed discussion of Johnson's experiences in the NYA and its impact on his views on race and poverty, see: Robert A Caro, *Master of the senate: the years of Lyndon Johnson.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002) pp. 734-737.

district.'[55] Offering the potential for significant control of antipoverty programmes by the poor themselves, the Community Action Program (CAP) swiftly became the primary site of conflict in the War on Poverty in New York and Los Angeles, and a number of other cities with large minority populations. In the process, the CAP highlighted two major concerns of this thesis. First, the close relationship between public policy and community activists who strived to capitalize on, and maximize, the opportunities they presented. Second, the enduring commitment of mainstream and entrenched white class interests, political and otherwise, to dictate the pace and direction of socio-economic and political change (and their success in doing so).

Under the CAP, each targeted poor area was required to set up (with federal money) a Community Action Agency (CAA) to act as a clearinghouse to administer and coordinate social service, education, job training, and legal services programs. War on Poverty planners had written the need for 'maximum feasible participation' of the poor themselves in the planning and delivery of those programmes into the CAP's guidelines. While the spirit of the CAP was shaped by Ohlin and Cloward's desire to mobilize the human resources of poor communities to combat poverty, the specific phrase 'maximum feasible participation' was born of antipoverty policymakers' desire to ensure that white southern politicians would not be able to exclude blacks from local programs.[56]

With such imprecise and flexible terminology, the degree of control it allowed the poor was open to interpretation, and the CAP instantly became a lightning rod for political controversy. Many of the country's poor citizens understood 'maximum feasible participation' as endorsing *their* control over local antipoverty programmes. Few city politicians shared this perspective, however, and generally saw it as sanctioning the limited involvement of the poor in antipoverty programme design and revision. Surrendering control over the War on Poverty to local communities was strongly resisted by many city executives unwilling to sanction a redistribution of their political power. The legislation's imprecise language, however, meant neither interpretation could be definitively declared 'wrong'. Where the poor did fight to win control over antipoverty programmes, the political disruption it caused for urban politicians (many of them big city Democratic power brokers) threatened to completely undermine the pursuit of consensus which was so central to President Johnson's vision of liberal politics.[57] The success of the War on Poverty in politically mobilizing the poor – and especially the minority poor – was reflected in the myriad struggles for control over antipoverty programs in cities nationwide. These struggles also produced

[55] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 2, Paul Weeks, 'U.S. shows gain in Poverty War', *Los Angeles Times*, (n.d.).
[56] McKee, 'This Government Is with Us', p.34.
[57] William Clayson, '"The Barrios and the Ghettos have Organized!": Community Action, Political Acrimony, and the War on Poverty in San Antonio' *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 28, No.2, (January 2002), pp.158-183 (p.158).

a fundamental clash of political cultures and precipitated a fierce political backlash by city officials against the poor's incursion into established urban power arrangements.

Few cities exemplified the conflict over the CAP better than New York where the antipoverty apparatus set up by Democratic Mayor Robert Wagner Jr. and his deputy Paul Screvane proved to be an exercise in circumventing the meaningful inclusion of poor communities. Wagner was elected in 1954 with a majority of black votes, but progress for African Americans under his leadership was slow. While the city claimed some victories, including the nation's first (albeit very weak) antidiscrimination housing bill in 1957, in other areas, such as school integration, virtually nothing was achieved.[58] Mayor Wagner had been a vocal supporter of civil rights throughout his time in office, but concrete gains for the city's black population under his leadership had been few and far between. The limits of Wagner's approach seemed to be reflected in his administration's handling of the antipoverty effort. The city's attempts to exclude the poor drew significant criticism, not least from Democratic Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell who publicly charged the New York City government, and those of a number of other big cities, of denying poor communities full participation in the effort. Instead, Powell argued, antipoverty poverty programmes were being used as 'giant fiestas of political patronage.'[59] Richard Cloward, MFY's research director, also lambasted Mayor Wagner's approach, charging that: 'City Hall doesn't want powerful organizations built in the ghetto by Negroes and Puerto Ricans. It doesn't want any ghetto in City Hall; it wants more City Hall in the ghetto.'[60] The response from Screvane, who was head of the New York City Council against Poverty (NYCCAP), the city's official antipoverty body, mirrored that of municipal politicians across the country when he declared: 'We are not about to turn this thing over to private organizations to administer. We have to have at least some say in the way the money is spent.' Wagner agreed with Screvane that 'such decisions should be made by City officials who are all trained professionals in their fields.'[61]

Recognizing the opportunities offered by new legislation, inner city communities across the country had begun preparing to take advantage of them. For example, the Central Brooklyn Coordinating Council (CBCC), a coalition group representing over one hundred membership organizations from the local black community, held a 'War on Poverty Conference' attended by

[58] Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, p. 221, 240.
[59] 'Poverty and Patronage', *New York Times*, April 17, 1965, p.18.
[60] Lindsay and Cloward quotes from: New Haven, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, John Lindsay Papers, Box 130, Folder 738, News clippings, Woody Klein, 'Key to Poverty's Cure – Power', *New York Herald Tribune*, 21/4/1965.
[61] Warren Weaver, 'Powell Threatens Cutoff in Antipoverty Aid to City', *New York Times*, April 16, 1965, p.1.

over five hundred local residents shortly after the antipoverty effort had been launched.[62] After the earlier years of antipoverty experimentation in the city, New York's poor black communities could certainly have been forgiven for thinking that they were the intended targets of the impending legislation. In a city where poor whites outnumbered poor blacks two-to-one, the pilot antipoverty agency, MFY, had been established in an area with a largely black and Puerto Rican population, and the next two to be set up in the years before 1964 – HARYOU-ACT and Youth-In-Action (YIA) – were located, respectively, in Harlem and Bedford Stuyvesant; the city's largest two black ghettoes. [63]

Screvane and Wagner's maneuvering to retain full control of the city's antipoverty programmes brought serious delays to New York's War on Poverty. The city's first plan called for the establishment of a policy board with sixty two members, including just six representatives from poor communities. A meeting of concerned community group members in May 1965 provided an insight into the frustration the city's machinations created among some of New York's poor residents. As the meeting's chairman angrily declared: 'Mr. Screvane is trying to treat us, the poor, like a child. He doesn't realize that we have grown. We have grown by leaps and bounds.'[64] After the city's plans were rejected by both the OEO and State Governor Nelson Rockefeller, when they eventually submitted an acceptable plan New York was one of the last cities in the country to have done so.[65] Wrangling over representation of the poor had seriously undermined the efficacy of the city's antipoverty effort during its first year. As one local newspaper argued, 'the poverty program was created to help the impoverished citizens, but in New York City, red tape, indecision, politics and mismanagement have hamstrung the program and kept it from reaching the vast majority of the people it was designed to help.'[66]

Over on the West Coast, the first year of Los Angeles's War on Poverty was, if anything, even more turbulent and bitter than New York's. Initially, antipoverty policies had been taken up enthusiastically by the city of Los Angeles. In early 1962, city officials met with David Hackett and Richard Boone of President Kennedy's Juvenile Delinquency taskforce, and in April of that year the city and county signed an agreement creating the Youth Opportunities Board of Greater Los Angeles (YOB). However, while YOB was created to improve the delivery of services to poor

[62] 'Coordinating Council Warring on Poverty', *New York Amsterdam Times*, December 5th, 1964, p.30.
[63] John Lindsay Papers, Box 104, Folder 250, 'Statement by Congressman John Lindsay, 6 August 1965, p.1; Nicole P. Marwell, *Bargaining for Brooklyn: community organizations in the entrepreneurial city* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 29.
[64] Fred Powledge, 'City asked to let Poor control aid', *New York Times*, May 14, 1965, p.37.
[65] Paul Montgomery, 'Governor vetoes agency to direct city poverty aid', *New York Times*, July 1, 1965 , p.1.
[66] John Lindsay Papers, Box 96, Folder 126, News clippings 'Report on Clubhouse Politics', *New York Herald Tribune*, May 10, 1965.

neighbourhoods, it was never designed to involve its clients in the planning or delivery of those services.[67] Shortly after the EOA had been signed into law, Mayor Sam Yorty made his vision for the city's War on Poverty clear. Yorty told the assembled press in early September 1964 that his plan aimed at 'work training for unemployed men and women through participation in community and public works programmes.' In this rather narrow view it was assumed the delivery of programmes would be city agency led and directed.[68]

Concerned at Yorty's intentions, local African American community groups vigorously contested control over the Los Angeles's War on Poverty. The Welfare Planning Council, a predominantly black group of social workers, was at the forefront of this challenge. Allied with other local groups, they set up the Economic Opportunity Federation (EOF) to vie with the YOB for designation as the city's official CAA. Behind the EOF stood a number of local politicians, including Congressman Augustus Hawkins and other liberal Democrats, who opposed Yorty.[69] The mayor dismissed the EOF as 'unnecessary' because an 'appropriate structure' – the YOB – already existed. The YOB's head (and Yorty ally) Robert Goe agreed. 'The YOB is equipped to handle any type of program…its makeup – and experience – make it the best possible agency to coordinate the antipoverty program here.'[70] At the heart of the debate, as in New York, was the issue of the participation of the poor. In January 1965, in an effort to mediate the dispute after three months of stalemate, the OEO proposed a merger between YOB and EOF. The resultant organization, they argued, would keep YOB at the heart of the city's antipoverty operations, while the EOF's involvement would bring the substantial community representation required by the OEO's guidelines and upon which disbursement of funds was contingent. The mayor rejected this solution, and was especially critical of the merger's terms which would have seen city officials narrowly outnumbered by community and private agency representatives on the new organization's board (ten to twelve). Yorty's position reflected his genuine belief that public funds had to remain under the authority of public officials, but was also intensely political. Elected with strong black support in 1961, Yorty had not only failed to make good on his campaign promise to stop police brutality but had, since then, become a strong supporter of the LAPD, and a close ally of the city's openly racist Police Chief William Parker. This bolstered his image among white voters, but turned black Angelenos against him, and he strived to prevent them from making any inroads in to his political power.[71]

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[67] Bauman, p.18-19.
[68] George Goodman, 'Wider Scope for Poverty Bill Seen', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 3, 1964, p.A1.
[69] Bauman, p.21-22.
[70] Ray Herbert, 'Poverty Funds Control Problem Stirs Dispute', *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 1964, p.A1.
[71] Bauman, p.23, 32-33.

In February 1965, YOB and EOF agreed the proposed merger which would produce the Economic and Youth Opportunities Agency of Greater Los Angeles (EYOA). However, Yorty again refused to accept the plan and, determined to retain complete city control over the antipoverty programme, instead offered an alternative in which only city officials would comprise the new organization's board. In the face of Yorty's resistance, local groups again organized to oppose the mayor. Gathering in Congressman Hawkins' local South Central office, a range of local groups formed the Community Antipoverty Committee (CAPC) in late May. The umbrella organization comprised all the area's leading civil rights groups and their leaders, as well as a number of local community groups. Norman O. Houston of the NAACP, Dr. Thomas Kilgore of CORE, Reverend H.H. Brookins of the United Civil Rights Committee (UCRC) and Archie Hardwick of the Westminster Neighbourhood Improvement Association (WNIA), amongst others, were all prominently involved. Though predominantly black, the CAPC also included some Mexican-American and Japanese American groups, highlighting broader minority interest in the War on Poverty. At the same time, other Watts residents formed the Watts Action Committee and criticized the city's actions, lambasting politicians for 'depicting us as a people without a desire to improve.' Resolving to assert themselves within the city's antipoverty programme, the group declared 'we intend to speak aloud now the things we have been saying to each other – we intend for this to be the beginning of the end of the neglect of Watts.'[72] Similarly, another local black community group, the Southeast Citizens Improvement Association, stated their intention to use the War on Poverty to turn their 'blighted areas into decent communities.' As the group's president Melvin Dorn announced, 'We've decided that there is no group or person outside this community who will do the job for us…we are going to do it for ourselves.'[73]

Opposing Yorty's attempts to exclude the poor, the CAPC and other local minority groups continued to battle the recalcitrant mayor until, in August of that year, the eruption of Watts into six days of rioting finally broke the deadlock. In the aftermath of the devastation, federal funds began to pour into the area at an accelerated rate. The debacle over EYOA was eventually concluded with a negotiated settlement in September 1965. Thrashed out by LeRoy Collins, Johnson's director of the federal government's Community Relations Service, the compromise increased the representation of poor communities but included a slim majority of public officials. Although an improvement on Yorty's terms, the settlement was resented by many black and Latino Angelenos for failing to adequately include them, and anger remained over the protracted saga in the minority community for some time. Nevertheless, the EYOA's confirmation as the city's official lead

[72] 'Outsiders Running War on Poverty', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 27, 1965, p.A11.
[73] Bauman, p.23-25; 'Outsiders Running War on Poverty', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 27, 1965, p.A11; 'Eastside Residents Seek Poverty Housing Funds', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 20, 1965, p.B12.

antipoverty agency did mean that, just over a year after the War on Poverty had been signed into law, the city's antipoverty effort could finally begin in earnest.[74]

A 'Black' War on Poverty?: Racial Identity Politics and Interracial Conflict in the War on Poverty

The introduction of resources, jobs, and power into poor minority communities, where they had traditionally been absent, was always likely to result in a clamour for control and battle over the War on Poverty's proceeds. What was, perhaps, less inevitable was the regularity with which local struggles were drawn along racial lines. African Americans in New York and Los Angeles, swiftly identified the War on Poverty as prime territory for black advancement. Rather than working with other local minority groups, however, interracial conflict came to characterize antipoverty efforts in both cities. In the process, the War on Poverty's capacity for generating racially nationalist organizing – a theme which is developed in chapters two and three – is revealed, highlighting its role as a catalyst and conduit of Black Power's emergence in the nation's ghettos.

In New York, the furore and debate over the inclusion of the poor in the antipoverty programme was a salient issue in the 1965 mayoral election and liberal Republican candidate John V. Lindsay promised voters a different approach to running City Hall if he were elected. 'Minority group leaders desperately want the dignity of responsibility and the burden of administration.' No longer, he suggested, would they be content with being 'merely a delegation to City Hall. They want to be a part of City Hall.'[75] Lindsay's victory brought an expansion of the city's War on Poverty. As the antipoverty programme extended into more of the city's poor neighbourhoods the battles over it intensified. During his two terms, Mayor Lindsay tried, in his own words, 'to bring democracy to the streets of New York.' Nowhere was this more apparent than in the city's War on Poverty. As Lindsay told a University of Illinois audience in late April 1968: 'We set up our antipoverty program in a way that emphasizes community action programs and local control. We divided our city into 26 poverty areas in which assistance is administered by a local corporation, two thirds of whose directors are representatives of the local poor themselves.' It was, he explained, an approach designed to meet the expectations of 'the disadvantaged of our city streets who […]

[74] 'Committee to Urge Poverty War Merger', *Los Angeles Times*, May 28, 1965, p.A8; Bauman, pp.43-47.
[75] Lindsay quote from: John Lindsay Papers, box 130, folder 738, News clippings, Woody Klein, 'Key to Poverty's Cure – Power', *New York Herald Tribune*, 21 April 1965.

want, and sometimes fiercely demand, participation in the decisions affecting their lives.'[76] Adept at attracting federal funds for the city's antipoverty fight, as historian Vincent Cannato has suggested, Lindsay was truly committed to making the city 'a laboratory for Great Society social policy.'[77]

In mid-August 1966, eight months into his first term as mayor, Lindsay signed an executive order that created the Human Resources Administration (HRA). The HRA was to be the city's new, all-encompassing apparatus for coordinating the city's War on Poverty as well as all its employment and manpower development, social service and public assistance programs. It consisted of five sub-agencies, each charged with different responsibilities. The Community Development Agency (CDA) was the agency designed to administer the city's poverty program. The mayor had also increased the number of officially recognized 'poverty areas' from sixteen to twenty six with official CAAs or 'community corporations' as they were known, set up in the newly designated areas.[78]

Lindsay's approach to the city's minority communities and the War on Poverty was also politically calculated. As the Republican mayor in a city with an overwhelming majority of Democratic voters – the first elected in in two decades – upon his arrival in office, Lindsay encountered a hostile Democratic political machine and city bureaucracy which had little interest in cooperating with him. Their resistance reinforced his desire to reach out to those groups traditionally marginalized, or excluded from city government altogether. Seeking to unite the city's sizable minority groups and white liberals and progressives in a new political coalition of his own, Lindsay began opening up city government, and the official antipoverty apparatus in particular (now considerably expanded), to the city's poor black and Puerto Rican communities.

In mixed neighbourhoods, this approach helped fuel significant and sustained interracial conflict, in competition over the jobs and resources in the War on Poverty, that was, at times, fierce. As local minority news agency the Community News Service reported, clashes over the antipoverty programme, which peaked in late 1969/early 1970 were ongoing in nearly every mixed black and Puerto Rican neighbourhood in the city. In South Bronx, black outrage followed the firing of Frank Wright, the African American Executive Director of the South Bronx Community Corporation, by its Puerto Rican Board chairman Frank Lugano. The incident was just one in a number, the reporter

[76] John Lindsay Papers, Box 77, Folder 632, John Lindsay speech at the University of Illinois, April 30, 1968 , p.2-3.
[77] Vincent Cannato, *The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York* (New York: Basic Books, 2001) p.109.
[78] New York, Municipal Archives, Mayor John V. Lindsay Papers, 1966-1973, Vol. 1, Subject Files, Reel 14, Box 27, Folder 475, Executive Order 28, August 16, 1966, , p.2, p.7; New York, Municipal Archives, Timothy Costello Papers(not yet inventoried), Folder: Poverty 1966, Letter from Donald Elliot to Timothy Costello, July 26, 1966.

noted, that reflected 'a struggle for power in the South Bronx poverty agency which has jobs and political patronage to bestow.' The situation was replicated elsewhere as the report continued:

> In East Harlem, Shirle Brown the black executive director of the district's community corporation, MEND, is under fire from Puerto Rican board members who are trying to dismiss him. In Coney Island, delegate agencies occupied the community corporation offices for a week in August in a dispute over Black –Puerto Rican appointments. Minor conflicts, even acts of violence, between the two groups have broken out in East New York, Williamsburg, and Brooklyn.[79]

Puerto Rican politician Herman Badillo, the former Bronx Borough President, argued that conflict came from making the two groups fight over 'one small piece of the pie.' 'The best way to solve the problem,' Badillo continued, 'is for Mayor Lindsay to appoint blacks and Puerto Ricans to important positions in other areas besides the Council [Against Poverty] and Human Resources, such as Finance, Public Works or Parks and Culture.'[80] Badillo's words reflected not only the strength and pervasive nature of racial identity politics within the city's War on Poverty, but the extent to which minority groups claimed ownership of the antipoverty programme and, increasingly under Lindsay, city government jobs too.

The racial dynamics of Los Angeles' War on Poverty differed significantly from those in New York. As only the second largest minority group in the city, black Angelenos found themselves increasingly in conflict with the biggest: Mexican Americans. Antagonism between the two groups quickly developed over the city's antipoverty programme. As the work of historian Robert Bauman has revealed, the main organizations in which interracial conflict festered were the EYOA, and the Neighborhood Adult Participation Project (NAPP). The result of a forced compromise, from the beginning EYOA enjoyed sparse support from local black and Chicano communities, many of whom were wary of the agency, believing it to be a political tool of Mayor Yorty. NAPP, the only Community Action organization initially set up under the EYOA, was headed by Opal Jones, a black female civil rights activist strongly committed to empowering local poor communities. While EYOA concentrated on social service delivery, NAPP instead focused primarily on community organizing. Thirteen 'outpost' NAPP offices were set up in poor communities across the city, with each one employing up to thirty neighborhood aides. The vast majority of aides were members of the local poor and, more often than not, were female. Usually at least half of these aides were deployed as liaisons between parents and the local institutions they

[79] New York, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, Doris Roldan, 'Black-Puerto Rican Conflict Stalls South Bronx Program', October 10, 1969.
[80] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, 'Badillo Says Appointing Blacks and Puerto Ricans Throughout City Government Is Answer to Conflict over Jobs', January 24, 1970.

were placed in (mainly schools and welfare offices). The remaining NAPP neighborhood aides others spent their time organizing people around issues of local importance.[81]

During its first year, NAPP successfully organized local groups to lobby for improved city services such as garbage collection, better street lighting, and child-care facilities. Irritated by their activity, and perceiving NAPP as a threat to his power (in particular because of Jones's close ties to Congressman Hawkins and Councilman Tom Bradley,) Mayor Yorty soon moved against NAPP. First, the Mexican American head of EYOA, and Yorty ally, Joe Maldonado pressured Jones to abandon NAPP's community organization focused approach. Refusing to change tack, Jones was then fired by Maldonado. Unhappy at her dismissal, Jones petitioned OEO to intervene on her behalf and succeeded in having the decision overturned. Not only was Jones reinstated, but OEO also stripped EYOA of authority over NAPP. However, the organization's newfound independence was soon marked by a growing conflict between its black employees and their Latino colleagues who felt they were seriously underrepresented. Despite being the largest minority group (and nonwhite poor community) only three of thirteen NAPP outposts were in areas with majority Chicano populations: Boyle Heights, East Los Angeles, and Pacoima. Those centres were also the only three with Mexican American directors. Arguing that the city's War on Poverty was favouring blacks (as Puerto Rican groups in New York had), the staff of the three Chicano-led NAPP offices clashed strongly with Jones in a battle for a greater share of jobs and power. While this conflict did result in greater Latino representation, tension persisted for many years, worsening over time. In 1969, the OEO (now under directives from the Nixon White House) stepped in to restructure the organization. The result was a shift in NAPP's focus toward jobs training, and firmly away from community organization.[82]

Interracial antagonism within the city's War on Poverty rumbled on within EYOA, which continued to draw sharp criticism from both the black and Latino communities. As Louis Negrete of the Council of Mexican American Affairs wrote to the state OEO director in May 1971:

> The Spanish-speaking urban poor are becoming increasingly politicized and aware of how EYOA, as the official dispenser of funds for the federal and state government, is actually nothing more than a haven for insulated bureaucrats to perpetuate their existence in plush downtown offices while they issue press releases and rhetoric concerning deplorable conditions in our community.[83]

[81] 'NAPP Fights Poverty with Total Grass-roots Approach', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 15, 1965, p.A10.
[82] Bauman, p. 47, 52-55, 57-59, 63. As we will see in the following chapter the Nixon administration set out to divest the War on Poverty of its most controversial elements and the CAP was top of their list of targets.
[83] California State Office of Economic Opportunity Records, Series F3751, Box 8, Folder 167, Letter to Lew Uhller from Louis Negrete, May 25, 1971, p.1.

Over time, opposition from the city's Chicano groups (again, over underrepresentation in the organization) increased to such an extent that the organization was shut down, and its powers transferred elsewhere, in 1972.[84] Speaking at a 'Save our War on Poverty' conference in May 1972, Opal Jones reflected that:

> for seven long years we have struggled to work in these [antipoverty] programs in Los Angeles. Our funds have been steadily reduced year after year and as the poverty and problems increased, the money decreased. In spite of the attacks against the community based programs we continued to try and work with many odds, blocks and many obstacles which were forever put in our way. Year after year we have had to go and beg for more funds. We have been placed in a pitiful and dreadful situation where we have been pitted in battle against each other: Blacks against Browns and Browns against Blacks; Blacks against Blacks and Browns against Browns…. We must unite against the forces that make us fight over the crumbs of the War on Poverty.[85]

Leonard Carter, the Regional Director of the NAACP regarded the 'increased competition and polarization developing between black and brown communities' with trepidation. In a letter to Congressman Augustus Hawkins in mid-1972 Carter voiced his fears for blacks' hard won gains. 'It is very clear that black citizens have carried the brunt of the civil rights movement and forged far ahead in job placements both inside government and within private industry.' Moreover, African Americans had excelled at taking advantage of 'expanding educational opportunities' which had seen them achieve 'access to high level positions on a rapidly accelerating scale in recent years.' These achievements, he argued, were now under threat from the region's Latino community which for a long time had been 'a sleeping giant.' This, however, was no longer the case. 'Today, the pressure is on from our Spanish-speaking citizens and they are rightfully demanding a greater share of jobs.' The problem was, Carter complained, that 'it is becoming increasingly clear that many brown representatives are attempting to remove blacks from jobs and then to replace them with browns.[86]

Pan-racial class solidarity then was an exception, rather than the rule, in both New York and Los Angeles. The clear trend of racial identity politics in both cities' antipoverty programmes was a reflection of the growing strength of nationalist ideologies in black and other minority communities. This, as Robert Bauman has pointed out, was a serious obstacle to those who sought

[84] Bauman, p.66.
[85] Berkeley, UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library, NAACP Western Regional Office Records, carton 46, folder 11, Opal Jones keynote address "We are Angry', May 22, 1972 p.1.
[86] NAACP Western Regional Office Records, carton 13, folder 32, Letter to Augustus Hawkins from Leonard Carter, June 8, 1972.

to build an interracial movement of the poor.[87] It also underlined the War on Poverty's capacity for nurturing racial nationalism, something most clearly visible in the organizations examined in the following chapter. Lastly, racial conflict between minority groups over antipoverty jobs and resources further discredited the War on Poverty and lent weight to white criticism that it was a liberal, pro-minority programme that put taxpayers' money in the hands of fractious and militant inner-city communities who brought unwelcome disruption to public life.

Calmer Waters? Atlanta's War on Poverty

The War on Poverty in Atlanta underlined the importance of local social and political conditions in shaping the trajectory of public policy, community activism, and racial progress. Whereas in New York and Los Angeles the War on Poverty engendered challenges to established local power structures, in Atlanta it seemed instead largely to strengthen them. This can be explained, at least partially, by the way in which Atlanta's political elites managed their city's War on Poverty and local blacks' efforts for inclusion. Just as the Watts riots began amid the turmoil swamping the city's antipoverty programme, the *Los Angeles Times* lauded the War on Poverty's seemingly incident-free launch in Atlanta: 'Today, Atlanta's program is a beacon which burns through the miasma of cynicism engulfing the efforts in some big northern cities.' Mayor Ivan Allen explained the smooth running of the city's effort: 'If the program is directed at the elimination of poverty and is not hamstrung by local political patronage, it has a great opportunity for success.'[88] A year later, local liberal newspaper the *Atlanta Journal* proudly declared: 'Atlanta is emerging as a champion city in the attainment of federal antipoverty money.' Celebrating Atlanta's place just below Pittsburgh at the top of the OEO's funding rankings the newspaper attributed this success primarily to the 'alertness…of city and county officials' in 'taking advantage of what was available for a most important kind of work.'[89] Atlanta's lofty place in the table reflected the virtual absence of serious conflict, and the resultant delays, in the city's antipoverty programme which beset efforts in New York and Los Angeles. Key to this was the city's established pattern of top-down biracial political cooperation.

As soon as the War on Poverty was announced, Mayor Ivan Allen ensured that the city's biracial leadership elite was well represented within the city's official antipoverty agency,

[87] Bauman, p.7.
[88] Paul Weeks, 'Atlanta Sets Pace in War on Poverty', *Los Angeles Times*, August 12, 1965, p.2.
[89] Boston, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Robert F. Kennedy Senate Papers, 1964-1968 (hereafter RFK Senate Papers), Box 17, Folder 2, 'Poverty Funds in Atlanta', *The Atlanta Journal*, August 16, 1966, p.15.

Economic Opportunity Atlanta, Incorporated (EOA Inc.),. The organization's board included some of the city's leading black power brokers, including: Martin Luther King Snr.; insurance executive and publisher Jesse Hill Jr.; and real estate mogul W. L. Calloway. Dr. Tillman Cothran, former professor of sociology at Atlanta University and the co-chair of the Atlanta Summit Leadership Conference (ASLC) – the preeminent contemporary black leadership organization – was appointed Associate Director of EOA Inc.[90]

African Americans across the nation had looked at the War on Poverty as legislation intended primarily for their benefit, and Atlanta's black establishment was no different. In keeping with the city's long tradition of interracial cooperation and negotiation, local black elites made it clear they expected to be fully included, and capitalized on their prominent position and connections to ensure they were. One such example is provided by Dan Sweat, EOA Inc.'s white associate director. Discussing the appointment of John Calhoun, his friend and head of the local NAACP, to a prominent position in the organization, Sweat explained:

> John showed up the first day on the job and said – my first day in the job – and says "I'm here to go to work." And I said "what are you talking about?" He said, "Well," he said, "This is the greatest opportunity of my lifetime for blacks. It has so much potential, and I'm not going to get left out. I've got to be involved." [91]

As whites continued to leave the city for the suburbs en masse, and blacks' numerical strength grew, Atlanta's black establishment pressed to increase their political power at every opportunity. Having secured sizable representation within the city's antipoverty administration, Atlanta's black elite then began to push for appointments at the state level.[92] Shortly after EOA Inc.'s board was announced, Attorney Donald Howell, Atlanta civil rights leader and ASLC member, was appointed by President Johnson as Southeast Regional Director of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. As local historian Harold H. Martin has suggested:

> The dialogue between the Black Summit Conference leaders and the EOA [Inc.] board set a pattern that would be followed for many years to come: the blacks asking for more and more recognition, more and more participation in government at all levels, and the white leaders agreeing.[93]

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[90] Atlanta, Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Archives and Special Collections, Frankie V. Adams Collection, Series B, Box 1, Folder 26, *EOA Inc. Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 1, July 1965, p.1; 'Negro Leaders Rally Around Summit', *Atlanta Inquirer*, July 24, 1965, p.1.
[91] Atlanta, Georgia State University, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Series P, Folder 6, Interview with Dan Sweat, November 20, 1996, p.16-17.
[92] 'Summit Conference Holds Breakfast Meet', *Atlanta Inquirer*, February 6, 1965, p.1, 13.
[93] Harold H. Martin, *Atlanta and Environs: A Chronicle of Its People and Events, 1940s-1970s, Volume III* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), p. 437.

Lacking the connections and influence of men like Calhoun, Atlanta's poor black citizens found their opportunities within the city's antipoverty effort much more limited. The 'Citizen's Advisory Councils' - the vehicles for community participation in antipoverty affairs - had no say in policy or decision-making. In late November 1965, the 'Atlanta All-Citizens Poverty Meeting' saw grass-roots leaders from across the city come together to discuss their concerns over the city's War on Poverty and the limited involvement of the poor. Among their primary concerns were the lack of poor representatives on the EOA Inc. board and the Citizens Advisory Councils' lack of power. Having had a request to speak to the board about their concerns denied, the group was angry. The board's refusal, in the words of Reverend Cadamus Samples, was 'a slap in the face. We were made to feel like floor mats. These people are supposed to be our representatives and we can't even speak to them.' Although Otelus Shelman, the group's other leading spokesman, wrote to Sargent Shriver insisting on the need for poor people to be represented at the 'upper administration levels' of the city's War on Poverty, little changed as a result. The poor would never acquire any meaningful degree of decision-making power in the city's antipoverty programme.[94]

The poor were not totally excluded from Atlanta's War on Poverty, though opportunities for them were limited. A key reason for this lay in the organizational form that the antipoverty fight assumed in the Gate City. The city's official antipoverty agency, EOA Inc., had grown out of the West End Project, a neighbourhood service centre set up in a poor mixed neighbourhood in 1962 in order to relocate services from the downtown business area to the point of delivery, i.e. into the poor community itself. The West End centre, a contemporary assessment explained, was 'run by local indigent personnel and supervised and guided by social service type organizational employees.' Perceived as a great success by the city, the West End Project model was replicated by EOA Inc. which created 'Neighborhood Service Centers' (NSCs) in a number of designated poor communities, black and white, across the city. Intended to coordinate and improve delivery of services to the city's poor residents, this became the NSC's overwhelming concern. Indeed, so complete was the EOA Inc.'s focus on service provision that, according to one report, after two years of operation less than half of one percent of the organization's budget was allocated for Jobscorp, the War on Poverty's main jobs training element.[95] Under this paradigm, the poor were identified primarily as clients and the role of service planning and delivery reserved mainly for social worker professionals and those locals deemed suitable for the handful of centre management

[94] Atlanta, Emory University Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Eliza K. Paschall Papers, 1932-1988, Series IV, Box 16, Folder 18, Atlanta All-Citizens Poverty Meeting Agenda, November 19, 1965; 'Grassroots Leaders term EOA Action a "Slap in the Face"', *Atlanta Inquirer*, November 27, 1965 p.2; Brown-Nagin, p. 259.
[95] Ralph Martin Cloud, 'The Management of an Antipoverty Program: A case of Economic Opportunity Atlanta, Incorporated' (unpublished thesis, University of Georgia, 1967) p.2, 107, 110; Georgia Government Documentation Project, Series P, Folder 6, Interview with Dan Sweat, November 22, 1996, pp.14-16.

roles, who, more often than not, were drawn from the ranks of Atlanta's well-educated black middle-class. As the War on Poverty developed in the city, the centres' activities were dominated by programmes like Headstart, homemaking, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and child care. With four of these multipurpose service centres created initially, eight more were built in other poor neighbourhoods (the vast majority of them black) with the additional $6.3 million antipoverty funding the city received in September 1965. This kind of social service-oriented model was seen by some critics to exemplify the shortcomings and limitations of the War on Poverty insofar as it did little to undermine the structural causes of poverty. [96]

As in the West End Project, the city's NSCs did provide some opportunities for the direct involvement of the poor through employment as 'Neighborhood Aides'. The organizational status afforded to Neighborhood Aides raised questions about the EOA Inc.'s disposition toward involvement of the poor in the antipoverty programme. As Otis Cochran of local community group the Vine City Improvement Association complained, 'The only staff positions involving the poor are the aide positions, and the valuable pension program does not include them.' Denied the full benefits enjoyed by their more senior colleagues, Neighborhood Aides occupied an effectively second tier status within EOA Inc.[97] With a limited number of these jobs available, competition for them was strong and controversy arose concerning the extent to which the poor genuinely benefitted from these jobs. In a statement to a local newspaper, one anonymous group of Neighborhood Aides charged that the positions were not going to the genuinely poor:

> There are some people working with the EOA [centres] who are paid a good salary. These people have husbands working at Lockheed, the Post Office, Conley, teaching school, and other high paying jobs. In the first place these women were not in poverty. The women without husbands who needed the jobs, and could have done the job, were left out [and] their applications overlooked.[98]

Implicit in the aides' criticism was their expectation that the War on Poverty should provide poor single black women (and their children) a route to the family wage they lacked access to, as well as the status it conferred. In their estimation, women with employed husbands already enjoyed the fruits of economic citizenship, and thus were less deserving of these jobs. While the War on Poverty was seen as a prime opportunity for extending economic citizenship to those historically denied it,

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[96] 'Atlanta Receives Grants to Expand EOA Program', *Atlanta Inquirer*, September 25, 1965, p.7. For material explaining the operation and programmatic focus of Atlanta's NSCs, see the numerous reports complied by Community Council of Atlanta worker Ella Mae Brayboy available in: Atlanta, Emory University Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Community Council of the Atlanta Area Records, 1960-1974, Box 10.
[97] 'Group to Fight Exclusion of Aides from Disputed EOA Pension Plan', *Atlanta Inquirer*, October 9, 1965, p.1, 11.
[98] 'EOA Aides Charge Discrimination, Low Pay', *Atlanta Inquirer*, December 11, 1965, p.11.

debate over it revealed a complex contest over female empowerment that was itself (somewhat paradoxically) shaped by the existing male breadwinner social paradigm. Concerns over who exactly should enjoy the benefits of the antipoverty programme were not exclusive to women. In a letter to EOA Inc., Edward Moody, a prominent spokesman for the poor of the Summerhill-Mechanicsville area, complained that the board of a recently created local child care association (sponsored by the local NSC) was very unrepresentative of the area's poor residents:

> The present [board] members are "what's in it for me?" members. The community is resentful of the employees driving expensive autos to and from work. The applicants applications are tampered with. Certain people are employed. Always a family tie. A board member or a friend. Employees are allowed to work two jobs. Employees mates are already doing good.[99]

The apparent anti-poor bias in EOA Inc. was manifested in other organizational arrangements. W.H. Montague, president of the Georgia AFL-CIO, spoke out against EOA Inc. after it declared its policy on the garnishment of employee's wages. In late November 1967, at a meeting presided over by Martin Luther King Snr., the organization stated that it did not consider indebted individuals 'desirable employees' and warned that any employee receiving a garnishment would be sacked.[100] As indebtedness was an issue that disproportionately affected the poor, EOA Inc.'s rules seemed one more way to inhibit their involvement. Montague lambasted EOA Inc.'s position as 'worse than the most recalcitrant, unenlightened, and backward Georgia employer and is contrary to the entire conception of the poverty program.'[101]

The poor would find themselves on the fringes of Atlanta's War on Poverty from its first day till its last. A consistent critic of the city's efforts, local newspaper editor J. Lowell Ware suggested in late 1971:

> we tire of saying it but the efforts of government and private business to provide work for those who need it, housing for those who must have it, and a way up and out of the pit of poverty is, and has been, a rotten little game in which career bureaucrats and hardened social work hacks grow fat while a generation of children linger, wither and die before they reach age ten.[102]

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[99] Eliza K. Paschall Papers, 1932-1988, Series IV, Box 16, Folder 18, Letter to Charles Emmerich from Edward Moody, September 26, 1966.
[100] A wage garnishment is when an employer is bound to redirect a fixed amount of an individual employee's wage to a debtor in order to force the process of debt repayment, which is often stipulated by a legal ruling.
[101] Atlanta, Georgia State University, Special Collections and Archives, AFL-CIO Civil Rights Department, Southern Office Records, 1964-1979, Series I, Subseries B, Box 1595, Folder 38, W. H. Montague Statement on the 'Operational Policies of the EOA Merit System Committee', November 27, 1967, p.1-2.
[102] J. Lowell Ware, "Poverty Fight Goes Nowhere" *Atlanta Voice*, Vol. 6, No.42, October 16, 1971, p.1.

Though restricted involvement of the poor was an issue in all three cities, the War on Poverty in Atlanta proved to be far less of an organizational platform for mobilizing the city's poor black community than it did in New York and Los Angeles (as following chapters confirm). While the limits of the NSC model ensured that community organizing and mobilization was a rare practice within Atlanta's antipoverty programme, the fact remains that there appears to have been a much more vocal and sustained resistance to the exclusion of the poor in New York and Los Angeles. In Atlanta, though the War on Poverty did provide improved services to the poor, it was more a source of administrative positions for local middle-class and elite blacks than it was an engine of local community activism as it proved to be in New York and Los Angeles. The community organizations discussed in chapter two, which emerged in the mid-to-late 1960s from the intersection of Black Power, antipoverty organizing, and alternative public policies never materialized in Atlanta during this period. Their absence can be explained, at least in part, by the way in which the War on Poverty unfolded and the relatively less intense grass-roots activism in the Gate City compared to the likes of New York Los Angeles.

Overall, the War on Poverty in Atlanta highlighted two other significant facts. First, the limitations of the War on Poverty, especially its social service-orientation, for the task of effectively reducing poverty levels. Second, that socio-economic class, more than race, could dictate the terms and conditions of black engagement in the War on Poverty. Opportunities were available to middle-class and elite black Atlantans, but not for their less fortunate counterparts. This trend of increasing middle-class opportunity would also become a defining characteristic of the alternative public policies discussed in the following chapter, as it remained in local racial politics in Atlanta. Class bias also ran at the heart of mainstream political reaction to the War on Poverty's impact where it energized and mobilized the inner-city minority poor.

The Poor in Politics: An Unwelcome Challenge

Seemingly endorsing the redistribution of political and economic power away from established white authorities and urban power brokers to poor urban minority communities, the transformative political change that the War on Poverty threatened, as we have seen, was strongly resisted at the local level. It did not take long for that opposition to find its voice at the national level too. Sargent Shriver, John F. Kennedy's brother-in-law and the man chosen by Johnson to head the OEO, had to defend the organization before Congress from widespread criticism over the politically energizing effect its work was having on many poor communities. Speaking in August 1965, as an extension to

the antipoverty bill was being debated, Shriver asserted 'the fact that we are giving poor people a forum is just as important as other things we do.' Dismissing community action as 'dreamy-eyed, unrealistic,' Alphonso Bell, member of the House ad hoc subcommittee of the War on Poverty and Republican Representative for Los Angeles, complained: 'We're all in favour of fighting poverty, but you're opening the gunwales to loads of political activity.'[103]

The following month, Charles Schultz, Director of the Bureau of the Budget, made existing concerns clear to the president. 'Many mayors assert that the CAP is setting up a competing political organization in their own backyards.' Underlining the importance of mayoral support, Schultz advised that 'we ought not to be in the business of organizing the poor politically.' He recommended to the President that OEO be ordered to stop sponsoring elections to poverty planning boards, to tone down its conflicts with city politicians over representation of the poor (which, he acknowledged, 'may cause some friction with civil rights groups,') and step up its efforts to involve the poor at the working, rather than the planning, level of the antipoverty programme.[104]

In late November 1965, the United State Conference of Mayors (USCM) submitted a special report to OEO concerning CAAs, based on consultations with representatives of ninety three local governments. The report revealed widespread concern with the relationship between public and private agencies, and also blamed the inefficient running of CAP activities on the lack of technical expertise among many of the poor communities involved. There was, the report argued, too much focus on the form of organization rather than on substantive program building. Local CAAs, the report insisted, 'should operate as service centers.' In many ways, Atlanta's War on Poverty exemplified the USCM's ideal formula. Administration and decision making should, they believed, be left to public officials and professionals who were best qualified to ensure that antipoverty programmes were successful.[105]

The President largely agreed with city politicians' objections to the CAP. As McKee explains, Johnson's past experience as head of the Texas arm of the New Deal's National Youth Administration (NYA) played a critical role in shaping his own view on the matter. As Texas NYA chief, Johnson had had programmatic and financial control, reflecting the federal government's implicit trust in his expertise and suitability for that role. Like many city politicians, therefore,

[103] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 2, Paul Weeks, 'Voices of Poverty are being heard – and City Halls across U.S. quail', *Los Angeles Times*, August 9, 1965.
[104] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 2, Memorandum from Charles Schultz to President Johnson, September 18, 1965, p. 2-3.
[105] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 2, Memorandum from Hubert Humphrey to President Johnson, December 2, 1965, p.2; *Ibid*., 'The Office of Economic Opportunity and Local Community Action Agencies' United State Conference of Mayors Report, p. 2.

Johnson believed that control of CAP's should rest with local officials, and assumed that it would. Moreover, Johnson's gendered political vision of the War on Poverty had led him to place greatest importance on those programmes which trained and employed men. Johnson had paid the CAP little regard as antipoverty planners drew up the legislation. It was here that Johnson's view clashed most decisively with those of the antipoverty legislation's framers. While Johnson still held to the principles of New Deal breadwinner liberalism, advocates of community action sought instead to mobilize and empower the very groups who had been most marginalized by the New Deal welfare state. As historian Thomas F. Jackson has argued, although many African Americans perceived the antipoverty programme as a tool for widening and accelerating the battle for equality, Johnson 'had no idea that his War on Poverty would become so thoroughly entangled with the black quest for independent political power.' Johnson's far more limited vision did not include mobilizing the nation's poorest citizens politically and he swiftly turned against it when faced with the political strife it created.[106]

Politicians' concerns over the CAP were, in some respects, well founded. The fact that, generally speaking, poor communities lacked the administrative and managerial experience that the running of antipoverty programmes might require threatened to detract from their quality and inhibit efficient delivery. Jim Carberry, an aide to John Lindsay, Mayor Wagner's successor, highlighted this practical aspect of the War on Poverty's conflicts. Advising Lindsay on how best to explain the city's delayed application for OEO funds to angry community groups, Carberry suggested being honest. The truth, he argued, was that:

> This administration tried too diligently to engage the poor in preparation of the applications for funding. The poor, inescapably, do not have typewriters. They don't spell very well. They are not precise in language and they are unfamiliar with the requirements of preparing project proposals. They don't have adding machines and their figures don't balance. Consequently, an effort to truly give poor people a rightful and effective voice in determining the use of poverty money creates an additional workload on those who are formally charged with preparing the bureaucratically correct applications to OEO. Moreover, it requires one hell of a lot of time to translate the often conflicting requests of the poor into proper, accurate applications.[107]

The emphasis on community participation regularly resulted in delays to antipoverty programmes. CAAs with significant and diverse community representation often found themselves bogged down in long debates over how best to organize, something generally avoided by top-down, tightly controlled, city hall-led CAAs which established programmes and implemented them swiftly.

[106] McKee, 'This Government Is with Us', p.34, 40, 41, 57. McKee's work has, through analysis of hitherto unstudied telephone conversations, revealing an interesting new perspective on Johnson's view of the War on Poverty and the CAP.; Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Economic Rights,* p. 194.
[107] John Lindsay Papers, Box 61, Folder 91, Memorandum to John Lindsay from Jim Carberry, June 3, 1966, p.1.

Moreover, the introduction of money and resources into poor neighbourhoods unchecked might also, some feared, lead to corruption and misuse of funds. In some cases these concerns were realized. As later head of New York's antipoverty programme Major Owens explained, 'Once you introduce money into the situation poor people behave like anyone else - the greed factor takes over and you have problems.'[108] Ultimately, as historian Thomas Sugrue has suggested, 'it is unclear whether maximum feasible participation actually improved services to the poor.'[109]

Below these issues of suitability and practicality lay a broader clash of cultures and expectations, as a letter to Los Angeles Congressman Hawkins from his South Central a district office aide Charles Knox reveals. Reporting back on a meeting he had attended in the Compton-Willowbrook area, Knox complained,'I could summarize the meeting by calling it a big 'mess'. However, intrinsic in the interaction is the raw and often time unintelligible approach to the board's problems.' The underlying and inescapable issue, he asserted, was that the poor were ill-equipped for such positions of authority leadership, and management. 'Unfortunately, inherent in a board of thirteen low-income representatives, who display all of the common disabilities of the poor, is resentment, conflict, destruction, etc.' To overcome this problem he suggested that 'the board needs the direction of a very firm and emotionally secure chairman who will ride herd and nip a lot of the internal jealousy and conflict in the bud.' The board members were, he concluded, 'guilty in maintaining internal struggles that limit good planning in all areas. I certainly don't want to be overly critical or subjective in evaluating the meeting. However, I feel just and objective in surmising from what seems to be occurring on the board, another demonstration of N-business.'[110]

An African American himself, Knox's (somewhat explicit) intra-racial criticism reveals that class tensions, and a clash of political cultures, could just as easily occur between established black middle-class and professional political elites and the black poor citizens as it could between the black community and white officials. It was a conflict that encompassed issues of education, class, cultural orientation, and the expected standards of behaviour that prevailed within mainstream political life. Moreover, it raised broader questions about the place of the poor within national politics, the class bias of mainstream U.S. politics and society, and the limits of inclusive democracy. Importantly, these questions were later amplified by the growth of a vibrant welfare rights movement which placed increasingly militant poor black women on the front line of a

[108] Major Owens interview with author, November 8th 2010.
[109] Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: the Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), p.373. Sugrue gives the example of Chicago as one city were strong top-down city control of the War on Poverty was seen to result in an effective, timely, and efficient delivery of programmes.
[110] Los Angeles, UCLA Charles E. Young Research library, Augustus F. Hawkins Papers, 1935-1990, Box 94, Folder: OEO – Compton-Willowbrook-Enterprise CAA, Letter to Augustus Hawkins from Charles Knox, October 2, 1967.

national debate about the moral and political dimensions of the tax-payer funded American welfare state and the pursuit of economic justice.

Great Expectations Disappointed

If many white politicians were unhappy with the results of the War on Poverty the same was true of many poor communities too. Aside from frustrated ambitions to control antipoverty programmes, a great deal of anger in inner-city minority communities grew over the inadequacy of the War on Poverty's funding. New York Senator Rep. James H. Scheuer explained to a House subcommittee on poverty that the programme's first year appropriations of $800 million dollars amounted to 'less than $30 an impoverished person.' This was in contrast, he argued to the US's recent history of foreign aid. 'We have given away overseas in the last decade or two well over $100 billion dollars.' Scheuer optimistically predicted that 'in the decades to come we may be investing an amount of human and dollar resources comparable to our foreign aid program, in the elimination of poverty at home.'[111] His faith would prove to be misplaced.

Explaining the antipoverty programme's achievements during its first two years of operation to a Senate subcommittee, Shriver's testimony underlined how insufficient War on Poverty appropriations had been, given the task in hand. Headstart, he explained, had reached over 700,000 poor children and their families each year, but this represented less than one third of the total number of children, aged between three and five, targeted by the programme. Of the nation's eight million children aged six to fifteen, he estimated that OEO operations were reaching only about 300,000. Out of three million impoverished sixteen to twenty one year olds, only twenty percent of those attending school and forty percent of drop-outs were involved with antipoverty efforts. Success in getting jobs training and placements to adults was even more limited, with just 6 percent of the nine and a half million poor people aged between twenty two and fifty four receiving jobs or vocational training in 1966. OEO resources were even more underutilized by the nation's 5.4 million poor elderly citizens, with antipoverty programmes estimated to only be consistently meeting the needs of around 5 percent.[112] In a June 1967 message to Congress, President Johnson

[111] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 2, Paul Weeks, 'Grasp of Poverty Gradually Eases', *Los Angeles Times*, August 13th, 1965.
[112] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex-FG 11-15, Reel 8, Additional testimony of Sargent Shriver before the Senate Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization, August 19, 1966, p.5-6.

admitted that although eight million poor Americans had been reached by the War on Poverty during its first two and a half years, another twenty four million remained unaffected by them.[113]

The possibility of greater financial commitment to fighting poverty at home, however, was lost to the fight against communism abroad. As the *Atlanta Journal* editor suggested:

> The declaration of the War on Poverty… accompanied by exuberant White House promises of relief for the country's 34 million people below the poverty line, amounted to a national promise and an official underwriting of hope. Yet the program had funding which, from the start, was judged by authorities on the subject to be grossly inadequate for the promises being made. Then, six months after the act [EOA] was passed, the escalation of the war in Vietnam and the beginning of full American involvement there threw a major obstacle in front of the program.[114]

Black disillusionment was only deepened by the apparent willingness of the federal government to sacrifice the pursuit of social and economic justice in favour of an increasingly controversial war overseas. A symptom of a society that had habitually and chronically failed African Americans, according to Martin Luther King Jr., it was another injustice feeding the groundswell of black disappointment from which the Black Power movement grew.[115]

In October 1966, presidential aide Robert Kintner acknowledged in a memo to Johnson that the funding of the War on Poverty had become 'a real political issue, as you know better than I, in every large city in this country.'[116] The following month, in a detailed message to the President entitled 'Great expectations vs. Disappointments,' Bureau of the Budget Director Schultz suggested that the administration's lofty rhetoric concerning the elimination of poverty at home was quickly becoming a political liability for the White House. 'States, cities, depressed areas, and individuals have been led to expect immediate delivery of Great Society programs to a degree that is not realistic.' With the deepening military conflict in Southeast Asia now diverting increasing levels of federal funds away from domestic programmes the 'frustration, loss of credibility, an even deterioration of state and local services' he expected to result would, he predicted, prove 'very troublesome in the 1968 campaign.'[117]

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[113] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex-FG 11-15, Reel 8, Lyndon B. Johnson, Message to Congress, June 22, 1967, p.2.
[114] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex-FG 11-15, Reel 11, 'Congress and Poverty', *The Atlanta Journal*, November 17, 1967, p.18.
[115] Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) p.35-36.
[116] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex-FG 11-15, Reel 8, Memorandum to the President from Robert Kintner, October 13, 1966.
[117] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 3, Memorandum to the President from Charles Schultz, November 7, 1966.

At the same time that the meagre funding, modest scope, and limited success of the War on Poverty was disappointing social and economic justice advocates, the political turmoil it had caused had done much to turn the political tide decisively in favour of conservative opponents of redistributive liberal social policy. As a confidential White House report explained, 'the outcome of the 1966 midterm elections, in terms of Congressional support for the War on Poverty, is very grim. In the House, the program has fallen from a position of relative strength to one of desperate jeopardy.' The Democrats, and liberals, in particular, suffered heavy reversals. Of the seventy one politicians unseated in the elections, fifty five had been behind the War on Poverty. Of their replacements, only eight could be counted as supporters, a further six as 'doubtful,' with the rest understood to be hostile to the antipoverty programme. American voters, conservatives argued, had delivered a resounding verdict on the Johnson administration's policies and its handling of the urban crisis. In the 90th Congress the War on Poverty would, in all likelihood, face a clear and sizable majority opposition. Its future seemed bleak at best. As the report concluded, 'the War on Poverty is in great peril in the House. On paper it looks as though the conservative coalition can work its will against our legislation, at least to the point of drastically restructuring and reorganizing the program.'[118]

With the stage set for the retrenchment of the War on Poverty, the report's dire predictions were soon realised. Antipoverty programme opponents oversaw a number of sizable cuts to OEO funding in 1966-1967. On the ground, the impact was considerable. In Los Angeles Mayor Yorty wrote to Sargent Shriver to warn him that the planned cuts (an expected loss of $10 million OEO funds for the city) 'shall severely handicap the functioning of the local CAP agency….this could mean the loss of about 500 jobs for poverty area residents and the disappearance of programs serving approximately 135,000 people.'[119] In Atlanta, EOA Inc. head Charles Emmerich wrote to Richard Boone, then head of the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty (CCAP), to explain that:

> EOA Inc. is struggling to reduce its opportunity programs in line with the reductions outlined by Sargent Shriver. The reductions represent approximately 50% of our anticipated budget for 1967. When you consider that EOA Inc.'s program has been escalating over a two year period and during this same period it has become very close to the community, it is easy to understand our frustration. Our local committees are cooperating beautifully, but it is heartbreaking when they are required to reduce programs which are efficiently and effectively serving their communities. Frankly we find the reduction extremely difficult to accept and it is also most difficult to maintain a reasonable degree of high morale among

[118] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex-FG 11-15, Reel 11, Confidential Report: 'Analysis of 1966 Congressional Elections Re OEO Legislative Position', n.d. (1966) p.1-3.
[119] Sam Yorty Papers, Box D-0025, Folder: OEO 1966, Letter to Sargent Shriver from Sam Yorty, November 29, 1966, p.1.

> our disadvantaged. Again they began to build up real hope and enthusiasm and now, as always, they are told this seems to be another broken promise.[120]

With President Johnson backing away from the War on Poverty from as early as late 1965, growing political opposition eventually led to the passage of two Congressional amendments in 1967 which diluted the CAP's potential to politically engage the poor. The Quie and Green Amendments assured local officials of the authority to decide which community groups were eligible for OEO funds and also required that one third of antipoverty board seats went to elected officials, with another third comprised of local social service and welfare professionals, and representatives from private sector organizations.[121] City politicians, across the country, had exerted their influence to restrict the antipoverty legislation's capacity to challenge established authority, pushing back against the poor communities attempt to interlope into the existing urban power arrangements. However, while politicians succeeded in winning control over the War on Poverty, they were less able to control the increasing fiscal burden of public assistance programmes that it generated. As we will see in the following section and beyond, the antipoverty backlash it produced had far-reaching political consequences for urban politics and the pursuit of racial and economic justice.

Broadening the Insurgency: Welfare Rights and the War on Poverty

One of the most significant consequences that the War on Poverty had for American politics was in helping to amplify, mobilize, and expand urban movements for social and economic justice. Offering a platform for disadvantaged communities to assert and defend their rights, the War on Poverty became intertwined with other important movements within the broader antipoverty coalition. The most significant of these was the welfare rights movement. As the War on Poverty intensified the focus on economic rights and urban organizing within the black freedom struggle, it provided extra impetus and support for a nascent welfare rights movement which grew rapidly in the mid-to-late 1960s. Led primarily by inner-city black (and other minority) mothers, the blossoming of a national welfare rights movement brought vigorous challenges to local and federal

[120] Frankie V. Adams Collection, Series B, Box 2, Folder 1, Letter from Charles Emmerich to Richard Boon, December 20, 1966, p.1.
[121] Orleck, 'Introduction: The War on Poverty from the Grass Roots Up', p.17.

government for comprehensive reform of the existing, much maligned, welfare system and for a fuller extension of benefits.[122]

Welfare rights activism centred on the AFDC programme created by the Social Security Act of 1935 under Roosevelt's New Deal administration. AFDC became an important support system for many inner-city blacks, as millions left the rural South for the urban north in the decades following the Great Depression. Unlike the top tier New Deal welfare programmes, (like Social Security, Workmen's Compensation, and Unemployment Insurance) which aimed to protect and, indeed, valorize the male-breadwinner, 'family wage,' household social paradigm, AFDC actively undermined it. By only providing assistance to female headed households the programme effectively incentivized the father to leave the home, thus weakening the traditional two parent family structure in poor black communities nationwide, stigmatizing mother-led single parent black families, and further dislocating AFDC recipients from the idealized vision of American citizenship.[123]

Worse still, payments were usually low, sometimes barely enough to cover food, rent, and other bills, leaving little, if anything, for extra expenses. Welfare rights protestors often demanded more money for essential items for their children such as school uniforms and shoes and for extra winter clothing. A strained relationship existed between AFDC clients and their (often hostile) welfare caseworkers. A key point of contention was intrusive home eligibility checks, investigating for evidence of a 'man in the house,' which many welfare recipients felt were inhumane and demeaning. As one black AFDC mother from Los Angeles explained to Sargent Shriver, when he visited the city in August 1966:

> How much do you think the human mind and body can stand? ...You think there is something nice about being on welfare and having a social worker come snooping under your bed, to see if you got a man there? It don't leave no dignity. You know it would be real nice if some of you people could change yourselves and be poor for a while. You see what the poor people have to go through. Who wants welfare? Who wants to have someone look down their nose at you all the time to give you a piece of bread? That's enough to make you want to blow your own brains out.[124]

[122] For a discussion of the ways in which ideas of motherhood both shaped and were shaped by welfare rights activism, see: Gina Denton, '"Neither guns nor bombs - neither the state nor God - will stop us from fighting for our children": motherhood and protest in 1960s and 1970s America,' *The Sixties*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2012), pp. 205-228.
[123] Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare warriors: the welfare rights movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2005) pp.143-146.
[124] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex-FG 11-15, Reel 8, Additional testimony of Sargent Shriver before the Senate Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization, August 19, 1966, p.7-8.

The recent wealth of scholarship on the welfare rights movement has revealed its roots in earlier civil rights protest and its place within the broader tradition of African American consumer and economic rights activism.[125] The War on Poverty played a central role in transforming relatively isolated, disparate protest groups into a national, coordinated, movement. As poor inner-city residents, welfare recipients naturally formed a vital War on Poverty constituency, and were a primary target for organizing by advocates of the poor. In a May 1966 article, New York sociologists (and MFY staff members) Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven outlined a plan for forcing reform of the welfare system, as a precursor to building a fairer society. Although opponents of the welfare state often criticized the cost of the nation's welfare system it was in fact, they argued, both inadequately provisioned and seriously undersubscribed:

> A vast discrepancy exists between the benefits to which people are entitled under public welfare programs and the sums which they actually receive. This gulf is not recognized in a society that is wholly and self-righteously oriented toward getting people off the welfare rolls. It is widely known, for example, that nearly 8 million persons (half of them white) now subsist on welfare, but it is not generally known that for every person on the rolls at least one more probably meets existing criteria of eligibility but is not obtaining assistance. The discrepancy is not an accident stemming from bureaucratic inefficiency; rather, it is an integral feature of the welfare system which, if challenged, would precipitate a profound financial and political crisis. The force for that challenge, and the strategy we propose, is a massive drive to recruit the poor onto the welfare rolls.[126]

In 1967, growing welfare enrollment and activism led to the founding of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). The group's chief architect was George Wiley, a former chemistry professor and CORE leader. In late August 1967, more than 250 groups, from 80 cities in 30 states, convened in Washington D.C. to establish a national organization. As Wiley explained, 'from deep in the ghettos and barrios of American cities welfare recipients and other poor people have been banding together to seek a better life for them and their families.'[127] The effort to expand the numbers on welfare rolls proved highly successful. In 1960 there were 3.1 million AFDC clients and by 1965 that figure climbed to 4.3 million. By 1970 it had rocketed to nearly 8.5 million. As historian Marisa Chappell has explained, over a quarter of all new recipients were added in just two states: New York and California.[128]

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[125] See, for example: Felicia Ann Kornbluh, *The battle for welfare rights: politics and poverty in modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Marisa Chappell, *The war on welfare: family, poverty, and politics in modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare warriors: the welfare rights movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[126] Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, 'The Weight of the Poor: A Strategy to End Poverty', *The Nation*, May 2, 1966, < http://www.thenation.com/article/weight-poor-strategy-end-poverty#> [Accessed 27/08/2013].

[127] New York, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Congress on Racial Equality Papers (hereafter CORE Papers), Part 3, Series A, Reel 10, Letter to Marvin Rich from George Wiley, July 25, 1967.

[128] Chappell, p. 50-51.

As more and more local groups formed across the country, welfare rights organizations became fundamentally intertwined with the War on Poverty and minority women's struggle for liberation not just from poverty but from racial and gender discrimination too.[129] While the Johnson administration had intended the War on Poverty to decrease welfare enrollment, (a natural corollary to the training and employment of African American men in the nation's ghettos,) it was far more successful in vaulting a highly vocal, militant, female-led welfare rights movement to national prominence instead. Welfare rights activism reached its climax in a national discussion, stretching from 1969 through 1972, over welfare reform and a guaranteed minimum income precipitated by the Nixon administration's proposed Family Assistance Plan (FAP).[130] As we will see in the following section and subsequent chapters, the apotheosis of welfare rights activism, and the fiscal burden brought by growing welfare enrollment, played an important part in the increasing polarization of American politics and in shaping alternative public policies to the War on Poverty and, later, the limits of black political power.

Reshaping American politics: The broader consequences of the War on Poverty

A memo to President Johnson in late December 1963 revealed it had been a close call for the Kennedy administration between instituting a federal programme that sought to attack poverty, or one that addressed the problems faced by America's middle-income citizens. While Kennedy was keen to help the nation's poorest citizens, he and his economic advisors also feared alienating the 'American in the middle' – the $3,000 - $10,000 income bracket – who they saw as 'the key to our economy, society, and political stability.' Perfectly capturing the gendered perspective of breadwinner liberalism, their assessment explained:

> He pays most of the taxes, carries most of the credit, makes or breaks the consumer goods market, is the home-buyer, car-buyer, etc. He is also the man in the gunsights of the future: automation is his job threat, high costs of education are his worry as a parent, high costs of elderly medical care fall heaviest on him as son. His consent is vital – his dissent is fatal – to our social progress vis-à-vis Negro rights, etc.[131]

[129] See, footnote 125.
[130] Felicia Kornbluh, '"Who Shot FAP?" The Nixon Welfare Plan and the Transformation of American Politics', *The Sixties*, Vol.1, No.2, (December 2008), pp. 125-150.
[131] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 1,Memorandum to the President: 'The Poverty Program vs. the Middle Class', December 30, 1963, pp. 2-4.

As the decade wore on, millions of white voters in this constituency, later defined by Richard Nixon as the 'Silent Majority,' abandoned the Democratic Party and liberalism, the first shoots of what contemporary political commentator Kevin Phillips famously termed 'the Emerging Republican Majority.'[132] The War on Poverty, and the welfare rights movement it helped to expand, played an important part in this developing political realignment. As antipoverty efforts and welfare rights protest became inextricably bound up with movements for racial and economic equality, many 'Middle Americans' increasingly resented liberal social policies that they believed privileged the interests of poor black and other minority groups. Writing in 1970, John Lindsay recognized this growing sentiment among white New Yorkers:

> In the last few years, governments at all levels have mounted a wide range of programs to aid the deprived. They have, in the main, been meager programs; they have in no sense represented the commitment of resources and energy we need – but they have been visible. Many governments, New York City's included, have attempted to break through the decades of neglect and demonstrate to our most deprived citizens that government cares about them and it can respond to their grievances. And seeing this – seeing at least the effort and concern among one part of the citizenry – the mainstream New Yorker may well ask: "Where is an effort being made to answer *my* grievances? Is the black man to be bettered at my expense?"[133]

The sense of injustice over redistributive liberal social policy was a powerful emotion among many white American voters and became a vital axis along which conservatives' political resurgence developed during the mid-1960s through the 1970s. Spiraling welfare enrollment was especially troubling for many who saw the growing fiscal burden it placed on the taxpayer as a violation of the sanctity of property rights, and as undermining the cultural meaning and value of work and self-reliance. As a white voter in Los Angeles explained eloquently in a letter to African American Congresswoman Yvonne Braithwaite:

> I believe that our government, in the years passed and at present, is drifting into a welfare program which places the recipients in a position of expecting welfare, believing it is their right to have welfare, and that being on welfare is an honourable profession. On the other hand, many of the donors, including myself, feel that being forced through taxation, or having the results of our labors appropriated in the guise of taxation, and redistributed to others, is not good for our country. In other words an undercurrent develops in the mind of the donor, which leaves the donor with a sense of frustration, a feeling of "What's the use?" and, "Why be a fool? Why should I work to take care of those who are able to work but who prefer to be recipients?"[134]

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[132] Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1969).
[133] John Lindsay, *The City* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), p.48 (italics as per the text).
[134] Sacramento, California State Archives, Yvonne Braithwaite Burke Papers, LP69:14, Letter to Yvonne Braithwaite Burke from Telford L. Smith, May 20, 1970.

It was not just the moral and economic dimensions of redistributive liberalism that upset American voters, the apparent link between liberal social policy, and a broader protest culture among dissenting minorities and the white Left, also deepened the disenchantment of many in the nation's 'Silent Majority'. To some, the antipoverty programme was responsible for stoking the fires of urban discontent, rewarding agitators, and encouraging challenges to authority and institutions they respected, and values they held deeply. The sight of antipoverty warriors and welfare rights activists – sometimes with Black Power militants alongside them – agitating against the very government that was funding them was an affront to many people. This view was captured well by labor writer Victor Riesel who used his nationally syndicated column 'Inside Labor' to accuse the OEO of funding people to 'spend their time confronting, frequently battling, the police, picketing city halls and boards of education, closing down schools, struggling with union workers, and […] discrediting the US...' It was clear in Riesel's mind that antipoverty officials were on a mission to 'go out and "revolutionize" the nation's ghettos.'[135]

In July 1964, just two months after Whitney Young had warned of the possibility of unrest during congressional hearings on the War on Poverty, six days of rioting beset the streets of Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant, New York's two largest black ghettos. Precipitated by the shooting of a black youth by a white policeman, it started a pattern that became a familiar rhythm over the next four summers in black ghettos nationwide.[136] Reaching a new scale in Watts in August 1965, by the time the last wave of rioting ended in 1968 it had claimed many dozens of lives, and caused billions of dollars' worth of damage to property and businesses nationwide. Some opponents saw the hand of the War on Poverty in the devastation of America's urban centres. As segregationist Atlanta businessman and Georgia Governor Lester Maddox complained in a letter to the president:

> hundreds of millions of federal dollars are being expended by […] the War on Poverty programs to encourage, train, and finance the bums, criminal, beatniks and misfits who have brought near chaos to our Country as they burn, kill, and wreck much of America.[137]

Seeking to defend the OEO against what he called 'unfounded and irresponsible charges that antipoverty programs and officials had caused such violence', Shriver sent Johnson a report following the 1967 riots extolling the positive role played by War on Poverty summer programmes

[135] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 7, Victor Riesel, 'Revolutionizing the Streets', *Publishers Hall-Syndicate*, September 19, 1968.
[136] Craig Steven Wilder, *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 176.
[137] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Part V, White House Central Files, WE9-1, Reel 17, Letter to Lyndon Johnson from Lester Maddox, July 10, 1968, p.1.

in both preventing and minimizing racial disturbances in cities across the nation.[138] Atlanta and Los Angeles were singled out for special praise. Shriver quoted a telegram he had received from Mayor Ivan Allen which read:

> OEO's assistance is proof positive of the value of federal-local cooperation. Recreation funds and EOA CAP Centers have contributed greatly to cooling off summer problems. CAP Center and personnel provided quick communications facility for easing explosive situation in Dixie Hills disturbance. Continued OEO help to urban cities is a must. Thanks for the helping hand.

In Los Angeles, Police Chief Thomas Reddin (Parker's successor) commended NAPP for distributing tens of thousands of leaflets which emphasized the damage riots did to the black community and urged locals to 'Keep Cool This Summer'. Another city official identified the city's OEO programmes in ghetto communities as an important factor in the declining number of juvenile arrests.[139] The following year, there was outcry in New York over the impact cuts to OEO funds would have on the city's summer jobs programmes. The loss of 20,000 summer jobs for ghetto youth, Mayor Lindsay argued, would undoubtedly increase the chance of 'violence and bloodshed' in the streets. 'If violence again occurs in our cities,' he concluded, 'those in Washington who have ignored our pleas for help will have to assume their share of responsibility.'[140] While these cases all demonstrated the War on Poverty's role as a positive force in the nation's cities, they also gave weight to criticism that the antipoverty programme was little more than 'riot insurance' designed to prevent urban unrest by buying off militants and preoccupying inner-city youths in summer work programmes. Even if, as mayors like Lindsay intimated, some antipoverty programmes were, to a degree, riot prevention measures, opponents argued that they had been very unsuccessful. As California Republican Assembly Chairman Dick Darling suggested:

> The more money that has been appropriated for all these programs (federal cities programs including the War on Poverty, welfare, urban renewal, housing) the more violence we have had. Therefore it would seem that congressional spending alone will not end city riots.[141]

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[138] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex-FG 11-15, Reel 8, Memorandum to all OEO Regional Directors from Sargent Shriver, July 20, 1967.
[139] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 5, Memorandum to President Johnson from Sargent Shriver, September 12, 1967; *Ibid*., Ex WE-9, Reel 5, 'Summer Program Inspection 1967 Report'; *Ibid*., 'OEO and the Riots – A Summary', p.2. The 'EOA CAP Centers' that Mayor Allen refers to are the Neighborhood Service Centers (NSCs) discussed earlier in this chapter.
[140] The War on Poverty, 1964-1968 [Microfilm], Ex WE-9, Reel 7, Memorandum to Joe Califano from Jim Gaither, July 11, 1968, p.2.
[141] Los Angeles, UCLA Charles E. Young Research library, California Republican Assembly Records, Box 10, CRA Newsletters 1969-1970, 'CRA News' Dec 67 – Jan 68, Vol. II, No.4 & 5, p.14.

The increasingly vociferous agitation, protest, and in many cases open rebellion and rioting, of urban minority groups against their condition during the mid-1960s, political scientist Ira Katznelson has explained, 'came to undermine the security of the dominant and middle-classes.'[142] As historian Dan Carter has argued, although most northern whites ostensibly eschewed overtly segregationist politics, many nevertheless shared southerners' 'deep and visceral apprehensions' concerning African Americans, and rioting brought these fears to the surface. Urban rioting shattered the civil rights movement's carefully sculpted media image of blacks as peaceful and non-violent, driving fear and feeding prejudice amongst whites everywhere.[143] When added to the maelstrom of campus unrest, antiwar demonstrations, countercultural protest, rising crime, and growing welfare dependency, it helped deepen a growing sense of resentment and anger amongst many whites. In the process, the broader national consensus over existing liberal-civil rights prescriptions for managing social, racial, and economic change disintegrated. White ethnic working and middle-class voters began to question and abandon their support for integration, civil rights legislation, the liberal welfare state, and economically redistributive government spending which, many believed, privileged racial minorities and the poor (especially African Americans) at their expense, and, worse still, encouraged urban disorder, welfare chiseling, and declining respect for authority, the established social order, and traditional American values.[144] Not only had liberals' policies failed to provide answers to the nation's problems, increasing numbers of voters blamed them for making them worse.

This growing white racial resentment and disillusionment with liberal policies had already found its voice in national politics and striving to roll back or narrow the scope of domestic reforms. For example, in May 1967, southern and northern conservatives in Congress combined to pass an amendment (by a vote of 232-171) discontinuing the Rent Supplement Programme. Established in the Housing Act of 1965, this programme specifically targeted public housing tenants and Federal Housing Authority (FHA)-financed new and rehabilitated housing (and not privately owned slum housing) and was described by one black poor advocate group as 'one of the very few which offer decent housing to the poor at rents more or less in keeping with their incomes.' Some had used the rising cost of war overseas to justify their position; others, led by Bronx Republican Congressman Paul Fino, made clear the racial and socio-economic dimensions of their opposition. Accusing the federal government of conspiring to 'spread rent supplement into middle-income suburbs and neighborhoods,' Fino dismissed the programme as a 'racial and economic balance sheet' that

[142] Ira Katznelson, *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. 4.
[143] Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge, 2000) p. 11, 304.
[144] Katznelson, p. 2.

'rewards rioters and subsidizes spongers.' For Fino, (who also strongly opposed the antipoverty programme and busing) rent supplements were another example of liberals' attempts to socially engineer the nation towards integration, and redistribute whites' hard-earned wealth to the undeserving inner-city minority poor. In the process, he believed, big government, welfare state, liberalism not only trampled over the personal and economic freedoms of the white majority, but in doing so violated core traditional American values associated with self-reliance, hard work, and private initiative and responsibility.[145] This kind of conservative message resonated with increasing numbers of American voters from the mid-to-late 1960s, and vitally shaped the political environment in which alternative public policies for dealing with racial and economic inequality developed.

As the following chapter will illustrate, leading national politicians like Richard Nixon and Robert F. Kennedy put forward different solutions for dealing with economic inequality that were deliberately sensitive to the changing political landscape. Rather than advancing the existing liberal-civil rights coalition's government-focused, integrationist, and economically redistributive politics, they instead offered alternatives designed not only to appeal to, or appease, white conservatives but also as a way to meet and sublimate the growing demand for black empowerment in the nation's ghettos. In the process, they encouraged the pursuit of a more middle-class, capitalist enterprise-oriented mainstream vision of Black Power intended to draw African Americans away from the transformative political solutions championed by social and economic justice movements and some of Black Power's most radical adherents.

[145] CORE Papers, Part 1, Reel IV, Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem, Inc., memorandum to CORE on Rent Supplement Program, June 27, 1967, p.4; Robert B. Semple, '$40 Million Voted for Rent Subsidy by Senate Panel', *New York Times*, August 29, 1967, p.1; Dennis Hevesi, 'Paul Fino, Politician Who Battled Lindsay, Dies at 95', *New York Times*, June 19, 2009, p. A25.

Chapter Two: Community Development Corporations, Black Capitalism, and the Mainstreaming of Black Power

On a cold, icy, February morning in New York City in 1966 local black residents Elsie Richardson and Donald Benjamin led Senator Robert F. Kennedy around Bedford-Stuyvesant, their struggling neighborhood in the center of Brooklyn. They trudged through ankle-deep snow to show Kennedy some of the problems blighting the area: run-down housing, piles of refuse, abandoned buildings, and filthy streets. It was a bleak picture. For Benjamin and Richardson, however, the tour was a pivotal moment. Both had spent many years working with the Central Brooklyn Coordinating Council (CBCC), a group which represented over one hundred membership organizations from the local black community, struggling to convince the city government to commit resources to the area in a bid to arrest its seemingly interminable decline. Having met with little success until then, Kennedy's tour saw them finally capture the interest of an influential and concerned politician. Ever since the nation had been rocked by the Watts riots in August 1965 Kennedy had dedicated his efforts to seeking a solution to black inner-city poverty and urban decay. For Kennedy there was no greater single problem facing the nation. As he told a group of New York community leaders in late January 1966, 'what is at stake is not just the fate of the Negro in America but the fate of all Americans, of the legacy of our past and the promise of our future.' Bedford-Stuyvesant, the Junior Senator feared, was another Watts waiting to happen. The tour of 'Bed-Stuy' made a lasting impression on Kennedy and he resolved to pilot his new strategy for tackling the ghetto there. Ten months later the first steps were taken on the way to the establishment of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (BSRC).[1]

Restoration, as it came to be known, was the first incarnation of Kennedy's Community Development Corporation (CDC) blueprint that he developed and articulated as the urban crisis deepened after Watts. Set against the Johnson administration's faltering War on Poverty, Kennedy's plans represent an alternative and competing liberal vision for maintaining the fight against growing

[1] 'Boro cry to RJK, JVL: We're tired of waiting', *New York Amsterdam News*, Feb. 12, 1966, p.23; 'New Look Coming to Bed-Stuy', *New York Amsterdam News*, December 17, 1966, p. 28; RFK Senate Papers, Box 2, Folder 3, 'Robert Kennedy Address to Second Borough President's Conference of Community Leaders', Jan. 21, 1966, p. 10. Kennedy's efforts in Bedford-Stuyvesant have been relatively neglected by historians, overshadowed in accounts of his life by his opposition to the war in Vietnam and his bid for the Democratic Party presidential nomination in 1968. Only the recent work of historian Edward Schmitt has examined Kennedy's role in Restoration's genesis in any serious depth. See: Edward R. Schmitt, *President of the Other America: Robert Kennedy and the Politics of Poverty* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010).

wealth inequality, at a time when such measures were losing support among white voters. Although Kennedy strongly endorsed the War on Poverty's mission, he became increasingly convinced that it was incapable of bringing the positive, long-term, and structural economic change to the nation's ghettos that they so badly needed. By failing to create jobs or tackle urban blight, the War on Poverty, Kennedy argued, left two important root causes of urban disorder, past and future, virtually untouched. The CDC was a non-profit, tax-exempt organizational model intended to address these limitations, and help channel the creative energy of urban black communities in to the revitalization of the nation's ghettos. Kennedy's vision for remedying urban poverty rested on the expansion of private enterprise in ghetto communities by inducing external businesses to relocate to the inner-cities, and supporting entrepreneurship among local blacks. Business (as an engine of urban regeneration and as a source of jobs, investment capital, and local taxes) was fundamental to Kennedy's schema for inner-city economic development.

The Junior Senator's CDC strategy was also intended to shape black activism in the nation's turbulent urban centers in a number of important and overlapping ways. Programmes for the physical and economic rehabilitation of black ghetto communities were intended to swell the black middle-class, and develop a conformist and conciliatory urban black leadership from its expanded ranks. Spreading prosperity and core American values, Kennedy believed, would also inhibit the growth of anti-American radicalism, helping ease racial tensions in the longer-term. Furthermore, Kennedy's plans also sought to co-opt and nurture the inchoate and growing black radicalism in the nation's cities by involving militants in the CDC's efforts to bring positive change to ghetto communities. This, he hoped, would bring black militants – and the disaffected black urban youth who might follow them - closer to the mainstream society and institutions with which so many of them were disillusioned. As such, Kennedy's efforts ultimately offer an excellent example of what Devin Fergus has called the 'interplay' between liberalism and Black Power.[2]

Kennedy's ideas soon received backing from other significant sources. Just as the Watts riots had spurred Kennedy into action, they also convinced the Ford Foundation that new approaches and greater effort were needed to eradicate inner-city deprivation and blight. Kennedy's CDC blueprint for urban reform was eagerly taken up by the foundation who, realising the limitations of War on Poverty organizational models, (which they themselves had played such an important role in producing,) agreed that 'efforts to deal with depressed areas must be comprehensive and long-term; social, physical, environmental, and economic redevelopment efforts are all required.' CDC's were an especially promising development, the foundation explained,

[2] Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power and the Making of American Politics,* p.12.

because they united the principles of local control and self-determination with a more comprehensive programme for urban redevelopment which promised to 'increase jobs and income, to improve housing and secure better services from local government, business and utilities, and foster a sense of hope in communities that have been stagnant or deteriorating.' The foundation would ultimately become the biggest non-governmental backer of CDCs in the nation.[3]

Kennedy's emphasis on economic development was seized upon by other leading national figures. During his campaign for the White House in 1968, Republican presidential nominee Richard Nixon offered a programme for 'Black Capitalism,' which would direct federal support and contracts to existing black businesses as well as fostering the creation of new ones. On March 5, 1969, shortly after assuming his position in the White House, Nixon broadened its scope to include all minority groups by issuing an Executive Order establishing the Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE). It would soon become his administration's flagship policy for black Americans. 'Encouraging increased minority-group business activity,' Nixon announced, 'is one of the primary aims of this administration.'[4]

These solutions arrived at a vital moment in the ongoing national political realignment; a shift in majority public opinion they were consciously tailored to fit. The declining public and political support for existing antipoverty interest group politics and protest was perfectly highlighted by the reception given to Poor People's Campaign (PPC) run by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) during 1968. Intended as an interracial nonviolent direct action campaign of sustained, and massive civil disobedience – larger than anything SCLC had ever attempted – the PPC planned to bring over 1500 demonstrators, from across the country, to Washington D.C. to pressure the government into renewing its commitment to, and expanding, antipoverty and public assistance measures.[5] The primary focus of the campaign was the creation of jobs for the poor. However, whereas the solutions put forward by Kennedy and Nixon rested on increasing the role of the private sector, the PPC demanded interventionist federal action. As SCLC's Reverend Ralph Abernathy wrote to the Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, 'We say the system must change and adjust to the needs of millions who are unemployed and under-employed.

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[3] Boston, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Ford Foundation Papers: Inventory of the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (hereafter Ford Foundation Papers), Box 2, Folder 1, *Community Development Corporations: A strategy for depressed urban and rural areas* (Ford Foundation, New York, 1972) p.3-5. The foundation's programme of CDC funding nationwide is detailed on pp.1-27.

[4] Berlin, John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, Friei Univeristat, Nixon White House microfiche: Part 6, President's Office Files, 1969-1974 (hereafter NWHM Part 6: President's Office Files), 8-51, D.P. Moynihan, Progress report to the President on Activities of the Urban Affairs Council, April 1969 (n.d.), p.2-4.

[5] Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996) p.443.

Government must lead the way as the employer of first resort.' The PPC also urged greater federal spending to improve housing, healthcare and education, as well as giving the poor greater control over manpower training, antipoverty, and urban renewal programmes. With the ranks of PPC supporters and demonstrators packed with welfare mothers and NWRO activists, another key demand was that the freeze on AFDC payments passed by Congress in 1967 (itself a sign of the political tide turning against liberal welfare politics) be immediately lifted. [6]

On May 12th 1968, in the wake of SCLC leader Martin Luther King's murder the previous month, PPC demonstrators arrived in Washington D.C. and set up camp – known as 'Resurrection City' – on the National Mall, to reassert their commitment to the fight for racial and economic justice. Local demonstrations in twenty major cities nationwide were coordinated to take place alongside those in Washington. The reception they received was telling. Not only was the media broadly critical of the PPC but, as Gerald McKnight has explained, the FBI conducted a 'sleeves-rolled up campaign' with 'extra firepower' against the PPC at the behest of 'Capitol Hill lawmakers and responsible government officials.'[7] In championing the cause of redistributive politics in the pursuit of economic justice, SCLC and the PPC found themselves preaching to an increasingly hostile political mainstream. By instead focusing on the capitalist development and improvement of ghetto communities, Kennedy and Nixon's prescriptions for black advancement were far more in step with a changing national political landscape.

Together, these turns in public policy also came at a pivotal moment in the black freedom struggle and presented African Americans with new opportunities to articulate their own visions of political and economic empowerment, and urban rehabilitation. Where blacks seized upon these new approaches, their enthusiasm emerged from the failure of public policy, legislation, and activism to meet their growing demands for greater independence and urban improvement. These aspirations underpinned the longstanding battles for access to better jobs, housing, and education, and for political empowerment, that characterized black urban activism in cities across the nation. These battles, which overlapped and intertwined with civil rights activism, had been further illuminated by African American communities' clamour for control of antipoverty programmes, and found a new voice in the emergence of the 'Black Power' slogan in mid-June 1966.[8]

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[6] Andrew Young Papers, Series 1, Subseries A, Box 5, Folder: PPC, Dept. of Labor, Ralph Abernathy to Willard Wirtz, April 29, 1968, p.1

[7] Gerald McKnight, *The Last Crusade: Martin Luther King, Jr., the FBI, and the Poor People's Campaign* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998) p.7

[8] See, for example: Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power and the Making of American Politics*; Self, *American Babylon*; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*; Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Yohuru

Although historians were slow to address the relevance of these alternative public policies to African American communities' struggles against racial and economic inequality (and the trajectory of U.S. politics), recent years have seen the publication of some important work. Lewis Randolph and Robert Weems Jr., the two pre-eminent scholars of African American business and economic history, have identified the intellectual and political roots of Black Capitalist policies within the longer sweep of twentieth century federal politics. Weems, in particular, has produced significant scholarship on the place of black business within the broader African American freedom struggle. Writing in 1997, Weems argued that, within an expanding body of scholarship on the twentieth century black experience, 'the dynamic of historic African American business enterprise remains relatively obscure.' No-one has done more to redress this imbalance than Weems himself.[9] More recently, Devin Fergus has explored the place of Black Capitalism within the shifting currents of Black Power and GOP politics during the late 1960s and 1970s, while Dean Kotlowski has helped to establish its place within the political philosophy and career of Richard Nixon.[10]

CDCs, however, have received less attention from historians, though this is beginning to change. Recent essays by Laura Warren Hill, Nishana Frazier, Julia Rabig and Andrea Gill have addressed the ways in which African American-run CDCs in Rochester, Cleveland, Newark, and Chicago, respectively, advanced their fights against economic underdevelopment, powerlessness, and urban decay.[11] Building on this scholarship, this chapter explores a number of black

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Williams, *Black Politics/whitepower: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (St. James, NY: Brandywine Press, 2000); Guian A. McKee, *The problem of jobs: liberalism, race, and deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Patrick D. Jones, *The Selma of the North: civil rights insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009); Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009)

[9] Robert E Weems and Lewis A Randolph, *Business in Black and White: American Presidents & Black Entrepreneurs in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2009). Quote from: Robert E. Weems, Jr., 'Out of the Shadows: Business Enterprise and African American Historiography', *Business and Economic History, 26* (Fall, 1997), pp.200-213 (p.200). For Weems's other works which have addressed black economic history in other regards include: Robert E. Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Robert E. Weems, *Black Business in the Black Metropolis: The Chicago Metropolitan Assurance Company, 1925-1985* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Robert E. Weems, 'African-American Consumer Boycotts During The Civil Rights Era', *Western Journal of Black Studies*, Vol.19, No.1, (Spring 1995), pp.72-79; Robert E. Weems 'African American Consumers Since World War II' in *African American Urban History Since World War II* ed. by Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) pp.359-375; Robert E. Weems, 'The Revolution Will Be Marketed: American Corporations and Black Consumers During the 1960s', *Radical History Review*, 54 (Spring 1994), pp.94-107.

[10] Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power and the Making of American Politics*, pp.196-231; Devin Fergus, 'Black Power, Soft Power: Floyd McKissick, Soul City, and the Death of Moderate Black Republicanism', *Journal of Policy History*, 22 (2010), pp.148–192; Dean J. Kotlowski, *Nixon's Civil Rights: Politics, Principle and Policy* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2001).

[11] See: Laura Warren Hill, 'FIGHTing for the Soul of Black Capitalism: Struggles for Black Economic Development in Postrebellion Rochester' (pp.42-67); Nishani Frazier, 'A McDonalds that Reflects the Soul of a People: Hough Area Development Corporation and Community Development in Cleveland' (pp. 68-92); Julia Rabig, '"A Fight and a Question": Community Development Corporations, Machine Politics, and Corporate

organizations (many of them CDCs) that engaged with the economic development and capitalist venture theories put forward during the mid-to-late 1960s. These organizations often moved beyond narrow definitions of community and economic development by also using their programmes to foster racial pride and unity, celebrate black history and culture, and promote greater community self-determination. In the process, these African American-run and controlled organizations, dedicated to urban rehabilitation and building local black economic power, helped to institutionalize important aspects of the Black Power mission into the mainstream of American life. This story is excavated from a wealth of different sources, including federal and local government records, personal papers, private foundation collections, relevant community organization material, and the reportage of local black media and periodicals. Collectively, they help illuminate the different ways in which the negotiation of Black Power ideology, through these community organizations, translated into the everyday lives of urban blacks.

This chapter begins by exploring the challenges that attempts to revive the nation's ghettos faced, the trajectory of Kennedy's CDC programme from the failures of the War on Poverty, as well as outlining the CDC strategy's broader socio-economic and political mission. Then follows an in-depth, and extended, case-study of the nation's first CDC: the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (BSRC). This is punctuated by a discussion of Nixon's theory of Black Capitalism, and its reception, along with Kennedy's designs, among the Black Power community. After exploring the history of Restoration, attention is then turned to similar organizations in New York and Los Angeles which, like BSRC, helped to shape a mainstream vision of Black Power as they operated at the intersection of community activism, the Black Power movement, the private sector, liberal foundations, elected officials, and the War on Poverty.

Reimagining the War on Poverty: RFK and the Community Development Corporation

Mainstream political engagement with Black Power owed a great deal to the supposed shortcomings of the Johnson administration's approach to tackling inequality. Kennedy's CDC strategy was consciously directed toward addressing the economic underdevelopment and physical decline of the inner-cities, two interrelated problems that he believed the War on Poverty was ill equipped to solve. Indeed, neither issue came under the purview of those primarily responsible for

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Philanthropy in the Long Urban Crisis' (pp. 245-272); Andrea Gill, '"Gilding the Ghetto" and Debates over Chicago's Gatreaux Program' (pp. 184-214) – all in *The Business of Black Power: Community Development, Capitalism, and Corporate Responsibility in Postwar America*, ed. by Laura Warren Hill and Julia Rabig, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012).

the antipoverty legislation: social scientists and Cold War liberal policymakers of the 1950s and early 1960s. As discussed in the previous chapter, academic research into urban problems focused on the human side of the growing urban crisis, while policymakers broadly accepted 'culture of poverty' theories which explained urban decline as the natural result of socio-economic and demographic changes wrought by white flight. As a result, both parties tended to overlook the deep-rooted and structural nature of urban decay and inequality in America's ghettos, and their relationship to public policy.

The pioneering work of historian Kenneth T. Jackson uncovered the role played by New Deal housing policies of the early 1930s in reshaping the nation's racial and economic landscape. The Great Depression had decimated the mortgage market, resulting in multiple bank failures and widespread foreclosures. In a bid to return stability and, above all, profit to the housing market, the Roosevelt administration created the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1933. Across the U.S, HOLC agents, in league with local property and financial interests, instituted an ostensibly qualitative assessment practice which subdivided cities into numerous communities. This process, called 'zoning', made the racial homogeneity of a community a primary factor in its grading; critically linking a neighborhood's racial composition and its property values. Communities with relatively new buildings, and a white middle-class population, were usually designated as 'A' grade neighbourhoods, identifying them as highly desirable and secure investment environments. Areas with aging property, or a significant nonwhite population, received the lowest two grades, 'C' and 'D', which labeled them areas of bad financial risk. Dilapidated, poor, white neighbourhoods often, therefore, received low ratings (in particular immigrant ethnic communities, and especially southern and eastern Europeans). Any area with a concentrated black population, however, was invariably classed as 'D' grade, and was colored red on HOLC maps, giving rise to the term 'redlining'.[12]

Zoning had a dramatic impact on the demographic make-up and socio-economic geography of the nation's cities for two main reasons. First, it actively incentivized white flight to the suburbs. In cases where racial prejudice was not the primary inspiration for whites' migration from racially heterogeneous inner-city communities to white suburbs, the threat that racial integration posed to the value of their home often proved sufficient. Likewise, racially restrictive housing covenants, and the fierce resistance of many white communities to residential integration, grew from both racial prejudice and fear of financial loss. Moving to a newly-built home in a racially exclusive white suburban community was made all the more enticing – and affordable – by the long-term, low-

[12] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: University of Oxford Press, 1985) p.195-203.

interest, federally-subsidized mortgages made available to millions of white homebuyers by the government. The endemic and aggressive discriminatory practices of real estate agents, who preyed on fears over the prospect of integration, helped to accelerate and sustain the white exodus, delivering handsome profits for vested financial and property interests in cities across the nation. Second, these same circumstances were the catalyst to selective deindustrialization, as vast numbers of business owners, across the country, followed in the footsteps of white homeowners and abandoned the cities for the suburbs.[13] As David Freund has explained, New Deal federal housing policies created a 'state-regulated and state-funded system of home finance' that not only encouraged, but, in fact, 'explicitly required appraisers and lenders to maintain and further promote residential segregation.' In the process, HOLC institutionally enshrined and fueled the discriminatory racial politics of housing that would prevail for the next half a century and beyond.[14]

If one corollary of zoning was the suburban aggregation of wealth, high quality schools, leisure facilities, commercial outlets, and expanding employment opportunities, then it had the direct opposite effect on the nation's ghettos. As Craig Wilder has explained, for African Americans everywhere, the 'redlining' of their communities had a number of pernicious consequences: it decreased neighborhood property values; made it virtually impossible for blacks to attain affordable home finance; and effectively restricted their scope for residential mobility to other redlined neighborhoods only. Furthermore, the disinvestment from redlined areas that zoning spurred saw businesses, jobs, capital – and even municipal services – abandon the inner cities, vitiating economic opportunity and consumer choice for their residents, and turning the nation's ghettos into virtual economic wastelands.[15]

This, in turn, produced numerous other disadvantages for ghetto communities. First, inadequate local education, and the general absence of local, decent wage, paying jobs, was the root of vicious cyclical poverty in the nation's ghettos. Second, as an unappealing environment for mainstream retail firms, businesses in ghetto areas tended to be few in number. They were also predominantly small-scale, owner-run, operations; often in the hands of non-local (usually white) merchants whose commercial practices were often highly punitive to local residents. As a 'Consumer Education and Action Project' run by Youth-In-Action in mid-1969, the official antipoverty agency for Bedford Stuyvesant, demonstrated, ghetto residents invariably paid more for goods in local stores than did white suburban residents who, despite paying less, also usually

[13] Wilder, pp.185-95.
[14] David M. P. Freund, *Colored property: state policy and white racial politics in suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) p.116. For an in depth discussion of New Deal housing policies and their role in the development of segregation across America, see: pp. 97-138.
[15] Wilder, p. 185.

received a higher quality product. Comparing prices in Bed-Stuy stores against those in East Hampton (a wealthy white community and summer resort on Long Island), the investigation found that, on average, the cost of food was twenty percent higher in the ghetto. Local merchants often blamed exorbitant pricing on the higher security and insurance premium costs they faced as business owners in 'redlined' neighbourhoods, costs which were further exacerbated by high local crime levels.[16] Critics instead argued that ghetto merchants (and slum landlords) were exploiting the absence of low-cost local credit and transport options, and the paucity of consumer information, generally available to ghetto residents. The net effect, as a 1967 government report explained, was that 'many low-income community consumers pay higher prices for and receive lower quality housing, food, clothing, furniture, appliances, medicine, and other goods and services than their neighbours in more advantaged communities.' Furthermore, the report concluded, redlining (which branded ghettos 'high risk' investment areas) converged with exploitative commercial practices to ensure that 'the low-income consumer is often forced to rely for credit and loans on loan sharks or unscrupulous merchants whose credit charges are often considerably higher than the legitimate financial institutions to which he is denied access.'[17] These businesses were often a source of considerable resentment in many ghettos and, as historian Jonathan Bean has explained, were primary targets of looting and destruction during the widespread urban rioting of the mid-to-late 1960s.[18]

Urban decay was also inextricably bound up with the federal government's housing policies. Lacking capital resources, and cut off from affordable home finance and credit options, homeowners in the ghetto were often unable to invest in general property maintenance, or necessary rehabilitation, heightening the physical decline of their neighbourhoods. For most blacks in the inner-cities, however, homeownership was a distant dream, made unattainable by its reliance on both a) a sufficient income (which itself was predicated on the availability of decent jobs) and b) the extremely limited and punitive financial options (if any) available to ghetto residents. Consequently, the vast majority of residential property in most ghettos (aside of public housing) was owned by non-resident private landlords. Condemning local property values, redlining discouraged many ghetto landlords from properly maintaining or repairing their properties, and many buildings were left to go to ruin with tenants in them; many more were abandoned altogether, on the way to

[16] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, 'Welfare Dollars Buy More in East Hampton', September 4, 1969.
[17] RFK Senate Papers, Box 89, Folder 9, 'Consumer Action Programs' Staff Report to the Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty, June 13, 1967, p.1.
[18] Jonathan J. Bean, '"Burn, Baby, Burn": Small Business in the Urban Riots of the 1960s,' *The Independent Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Fall 2000, pp. 165-187.

becoming firetraps and centres of gang activity and drug use.[19] Primarily interested in profit, ghetto landlords habitually overcrowded their properties, often severely. For example, although they only occupied 20 percent of Atlanta's residential land, the city's black ghettos housed nearly 45 percent of its population.[20] These commonplace practices among recalcitrant ghetto landlords played a central role in the accelerated decline of urban neighbourhoods across America. This process also, generally speaking, reflected a serious failure of local government.

The dilapidation of ghetto housing was barely checked by city governments, who, despite acute awareness of the problem, committed little energy to enforcing housing codes in either privately-owned slums, or their own public housing stock. As Reform Democratic Candidate William F. Ryan lamented during the 1965 New York mayoral campaign, 'one million New Yorkers live – as unbelievable as this may seem - in tenements that were considered inadequate for human habitation since 1901. And let's not kid ourselves; we know who those million are. They are, overwhelmingly, New York's Negroes.'[21] As leading SNCC activist, and recently elected State Assemblyman, Julian Bond complained, city government needed to do more in Atlanta to prosecute violations, and, if need be, to 'condemn the slum property of absentee landlords.' 'You have people living like animals in shacks down in Buttermilk Bottom and the city has its hands tied because the owner is living off somewhere and can't be brought to court. Other cities have such condemnation procedures and so should Atlanta.'[22] The apparent collusion between unresponsive municipal officials and so-called 'slumlords' led many ghetto residents to one inescapable conclusion. As a CORE report from early 1965 suggested, 'A government such as New York's, which provides only enough [housing] inspectors to examine every structure in its jurisdiction once every nine years, has implicitly joined the landlords.'[23]

As far as Robert Kennedy was concerned, dealing with the economic underdevelopment and degeneration of urban communities – two of the biggest concerns of their residents – would require specific programmes designed to reverse both trends and actively undermine the existing patterns of prejudice that had produced them. The War on Poverty, he believed, promised to do

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[19] John Lindsay Papers, Box 91, Folder 83, Milton Mollen, 'Report on the Lindsay Team's Program for Housing Code Enforcement in New York City: An Effective Attack on Slums', October 21, 1965, p.68.
[20] Winston A. Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960-1977* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 114.
[21] John Lindsay Papers, Box 96, Folder 121, William F. Ryan speech, 'Los Angeles Riots – Some Lessons for New York', August 23rd 1965, p.3.
[22] Bond quoted in: Atlanta, Georgia, Emory University Manuscripts and Rare Books Library, Richard L. Stevens Papers, 1964-1969, Box 4, Folder 6, Paul Good, 'Beyond the Voting Rights Act' *The Reporter*, October 7, 1965, p.25.
[23] CORE Papers, Part 2, Reel XIV, George Schiffer, 'Ending the Landlord-Tenant Relationship in the Slums', February 5, 1965, p. 5.

neither. These limitations had been hardwired into the antipoverty battle by the social science-grounded approach of liberal policy makers during the 1950s and early 1960s; which operated more in the name of improving services, and of reforming people rather than the economic structures which underpinned and reinforced inequality.[24] Many community organizations created under, or funded by, the War on Poverty reflected this mission. Few did so better than the Westminster Neighborhood Improvement Association (WNIA) in Watts.

Established in November 1960, Westminster began life as a quasi-social service agency aimed at helping families in Watts's housing projects. Mirroring the growing national concern with juvenile delinquency, the organization's formative years were spent working with local parents and youth, particularly those in the Hacienda Village, Jordan Downs and Nickerson Gardens public housing projects, 'in the solution of neighborhood conditions and problems such as school dropouts, youth and adult unemployment and community services.' This was pursued through a range of programmes and services, including: intensive counseling; home visiting; social group work; and 'opportunities for informal education and experiences to improve personal skills, family relations and parent functioning.' Their overall aim was to help 'strengthen families and encourage hope for the future.'[25]

Efforts to improve the educational attainment of local children came through a one-to-one tutorial programme that united talented young volunteer college students with local parent groups, and elementary students in Watts. Set up in 1964, the programme was later extended to cover high school students too, and within two years they had worked with over 1,000 local children.[26] In the aftermath of the riots, Westminster was awarded OEO funding and quickly began to grow. Beginning with just two staff members in 1960, six years later the organization had grown to having a staff of eighty two, and massively expanded facilities and operations.[27] WNIA was given $1 million of federal antipoverty funds to initiate a Youth Training and Employment Program (YTEP) which was designed to place 650 young people from Watts into 'meaningful employment' annually. According to WNIA's chief Archie Hardwick, the program specifically targeted high school drop-outs and graduates who 'lacked the basic educational skills required to achieve financial independence and personal growth.' It also involved 'attitudinal education' meant to prepare

[24] RFK Senate Papers, Box 2, Folder 3, 'Robert Kennedy Address to Second Borough President's Conference of Community Leaders', Jan. 21, 1966, p. 10.
[25] 'Social Service Agency Seeks New members', *Los Angeles Sentinel,* May 9, 1963, p. B3.
[26] 'Tutorial services offered in Watts', *Los Angeles Sentinel,* May 28, 1964, p. E6; 'Westminster Success', *Los Angeles Sentinel,* March 24, 1966, p. A6.
[27] 'Westminster Success', *Los Angeles Sentinel,* March 24, 1966, p. A6.

enrollees for specialized manpower development training, job placement, or a return to school.[28] Community organizing efforts were directed by Westminster's 'Community Aides' who were charged with contacting families in the community, informing them about available programmes and services, and, as one aide explained, encouraging locals to 'form neighborhood councils and discuss problems they would like to help do something about.'[29]

In the scope of its programmes, Westminster was broadly typical of many community organizations established under the War on Poverty. For example, as discussed in chapter one, the Neighborhood Service Centers (NSCs) that formed the backbone of Atlanta's War on Poverty were similarly focused. HARYOU-ACT and MFY in New York, as the work of historian Noel Cavanaze has revealed, also operated on the same premise. Indeed, this is hardly surprisingly given the role played by HARYOU-ACT officials who travelled to Los Angeles in late 1964 to oversee WNIA's programme development, staff training, and OEO grant proposals.[30]

Westminster did stretch beyond the War on Poverty's narrow vision of social service, education, and jobs training delivery, and became an important part of the changing (and increasingly Black Power-oriented) post-riots local cultural scene. Prominent black cultural nationalist Ron Karenga gave lessons on African history and taught Swahili to local children in Westminster's community centre. Furthermore, WNIA helped establish the Watts Writers Workshop, a programme inspired by the Federal Writers Project of the New Deal, that was run by Hollywood screenwriter Budd Schulberg. The project gave local youth the chance to develop and demonstrate their artistic and literary skills and undermine the prevailing 'culture of poverty' theory that informed policymakers' analysis of rioting and of the ghetto itself. The Watts Writers Workshop, historian Daniel Widener has argued, reflected local commitment to a cultural liberalism that 'linked politics and aesthetics as clearly as subsequent Black Arts Movement and Black Power activists did.'[31] Furthermore, in mid-April 1966, WNIA set up the Watts United Credit Union (WUCC), the first California credit union to be organized under a grant from the OEO. Serving over

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[28] 'Youth Training Program Falling Behind Schedule', *Los Angeles Sentinel,* Feb 3, 1966, p. D1; 'Westminster YTEP Student in Key Job', *Los Angeles Sentinel,* April 7, 1966, p. D4.
[29] 'Parkside Manor Improvement Council', *Los Angeles Sentinel,* September 2, 1965, p. C6.
[30] Noel A. Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007); Augustus F. Hawkins Papers, 1935-1990, Box 94, folder: Labor – Westminster Neighborhood Association, Inc., George Broadfield, 'Syllabus for Staff Training Institute of the WNA', February 1966, p.1. HARYOU-ACT sent five officials who were joined by two from Youth-In-Action, the Bedford-Stuyvesant antipoverty agency.
[31] Archie Hardwick, 'Westminster Report on Watts', *Los Angeles Sentinel,* November 3, 1966, p. A6; Budd Schulberg, 'Watts '67 – Unfinished Business', *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1967, p.A6; Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009) p. 94. For Widener's in-depth discussion of the trajectory of cultural liberalism in Watts and its relationship to the development of the local Black Arts Movement see, *Ibid,* pp. 90-115.

70,000 locals from a twenty five block area, WUCC helped many Watts residents attain low interest loans that were otherwise unavailable to them.[32] In doing so, Westminster demonstrated the appetite among urban blacks for using the War on Poverty to pursue their own programmatic vision for cultural enrichment and economic empowerment - a feature that was characteristic of the CDC-type organizations we will examine later.

Overall, Westminster's efforts were certainly popular with the local community. Involvement in their programmes had a transformative and empowering effect on some in the community. As Carl Rucker, a WUCC employee explained: 'Westminster has really changed my life. I'm starting to see Watts as a community with hope. […] Given the opportunity I've seen a lot of people change through these antipoverty programs.'[33] Helping to improve local social services and access to credit, mobilizing locals around issues of importance, and increasing the opportunities for employment training, remedial education, cultural enrichment, all combined to make Westminster an important institution in the lives of many Watts citizens.

Despite these positive contributions, however, organizations like Westminster nevertheless encapsulated the War on Poverty's shortcomings. While jobs training would find jobs for hundreds, possibly thousands of youngsters, they would fail to reach of tens of thousands of other unemployed black inner-city youths. Moreover, such programmes did nothing to address the virtual absence of jobs in ghetto areas, a quandary that did not go unnoticed in the black community. As Watts NAACP leader Edward Warren asked, 'you take and train them, and then where are they going to go, what are they going to do, where are they going to find a place to fit in?'[34] Credit unions like the WUCC could mitigate the injurious commercial climate in ghetto areas, but, alone, they offered very limited potential for broader local economic change. Without building and letting new housing the iniquitous slumlord-tenant relationship would continue to predominate. Problems targeted by programmes based on social service provision and counseling would persist if the structural disadvantages which had helped produce them remained unchallenged. Likewise, community organizing directed at those same problems would also face an interminable battle. The War on Poverty had demonstrated and invigorated African Americans' fervent desire for urban improvement, greater self-determination, and economic empowerment, but had failed to provide them with tools that might bring substantial progress toward achieving them. As prominent Watts Black Power advocate Tommy Jacquette, who worked as Westminster's YTEP recruiter, argued in mid-1967:

[32] 'Watts Credit Union Issued State License', *Los Angeles Sentinel,* April 14, 1966, p. A7.
[33] 'Poverty Executive sees Watts gain', *Los Angeles Sentinel,* Dec 7, 1967, p. B10.
[34] 'Gov. Defends Mormons Church Racial Position', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 28, 1967, p.A8.

> With all the talk and meetings, and the expensive antipoverty machinery, we're right where we were two years ago. What the white people call improvement is nothing but tokenism. It's like the patient is in danger of bleeding to death but all the Man can think of is to apply a Band-aid.[35]

With anger and disillusionment turning to unrest, Senator Kennedy was keen to find a more comprehensive, larger-scale, solution to the problems of black inner-city poverty, economic underdevelopment, and urban blight that would meet the demands, and engage the energy, of increasingly restive ghetto communities. In the six months following the Watts riots, Kennedy's ideas crystallized into a coherent plan of action. Kennedy detailed his vision in a series of three speeches in January 1966. 'Wiping out the ghetto', he declared, was 'essential to the future of the Negro and of the city itself.' It was a task, he argued, that the federal government could not accomplish alone, and his speeches called for 'a total effort at regeneration' that mobilized 'the skills and resources of the entire society, including all the latent skills and resources of the people of the ghetto themselves, in the solution of our urban dilemma.' The answer, he believed, was the Community Development Corporation (CDC), a tax-exempt, not-for-profit, body, able to receive and spend federal antipoverty funds, which would be set up in relevant urban poverty areas to give overall direction to specific programs for their physical and economic regeneration.[36] If pioneered successfully, Kennedy hoped his CDC strategy would help reorient national policy away from the seemingly ineffective and politically divisive approaches of the War on Poverty.

Kennedy also harboured grander political ambitions, as growing domestic discontent with Lyndon Johnson's presidency emboldened potential challengers to his renomination in 1968. Although Kennedy had only become a Senator in 1964, the presidency, as Johnson feared, was his long-term goal. Longstanding rivalry and animosity between the two worsened as Kennedy's criticism of the Vietnam War and its impact on domestic affairs grew. As historian, and Kennedy confidante, Arthur Schlesinger has suggested, once conflict in Southeast Asia started to envelop the Great Society, Kennedy decided to strike out on his own, hoping to boost his political profile in the process. However, as much as Kennedy's developing political platform was a calculated effort to enhance his prospects for the presidency by expanding his support base among poor, minority, and white liberal voters, it also reflected a deep, genuine, and growing personal concern with the social and economic impact of poverty and racism in the U.S.[37]

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[35] Jacquette quoted in: Budd Schulberg, 'Watts '67 – Unfinished Business', *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1967, p.A6.
[36] RFK Senate Papers, Box 2, Folder 3, 'Robert Kennedy Address to Second Borough President's Conference of Community Leaders', p.8.
[37] Arthur Schlesinger, *Robert F. Kennedy And His Times* (London: Heinemann, 1978), p.784.

The federal government's role in the fight against poverty, Kennedy believed, needed to be reassessed. Convinced that the long-term salvation of the inner-cities could (and should) not be achieved with government funds alone, Kennedy challenged American industry and business to bring their 'ingenuity' to the task in hand and 'become a generator of social change and improvement' in the nation's slums. The process of urban rehabilitation, Kennedy felt, could itself be an immediate and sizable source of jobs for ghetto residents, especially for young unemployed black men – the very group who had been so prominently involved in the destruction of Watts. Sponsoring the construction and rehabilitation of housing, when paired with the extension of affordable home finance credit options to local families, was designed to increase local levels of property ownership and reduce the incidence of absentee landlordism too. Finally, physical regeneration of the ghetto was also intended to make it a more conducive and appealing environment for business, and this dovetailed with a more direct program for boosting inner-city economic development. External businesses would be offered inducements to relocate to the ghetto and local private enterprise was to be facilitated and supported, financially and otherwise. Together they would be critical to developing the commercial vitality of the ghetto and expanding employment opportunities for its residents; something the War on Poverty had completely failed to do.[38] A major role for the private sector would also allow government to share costs and workload while ensuring a smaller role for inefficient federal and local government bureaucracies. This, in turn, would help protect Kennedy's plans from the 'guerilla skirmishes of local politics,' (as discussed in chapter one) that he felt had so seriously undermined the War on Poverty. Moreover, this approach promised to mitigate the disapproval of conservatives vehemently opposed to an activist federal state and public spending, and a white public increasingly disinclined toward the redistributive politics of welfare liberalism.[39]

Working closely with liberal Republican, and fellow New York Senator, Jacob Javits, Kennedy helped produce an amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act which installed his CDC blueprint in the War on Poverty's legal framework. Called the Special Impact Program (SIP), it was designed to allow for CDCs to receive extra government funding for economic development programmes which created local jobs and provided vocational training to prepare long-term unemployed residents for those jobs. For example, a medical healthcare facility to be constructed in a poor community would provide employment for locals not just in the process of construction, but, through the provision of appropriate training and educational opportunities, would be staffed by

[38] RFK Senate Papers, Box 2, Folder 3, 'Robert Kennedy Address to Second Borough President's Conference of Community Leaders', Jan. 21, 1966, p.7.
[39] 'New Look Coming to Bed-Stuy', *New York Amsterdam News*, December 17, 1966, p.28.

local residents upon completion too.[40] The Kennedy-Javits amendment, as it was known, provided significant funding for CDCs across the country in the following years, and codified Kennedy's efforts to reorient the War on Poverty toward job creation and urban regeneration.[41]

Kennedy also envisaged important political consequences flowing from the rehabilitation of urban slums and their economies. The desperate conditions of ghetto life threatened to alienate legions of urban blacks from mainstream US society and make the inner-cities a breeding ground for extremism. As Kennedy warned shortly after the Watts riots, 'the army of the resentful and desperate is larger in the North than the South, but it is an army without generals – without captains – almost without sargeants.' Kennedy criticized southern civil rights leaders and the black middle-class for not reaching out to the growing black urban underclass. Their failure to do so, he argued, meant that demagogues had 'often usurped the positions of leadership' in ghettoes across the country. Kennedy's CDC blueprint, therefore, was intended to encourage the development of moderate black leaders as a counterbalancing influence to the appeal of violence or political radicalism to the desperate and disadvantaged. Cultivating a new urban black leadership, Kennedy reasoned, could only be achieved by giving black communities a greater degree of control in shaping their own destiny. 'We will be tempted to run these programs for their [the poor's] benefit,' he argued, but 'it is only by inviting their active participation . . . that we can help them develop leaders who make the difference between political force – with which we can deal – and a headless mob.'[42]

The middle-class, Kennedy believed, represented the best hope for developing responsible, moderate ghetto leadership and the preexisting core of middle-class blacks in Bed-Stuy (reflected in its relatively high level of residential owner-occupancy of 15 percent compared to only 2 percent in Harlem), made the neighborhood particularly suitable for his purposes. Accordingly, Restoration's focus on developing Bed-Stuy's economy, physically rehabilitating the neighborhood, and making affordable finance available to local residents, were all intended to stabilize the existing middle-class, and expand it by lifting other residents up from poverty. Restoration was clear in its belief that the black middle-class was 'the foundation on which growth and opportunity for the entire community depend.' The wider emphasis on private enterprise and economic opportunity would also foster local entrepreneurship and help grow American middle-class and reformist values,

[40] Boston, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Thomas M.C. Johnston Papers, 1936 – 2008 (hereafter Thomas Johnston Papers), Box 3, Folder 1, 'Special Impact Project Proposal Paper', February 16, 1967, p. 4, 6-7.
[41] Joseph Palermo, *In His Own Right the Political Odyssey of Senator Robert F. Kennedy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p.168.
[42] Schlesinger, p.781; Schmitt, p.122.

drawing urban black society as a whole more fully into the existing American capitalist system and ethos.[43]

Just like the liberal policymakers behind the War on Poverty, Kennedy subscribed to a vision of breadwinner liberalism that identified the employment of black men as the key to black economic and social progress, as well as a vital step toward reducing levels of welfare enrollment. As Kennedy wrote to McGeorge Bundy, head of the Ford Foundation, in early 1966:

> No-one – as far as I know – is presently thinking of using their housing or jobs programs as a lever for fundamental social change – for the building of the community, for the reintegration of the Negro family, for the integration of the slum Negro into the ethos of private property, of self-government, of doing what is necessary instead of asking the government to do it.[44]

Molding a more conciliatory and middle-class oriented black urban society and politics would also require engaging with the growing threat of black radicalism that greatly concerned the young Senator. His CDC plans sought to do this in two ways.[45] First, they intended to channel militants' passion and drive for black advancement away from radicalism, and in what Kennedy saw as a more positive direction, by directly involving them in the endeavor to revitalize their communities. By emphasizing the need for greater black self-determination, and for the creation of jobs, economic opportunity, and black business ownership, Kennedy's CDC blueprint was expressly intended to appeal to the demands of urban black communities and militant radicals. Second, Kennedy wanted to reach out to the vast numbers of young, disaffected, undereducated, and unemployed black males in the nation's ghettoes. This demographic – long a primary concern of social scientists and liberal policymakers – was also the group to whom the empowering and

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[43] Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Robert Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White: An Appraisal of the Development and Record of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration and Development and Services Corporations', Feb. 1969, p.4, 135.

[44] Schmitt, p.153.

[45] In the spring of 1963, convinced that the next major battlefront for racial justice outside of the South would be in the nation's ghettoes, Kennedy asked to meet with the novelist James Baldwin, whose evocations on the suffering and anger of blacks in urban America had made a considerable impression on him. Convening at Kennedy's Manhattan apartment in May 1963, Baldwin brought a number of prominent blacks with him including, among others, psychologist Kenneth Clark, playwright Lorraine Hansberry, and entertainer Harry Belafonte. Despite the exalted company in which he stood it proved to be a young Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) activist named Jerome Smith who ensured the meeting remained an unforgettable experience for Kennedy. Recounting the horrors of his experiences in the South with CORE Smith told Kennedy he was on the point of renouncing nonviolence. 'When I pull the trigger,' he warned, 'kiss it goodbye.' The heated and confrontational meeting gave Kennedy a glimpse of the sheer depth of black anger and frustration with American society, and resentment of liberals in particular. From that point on Kennedy was increasingly able to understand the anger of black radicals even if he sharply disagreed with many aspects of their activism and message. The meeting left Kennedy in little doubt that the clock was ticking for the civil rights establishment's nonviolent and gradualist approach. According to Arthur Schlesinger, Kennedy's attention was first attracted by Baldwin's 'Letter from a Region in my Mind' published in the *New Yorker* magazine in November 1962. See, Schlesinger, pp.330-34.

masculinist rhetoric of militants like Malcolm X was most appealing. Indeed, they were the key target audience of many Black Power radicals. As Black Panther Party founder Huey Newton later explained, the organization grew from the desire to politicize, and engage the potential of, the 'lower-class brother' in the nation's ghetto – the 'brother on the block,' as co-founder Bobby Seale would say – in the in the service of remaking their communities, and resisting white domination and oppression.[46] Kennedy's approach to black radicals and ghetto youth was driven by both his own palpable concern with their cause and a firm conviction that, if properly harnessed, their creative potential would be a powerful tool in the task of improving the nation's ghettoes.[47] As he told a Senate subcommittee in August 1966, his CDC program was designed to 'try to meet the increasing alienation of Negro youth.' 'We must,' Kennedy asserted, 'work to try to understand, to speak and touch across the gap, and not leave their voices of protest to echo unheard in the ghetto of our ignorance.' Their alienation, he warned, came from 'a frustration so terrible, an energy and determination so great, that it must find constructive outlet or result in unknowable danger to us all.' Kennedy believed that including black male militants in his ghetto regeneration plans offered the best hope of connecting with black urban youth, and of gravitating both groups toward mainstream American society, and away from the despair and frustration that might breed violence, crime, and urban disorder.[48]

In this respect, Kennedy's intentions seem to accord with Devin Fergus's reassessment of the relationship between liberals and black radicals. In challenging the notion that Black Power led to the disintegration of the liberal consensus Fergus argues that liberalism, in fact, helped to 'bring a radical civic ideology back from the brink of political violence and social nihilism,' demonstrating its capacity to 'reform revolution.'[49] Between January 1966, when Kennedy first outlined his CDC plans, and December that year, which witnessed the first stages of their implementation, Black

[46] Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Writing and Readers Publishing inc., 1973), p.110; Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party*, (London: Arrow Book, 1970), p.80.
[47] Schmitt and Schlesinger provide two excellent examples of Kennedy's constructive approach to militants. In Watts, Schmitt writes, this was evident in Kennedy's public identification and association with the Sons of Watts, a collective of ex-gang members formed in the aftermath of the Watts riots who performed various local community improvement work and services. As Edward Schmitt has suggested, by wearing a "Sons of Watts" pin and having the group handle his security as he addressed a large local crowd while on the campaign trail in Los Angeles in March 1968, Kennedy was effectively endorsing the group's emphasis on 'community self-help and racial pride' which were 'the elements of the Black Power movement that he found most valuable.' Schlesinger recounts a private audience Kennedy had with black radicals in Oakland, shortly after his appearance in Watts. Recognizing that he was himself a powerful symbol of white society, Kennedy warned his staff prior to the meeting: 'These people have a lot of hostility and a lot of reasons for it. When they get somebody like me they're going to take it out on me…But no matter how insulting a few of them may be, they're trying to communicate what's inside them.' Though the meeting proved turbulent, as the young Senator had predicted, Kennedy later told his campaign manager, 'I am glad I went. They need to know somebody who'll listen.' See: Schmitt, p.208; Schlesinger, p. 908-09.
[48] RFK Senate Papers, Box 2, folder 6, 'Statement of Senator Robert F. Kennedy before Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization', Aug. 15, 1966, p.13.
[49] Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power and the Making of American Politics*, p.10-11.

Power became a fixture upon America's urban political landscape, ensuring that Kennedy's approach to black radicalism would certainly be put to the test in Bed-Stuy. As this chapter demonstrates, Kennedy's CDC blueprint proved effective in engaging local Black Power militants. A vital element in establishing the CDC with their support, as the following section reveals, was the gendered assumptions and biases (the same as those which animated the War on Poverty) that underpinned Kennedy's vision for tackling urban and racial inequality.

Beginning the Experiment in Bed-Stuy

Occupying a 653 city block area, and with close to 450,000 inhabitants, by the mid-1960s Bed-Stuy was America's second largest ghetto behind Chicago's South Side. If it had been a city by itself, in terms of population alone, it would have been the twenty-ninth largest in the country. Although conditions in Bed-Stuy compared to those in the nation's more notorious inner-city slums, it had not always been that way. Less than two decades earlier, in 1950, the then relatively salubrious Bed-Stuy had a population which was over 50 percent white, and was home to a large number of upper and middle-income white families many of whom lived in the large and impressive homes which lined its streets. The familiar story of white exodus from the central cities, repeated in so many of the nation's urban centers, also played out in Bed-Stuy and by the mid-1960s whites constituted less than 10 percent of the area's residents. By then African Americans were the new majority, representing over 80 percent of the local population, with the remainder comprised almost entirely of recent Puerto Rican immigrants.[50]

Like most of the nation's ghettos in the mid-1960s, Bedford-Stuyvesant exhibited all the classic indicators of extreme social and economic deprivation. It had no hospital and an infant mortality rate nearly twice the national figure. Local schools performed badly, doing what they could with meager resource allocations, and drop-out rates in the area were high. Those who did finish school found decent employment opportunities scarce. The local unemployment rate was nearly 50 percent higher than the city average and over 42 percent of all men who were employed were in unskilled jobs. The area's median income was $1,500 below the city-wide figure and 70 percent of local families earned less than the $5,400 basic 'subsistence' level set by the US

[50] Thomas Johnston Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, 'The Bedford-Stuyvesant Community' Report, n.d., p. 1. For a detailed discussion of the impact of New Deal housing policies on ghetto formation in Brooklyn in particular, see: Wilder, pp. 175-217.

Department of Labor, with 36 percent earning less than $3,000 annually.[51] Despite its sizable middle-class core, then, poverty was deeply entrenched in Bed-Stuy and presented a formidable challenge.

In order to give his Bed-Stuy experiment the best chance of success, Kennedy sought the backing of other important groups. The support of the Ford Foundation and other philanthropic organizations reinforced the project's liberal identity and widened its financial base. Key New York Republicans, and fellow liberals, Senator Javits and Mayor Lindsay were invited on board in the belief that with City Hall's blessing and bipartisan political support (which several of the supporting foundations had stipulated) the project would be insured against political attack. Despite promising to be of little political benefit to either, both Javits and Lindsay threw their weight behind the plans and their links to New York's Republican-dominated business community were vital in Kennedy's attempts to bring yet more powerful whites into the equation. Assisted by Javits, Kennedy assembled a stellar cast. Prominent business leaders, lawyers, and financiers from the upper echelons of New York society, including investment banking guru Andre Meyer and former Secretary of the Treasury C. Douglas Dillon, pledged themselves to the cause. Beyond the extra gravitas, expertise, and business acumen they would bring to the project, Kennedy hoped their involvement would set an example for the wider American business community too.[52]

With all the pieces seemingly in place, Senator Kennedy finally announced the creation of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Renewal and Rehabilitation Corporation (R&R) and its sister organization, the Bedford-Stuyvesant Development and Services Corporation (D&S), at a CBCC convention on December 9th 1966, just over ten months after his first tour of Bed-Stuy. While R&R's board was composed almost entirely of local blacks, the D&S board was made up of the high-profile whites Kennedy had recruited. This all-white corporation was charged with attracting and securing the necessary levels of funding that would allow R&R to pursue plans ambitious and large-scale enough to effect real change in Bed-Stuy. Beyond this, as key Kennedy staff member Thomas Johnston suggested, the D&S board's greatest value would be in 'the perspective of its collective experience,' and its ability to 'assist in anticipating and dealing with problems as they arise.' R&R was the vehicle for developing local leaders and ensuring community participation in the planning

[51] Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', p.4; Thomas Johnston Papers, Box 2, Folder 4, 'Grant Proposal to Ford Foundation', February 1967, p. 1-2; *Ibid.*, Box 1, Folder 2, 'The Bedford-Stuyvesant Community' Report, n.d., p.2.

[52] Among the other foundations who committed funds to Restoration were the Astor Foundation, the Tatonic Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, the Stern Family Fund, the Field Foundation, and the JM Kaplan Fund. For foundations' desire for bipartisan support see, for example: Thomas Johnston Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, Astor Foundation Press Release, March 26, 1967, p.1; *ibid.*, David Stern to Robert Kennedy, Oct. 13, 1966, p.1; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', p.14-15, 17-19, 22-23.

and prioritizing of regeneration programs. As Kennedy and his staff described the co-venture to the Ford Foundation, it would be a novel attempt to 'produce a new blend of planning action in the nation's second largest ghetto by linking the powerful with those thirsting for power in a unique pattern of working relationships.' Having two different boards, clearly separated on racial lines, brought important benefits. Not only did it allow for the 'powerful' to guide and influence those 'thirsting for power' but a separate corporation for the white businessmen would give them a more clearly defined role and set of responsibilities, helping to sustain their interest in the longer-term.[53] R&R was made separate for other reasons. First, Kennedy hoped that experience of controlling R&R would help set local black politics on a moderate, responsible, and constructive trajectory. Second, it would satisfy CBCC's demand for community participation. Kennedy was keen that R&R should be strongly and unmistakably identified as the community's organization run for, and by, local blacks who were independent of the white corporation but worked alongside it as equals.[54]

Unfortunately, R&R quickly ran into serious problems and was dissolved just four months after its creation, replaced in late March 1967 by a newly formed Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation. A 1969 Ford Foundation report on Restoration's performance during its first two years shed light on the tumultuous events that led to its birth. The breakdown of R&R, though due to many factors, largely stemmed from a fundamental miscalculation on the part of Kennedy and his staff concerning the prevailing local politics. Negotiating these proved far more difficult than they had imagined.

The first seeds of trouble were sown when Kennedy charged R&R Chairman Judge Thomas Russell Jones with appointing an executive director. Jones, who had been a prominent figure in the local Democratic Party for many years, a state assembly representative and now Civil Court judge, enjoyed a close relationship with Kennedy. In choosing a chief executive for R&R, Jones clashed with a group of CBCC leaders on the R&R board who were determined to play a key role in Kennedy's plans. Five women constituted the core of this leadership group: Elsie Richardson, Lucille Rose, Louise Bolling, Almira Coursey, and Constance McQueen. Friction between this group and Jones, Kennedy, and the Senator's staff intensified as it became increasingly clear that they were going to be denied the central role in the organization they believed they deserved. Tensions reached a climax at a meeting on March 30, 1967 when Jones attempted to expand R&R's board membership to both increase its representativeness and dilute the power of the CBCC female

[53] 'New Look Coming to Bed-Stuy', *New York Amsterdam News*, December 17, 1966, p.28-29; Thomas Johnston Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, Thomas Johnston, memo, Nov. 20, 1967, p.5; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', p.i.
[54] RFK Senate Papers Box 1, Folder 1, 'Robert Kennedy Address to Independent Order of Oddfellows', Aug. 18, 1965, p.5; 'Brooklyn leaders get support from RFK', *New York Amsterdam News*, October 22, 1966, p.25.

leadership. According to reports, when the group refused to support him, Jones 'lost his cool' and castigated the women for being a 'matriarchy' who were trying to 'emasculate' him. In doing so, Judge Jones echoed sentiments shared by others in Bed-Stuy. Local Black Power militants, including Sonny Carson, the head of Brooklyn CORE, also resented CBCC's female leaders, believing they exerted undue influence over the organization, denied black men the chance for leadership, and skewed the CBCC's priorities and activism toward middle-class concerns rather than those facing Bed-Stuy's majority of poor and working-class residents.[55]

The animosity toward the CBCC female leaders expressed by Judge Jones and Carson was informed, at least in part, by a broader debate over the place of African American women in contemporary black society which had been amplified by the release of a controversial government report entitled *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* less than two years earlier. As black feminist activist and intellectual Angela Davis has argued, the Moynihan Report, as it was known, 'directly linked the contemporary social and economic problems of the Black community to a putatively matriarchal family structure.' Ultimately, as Davis has asserted, the report placed the 'absence of male authority among Black people' at the heart of a 'tangle of pathology' in America's ghettoes. The report's solution, Davis continues, was the reintroduction 'of male authority . . . into the black family and the community at large.' In the process, Moynihan gave voice to the gendered assumptions underlying liberal policymaker's view of the War on Poverty and breadwinner liberalism discussed earlier. Furthermore, as historian Steve Estes has suggested, by releasing the report in the immediate aftermath of the destruction of Watts in August 1965 it came to be seen as the White House's official analysis of the urban disorders that shook the nation during the mid-to-late 1960s. As a consequence, rioting – an activity in which many young black urban males were implicated – came to be explained in part by the lack of male leadership in the nation's black urban communities. This discourse of stigmatized black female dominance and emasculated black manhood, bearing the Federal Government's imprimatur, was an important backdrop to the discord between Kennedy, Judge Jones, Carson, and the CBCC women. As an anonymous, presumably male, Restoration source quoted in the *New York Times* said of the boardroom struggle: 'The situation really confirms all that's been written about the power of the matriarchy in Negro communities, and the resentment many men feel about it.'[56]

[55] Schmitt, p.152; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', p.25, 31, 33-34.
[56] Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York, 1983), p.13; Steve Estes, *I Am a Man!: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p.107; Steven V. Roberts, '800 Demand Vote on Renewal Unit', *New York Times*, April 7, 1967, p.49.

Ultimately, CBCC and their female leaders, though widely representative of the local community, did not have the respect of local black militants whose support Kennedy had prioritized for a number of reasons. First, he envisaged that the involvement of male black radicals would help tie them and their supporters to moderate community leaders, the growing middle-class, and mainstream society. Second, Kennedy believed that men like Carson would be far more useful than CBCC's female leaders in helping the organization connect with the area's black male youth. Finally, getting the 'most vocal and dissident elements in the community' on board, and keeping 'a tight rein over' the part they played, would, at the very least, help constrain their potential to criticize the effort. Attempting to justify their exclusion, Thomas Johnston later advised the CBCC leadership that their organization was simply not 'sufficiently representative of the community as a whole to serve as a focus for the development effort.'[57]

The solution was the creation of Restoration – with Judge Jones retained as chairman, a wider cross-section of community representatives, and with the supposedly 'safe members' of R&R brought on board too. Outraged at having been pushed out of Kennedy's plans, the CBCC leaders, along with their supporters in the community, organized a protest rally in support of R&R against the new corporation which drew close to 1,000 people. Those who attended heard fierce denunciations of Kennedy and Jones, among others, but the rally was most significant for the manner in which it ended. In bringing Sonny Carson, head of Brooklyn CORE, on to Restoration's board Jones had sought and been assured of Carson's assistance in shoring up community support for the new corporation. True to his word, Carson and other CORE members turned the rally on its head when they seized the microphone and, declaring Restoration the best possible outcome for the whole community, lambasted the female leadership of CBCC, and R&R, for 'emasculating the community and denying us our models of black manhood.' The split between R&R and the new corporation was left beyond repair and as Restoration took its first steps R&R began to recede into the background.[58]

D&S's executive director at the time, the young investment banker Eli Jacobs, wrote to the Ford Foundation to express his regret that R&R had 'proved unworkable due to a small a number of women unrepresentative of the community and uninterested in effecting positive change' and assured the Foundation that, with Restoration now in its place, the whole project was back on track. Jacobs also happily reported that Restoration had appointed an executive director of whom they had

[57] Thomas Johnston Papers, Box 2, Folder 8, Earl Graves memo, May 22, 1967, p.4; *Ibid.,* Box 1, Folder 13, Thomas Johnston to Lionel Payne, April 4, 1967, p.2.
[58] Thomas Johnston Papers , Box 1, Folder 7, Earl Graves, memo, May 27, 1967, p.2; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', p.34.

high expectations. The man chosen to lead BSRC was Franklin Thomas (Judge Jones's preferred candidate) and he arrived with impressive credentials. A Bed-Stuy resident his whole life, Thomas had been an Assistant U.S. Attorney before becoming New York City's Deputy Commissioner of Police, the position he left to join Restoration. Thomas certainly fitted the model of strong black male leadership that some in Bed-Stuy had been calling out for and his appointment, along with the exclusion of the female leadership group, raise a number of interesting questions about the gender dynamics within Restoration.[59]

Not only was local male opposition to female leadership a useful common ground for Kennedy and his staff to occupy in their efforts to sideline CBCC's female leaders and cement a working relationship with local black militants, it was also entirely compatible with Kennedy's paternalistic brand of liberalism. Kennedy's own relationship with some of the women in question was strained, as he confessed to Judge Jones: 'I have never been dealt with as rudely and abruptly, by anybody – even my worst adversaries – than I have been by some of the women of Bed-Stuy. They take particular delight in accusing me, in harassing me… I don't know what to do but I just can't stand it.' Kennedy gave Jones the green light to start a new corporation without them: 'Whatever way you want to do it' he told the Judge, 'you do it.' Jones later justified his actions by explaining that, although the social pressures on African American men 'had led to a large and larger role being played by black women,' the 'white society – the dominant society – doesn't have that kind of orientation; it operates on the basis of the leadership of men.'[60]

It was a bitter pill for the CBCC leaders to swallow as their years of hard work in relative obscurity appeared to be diminished as Kennedy's project stole the headlines in Bed-Stuy. Clearly the CBCC female leaders' prominent community activism and strong leadership abilities violated gender stereotypes of the time and posed an unwelcome challenge to some local male leaders. For most of the group their deep commitment to the struggle for racial justice and a better city for their families and communities continued well beyond R&R's defeat. While Almira Coursey joined the Restoration board the others continued their work with CBCC (with Elsie Richardson and Lucille Rose later progressing to high-ranking and influential roles in city government) and persisted in redefining the contemporary societal boundaries of female agency and authority. Restoration, however, was being fashioned in the image of the typical American business, an entity which exuded the national capitalist culture and where male dominance was still the norm. In early 1969,

[59] Thomas Johnston Papers, Box 1, Folder 14, Eli Jacobs to Louis Winnick, June 20, 1967; 'City Bank Ups Black', *New York Amsterdam News*, Dec. 19, 1970, p.40.
[60] C. David Heyman, *RFK: A Candid Biography* (London: Heinemann, 1998), p.423; Schmitt, p.154; Heyman, p.422.

after just under two years of operation, the D&S board included just one woman alongside ten men while Restoration could count three female board members out of a total of twenty six. Over a decade later, in 1981, this gender disparity remained virtually unchanged with five women now included on a twenty five strong Restoration's board while a reduced D&S board of five retained its sole female representative. Kennedy's efforts to reshape urban black communities therefore rested upon reinforcing gender hierarchies and stereotypes in the local black community that dominated, and were instated in, the mainstream white society and its political and economic structures.[61]

Richard Nixon, Black Capitalism, and Black Power

As Restoration's operations were getting into full swing, Republican presidential hopeful Richard Nixon was preparing to challenge for his party's nomination for the 1968 election. While on the campaign trail, Nixon built on Kennedy's economic development vision with his promotion of 'Black Capitalism'; a theory founded upon increasing financial support (including the allocation of federal contracts) to black-owned businesses, which were something of an anomaly in the nation's inner-cities. As a 1969 government report revealed, from a total population of around 22,500,000, just over 163,000 African Americans owned businesses. These businesses, however, only employed an average of 1.9 people, reflecting their predominantly small scale. This was also true of most nonwhite businesses, which meant that the nation's minorities – 17 percent of the population – only owned about 4 percent of its businesses. These, in turn, accounted for a mere seven-tenths of one percent of total sales in the national economy. The development of black businesses had been badly suppressed, discouraged, and limited by the cumulative effect of numerous discriminatory economic patterns, including those structuralized by zoning, such as the denial of access to affordable capital, and the same high costs that white ghetto businesses faced.[62]

The Nixon administration's Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE), therefore, was designed not only to foster new minority businesses, but also help existing ones looking to

[61] Elsie Richardson later enjoyed a number of different positions within Central Brooklyn Model Cities and Lucille Rose became the head of the city's Department of Employment. See, for example: Elsie Richardson, 'Open Letter', *New York Amsterdam News*, April 15, 1972, p. C1; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, 'Lucille Rose Given Powell Award', *New York Amsterdam News*, Nov. 10, 1973. Concerning the composition of the two boards, see: Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', pp.141-43; *Ibid.*, Box 2, Folder 2, Restoration Newsletter, 1981, Vol.11, No.1, p.1.

[62] NWHM Part 6: President's Office Files, 173-32, Maurice Stans memorandum to John Ehrlichman, September 15, 1971, p. 2.

overcome difficulties, stabilize, and expand. In this sense, the OMBE was building on the work of the Small Business Administration (SBA), an existing federal agency which, as historian Dean Kotlowski explains, had been required by a 1967 congressional EOA amendment to earmark half its $2.65 billion loan budget to businesses in ghetto areas. The OMBE did move beyond the SBA's remit, however, in its expansion of federal procurement from minority-owned firms, for whom they also created affirmative action-inspired minority contract set-asides.[63] Whereas Kennedy sought to induce businesses to relocate into ghetto areas, the Nixon administration operated in the hope that boosting the amount of federal contracts going to black and other minority businesses in ghetto areas would see urban regeneration follow as a result of the greater flow of capital in to those businesses and communities. As we will see, (in chapter four,) these programmes – along with affirmative action, with which they were fused – would become the vital avenue for black economic progress in Atlanta and Los Angeles, under black political control, during the mid-1970s.

In pinning their 'long term hope for the inner-city,' as OMBE head Maurice Stans explained, on their success in creating 'a viable economic environment in which minorities can achieve economic power through the business mechanism,' the Nixon administration's mission overlapped with Kennedy's CDC strategy.[64] As Nixon's lead aide on civil rights matters Len Garment later explained, 'the key concept in the President's approach to minorities is "mobility"… The ability of minorities to choose freely involves economic considerations, which means jobs, ownership of businesses, community economic development, etc.'[65] As a result, CDCs received considerable financial support from federal government during Nixon's presidency. The president's theory of Black Capitalism/minority business enterprise, however, was a far less comprehensive scheme for inner-city regeneration than that outlined by Kennedy, and endorsed by the Ford Foundation. Black Capitalism operated in the hope that the growth of black business would result in the amelioration of ghetto communities, while Kennedy's CDC strategy specifically directed business toward, and stimulated the processes of, urban rehabilitation. As the Ford Foundation suggested, the SBA and OMBE's focus on 'the individual or small corporate entrepreneur' was too narrow in scope. Such 'frequently marginal and dispersed enterprises,' the foundation reasoned, 'cannot […] carry the burden of redevelopment.'[66]

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[63] Kotlowski, p.130. The SBA was established in 1953 by the Eisenhower administration to provide assistance to small business owners.
[64] NWHM Part 6: President's Office Files, 173-32, Maurice Stans, memorandum to the President, July 24, 1971, p.4-5.
[65] NWHM Part 6: President's Office Files, 123-41, Leonard Garment, Memorandum to Bob Haldeman, February 22, 1971.
[66] Ford Foundation Papers, Box 2, Folder 1, Ford Foundation Policy Paper, *Community Development Corporations: A strategy for depressed urban and rural areas* (Ford Foundation, New York, 1972) p.7.

Alongside Nixon's championing of Black Capitalism was his strong identification with the politics of 'law and order'. Directly borrowing from the tactics Ronald Reagan had used to capture the Governor's mansion in California in 1966, Nixon consciously crafted a conservative self-image to appeal to the nation's white 'Silent Majority'. The rhetoric he deployed pitted so-called law abiding, patriotic, tax paying voters – the American mainstream - against liberal politicians, racial agitators and militants, countercultural ideals and lifestyles, and anti-war demonstrators. It proved highly effective, as it had for Reagan.[67] 'At a popular level,' historian Michael Flamm explains, '"law and order" resonated both as a social ideal and a political slogan because it combined an understandable concern over the rising number of traditional crimes – robberies and rapes, muggings and murders – with an implicit and explicit unease about civil rights, civil liberties, urban riots, antiwar protests, moral values and drug use.' The root cause of these problems was identified as the activist, paternalistic liberalism of the Democratic Party which, in attempting to cure the apparent ills of society, had only succeeded in making them worse. The answer, Nixon argued, was not more liberal social programmes, but putting an end to protest and unrest by ensuring respect for the nation's laws and institutions. Nixon's 'law and order' campaign rhetoric, aggressively underscored by his running mate, Maryland Governor Spiro T. Agnew, tacitly promised the nation that his election would see the 'troublemakers' put behind bars, and an advocate of hardworking 'Middle Americans' installed in the White House.[68] Although an implicitly racialized distinction between the 'Silent Majority' and black and other minority groups was embedded in Nixon's rhetoric, his programme for Black Capitalism, as a corollary to his 'law and order' message, represented a chance for African Americans to join the 'Silent Majority' by eschewing protest and instead focusing on working constructively within the system.

Aside of Nixon's narrower conception of black capitalist development and the divisive political vision which undergirded it, significant parallels existed between Nixon's Black Capitalist initiatives and Kennedy's CDC strategy. First, both were intended to appeal to urban black communities clamouring for greater self-determination, economic empowerment, and urban improvement. Promoting constructive rehabilitation of the inner-cities and integration into the nation's economic mainstream was designed to swell the ranks of the black middle-class, and win over black organizations and voters, drawing them away from the supposed extremism of groups

[67] Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008) p.91-95, 202
[68] Michael W. Flamm, 'The Politics of "Law and Order' in *The Conservative Sixties* ed. by David Farber & Jeff Roche (New York: Peter Lang, 2003) pp.142-152 (p.149, 145).

like the Black Panthers.[69] Second, they were expressly intended to appeal to, and co-opt, Black Power radicals in the nation's cities too by tapping into a rich, longstanding, and quasi-conservative strand of black political thought and activism that venerated economic nationalism.

As historians Laura Hill Warren and Julia Rabig have explained, the promotion and practice of black business enterprise had deep and broad roots in the twentieth century African American experience. Booker T. Washington's advocacy of black entrepreneurship, economic cooperation, and self-reliance had helped to position him as the preeminent race leader at the turn of the century. His closest rival, W.E.B. Du Bois, was similarly supportive of black economic nationalism, a position championed most powerfully by the period's leading Black nationalist, Marcus Garvey. The decades prior to the Great Depression in 1929 were a 'golden age' for black businesses when, largely shut out of the mainstream national economy, many flourished catering specifically to African Americans' social and cultural needs and tastes. As businesses struggled during the 1930s, practices of economic nationalism persisted and evolved elsewhere. Cooperative societies and consumer boycott campaigns in northern cities, and the leveraging of New Deal programmes to create cooperative farming and land ownership schemes in the South, demonstrated the enduring importance of economic questions to the black freedom struggle.[70]

Over the next two decades, as a strong focus on economic issues was repressed by domestic Cold War politics, black separatist economic strategies were kept alive by the Nation of Islam (NOI). While the prevailing integrationist civil rights movement generally focused primarily upon the desegregation of the nation's classrooms and outlawing legally-sanctioned racial discrimination, the NOI (as they had since the 1930s) worked to build collective black economic power and self-reliance through the ownership and operation of community-based black businesses in cities across the country.[71] During the first half of the 1960s, this vision of economic and racial empowerment had been given its most powerful reiteration by NOI minister, and leading Black Power ideologue, Malcolm X:

> The economic philosophy of black nationalism means that in every church, in every civic organization, in every fraternal order, it's time for our people to become conscious of the

[69] Robert E. Weems & Lewis Randolph, 'The National Response to Richard M. Nixon's Black Capitalism Initiative: The Success of Domestic Détente' *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, (Sept., 2001) pp.66-83 (pp.66- 68).
[70] Laura Warren Hill and Julia Rabig, 'Toward a History of the Business of Black Power,' in *The Business of Black Power: Community Development, Capitalism, and Corporate Responsibility in Postwar America*, ed. by Laura Warren Hill and Julia Rabig, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012). pp. 15-42 (pp.15-20).
[71] Jeffrey Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 194. As Ogbar explains, in black communities across America, the NOI built and sustained petty capitalist enterprises, and aimed to secure local control over economies in black neighbourhoods.

> importance of controlling the economy of our community. If we own the stores, if we operate the businesses, if we try and establish some industry in our own community, then we're developing to the position where we are creating employment for our own kind. Once you gain control of your own economy, then you don't have to picket and boycott and beg some cracker downtown for a job in his business.[72]

Fundamentally conservative in many ways, this kind of vision, as historian Angela Dillard has argued, was underpinned by an insistence on self-reliance, racial solidarity, and mutual support. Black self-determination was predicated on personal responsibility and initiative and business ownership and employment – and the economic independence they promised – was a vital part of that.[73] It was also, a quintessentially masculinist brand of black nationalism, undergirded by the assumption of male leadership and authority, which, as the example of Restoration's founding demonstrated, was a powerful sentiment within the broader black freedom struggle. As this quote from Malcolm X – a staple part of the message he delivered regularly to young, poor black men – makes clear, it also involved a firm rejection of government assistance, welfare dependency, and protest culture:

> Get off welfare. Get out of that compensation line. Be a man. Earn what you need for your own family. Then your family respects you….So husband means you are taking care of your wife. Father means you are taking care of your children. You are accepting the responsibilities of manhood.[74]

In this way, this masculinist strand of black politics not only fit with Kennedy's vision of urban reform and black community development, but also bore striking similarities to mainstream conservatism and dovetailed with the Republican Party's own business-oriented and socially conservative gender politics. Reinvigorated during the Black Power-era, this vision overlapped with the mainstream politics of Kennedy and Nixon's plans which sought to reify, not challenge, existing gender hierarchies. Indeed, while campaigning for the Democratic nomination in May 1968, Kennedy delivered a pronouncement on the growing welfare crisis which could have come straight from Malcolm X himself. As Kennedy argued:

> The answer to the welfare crisis is jobs, self-sufficiency, and family integrity; not a massive new extension of welfare; not a great new outpouring of guidance counselors to give the poor more advice. We need jobs, dignified employment at decent pay; the kind of employment that lets a man say to his community, to his family, to the country, and most important, to himself – "I helped to build this country. I am a participant in its great public

[72] Malcolm X, 'The Ballot or the Bullet' in *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements* ed. by George Breitman (New York: Grover Press, 1994) pp.23-44 (p39).
[73] Angela Dillard, 'Malcolm X and African American Conservatism' in *The Cambridge Companion to Malcolm X* ed. by Robert Terrell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) pp.90-100 (p.92).
[74] Malcolm X quoted in: Estes, p. 106.

> ventures. I am a man." […] The first domestic task of any administration must be […] to create jobs and put men to work.[75]

Similarly, also while electioneering, Nixon had endorsed the need for 'black ownership…black pride, black jobs, black opportunity and yes, Black Power in the best, most constructive sense of that often misapplied term.'[76] Nixon's appeals did not go unheeded. The most notable success the President-elect found here was in securing the support of Floyd McKissick, the recent head of CORE and one of the nation's leading spokesmen for Black Power. As the work of historians such as Devin Fergus and Tim Minchin has revealed, McKissick became Nixon's champion for Black Capitalism in late 1968. McKissick's vision led to the creation in 1973 of 'Soul City' in the majority-black rural, and poverty-stricken Warren County, North Carolina, the first American town ever planned and constructed by a minority-owned developer. Bringing together state and federal funds, it was an effort to attract private industry and jobs, stem black outmigration, and deliver economic growth to a depressed area, while simultaneously building black economic and political strength (though not at the exclusion of whites). Although Soul City fell a long way short of the heights that McKissick had envisaged for it, it nevertheless demonstrated the appetite among leading Black Power advocates for the state-sponsored development of black communities and the scope for greater self-determination and economic empowerment that it offered.[77]

Programmes for remedying racial and economic inequality that rested on community development and the expansion of black business were, therefore, bound up with gendered assumptions shared by both liberal policymakers (as the War on Poverty and the Moynihan Report had emphasized) and many in the broader Black Power movement. They played to a vision of black progress that was grounded in the renewal and empowerment of black manhood through the responsibilities of business, family, and community, leadership. As such these policies underlined the belief that black female prominence was an inherently negative phenomenon by setting out to undermine and undo it by primarily recognizing, and consciously privileging, the needs of black men. In the process, these policies made an implicit distinction, and judgment, on the value of public policy to the cause of black advancement. Programmes dedicated (first and foremost) to employing and empowering black men in community development and business enterprise

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[75] Andrew Young Papers, Series 1, Subseries A, Box 5, Folder: PPC, Statements, 1968, Robert F. Kennedy Statement 'Solutions to the Problems of Welfare', May 19, 1968, p.2.
[76] Kotlowski, p. 126.
[77] Timothy J. Minchin, *From rights to economics: the ongoing struggle for Black equality in the U.S. South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007) pp. 59-81; Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics*, pp.196-231. While Minchin posits the development of Soul City as an extension of civil rights activism, Fergus frames it more effectively as 'Federally-Subsidized Black nationalism' and draws out the projects broader significance to the growing ascendancy of the New Right within Republican politics in North Carolina (led by conservative Senator Jesse Helms) and, subsequently, within the GOP nationally too.

endeavours were positive. Simultaneously, they echoed the negativity that conservatives directed toward programmes that augmented the welfare state, and which were intrinsically associated (though not exclusively) with black social pathology of the ghetto in general, and the political and economic rights of poor black mothers in particular. This basic dichotomy and narrative would persist, heavily inflecting debates over domestic public policy and racial inequality for the next decade and beyond. As we will see in the final chapter, along with the policies themselves they played a vital role in shaping the limits of black political action on poverty in cities like Atlanta and Los Angeles throughout the 1970s.

Many African Americans, however, rejected solutions that rested on capitalist development, just as contemporary critics of Washington and Garvey, and the black Left of the earlier twentieth century, had consistently done before them. This voice of opposition was echoed in late 1968 by black political journalist Earl Ofari Hutchinson who argued, 'the long term effect of a concentrated drive to put more individual black faces in business, will only result in a change in color of the exploiter.' The cause of black liberation and empowerment, he asserted, required the replacement of capitalism 'with a socialistic system based on humanitarian principles. This would have as its goal the complete equalitarian distribution of the U.S.'s land, wealth, and power among all the people who, after all, have contributed the most toward the building of the U.S. financial empire.' All Black Capitalism offered, Ofari continued, was 'a deadend form of a reactionary form of nationalism rather than a real solution to the problems of black people.'[78]

For those Black Power groups operating at the most radical and leftist end of the spectrum – most notably the Black Panther Party – Black Capitalism was antithetical to their revolutionary socialist political worldview. The party's leaders also recognized the potential for black business development programmes to advance a middle-class vision of Black Power, just as Kennedy and Nixon intended. As Eldridge Cleaver wrote in a letter to SNCC's Stokely Carmichael in July 1969:

> Pigs have seized upon [Black Power] and turned it into a rationale for Black Capitalism. With James Farmer [*former head of CORE before becoming Assistant Secretary in the Health, Education and Welfare Department*] in the Nixon Administration to preside over the implementation of Black Capitalism under the slogan of "Black Power", what value does that slogan now have to our people's struggle for liberation? […] Even though you were right when you said that LBJ would never stand up and call for Black Power, Nixon

[78] Los Angeles, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, Black Panther Party Collections, Box 1, Folder 21, Earl Ofari, 'Black Capitalism: Salvation or Sell Out?' December 5, 1968, p.1-2. Perhaps the most famous contemporary criticism came from African American scholar Robert Allen in the form of his book *Black Awakening in Capitalist America: an Analytic History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969).

> has done so and he's bankrolling it with millions of dollars. Now…in effect your cry for Black Power has become the grease to ease the black bourgeoisie into the power structure.[79]

For the BPP, programmes of black business development promised primarily to bolster a system that was in need of radical change, while pushing the struggle for Black Power away from revolutionary and redistributive politics and into the nation's political mainstream. Ultimately, however, the Panther's revolutionary socialist outlook was simply not typical of the African American community at large. As Jeffrey Ogbar has argued, 'among the nation's major black organizations [the Black Panther Party] alone glorified what it called lumpen proletariat culture, seeking to give voice to the voiceless masses of poor urban black people by adopting lumpen speech, culture and politics...'[80] Despite their large footprint in the historiography of the Black Power movement, the Panthers were always on the fringe of black political opinion during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the question of economics and politics was a fundamental part of that. This was illuminated by an encounter between Cheryl Foster, the housing coordinator of the Harlem branch of the BPP, and a young 'street hustler' in May 1970. Recounting the incident, Foster wrote 'He said that most young people in Harlem don't think revolutionary, but capitalist because they love to have money in their pockets and an El Dorado parked out front. He said he liked the BPP but felt that it was just wasting its time.'[81] In a bid to close the ideological gap between themselves and the majority black community, the Panthers began to soften their dogmatic stance. In June 1971, national leader Huey P. Newton offered a revised analysis of Black Capitalism. Admitting that the Party's initial 'blanket condemnation' was a mistake, Newton explained that he had come to see that 'since the people see Black Capitalism in the community as black control of local institutions, this is a positive characteristic because the people can bring more direction and focus to the activities of the capitalist.'[82] In doing so, Newton was acknowledging the broad appeal in the black community of mainstream, business-focused, approaches to combatting inequality that politicians like Kennedy and Nixon had promoted.

Finally, economic enterprise and community development programmes were deliberately sensitive to the shifting terrain of white political opinion during the mid-to-late 1960s. By focusing on improving and strengthening black communities, and endorsing black control of their own separate institutions, these policies were a step away from the liberal-civil rights establishment's

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[79] Eldridge Cleaver, 'An Open Letter to Stokely Carmichael' (July 1969) in *The Black Panthers Speak* ed. by Philip S. Foner (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995) pp.104-108 (p.105-106).
[80] Ogbar, p. 194.
[81] New York, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Black Panther Party Harlem Branch File, 1969-1970, Box 1, Cheryl Foster Writings 1970.
[82] Huey P. Newton, 'Black Capitalism Re-analysed: June 5, 1971' in *The Huey P. Newton Reader* ed. by D. Hilliard and D. Weise (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), pp.227-233 (p. 229, 231).

emphasis on integrationist goals and strategies for which support among white voters nationwide was rapidly diminishing.[83] Just as importantly, although both schemes involved government spending on black ghetto communities (another key source of discontent on the Right) they represented an alternative to the public assistance and welfare state spending on African Americans that was so inimical to conservatives. Government backing of CDCs and minority businesses offered not only the potential for financial return, but also promised to encourage and foster the traditional American values of hard work, individual initiative, and self-reliance which, in turn, would undermine the culture of poverty and welfare dependency imagined by many whites to prevail in ghetto communities. Furthermore, Kennedy's CDC strategy and programmes for minority economic development offered the chance to channel the creative energy of ghetto communities away from demonstrations and rioting (another major source of white anger and fear), and into the business of urban revival and integration into the economic mainstream.

Highly disturbed by the spread of urban unrest, the nation's corporate business community also offered its support for Kennedy and Nixon's policies. For example, at a White House meeting in March 1969, representatives of the Life Insurance Association of America told Nixon and his advisors that the organization 'desired to be a catalyst, bringing private resources back into the ghetto to rebuild' and help channel the same resources 'that developed the suburbs after the war' into improving the nation's inner-cities.[84] In May the following year, the American Bankers Association announced a programme that would provide $1 billion in financing for minority businesses by 1975.[85] Greater reliance on the private sector in the solution of poverty offered American businesses tax incentives, the prospect of profit and positive public relations exposure, and, most important, a chance to help ease the socio-economic conditions of life in the ghetto which threatened the domestic peace and urban stability that were so vital to smooth business operations.[86]

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[83] In a similar vein, as historian Dean Kotlowski has explained, Nixon's other major policy for black advancement was the funneling of federal funds to support and preserve black colleges. Promoting black control of their own separate institutions again signaled the federal government's move away from integrationist goals under Nixon. Validating African Americans' cultural and ethnic independence also fit with Nixon's endorsement of the broader revival of white ethnic identity politics that, as Matthew Frye Jacobsen has argued, formed an important cultural dimension of the white backlash against African American gains during the civil rights-Black Power era. See, Kotlowski, p. 14, 60. See pp. 15-42, 151-155 for in-depth discussion of these matters); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-civil Rights America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).
[84] Berlin, John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, Friei Univeristat, Nixon White House microfiche: Part 2, President's meeting file 1969-1974 (hereafter NWHM Part 2: President's Meeting Files), 69-3-2, B5-C6, John Ehrlichman, memorandum for the President's Personal File, March 14, 1969, p.2-3.
[85] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, 'Community Calendar' May 8, 1970.
[86] Laura Warren Hill and Julia Rabig, 'Introduction,' in *The Business of Black Power: Community Development, Capitalism, and Corporate Responsibility in Postwar America*, ed. by Laura Warren Hill and Julia Rabig, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012), p.6.

Appealing to middle-class sensibilities, and conservative socio-economic strands of political opinion, among both blacks and whites, these strategies were tailor made to survive in a nation shifting right-ward, and increasingly disinclined toward integration, welfare state liberalism, and the sustained protest culture of movements for social and economic justice. As Nixon's Director of the Office of Management and Budget Charles Schultz later explained, the White House's emphasis on minority business enterprise development was designed to 'help the administration with minorities, particularly Blacks, without carrying a severe negative impact on the majority community as is often the case with other civil rights issues.'[87]

Along with Kennedy's CDC vision, these turns in public policymaking presented urban black communities with new opportunities to build on, diversify, and advance their pursuit of racial equality. Continuing our in-depth look at the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation in Brooklyn, New York, the following section will explore Restoration's programmatic outlook as it developed and extended beyond narrow theories of economic development, coming to embody a type of Black Power – more centrist and moderate than radical – that became integrated in to mainstream American life. Similar organizations, such as the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle (CAEHT) and the Harlem Commonwealth Council (HCC) in New York, and the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC) and Operation Bootstrap (OB) in Los Angeles, are then also explored. Run by blacks, and working towards the physical, economic, and psychological uplift of their local communities and environments, these organizations manifested an affirmative sense of racial pride and identity. This often involved the promotion and celebration of African American history and heritage, and the creation of forums for the development and expression of the black arts and culture, and efforts to create new, more responsive, institutions in their communities. In the process, these organizations further illuminate the ways in which black urban communities articulated visions for greater self-determination, economic empowerment, urban improvement, and cultural enrichment, the development of which were tied to the extant economic and political institutions and philosophies that helped to shape their trajectory.

[87] NWHM Part 6: President's Office Files, 173-32, George Schultz, memorandum to the President, September 17, 1971, p.2.

Black Power in Action: the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation

Perhaps the biggest issue confronting Franklin Thomas during BSRC's early days was getting to grips with the corporation's unusual twin organizational structure. The relationship between the black and white boards was complicated and took time to settle down. Thomas had warned of the dangers of having two separate boards. In a letter to the D&S board in January 1967, shortly after he had first been spoken to about the possibility of joining the project, Thomas suggested that 'with dual leadership a cynic might well say that the Negro community has a Negro board with a Negro executive director and no money, while the actual work, power and authority reside outside the community.' Thomas's fears were certainly realized during the twin corporations' first year of coexistence during which D&S executive director Eli Jacobs clearly perceived Restoration as the junior partner in the project.[88]

Having D&S dominate proceedings was arguably beneficial for Restoration during its early months while it found its feet, hired a full staff, and built up a list of programmatic priorities. Understanding that a dominant D&S would stymie Restoration's long-term growth and development, Kennedy convinced John Doar, former Assistant Attorney general for Civil Rights in the U.S. Justice Department, to take over from Jacobs in January 1968. A popular choice in the eyes of the local media, Doar quickly struck up a good partnership with Franklin Thomas though Thomas still chafed at the dual board structure. Doar's arrival heralded a number of important changes that put the twin corporations on an even footing. Franklin Thomas's salary was increased to match Doar's. Control over disbursement of funds - which effectively entailed programmatic control - had been closely guarded by Jacobs but became a shared responsibility of Thomas and Doar in April 1968. In addition, all funds were placed into a joint account shared by the twin corporations. Doar also moved D&S into the same offices as Restoration, ensuring that both corporations and their staff worked in the same building for the first time. While this had always been the plan once construction work on their ambitious headquarters was completed, the interim period had seen the two corporations based in different offices, further underlining their separation. Under Thomas and Doar the two organizations developed an amicable, effective, and productive working relationship that gave Restoration the power and space it needed to grow and overtake D&S as the prime mover of the twin corporations - as Kennedy had intended and as Thomas desired. While Restoration was becoming an increasingly powerful black organization at board

[88] Thomas Johnston Papers, Box 2, Folder 12, Franklin A. Thomas to D&S Board, Jan. 1967, p.1.

room level its programs in the community were beginning to shape its development into a model of institutional Black Power. [89]

Had Robert Kennedy not been assassinated in June 1968 he would have lived to see his original ideas pursued faithfully by Restoration. Kennedy knew that a great deal of the despair in the nation's ghettoes was due to the appalling conditions their residents had to endure. Likened by D&S board member J.M. Kaplan to 'a decaying cemetery,' Bed-Stuy was a case in point. Revitalizing the ghetto was central to Restoration's mission and, as Franklin Thomas suggested, they adhered to the principle that urban redevelopment was itself 'a big industry and the people who ought to benefit from that process are the people who live in that area.' True to Kennedy's CDC blueprint, Restoration ensured as many local residents as possible were employed in its regeneration efforts. Ultimately, Restoration's construction and rehabilitation programs saw it become one of the neighborhood's largest housing sponsors and landlords.[90]

Beyond the construction of new properties, another key part of Restoration's plan to rehabilitate Bed-Stuy was the Community Home Improvement Program (CHIP), a popular initiative that reflected the organization's ethos perfectly. Run annually, the scheme offered participating blocks the chance to have the exterior of their buildings completely renovated. All those employed in the process of renovation were local residents receiving on-the-job training. Each block wishing to participate had to meet certain criteria. First, each had to have formed its own block association. Second, each homeowner had to pay a certain fee, regardless of the amount of work being done on their specific property, and a minimum of 60 percent of the homeowners in each block had to sign up. Finally, all participants had to pledge to maintain their properties' exteriors, and make interior changes if necessary, agreeing only to use local labor when doing so. The CHIP demonstrates the ways in which Restoration tied together the area's rehabilitation with the creation of employment opportunities for local residents while working to forge a stronger sense of community and civic pride. Furthermore, as Edward Schmitt has suggested, it was not only the homeowners who

[89] 'New Guy in Town', *New York Amsterdam News*, Jan. 13, 1968, p.21; Boston, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Collection, Franklin A. Thomas Oral History Interview, RFK #1, 23/3/1972, p. 8-9; Thomas Johnston Papers, Box 1, Folder 7, 'Minutes of Development & Services Corporation Board Meeting', Feb. 5, 1968, p.4; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', p.118.

[90] Thomas Johnston Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, 'Minutes of Development & Services Corporation Board Meeting', March 8, 1967, p.8; Franklin Thomas quoted in: Ford Foundation Papers, Box 2, Folder 1, *Black Enterprise*, June 1975, p.1.

benefitted from the scheme as the 'CHIP workers even began wearing their hard hats as a badge of pride.'[91]

Restoration's motto was to make the neighborhood 'a place to live, not to leave' and an important corollary to Restoration's housing programs was helping local residents become property owners. A legacy of redlining, the area's reputation amongst mortgage lenders was so bad that it was very difficult for anyone, let alone impoverished black citizens, to obtain home finance there. Restoration and D&S endeavored to change the pattern of lending by working with banks and the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) to create a mortgage pool available to owners or occupiers of one to four bedroom family dwellings in Bed-Stuy. Under the guidance of D&S board member George Moore eighty-five banks agreed to participate and collectively provide $100 million in funding. The FHA also agreed to act as guarantor for approved loans. The mortgage pool, described by the Ford Foundation as 'potentially the most significant housing program being carried out by the twin corporations' helped make homeownership possible for hundreds of local families. Restoration also bought local residential properties (foreclosures acquired via the FHA) and sold them through a low-income homeownership scheme. Under this initiative priority was given to applicants who lived on the same block that the property for sale was located. Right at the center of Restoration's housing program lay both the desire to regenerate Bed-Stuy and to facilitate property ownership amongst local black residents, itself a critical step on the way up the economic ladder for many poor African Americans.[92]

Although Bed-Stuy, as Eli Jacobs suggested, was 'a marketplace of 400,000 – perhaps the most densely concentrated market you will find on this planet,' the area's physical rehabilitation and its potential for private enterprise alone would not be enough to attract new residents and businesses. Kennedy's plans, therefore, outlined two other key approaches for developing the local economy. One of these was encouraging large businesses to locate premises in Bed-Stuy and employ local residents. To this end D&S used its influence and connections to help bring a number of sizable businesses into the area. The most notable success story came when IBM, one of America's biggest companies, located a new plant in Bed-Stuy in 1968. Of the initial 155 local residents that IBM employed, nearly 40 percent had no high school diploma. It was hoped that, if IBM's venture into the ghetto was a success, other large businesses would follow. As with the mortgage pool, the twin corporations were dedicated to changing attitudes in the private sector -

[91] Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, 'Annual Home Improvement Program', *New York Recorder*, May 11, 1974; Schmitt, p.162.
[92] Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', p.93-94; *ibid*., Box 1, Folder 3, 'Minutes of Development & Services Corporation Board Meeting', July 26, 1971, p.5.

vital if deep-seated patterns of discrimination that existed in virtually every aspect of commercial life were to be overturned. Although the number of companies who followed IBM's lead was not as high as the twin corporations would have liked, Bed-Stuy residents at the time nevertheless identified IBM's arrival as a symbol of the positive changes taking place in their neighborhood. The plant went on to grow in size and in 1994 was eventually sold by IBM to Advanced Technological Solutions Inc. (AST), a company set up by a group of the plant's black and Puerto Rican employees, who, with the help of 'the city, the local community and IBM' completed a $6.5 million leveraged buyout of the plant. In doing so AST instantly became 'one of the nation's largest minority employee-owned businesses.'[93]

The other main thrust of Restoration's economic development program involved promoting and financially assisting business ownership among local residents. Finance was always arranged in cooperation with an external bank, a deliberate tactic designed to start breaking down the reputation of black businesses as credit risks. Technical and managerial expertise was also made available in order to instill good business practice and help new ventures grow sustainably and securely. By late 1972, Restoration had helped provide nearly $9 million to over one hundred local, black-owned businesses which had resulted in a number of 'firsts' for Bed-Stuy, including the first black-owned car dealership in the whole of New York state. Restoration also worked to extend opportunities for opening national chain business franchises to Bed-Stuy residents and, in October 1971, much local fanfare accompanied the start of construction on what became the first black-owned and run McDonalds restaurant. Fostering private enterprise among local residents, as a Ford Foundation report noted, also brought 'intangible benefits that flow from the emergence of new black-owned businesses…the sense of satisfaction that the community derives from such developments is not measurable in economic terms.'[94]

While Restoration's efforts to increase levels of black property ownership, support and finance black businesses, and improve local employment opportunities were all intended, as their director of economic development George Glee declared, to 'make the rhetoric of Black Power a Black reality,' alone they are not enough to consider placing Restoration within a framework of Black Power. As historian Peniel Joseph has suggested, although Black Power encompassed many

[93] Thomas Johnston Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, 'Minutes of Development & Services Corporation Board Meeting', March 8, 1967, p.54; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', pp.56-58; Dawnyielle Peeples, 'Workers use a buyout to buy in', *Black Enterprise*, (Jan. 1994), <http://www.questia.com/library/1G1-14779706/workers-use-a-buyout-to-buy-in-6-5-million-lbo-turns> [Accessed 16/08/2013]

[94] Ford Foundation Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, 'Spotlight on Economic Development', *Restoration Newsletter*, Oct. 1972, Vol.2, No.3, p.1; 'First McDonalds Store in Bed-Stuy Going Up', *New York Amsterdam News*, Oct. 16, 1971, p.D1; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', p.59.

things it was characterized by certain fixed core values and goals. These included pursuing self-determination through black political and economic empowerment, the redefinition of black identity, greater racial pride and solidarity, and a critical emphasis upon a shared African heritage and history of racial oppression. In order, therefore, to more fully develop an understanding of Restoration as an institutional expression of Black Power, we must now turn our attention to the aspects of Restoration's work that explicitly sought to: foster greater racial pride and celebrate African American history and culture; build community solidarity and empower Bed-Stuy residents; and help local blacks shape the development of new institutions in their community.[95]

An excellent example of Restoration's support for the promotion and celebration of black culture and heritage can be found in the Design Works of Bedford-Stuyvesant which, with an $180,000 loan from Restoration, began life in 1969 as a small silk screen studio with three employees. The company produced textiles, clothing, and jewelry inspired by or based on African designs. Five years later the company had over one hundred staff, an annual turnover in excess of $600,000, and sold their products worldwide. By assisting Design Works, Restoration helped to put local blacks at the forefront of a cultural industry that grew rapidly through the 1970s.[96]

Other aspects of Restoration's work further demonstrated its commitment to advancing and protecting black history and heritage. Between 1827 and 1875 a free black community called Weeksville had existed in Brooklyn, encompassing part of what later became Bed-Stuy. As the area's history increasingly came to light during the late-1960s Restoration became involved in efforts to preserve the site and, in mid-1973, purchased a number of historic properties on Old Hunterfly Road. Not only did Restoration save the site from the threat of demolition, but, in league with the Weeksville Society, also helped to secure it 'New York City Landmark' status. The same buildings on Old Hunterfly Road are now home to the Weeksville Heritage Center which helps to keep a unique part of Brooklyn's black history alive to this day.[97]

Beyond their emphasis on black history and culture in the wider sense, Restoration was also committed to promoting racial solidarity and positive, constructive relations at the community level. Annual 'Soul Sunday' festivals, sponsored by Restoration and other local groups, combined a celebration of black music with the opportunity for local residents to relax and socialize together. A

[95] Ford Foundation Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, 'Spotlight on Economic Development', *Restoration Newsletter*, Oct. 1972, Vol.2, No.3, p.1; Joseph, 'The Black Power Movement', p.4.
[96] Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 6, 'Design Works' *Downtown Brooklyn*, April, 1974; *Ibid.*, Box 1, Folder 7, 'Designing an Idea', *Black Enterprise*, Nov. 1974.
[97] 'Historic Weeksville to be preserved by Bed-Stuy Rest Corp', *New York Amsterdam News*, June 23, 1973, p.C1; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, *Restoration Newsletter*, Sept-Oct. 1973, Vol. 3, No.2, p.2-3; See: 'History', *Weeksville Heritage Center*, <http://weeksvillehc.tumblr.com/> [Accessed 16/08/2013].

number of 'Neighborhood Restoration Centers', established in late 1967, fostered and supervised the creation of new block associations, worked with existing ones to determine and prioritize the community's needs and encouraged organization around issues of importance. These centres, a vital link between Restoration and Bed-Stuy's residents, helped to empower the local community by giving them the tools they needed to effect change in their own lives. For example, in 1968 a number of the block associations Restoration helped form joined forces with other local groups (including CORE and CBCC) and negotiated with the city to secure a dramatic improvement in their neighborhood's sanitation services – a service that most took for granted but which Bed-Stuy residents had been long denied.[98]

The neighborhood centres also helped conduct voter registration drives, encouraging the growth of African Americans' collective voting strength in Bed-Stuy. Free tax clinics were made available to local residents, and a Tenant Aid program was run which not only educated tenants about their legal rights and responsibilities but also met their emergency needs, including making repairs, restoring essential services, and, if necessary, dealing directly with intransigent landlords on the tenant's behalf. Beyond this, the centres ran summer schools for local children where they were taught practical life skills, performed community service, and enjoyed classes in African culture and languages too. The entire thrust of such activities was to try and help educate Bed-Stuy's residents and move them toward greater independence, self-reliance and responsibility, and imbue them with the belief that they could begin to deal with their problems and assert their rights, both as individuals and collectively, through the existing structures of American society.[99]

Perhaps the best example of why Restoration should be seen as an expression of Black Power can be found in the organization's impressive headquarters, situated on Fulton Street, right at the heart of Bed-Stuy. Restoration's original plans had always intended to give Bed-Stuy the centerpiece it lacked by creating offices that would serve as a focal point for the community. The organization hired black architects, construction superintendents, and administrators to carry out the ambitious plans they had for converting a former milk-bottling plant known as Sheffield Farms which the twin corporations had purchased in early 1967. Their commitment to using local residents on all their building schemes resulted in delays and construction on the site was not finished until 1972; in 1975 it was expanded, taking over adjacent buildings. Restoration Plaza, as it was called,

[98] See, for example: 'Bed-Stuy 'Soul Sunday', *New York Amsterdam News*, May 1, 1971, p. 23; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', pp.70-72.
[99] *Ibid.*, p.72; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, 'Tenant Aid', *Restoration Newsletter*, April 1973, Vol.3, No.1, p.5; *Ibid.*, 'Free Tax Clinic Reopens', *Restoration Newsletter,* Dec. 1972, Vol. 2, No. 4, p.3-4; *Ibid.*, Debra Walton, 'My Experiences working for the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation this Summer', *Restoration Newsletter*, Oct. 1972, Vol.2, No.3, p.6.

was worth the wait. Once completed it swiftly became the commercial heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant. More importantly, though, the 'Billie Holiday Theater' and large art gallery that Restoration Plaza also housed made a highly significant contribution to local cultural life. The platform these facilities provided for black artists, writers, musicians, poets, and actors, of all ages, was unrivalled in Brooklyn. Controversial and challenging plays by black playwrights dealing with the experience of poverty and racism in America dominated the theatre's program. The art gallery was dedicated to showcasing the work of black artists from Bed-Stuy and around the world. Together their ethos represented a celebration of black art and culture and promotion of its black producers past, present and future.[100]

Restoration Plaza also included a large auditorium and meeting rooms which served as a physical space for local community groups to meet and conduct their affairs. There is no better example of how Restoration helped the local black community to fashion new opportunities for itself than the events that led to the creation of Medgar Evers College. The creation of an innovative educational affiliate in the area had been an early goal of the twin corporations and in April 1967 William Birenbaum, formerly of Long Island University, was hired and assembled a team of educators (many of whom were black) to assist in the planning and delivery of the new facility. The final plan, for a four year college to be administered by a community board with significant student representation, had strong community support. D&S board member William Paley played a critical role in getting the City University of New York (CUNY) to pledge $30 million toward the creation of the college. However, fearing that critics would label an all-black campus 'segregated', CUNY demanded changes to the plans that Birenbaum was unwilling to accept. In response to this impasse a group of community members formed the 'Bedford-Stuyvesant Coalition on Educational Needs and Services Negotiating Team' and, with the support of Restoration, took over the planning from Birenbaum and continued discussions with CUNY, ultimately succeeding in getting the original plans for the college accepted. Restoration was the community group's base throughout the entire process and they benefitted from the close involvement of board members Judge Jones and, in particular, Albert Vann, the head of the Afro-American Teachers Association (AATA). The result was the creation of Medgar Evers College, one of the most respected black educational facilities in New York City today.[101]

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[100] 'Bedford-Stuyvesant was the newer world of RFK', *New York Amsterdam News*, June 15, 1968, p.17; For Restoration's cultural programs see, for example: Ford Foundation Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, '"Beauty of the Ghetto" exhibition at Restoration', *Restoration Newsletter*, Winter 1975, Vol. 5, No. 5, p.1; *ibid.*, Box 1, Folder 5, Albert Jones, 'What Makes a Ghetto?', *Antillean Caribbean Echo*, Nov. 10, 1973; *Ibid*., Mel Tapley, 'Cultural Center – Home of Dreams', *New York Amsterdam News*, May 4, 1974; *Ibid*., 'Local Artist returns home to Brooklyn', *New York Amsterdam News*, Jan. 1, 1978.

[101] Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', pp.44-47.

By working to facilitate the creation of Medgar Evers College, Restoration had helped the local community to physically build black institutional power: a place where black teachers taught black children and where direct input into college governance gave parents a greater level of influence over their children's educations, and indeed futures, than ever before. In addition, Vann's AATA held their meetings in the Restoration offices, ran talent schools to help discover potential local teaching recruits, and held the first New York City Black Teachers Convention there in May 1972, further underscoring the vital contribution Restoration made to the educational opportunities available to local blacks.[102]

Restoration also came to stand at the centre of developments that shaped new political institutions and reconfigured local black political power. In early 1975 around 700 local residents gathered in the main 'community room' at Restoration Plaza to witness the creation of a new local political organization and to honor Carl L. Butler, a recent addition to Restoration's board, for his election as District Leader for Bed-Stuy's 56th Assembly District (A.D.), a powerful position in local and county Democratic politics. Alongside Butler was Restoration's own Albert Vann, who had just been elected by local residents to the New York State legislature as Assemblyman for the 56th A.D. Together they launched the Crispus Attucks Regular Democratic Club which marked a significant power shift within local black politics (both Butler and Vann has displaced longstanding incumbents). Congresswomen Shirley Chisholm characterized these developments as 'part of the wind of change bringing the infusion of new blood in the political system from the national down to the local level.' It seemed fitting then that such an occasion should take place in Restoration Plaza, perhaps the biggest and most vital symbol of the change underway in Bed-Stuy.[103]

As Restoration's impact on the local community grew over time, its organizational self-image and projected personality changed too. Though D&S may have overshadowed Restoration at the very beginning this proved momentary. Indeed, as Schmitt has suggested, the 'balance of power' between the two corporations began shifting toward Restoration from as early as mid-1967. With Restoration conducting the overwhelming majority of the twin corporation's business some Restoration staff began to question the continued need for D&S. As one employee explained in early 1969 he sometimes felt that D&S only still existed to make sure Restoration 'don't steal the money.' This kind of self-assurance is, arguably, exactly what one might expect from employees of an organization that embodied and exercised literal black power, and meant to keep on doing so.

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[102] Albert Vann, 'View of the Black Teachers Conference', *New York Amsterdam News*, May 20, 1972, p. A5; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, 'The African American Teachers Association and its Search for Black Talent', *Restoration Newsletter*, June 1971, Vol. 1, No. 5, p.4-5.
[103] 'Launch Crispus Attucks Democratic Club', *New York Amsterdam News*, Feb. 1, 1975, p. C1.

Although the twin organizational structure remained until 2000 (when D&S was subsumed in to the Restoration board) it came to play an important part in forging Restoration's image as a black organization. This was evident in the wake of John Doar's departure from D&S in December 1973 when a Restoration source was quick to reassure people that Doar's resignation would 'not alter the racial division between the two groups.' Whereas in the early days the racially split twin corporation structure had concerned many in Restoration, not least Franklin Thomas, by the time of Doar's exit it had become an integral part of their identity.[104]

Restoration's continued association with controversial individuals like Sonny Carson reflected its growth into an organization that celebrated its blackness, made no apology for its methods, and unswervingly dedicated itself to the Bed-Stuy community. In late 1968 Carson (already a contentious figure when he joined Restoration at its inception) was prominently involved in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville School controversy along with fellow Restoration board member Albert Vann. As we will see in the following chapter, this fierce clash between black activists and the white, predominantly Jewish, United Federation of Teachers (UFT) over decentralization and community control of public schools was mired in charges of white racism and black anti-Semitism, leaving a bitter legacy for the city. Restoration continued to publicly support Sonny Carson even when, in 1973, he was arrested, tried, and convicted, on charges of kidnapping and attempted murder.[105]

Popular with neighborhood youth, and a powerful local image of strong black masculinity, Carson remained a militant, and a part of Restoration, for the rest of his life. As a local journalist wrote following Carson's death in late 2002:

> One would only have to spend a day at his basement office at Restoration Plaza to grasp the pivotal role that Carson played in the socio-political economy of Bedford-Stuyvesant and, by extension, the black community at large. Carson was the elder statesman, the tribal counselor, and the warrior king adorned, staff in hand, in regal Afrocentric garments as he held court and weighed in on matters from the most trivial of domestic affairs to issues of great import to the black diaspora.[106]

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[104] Schmitt, p.162; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Goldmann, 'Performance in Black and White', p.119 - 20; Regarding the 2000 board merger, see: 'Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation Profile', *PlaceMatters*, para.6, http://www.placematters.net/node/1028; "Doar Quits, Restoration will still have 2 boards," *New York Amsterdam News*, Dec. 29, 1973, p.C1.

[105] For an excellent account of the Schools crisis, see: Jerald Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York : Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven, 2002); 'Sonny Carson faces DA Charges', *New York Amsterdam News*, July 28, 1973, A1; 'Sonny Carson Back to Brooklyn', *New York Amsterdam News*, March 11, 1978, B1.

[106] Dasun Allah, 'Sonny Carson Dies', *Village Voice*, Dec. 31, 2002, para. 7, <http://www.villagevoice.com/2002-12-31/news/sonny-carson-dies > [Accessed 16/08/2013].

In its continued support of, and identification with, Carson, Restoration's projection of itself was clear and uncompromising: it was concerned, first and foremost, with conforming to the standards and norms of the black community which it represented. As such, while Restoration had been shaped by the influence of Robert Kennedy and his CDC blueprint, and continued to embody the conventions of the male-dominated national political and economic culture, it was able to move beyond those influences and define its own distinctly black image. For Restoration, conforming to white mainstream society was not absolute and did not mean renouncing the promotion of racial pride and solidarity.

Restoration's history can contribute to our understanding of Black Power as it adapted to mainstream America. Almost everything about the organization was wholly dedicated to improving the standard of local blacks' lives and empowering local black citizens. Restoration sought to increase local black property ownership and expand economic and employment opportunities for Bed-Stuy residents by rehabilitating and improving their community, attracting outside investment, and fostering local black entrepreneurship. By the start of 1981 Restoration, and its affiliates and subsidiaries, had directly generated over $250 million for the benefit of Bed-Stuy.[107] On top of this, Restoration's headquarters (whose commercial space has contributed so vitally to the resuscitated Bed-Stuy economy we see today) provided a vital platform for black artists, musicians, playwrights and actors to work and develop their skills, helping to promote and support the teaching and practice of black art and culture. The critical role Restoration played in saving an important local black historical site for future generations reflected the organization's commitment to the preservation and celebration of African American history and heritage. Neighborhood Restoration Centers worked to encourage constructive and positive community relations and helped mobilize, educate, and empower local residents to deal more effectively with the challenges of daily life, both individually and collectively. In facilitating the establishment of Medgar Evers College, Restoration helped local blacks create an educational institution that would be more responsive to their needs than any that had preceded it. By the mid-1970s, Restoration Plaza also came to witness important changes in local black politics; changes which the organization, and some of its most prominent members, sat right at the heart of. Though fundamentally shaped and influenced by the prevailing, male-dominated, corporate capitalist culture, Restoration was still able to pursue its own agendas and associations, and forge its own identity; an identity which celebrated and venerated its blackness. In this way, Restoration can be seen as part of another side of the Black Power movement - beyond the dominant imagery and controversial rhetoric of its most militant exponents

[107] Ford Foundation Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, 'Restoration of Confidence in Bedford-Stuyvesant's Future', *Restoration Newsletter*, 1981, Vol.11, No.1, p.4.

– that was at first shaped by, and then began to refashion, the political, social, and economic fabric of mainstream urban America.

Building Black Power: Beyond Bedford-Stuyvesant

Although Restoration's developmental path cannot be considered typical, it was by no means the only African American organization that was committed to the regeneration of inner-city communities, the growth of local black political and economic power, the creation of new, locally-controlled, institutions, and the fostering of greater racial pride and unity. The following section looks at four other organizations (some of them CDCs) which flourished during the same period (roughly 1965-1975) and whose missions overlapped with Restoration's, to varying degrees. After first outlining the organizations to be examined, I then explore how they helped to build Black Power through programmes for urban improvement, greater black political and economic power, cultural enrichment, and created new black-controlled institutions in their local communities.

Across the East River from Brooklyn lay Manhattan, the site of Harlem – New York's most famous black ghetto – the eastern portion of which was home to the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle (CAEHT). Established in New York in 1961 by members of the Chambers Memorial Baptist Church, CAEHT was created to oppose the city's plans to turn a significant section of the East Harlem Triangle into an industrial park, a plan which promised to displace over 10,000 local black and Puerto Rican families. Foremost among the founders was Alice Wragg Kornegay. In 1942, at the age of ten, she had relocated to East Harlem from Georgetown, South Carolina, to live with cousins after both her parents had died. Supporting herself through college, (where she attained a degree in social work,) Kornegay became a pillar of the East Harlem community, and one of its most forthright advocates for social and economic justice and local improvement. As CAEHT's first president, Kornegay seized upon the opportunity presented by the arrival of antipoverty funds to enlarge the scope of the organization's activities. In February 1966, with the help of OEO funding, the group moved to new, bigger, headquarters. At the new centre's opening, Kornegay, before an audience including many local government and antipoverty officials, took to the stage to reiterate the organization's intentions:

> Let the city be on notice. We intend to press for action on the renewal of our community and along the lines we want, not what they want for us. The time is past where we are willing to let others make our decisions for us. We intend to help ourselves.[108]

In 1967, using OEO funds acquired through the Kennedy-Javits SIP amendment, CAEHT helped spawn the Harlem Commonwealth Council (HCC), a CDC dedicated to the economic development of the local black community. Kornegay joined with a number of prominent local black male leaders to plan and set-up HCC, including: Columbia University sociologist Preston Wilcox; Isaiah E. Robinson Jr., of Harlem Parent's Association; Arthur B. Hill, then New York's second highest ranked black police officer; and Roy Innis, the director of Harlem CORE who would become CORE's national director the following year. Focused solely on building up a local black economic base, HCC was intended to complement CAEHT's housing, education and social service programmes.[109]

Similar organizations developed in South Central Los Angeles in response to the difficult conditions facing local blacks. Foremost among these was the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC). As the work of historian Robert Bauman has shown, over time, WLCAC also grew into an organization which evinced many of the core aspects of the Black Power mission, just as Restoration had.[110] Predating Restoration, WLCAC began life under the War on Poverty's Community Action Program. On May 24th 1965 a group of trade union leaders, representing over 60,000 members in the local area, came together with concerned local academics and students to establish an organization that would to begin addressing the area's worst problems, in particular: housing, education, healthcare, the lack of recreational facilities and, most importantly, the parlous state of the local economy and severe lack of jobs. The chief architect was Ted Watkins, an international representative for the local United Auto Workers (UAW) union who coordinated the involvement of other union leaders, as well as researchers from the University of California's Institute of Labor Relations and local black students from Jordan High.[111] Watkins would remain the organization's helm until his death in 1992 during which time WLCAC developed into one of the most important black institutions in South Central Los Angeles. Just as Westminster had,

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[108] Alice Kornegay Triangle' May 05, 1998. Online:<http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/historical-signs/listings?id=6397> [Accessed 05/06/2012]; 'Grassroots Group in Own Headquarters', *New York Amsterdam Times*, February 26, 1966, p.7.

[109] 'For the Harlem Commonwealth Council Growing Up Means Buying Up', *Black Enterprise*, November 1978, p.59. As we will see in the following chapter, Wilcox was the primary academic theorist behind the city's movement for community control of public education, and Robinson (along with Kornegay) was leading figure in the movement too.

[110] Bauman has done more than any other historian to advance our understanding of WLCAC. See, Bauman, pp. 69-89.

[111] 'Labor Group Urges Action Programs', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 9, 1965, p.A8; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 2, Folder 1, Ford Foundation Policy Paper, *Community Development Corporations: A strategy for depressed urban and rural areas* (Ford Foundation, New York, 1972) p.20; Bauman, p. 70.

WLCAC grew rapidly in the aftermath of the August 1965 rioting, benefitting from the huge influx of federal antipoverty funds into the area which it precipitated (from an initial $1.3 million in 1964, the figure jumped to $19.5 million in the months after the riots, and peaked at $46.5 million in 1967).[112]

Finally, Operation Bootstrap (OB) provides another excellent example of the urban improvement and black empowerment ethos that permeated many community organizations set up in ghetto areas during the mid-to-late 1960s onwards. In the aftermath of the August 1965 Watts riots, OB was set up by former CORE leader Lou Smith, and Korean War veteran Robert Hall. Consciously appropriating the 'Burn Baby Burn' slogan that echoed in the Watts ghetto during the riots, OB declared its motto 'Learn Baby Learn', highlighting its emphasis on the importance of education, training, and self-improvement. Focusing primarily on education and vocational jobs training and guidance for ghetto youth, OB presented itself as a model of 'self-help' and as an alternative to the War on Poverty and government assistance. Unlike other local organizations, like Westminster and WLCAC, OB was completely opposed to the idea of government funding. Indeed, as Smith later wrote to *Black Enterprise* magazine, correcting an error they had made in a previous issue: 'you listed our corporation, Operation Bootstrap, as being funded by the OEO. That just ain't so. We never have, and never intend, to accept government funding. That principle is the cornerstone of Bootstrap philosophy.'[113]

OB, Smith argued, was dedicated to showing 'what determined, hard-working, young people can do for themselves – by themselves.'[114] Instead, they attracted all their funding from private donations (many from white liberal Angelenos) and from its associations with mainstream businesses including major corporations like IBM, Shell Oil, Singer, Litton Industries, and Scientific Data Systems. Working out of six buildings in the Watts ghetto, OB offered classes in computer programming and operation, as well as a range of skilled industrial job-related classes using training equipment provided by its business backers.[115] Unlike the jobs training programmes run by most antipoverty organizations, the arrangement between OB and its partner businesses meant that trainees who successfully completed their practical training were guaranteed to graduate to a position with the relevant company afterward.[116] OB's message of self-reliance, and emphasis on private, over public, funding, won strong approval from leading conservative Ronald Reagan,

[112] Ernie Sprinkles, 'Watts Riots in Review: What Good Did it Do?', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 20, 1971, p. D10.
[113] Lou Smith letter to Editor, *Black Enterprise*, January 1973, p.6.
'[114] '"Operation Bootstrap" Shows How Training is the Key to Progress', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 22, 1967, p.F7.
[115] Charles E. Brown, 'Operation Bootstrap Prepares', *Jet*, December 21, 1967 p.16-22.
[116] Jerri Moore, 'A Will to Make Ideas Work', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 4, 1968, p. A3.

who visited the organization's workshops during the 1966 gubernatorial campaign. Condemning the War on Poverty as Democrats' '"Big Brother" form of assistance government,' Reagan affirmed that OB's interest in 'helping people help themselves. […] fits in with what I have believed all along.'[117]

Like Restoration, all four of these organizations, in one way or another, were dedicated to the physical improvement of their neighbourhoods and the creation of new local institutions. In 1968, CAEHT, or the Triangle Association, as they were known, completed and submitted alternative urban renewal plans in league with M.E.N.D, another local antipoverty agency, and the Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem, Inc. (ARCH), a local African American professional interest group focused on low-income housing issues and urban regeneration. Although not implemented in full, the local plan nevertheless succeeded in supplanting the city's 1961 scheme, preventing the wholesale demolition and restructuring of community land for industrial use it had mandated. In its detailed regeneration plan (in language evocative of the rhetoric of radical Black Power groups like the Panthers) CAEHT described its existence as the 'the story of a dogged fight of a deprived community for the right to survive.'[118] As an organization, CAEHT dedicated itself to improving the social and economic conditions in East Harlem and, under Kornegay's leadership, made a substantial and lasting contribution to the local community. They built badly needed affordable local low-income housing, ran a preschool education programme and a planned parenthood centre, organized local tenants, and trained local people to become welfare inspectors (something designed not only to increase employment opportunities but also to mitigate the unpleasantness of existing welfare inspections).[119] In 1974, in league with the community, and local black architects and contractors, they built the East Harlem Center, a $4 million multi-social service complex which included a child day-care centre, a senior citizens care centre, as well as city welfare agency offices.[120] HCC later contributed in this respect too by purchasing land for the expansion of a neighborhood hospital and helping a local healthcare organization construct Harlem's first residential mental health treatment centre for teenagers.[121]

In Los Angeles, WLCAC's Ted Watkins, heavily influenced by his own past experiences as a youth working in New Deal programmes, set up a Community Conservation Corps (CCC) in the

[117] 'Reagan Visits Ghetto Areas; Lauds Self-Help', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 3, 1966, p.A1.
[118] New York, Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture, Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem, Inc. , *East Harlem Triangle Plan: Prepared for the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle and New York Housing and Development Administration* (October 1968) p.3.
[119] 'Grass Roots Group in Own Headquarters', *New York Amsterdam News*, Feb 26, 1966, p.7.
[120] 'East Harlem Center Opening', *New York Amsterdam News*, June 29, 1974, p.B7.
[121] 'For the Harlem Commonwealth Council Growing Up Means Buying Up', *Black Enterprise*, November 1978, p.76.

weeks following the August 1965 uprising primarily designed to target the groups who had been most strongly implicated in the rioting: the local mass of unemployed young adults and teenage school drop outs. Utilizing funding from unions and federal antipoverty money, the CCC was designed to provide community service work for seven to twenty one year olds from the local area. Working under the guidance of local unionists, and other adult 'role models,' was intended to instill greater discipline in the young participants, as well as encouraging their personal and social development, and promoting a wider sense of civic pride among Watts' younger generation. Programmes like these also took youngsters off the street during the school summer holidays. The intention was clear: it was a programme aimed at ensuring that Watts' youth would be engaged in the business of repairing and beautifying their neighbourhood rather than tearing it down. Perhaps more significantly, as Bauman has explained, the CCC became a vehicle for the building of racial pride among local youth who explicitly appropriated the symbols and language of Black Power in their work. Through programmes like CCC, WLCAC's dedication to redeveloping and revamping South Central Los Angeles resulted in the creation of eleven urban parks (converted from vacant lots,) numerous playgrounds, senior-citizens and neighbourhood centres, the renovation of local properties, as well as the planting over 22,000 trees in the local area too.[122] Not unlike Restoration's CHIP scheme, local people (and, in particular, local youth) were actively engaged in the rehabilitation and beautification of their neighbourhoods.

As WLCAC grew, its impressive track record attracted funding from both the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, allowing further expansion. The organization's youth-focused jobs training and education programme led to the creation of the $2.5 million Urban Residential Educational Center (UREC) in the nearby town of Saugus, forty miles from downtown Los Angeles, with Department of Labor, union, and private foundation funds. Accredited by the Los Angeles City Schools system, UREC was vocational training and education centre which offered courses in 'business, automobile mechanics and body repair, culinary arts, horticulture, and stationary engineering.' The organization's youth-oriented programmes were intended, they explained, to 'give enrollees the chance to see what being part of the American structure is like, and to begin to lift their sights beyond their narrow lives in the ghetto into new lifestyles and opportunities.'[123]

[122] Bauman, p.77-79; Marshall Lowe, 'WLCAC: Changing Face of Community', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 20, 1971, p.D1.
[123] Black Panther Party Collections, Box 2, Folder 'Watts 1960s', 'Watts Labor Community Action Committee' brochure n.d. (1972).

In 1971, Bauman explains, WLCAC was designated as a CDC by the state OEO and broadened its programme to include housing and local business development. An Assembly Bill, passed in 1968 and authored by local black politician Leon Ralph, enabled WLCAC's housing construction arm, the Greater Watts Development Corporation (GWDC), to initiate a Housing Replacement Project designed to help relocate low-income residents displaced from their homes by state highway construction projects. As the new 'Century Freeway' was being built during 1971-1972, GWDC began to build replacement low-income homes for the affected residents.[124] Their first steps in housing began with using a state grant to build thirty new homes in 1971, while a low-interest $2 million loan from Chrysler Corporation-UAW in 1972 allowed the organization to expand its construction program.[125]

Elsewhere in South Central, Operation Bootstrap built the Honeycomb Child Development Center which, as sociologist Russell Ellis has explained, was created as 'a place where the children of the ghetto […] could be cared for, find strong black identities, and get an educational head start on the public school system.'[126] OB also offered a number of educational courses for local school children which focused on the improvement of all aspects of literacy and public speaking, mathematics and computational skills, social dynamics, civics, and black history and culture. Classes in Swahili were also run too.[127] Indeed, as we will see in the following chapter, the organization lent strong support to local students' demands for educational reform, not only running the black history courses (that local students wanted and which were absent from local school curricula) but also providing the physical space for students to meet, plan their protests, and parley with school officials. Furthermore, Smith and Hall later funded the creation of a Black Studies department at local Irvine College from the proceeds of one of its most successful business ventures, Shindana Toys.[128]

Economic nationalism – as a route to creating jobs, building a local economic base, and improving local conditions – was another key underlying principle and concern of all these organizations too. In Harlem, CORE leader Roy Innis was an important influence within HCC, and he was keen for it to reflect his own preoccupation with economic nationalism, a stance which characterized CORE under his leadership too. Economic development, as Innis later argued, should not be narrowly defined as purely 'black capitalism' but, rather was 'the creation and acquisition of

[124] Marshall Lowe, 'WLCAC: Changing Face of Community', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 20, 1971, p.D1.
[125] Bauman, p.74-75.
[126] William Russell Ellis, *People making places: episodes in participation, 1964-1984* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, 1987).p. 172-173.
[127] 'Ruth Warrick Teaches Trainees in Bootstrap's Self-Help Course' *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 24, 1966, p.C8; Charles E. Brown, 'Operation Bootstrap Prepares', *Jet*, December 21, 1967 p.16-22.
[128] Barry Grier, 'Whites Surpass Blacks in Purchasing "Black Doll"' *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 31, 1973, p.5.

capital instruments by means of which we can maximize our economic interest.' The development of black business was, therefore, fundamentally tied to greater self-determination and economic power for the community as a whole, and not just the individual.[129]

Following the path set down by Innis, HCC strived to develop a local black economic base by gaining control of businesses and the jobs they held, as well as increasing black property ownership in Harlem; a community long dominated by the interests of outsiders. By the early 1960s, 96 percent of Harlem's residential and 80 percent of its commercial properties were owned by individuals or companies from outside the community. It was not until 1964 that an African American owned a commercial property on 125th Street, Harlem's main business artery. The economic underdevelopment of Harlem was also predicated on the widespread poverty among its residents (one third were on the city's welfare rolls,) and the fact that most Harlem residents who did have a job worked outside the area. As a consequence, money constantly flowed out of Harlem, while little flowed in. HCC was intended to reverse that trend. By the late 1970s, HCC had become the largest owner of real estate on 125th Street. They also committed themselves to developing relationships with banks in order to attract greater capital investment in to the area. Both HCC and CAEHT explicitly supported Freedom National Bank – Harlem's only black-owned bank – by holding a majority (or, in the case of CAEHT, all) of their accounts with them. Throughout the 1970s, greater access to finance allowed HCC to acquire a number of profitable, multi-million dollar turnover businesses, retain them in Harlem, increase their profitability, and expand their operations, creating more employment opportunities for local blacks in the process. After eleven years of operation, HCC came to manage fifteen different businesses and its assets had grown from less than $50,000 in 1967 to over $28 million by 1978.[130] In a faltering national economy, and while American manufacturing in particular declined, HCC's business portfolio helped to keep jobs in Harlem that might otherwise have been lost.

WLCAC's outlook was founded on the principle that 'economic power is the first step on the long road to community stability and personal opportunity,' and creating a more productive and positive financial climate in South Central dominated the organization's activities. For example, in 1967, WLCAC set up a credit union and consumer advice centre that, like Westminster's, brought affordable credit options to locals who had historically been denied them. In mid-1968, at the same time that the Los Angeles BPP was meeting with the Oakland-based national party leaders like

[129] Roy Innis, 'Separatist Economics: A New Social Contract', 1969, in *Modern Black Nationalism: From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan* ed. by William L. Van Deburg (New York: New York University Press, 1997) pp.176-181 (p. 179).
[130] 'Freedom Bank Seeks More "Big" Depositors', *New York Amsterdam Times,* June 18, 1966, p.14; 'For the Harlem Commonwealth Council Growing Up Means Buying Up', *Black Enterprise*, November 1978, p.62, 65, 67.

Newton, Cleaver, Hilliard, and Seale and discussing plans to set up and operate various black-owned and run 'cooperative "service" businesses, laundries, and grocery stores,' WLCAC was already in the process of doing exactly that. Sharing the Panther's vision of cooperative black business ventures, by the early 1970s WLCAC had created a number of community-owned businesses which employed local people. Among these were two service stations, two restaurants, a farm, seven supermarkets, a landscaping company, [and] a construction company…' Run as a non-profit enterprise, all monies earned from WLCAC's commercial operations were invested back into their programmes.[131]

Many of WLCAC's businesses were also intended to make Watts as self-sufficient as possible as well as providing jobs. In 1967 they acquired a defunct egg ranch and turned it into fully operational poultry farm business. In 1969, they expanded operations at their Saugus base (home of the UREC) to include a 200 acre farm producing a wide range of vegetables and an enlarged poultry farm (triple its original size and output,) as well as starting a cattle ranch. By selling their produce in the WLCAC's supermarkets and restaurants in the black community, the organization was able to offer a cheaper, better quality, and fresher alternative to the food traditionally available in ghetto food stores. Moreover, WLCAC's agricultural operations were also intended to open up new economic opportunities for local residents who could gain practical 'experience in the actual operations of commercial farming.'[132] In 1972, the Ford Foundation provided extra funding to allow WLCAC to begin its own minority business investment and development corporation to offer the same support opportunities for black businesses in Watts as Restoration and HCC had been doing in New York for several years.[133]

One of WLCAC's most important contributions to the local community was the work done by Ted Watkins in coordinating and advancing existing outline plans for the creation of a hospital in the Watts-Willowbrook area of South Los Angeles. With no such facilities in a fifteen mile radius, the hospital plans promise to meet a critical need and a longstanding community ambition. Opening its doors in 1971, Watkins had also intended the new hospital – the Martin Luther King Jr., Medical Center – to be an important source of jobs for local people. To that end, WLCAC developed a 140 acre site next to the hospital on which low-income housing, a shopping centre, and community recreational facilities were established, ensuring the availability of affordable housing close to the

[131] Black Panther Party Collections, box 2, Folder 'Watts 1960s', 'Watts Labor Community Action Committee' brochure n.d. (1972); Bauman, p.74; Berkeley, UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library, Eldridge Cleaver Papers, 1963-1988, carton 27, folder 9, Confidential FBI Internal Memorandum, June 24, 1968, p.3.
[132] Black Panther Party Collections, box 2, Folder 'Watts 1960s', 'Watts Labor Community Action Committee' brochure n.d. (1972).
[133] Bauman, p.74-75.

hospital for its employees. Once the plans for the creation of a local hospital had been confirmed, WLCAC also ensured that a number of para-medical and related courses were added to the UREC curriculum, helping prepare local youth to take up employment opportunities at the site upon completion. Watkins' vision would become reality. As Bauman explains, to date 'more Watts residents have worked there [the MLK hospital] than for any other private or public employer in the area.'[134]

In Los Angeles, in particular, these organizations also made a substantial contribution to efforts to boost local and racial pride through their programmes which translated into local community's social and cultural life. WLCAC built the Watts Happening Coffeehouse, which became a focal point of local black culture as a forum for the performance and discussion of African American music, poetry, art, and literature. The Watts Writer's Workshop, which had begun life under Westminster, later relocated to Watts Happening Coffeehouse before closing in 1970.[135] OB ran a community workshop theatre, which toured the state, and performed plays exploring racial inequality and black life in American society. The involvement of the local community was encouraged too, through free arts and drama classes held by theatre staff.[136] In June 1969, OB refurbished and reopened the Bill Robinson Theatre on Central Avenue, the last operational cinema in the whole of South Central, which had been closed for many years.[137]

Perhaps the most significant contribution WLCAC and OB made in this respect, though, was their involvement in establishing the annual Watts Summer Festival, alongside a number of other local organizations including Westminster, and a number of militant local black nationalist organizations including Ron Karenga's US Organization and Tommy Jacquette's Self-Leadership for All Nationalities Today (SLANT).[138] Beginning in August 1966, on the first anniversary of the riots, the festival was intended as sign of the area's rebirth, and a celebration of African American culture and heritage that went on to become one of the biggest black events in the whole country, with a largest attendance estimated to have been 130,000 in 1967. Although focused primarily on the performance of black music and art, the festival, as historian Bruce Tyler has explained, was also attended by a wide range of employers with recruitment booths, including many city and government agencies (including the traditionally white Police and Fire departments.) Moreover, Tyler continues, the festival was a boon for black business, and awash with vendors selling a range

[134] Bauman, p.76; Ford Foundation Papers, Box 2, Folder 1, Ford Foundation Policy Paper, *Community Development Corporations: A strategy for depressed urban and rural areas* (Ford Foundation, New York, 1972) p.21; Marshall Lowe, 'WLCAC: Changing Face of Community', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 20, 1971, p.D1.
[135] Widener, p.97.
[136] See, for example: 'Community Calendar', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 21, 1967, p. B10.
[137] 'Business-Financial News' *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 5, 1969, p. C7.
[138] Bauman, p.80-81.

of goods, including 'candy, ice cream cones, African jewelry, clothes, books, black arts and crafts, barbeque, hot dogs, juice, African clothing and handiworks.' Though it experienced a decline during the second half of the 1970s, it was revived in the 1980s and continues to this day, a lasting symbol of the revival of cultural pride that the Black Power movement brought in African American communities across the nation.[139]

As Restoration demonstrated, the promotion of racial pride and black culture and heritage could also be inextricably tied to the development of businesses. OB, in particular, was a leading exponent of this approach. For example, in late 1967, OB supported former jobs training graduate Rosana Wright in the expansion of her design company 'The Boutique' which focused on creating women's fashion inspired by traditional African designs and materials. 'African culture and black heritage have been lost in our society' Wright explained, 'and The Boutique is trying to help regain it.'[140] In October 1968, in a venture supported by prominent toy manufacturer Mattel Inc., Operation Bootstrap created Shindana (Swahili for 'competitor') Toys, a company which produced black dolls and toys. Mattel provided technical and financial support during the first year of operation, before helping OB obtain a $200,000 start-up loan from Chase Manhattan bank and beginning a life of independence. Based in a factory in Watts and employing local, predominantly unskilled, residents, a year into operations they had made $130,000 sales and distributed all over the U.S. With plans in place to expand their product into overseas markets, Hall held a birthday celebration (for 'Baby Nancy,' their star product) for the company to highlight its achievements which, he argued, proved that 'black people can make it in the business world, and that more corporations should give black men opportunity by investing money and training to let them do their thing.'[141] By the end of 1971, Lou Smith reported that they had U.S. sales totaling just over $1.5 million, and had opened distribution agencies in Houston, Chicago and New York. As a non-profit subsidiary of Operation Bootstrap, the money earned from Shindana's sales was all ploughed back into the various programmes that Bootstrap (itself a non-profit CDC) ran.[142]

At the heart of Shindana's business plan was a fundamental emphasis on racial pride. Whereas previously black dolls were, Smith explained, 'just repainted white dolls' (i.e. black in colour but Caucasian in appearance,) Shindana was the first company to make dolls with authentic black features. The numerous dolls and toys that the company produced were an example of the growing racial and cultural pride among African Americans, as well as a conscious effort to

[139] Bruce M. Tyler, 'The Rise and Decline of the Watts Summer Festival, 1965-1986' *American Studies*, Vol. 31, No.2, (Fall, 1990) pp. 61-81 (p.64, 61); Bauman, p.84; Widener, pp.108-109, 157.
[140] Mary Crosby, 'Africa Spreads Her Wings in Fashion', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 7, 1967, p.D1.
[141] 'Happy Birthday To Shindana', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 16, 1969, p. D1.
[142] 'Toy Making Profitable for Bootstrap Company', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 23, 1971, p.A3.

capitalize on it. They were specifically intended to give black children a positive self-image, as well as affirming prominent aspects of changing black culture during the Black Power-era. For instance, the most popular girls' toy was the talking 'Tamu' Doll (meaning 'sweet' in Swahili) which was advertised as having 'a real rooted natural afro hairstyle' and a catch phrase of 'Can you dig it?' They would eventually produce 17 different dolls that represented a wide range of black figures, both male and female, including military men, athletes, musicians, and other entertainment stars. Other Shindana products were also significant for their cultural implications. Some of the best-selling items were the 'Feel-The-Soul' and 'The Jackson-5' board games, featuring black music stars of the period, and the 'Afro-American History Mystery Game' and 'The Black Experience' game, which invited youngsters to learn about black history and 'live through the setbacks as well as the steps forward' as they played.[143]

In Smith's view, the pursuit of Black Power was inseparable from the development of black businesses. In a statement that drew on the message of men like Malcolm X and Floyd McKissick, Lou Smith wrote in an 'Open Letter to Black Power Organizations':

> We must use the system's weapon against it. It is a must that we establish our own economic base from which to finance our struggle. […] Black Power organizations, if they have any hope of surviving, let alone being an influence, must broaden their base to include people who have ideas along economic lines. Our initial ventures should be things directly relating to the black revolution, and should be small enough in the beginning to give some assurance of success. Bar-B-Que pits, Afro-American bookstores, soul food restaurants, and Afro barber shops are a few examples of what I am talking about. All the profits from these ventures should be used to finance the work of the organization as well as creating jobs for our ghetto-trapped brother. With the least amount of imagination you should be able to see how this would open doors to areas not yet explored by our movement. Industries with real growth potential could start to develop once we jump into the economic sea. From this type of thinking, avenues should start to appear that will lead us to where I think we should be headed – a society that allows black people to accumulate the material advantages of the middle-class value system. In short, we must inject the "soul" of the black community into the economic area.[144]

In this edict, Smith captured some of the middle-class oriented, moderate, and reformist (and gendered) essence that guided the economic development work done by OB, and the other organizations we have discussed. At the core of this lay a tacit acceptance that America's capitalist free market private enterprise system *could* be used to further the goal of social and economic equality and justice. This did not mean, however, that they all subscribed to a doctrinaire view of

[143] 'Toys that Build Pride', *Ebony* (November 1975) p. 137; Shindana Toys Advertisement, *Ebony* (November 1975) p.140
[144] Smith quoted in: William Russell Ellis, *People making places: episodes in participation, 1964-1984* (Berkeley: University of California, 1987) p.174-175.

capitalist business enterprise. Indeed, the use of non-profit business models and the reinvestment of money back in to new community programmes, institutions, and businesses, betrayed a pseudo anti-capitalist bent. However, at its root, it was this philosophy that made their vision of Black Power mainstream and which separated them from those organizations that articulated a more radical analysis of the American socio-economic order and privileged redistributive politics as the route to black empowerment. As such it was this philosophy that won them the support of mainstream white politicians, institutions, and businesses.

Limits and Legacies

Although judging these organizations in terms of success or failure is not the main aim here, their achievements must be put in context. Ultimately, their success remained limited for a number of reasons. In the longer term, private enterprise did not commit itself to the solution of urban poverty as Robert Kennedy had envisaged it would. In Bed-Stuy, and black inner-city communities across the nation, the level of private investment required to effect large-scale transformation never materialized. Even if it had, it would likely have taken generations of incremental change to remedy the underlying causes of black urban poverty, despite the era's optimistic political rhetoric predicting its swift elimination. Furthermore, as critics insisted, there was nothing to suggest that increased black capitalist enterprise would prove any more effective in solving black poverty than it had for white poverty. Indeed, economic nationalism among minority groups would always face the issue of a marketplace limited, theoretically, by the correspondent size of their population. Nevertheless, the organizations examined here helped to create, attract, and retain many thousands of jobs in Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and South Central Los Angeles, and brought substantial investment and improvement to their neighbourhoods too. However, poverty still persisted in those communities. As the state of the national economy worsened during the 1970s, and the American manufacturing sector experienced precipitous decline, the unfavorable financial climate made life increasingly difficult for all of them. The rise of the New Right within the national GOP, as Fergus has argued, brought pressure to bear on Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, and the Republican Party began to back away from their support of minority business in the mid-1970s, a process that was sealed by the election of Ronald Reagan to the White House in 1980.[145] In the absence of large-

[145] Fergus, 'Black Power, Soft Power', pp.171-174.

scale private sector involvement this meant a severe reduction in funds for most CDCs, and spelled the end for many others.[146]

Despite these severe challenges, all these organizations remained committed to making a difference to their communities during a financially challenging period, from the mid-to-late 1970s onwards, in which political hostility to their aims and methods increased. Not all urban African American communities were as fortunate. Indeed Restoration proved to be a path breaker and its legacy lasts far beyond Brooklyn to this day. Beyond HCC and WLCAC, the model Restoration set has been followed by many others, and estimates suggest there could be as many as 8,000 CDCs currently operating in the United States. The most recent national census of CDCs in America, in 2005, stated that existing CDCs have been responsible for the creation of 774,000 jobs and for housing production totaling over 1.25 million units. Perhaps more significantly, as the report suggested, 'much of what CDCs do – stabilize communities, change a negative dynamic, give residents hope for the future – cannot be captured by statistics.'[147]

The continued vitality of organizations like these is significant for a number of other reasons. First, many are still in operation today, and nearly half a century later they remind us that the fight for black advancement, which took many forms and persisted well beyond the 1970s, is not yet finished. Only Operation Bootstrap did not survive the 1980s, suffering badly during the economic downturn and following the tragic deaths of the organization's founders in the mid-1970s.[148] Of the others, Restoration is still a vibrant part of Bed-Stuy's social and economic life. CAEHT remains in operation, and a number of the institutions and organizations that it gave rise to under Alice Kornegay's leadership were still playing a vital part in East Harlem community life when she passed away in 1996, and they continue to do so today. Though largely absent from the history books, Kornegay's lifetime of achievement and community service is recognized today by a playground in a park on Harlem River Drive, East Harlem, which bears her name.[149] HCC continues to thrive, and has a significant retail and residential property portfolio in Harlem, and runs, amongst other things: a minority business entrepreneurship scheme; a healthcare academic scholarship

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[146] Kimberley Johnson, 'Community Development Corporations, Participation, and Accountability: The Harlem Urban Development Corporation and the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 594, (July 2004), pp.109-124 (p.121).
[147] Schmitt, p.166; 'Reaching New Heights: Trends and Achievements of Community-Based Development Organizations," 5th National Community Development Census, National Congress for Community and Economic Development, p.4, <http://www.ncced.org/documents/NCCEDCensus2005FINALReport.pdf> [Accessed 05/07/2012].
[148] Ellis, pp.175-178. Robert Hall died following an illness in 1973, while Lou Smith was killed in a car accident in 1976.
[149] 'Alice Kornegay Triangle' May 05, 1998.<http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/historical-signs/listings?id=6397> [Accessed 05/06/2012].

programme; a free adult education service; and an afterschool recreational and educational programme for local children.[150] They are also responsible for the building of Harlem USA, a commercial centre housing numerous shops, restaurants, banks, and a nine-screen cinema, which is one of Harlem's biggest economic success stories of the last decade.[151]

In Los Angeles, WLCAC remains a major community institution, running numerous cultural programmes, youth oriented and educational work schemes, extensive local property management (both residential and commercial) and local social services including: building maintenance; elderly care; a highly affordable local transportation system; and a young offenders rehabilitation programme. In April 2012, the organization was boosted by the award of a $5 million grant from the state government to build an urban farm and community centre in central Watts.[152] In 1990, Westminster, one of the largest poverty agencies in Los Angeles with an annual operating budget of $1.6 million, seventy employees and numerous community facilities, moved into housing development. Working with a local black-owned construction company, they built a $10 million dollar 130 unit new housing development in Watts, the largest such development in the area since the Second World War.[153] As such these organizations represent perhaps the most vital, concrete legacy of the civil rights-Black Power era in their communities today. They also complicate conventional narratives of black urban decline during the final decades of the twentieth century which are, understandably, dominated by the hyper segregation of cities and suburbs, inner-city crack epidemics, gang warfare and skyrocketing murder rates, mass incarceration, failing schools, and the persistence, and even deeper entrenchment, of endemic cyclical poverty.[154] In these tremendously difficult circumstances, these organizations continued to fight for urban improvement and to ease the socio-economic pressures of life in the ghetto.

The late 1960s and 1970s (especially the first half of the decade) represented the heyday of these organizations, as they flourished in the window of opportunity between the arrival of new public policies in the mid-to-late 1960s and the election of Reagan to the White House in 1980. During that period, they capitalized on the efforts of elected officials and liberal foundations to deal with the urban crisis, using the resources on offer to articulate their own visions for black

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[150] See, online: <http://www.harlemcommonwealth.org/programs.htm#scholarship> [Accessed 17/04/2013].
[151] See, online <http://www.gridproperties.com/projects-harlemusa.html> [Accessed 17/04/2013].
[152] See, online: <http://wlcac.wordpress.com/2012/04/11/wlcac-wins-4-9-million-prop-84-california-state-parks-award/> Accessed 31/05/2012; For WLCAC's current programmes see, online: <http://www.wlcac.org/our-work.htm> [Accessed 17/04/2013].
[153] Glenn F. Bunting, '"Amazing Grace" Hits Rough Waters', *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1990, Online: <http://articles.latimes.com/1990-09-05/local/me-462_1_amazing-grace> [Accessed 17/04/2013].
[154] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 91 No. 4, (March 2005), pp.1233-1263 (p.1261).

advancement, and targeting some of the biggest problems ghetto communities faced, and which existing measures had failed adequately address. As such, these organizations reveal how the negotiation of Black Power unfolded at the local level. Urban regeneration schemes rehabilitated declining properties, built and sponsored new housing, increased black home ownership, and supplanted the poisonous tenant-landlord relationship that many ghetto residents endured. Other programmes designed to create vibrant commercial urban environments helped grow local black economic strength through the expansion of employment opportunities and business ownership. Efforts to alter discriminatory patterns of lending brought a widening of financial options to many who had historically been denied them. These kinds of programmes were simultaneously suffused with an emphasis on black pride, the promotion of racial unity, and the celebration of black history and culture. Last, but not least, the creation of new local institutions helped to remake urban environments and bring new dimensions to community life. In the process they came to embody a type of Black Power in their communities which, though modest in scope, nevertheless helped to push back against the myriad disadvantages that their residents faced. Their intended value as a symbol of black progress should not be forgotten either. As Congressman Augustus Hawkins explained of Ujima, (another black-owned and run non-profit development corporation set up in South Central in 1970 which built housing, created and supported local commercial ventures, and provided local services) such a development would be 'a bright and inspirational star for black people. It will be a symbol that our black children can identify with and be proud of.' Furthermore, as 'a beautiful black movement,' he continued, Ujima would be 'a symbol of black power… a ray of hope that guarantees the provision of green power, a necessary source if black power is to have significance. It is a symbol that can alter the pattern of exploitation that has historically divided black people and insured a background of poverty and illiteracy.'[155]

Operating at the intersection of Black Power, white politicians and institutions, and the urban crisis, these organizations highlight the interpenetrative relationship between these forces in the mainstreaming of Black Power. The relative success of these organizations during the late 1960s and 1970s represented a blueprint for black advancement that resulted from a subtle negotiation of the increasingly turbulent waters of national politics, and the broader battle between liberals and conservatives for the soul of America, and the class and gender biases that rested at the heart of the mainstream vision of Black Power they represented. As we will see in chapter four, once African Americans began to win elective office these same forces would combine to shape the character of black political power, and its limits and dimensions. In the following chapter, however, we turn our attention to local battles over public education which unfolded in the three cities. Just as the

[155] Augustus Hawkins, 'Ujima – Black Ownership', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 4, 1969, p. A6.

organizations explored in this chapter highlight the extent to which the trajectory of black empowerment was vitally shaped by white politicians, public policy, the shifting terrain of racial and economic politics, and gender, the same proved true in efforts to control and remake the apparatus and institutions of inner-city education too.

Chapter Three: Black Power and Battles over Education

On the afternoon of Wednesday 14th June, 1967, local NAACP branch head Celes King III arrived at Manual Arts High School, a virtually all-black city school in South Central Los Angeles, asking to speak to Robert Denahy, the school's white principal. King wanted to discuss the 'F' grade recently awarded to Angela Bates, one of the school's African American students, by her white English teacher, Mary Covington. As things stood, the grade would prevent Bates from graduating that school year. With the ceremony just over a week away, King asked the school to reconsider, and to award Miss Bates a 'D' grade, (the lowest passing mark,) which would qualify her for graduation. The student, he was told, had failed to apply herself sufficiently, and did not deserve a higher mark. The 'F' grade, Principal Denahy and Miss Covington explained, was final. Upon this news, King left, urging them once more to reconsider and warning that, if they chose not to cooperate, 'there are other ways to handle this problem'. In a follow-up letter sent later the same day, King reiterated his desire to see Miss Bates 'receive her diploma' at the impending graduation ceremony. 'In my judgment,' he insisted, 'a complementary 'D' grade would be a correct and reasonable designation'. Aside of her English class, he argued, the student had done well, and that should be recognized 'even if Miss Covington does continue to use her standards and insists on a failing grade.' Unmoved, Principal Denahy replied that 'there is nothing I can do about it. Miss Covington is credentialed and her grade stands.'[1]

The following week, just two days before the graduation ceremony, four black men arrived at the school demanding to see Principal Denahy. All recognized local Black Power militants (three members of the Community Alert Patrol along with Westminster's Tommy Jacquette), they made their way past security guards to try and find the principal. Once in front of Denahy, they warned him that Angela Bates would graduate 'no matter what.' 'We don't give a damn what you or the school board say. If you want trouble, you can have it.' Concerned school science teacher Mrs Georgia Logan decided to visit Celes King, who she knew as a member of the local NAACP. Reporting back to her fellow Manual Arts teaching staff, Logan explained that King had told her that 'he had sent the four men and that a "bigger wrecking crew was available if necessary"'. Manual Arts, he suggested 'needed a riot because the Principal does not communicate with the people.' Moreover, King explained, Angela Bates's mother had been the victim of a cross-burning

[1] NAACP Western Regional Office Records, carton 15, folder 47, Letter from Celes King III to Robert Denahy, June 14, 1967; *Ibid.*, Memo from the Office of Principal Denahy 19th June 1967.

after moving in to previously white sections of town, and her daughter's failure to graduate would be another injustice brought against the family by whites that would not be tolerated.[2]

Rumours that a riot at the school was planned for the graduation ceremony quickly gathered steam, prompting local school board official Isaac McClelland and the Mayor's Human Relations Director Leon Whaley to intervene. During a phone call with the NAACP leader, King told McClelland it was a matter of 'white vs black', that Angela Bates 'would graduate', and that he had the backing of 'seventeen militant groups' and the community at-large. King's tactics, and the threat of rioting, worked. Still haunted by the spectre of the August 1965 Watts riots, and strongly committed to avoiding racial conflict at the school, Whaley convinced the Board of Education to order that Bates be passed for graduation, despite the objections of the school's predominantly white teaching staff. For King and his supporters in the community, it was a victory over the school's white administrators who they had long deemed to be unresponsive to the community's concerns. For the teachers, it was a capitulation to the threat of violence from local militants seeking to encroach on teachers' professional prerogatives, which endangered the education system in the process.[3]

Racial tensions at Manual Arts were part of the ongoing struggle of urban blacks to win control over the white-dominated public institutions. In some cities, public schools were an important focal point of that power struggle. Generally characterized by sharp segregation, dilapidated buildings, outmoded learning resources, dangerously overcrowded classrooms, and academic underperformance, schools in ghetto communities were a source of much concern for their black residents. Under the purview of unhappy, demotivated, – and sometimes overtly racist – whites, for many blacks, public schools stood as monuments to America's still unfulfilled promise of racial justice and equality for all its citizens. Exploring how the black fight against educational inequality unfolded in New York, Los Angeles, and Atlanta, this chapter develops a number of the major themes of this thesis: the intimate relationship between public policy and black community activism; the impact and development of Black Power ideology at the local level; the strength of white resistance to African American's transformative and redistributive solutions to inequality; and the importance of class interest in shaping the direction of black advancement and socio-political change.

[2] NAACP Western Regional Office Records, carton 15, folder 47, 'A Chronological List of the Events in the Angela Bates Graduation Case, As Compiled by the Manual Arts Faculty Association', June 26, 1967, p.1-4.
[3] *Ibid.*, 'Report on the Meeting with the Los Angeles City School Board and Representatives of the Manual Arts Faculty Association', June 26, 1967, p.1-2.

Throughout the so-called 'classical phase' of the civil rights movement, from the mid-1950s through the mid-1960s, an integrationist civil rights movement agenda and protest tradition dominated education activism in all three cities. This agenda grew from the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education, Topeka* in May 1954 which outlawed segregated schooling. The core assumption underpinning the NAACP's victory in the case was that for blacks to receive a quality, positive education they needed access to integrated schools. Enshrined in the court's ruling, this idea shaped the course of black education activism for decades to come.[4] However, African Americans in New York, Los Angeles, and Atlanta came to challenge this orthodoxy in the face of changing intellectual currents within the wider black freedom struggle, the hardening of white resistance, and the opening up of political opportunity. During the second half of the 1960s, the arrival of the War on Poverty and the emergence of the Black Power movement brought forth a new concept for improving black children's education: community control of local schools. First developed and articulated in New York over the course of 1966, demands for community control represented an alternative approach to improving black education which reflected, and was shaped by, the growing strength of increasingly militant calls for black political and economic empowerment.

In New York and Los Angeles in the mid-to-late 1960s, African American parents, activists, and students presented community control as a cure for the apparent sickness of their public schools. Turning control of school policy, hiring, spending and curriculum over to local parents and community groups would, they believed, democratize the education process, make teachers and staff more responsive, eradicate racism in their schools, and improve black children's emotional and educational experiences. Community control would empower minority communities, allowing them to make the institutions of local education more relevant to their own cultures and values, and to redirect the economic benefits of control over school finances locally. In Atlanta, where failing ghetto schools were already largely under the control of black teachers, grassroots education activism – spearheaded by local black welfare mothers – instead identified school desegregation and busing as the best way to secure a better education for their children. On the other hand, there was broad concern among Atlanta's black middle-class and elite over the prospect of integration and busing which were seen as a threat to the high quality black schools which served their well-heeled neighbourhoods. Furthermore, with many of this group drawn from the city's large pool of black education professionals, school desegregation seemed to threaten their personal livelihoods, as well as their children's educations. These concerns led many of them came to instead endorse an anti-integrationist, narrow, class-interest based blueprint for educational change.

[4] Raymond Wolters, *Race and Education, 1954 – 2007* (Columbia, MI: University of Missouri Press, 2008) p.3.

The struggles over public education in all three cities are instructive. In their own ways, they all highlight the broad and pervasive influence of Black Power as a philosophy and organizing tool. In New York and Los Angeles, community control activism blurred the lines traditionally drawn between civil rights and Black Power, and between black moderates and militants. In both cities, civil rights and Black Power advocates joined with students, parent associations, antipoverty workers, and community activists of all stripes. As such, they offer fascinating examples of the flexibility and wide appeal of Black Power ideology and of the syncretic, pragmatic approach of the local community activists. Furthermore, events in both cities demonstrate how Black Power as a philosophy and movement shaped grassroots activism, and interacted with mainstream politics and institutions.

Across New York and Los Angeles, battles for community control also brought African Americans together with Puerto Ricans, Asian Americans, and Chicanos, highlighting the interconnections and overlaps between the black freedom struggle and other racial liberation movements. In Atlanta, although grassroots education activists were pursuing an explicitly integrationist agenda, their fight for school desegregation emerged from a broader fight for racial and economic justice that was shaped by the local community's own vision of Black Power. It was also the product of unusual interracial cooperation between local blacks, white student volunteers, and the white Catholic clergy who ran the social service and community support centre in which was based and later flourished. Taken together, these movements challenge us to reconsider traditional assumptions about the social, racial, and organizational dimensions of civil rights-Black Power-era community activism.

The trajectory of the different grassroots movements in each of the three cities highlights how the negotiation, through public policy, of Black Power (and the means through which African Americans could achieve the goals that Black Power broadly encompassed) unfolded at the local level. Each case underlines the broader conclusion of this thesis: that the course of black empowerment and socio-economic change was most powerfully shaped by mainstream white interests and their representatives. As a transformative, grass-roots inspired solution founded upon the redistribution of power from established authorities to poor ghetto blacks, community control activism in New York and Los Angeles ultimately foundered against the rock of white opposition. As the Angela Bates episode illustrated, demands for school reform could become characterized by racial militancy, community anger, and confrontation, and fraught and tense scenes became familiar in schools in both cities in the late 1960s. Teachers and school administrators – supported by conservative politicians – were not willing to acquiesce and allow their sphere of professional

authority and expertise to be infringed. In both cities, their resistance proved decisive in defining the limits of school reform and protecting the status quo. The fleeting nature of community control's ascendancy reflected the ability of entrenched white interests to curb and dictate the boundaries of black empowerment. Events in Atlanta shed a different light on this phenomenon. Negotiations between the city's elites produced an biracial agreement over school reform that highlighted the divergent class interests in the black community. In return for abandoning the prospect of further school desegregation and busing – solutions that were favoured by a majority of the city's poor and working-class blacks – Atlanta's black establishment secured administrative control of the city's school system and the high ranking jobs it offered, and protecting middle-class black schools in the process.

The success of Atlanta's white power structure in exploiting class divisions within the black community to further the narrow class interests of economic elites, both white and black, demonstrates how (as discussed in chapter two) certain visions of, and approaches to, black empowerment characterized mainstream whites' attempts to define the political opportunities for racial change. These habitually appealed to the values and interests of (and benefitted most) middle-class and elite blacks, and ultimately reinforced the class and gendered intra-racial dynamics of an oppressive socio-economic order. Despite their legal challenges, Atlanta's grassroots and community based struggle for integrated schooling, dominated by local female welfare and tenants' rights activists, was unable to prevent the compromise over school policy. Their vision of education reform which, like that of community control activists in New York and Los Angeles, sought black empowerment and threatened existing white authority and interests through transformative political change, was fundamental to their defeat. As such, this chapter adds greater depth to the major arguments that are carried throughout this thesis. Studying the course of education activism in each of the three cities reveals the intimate relationship between black community activism, public policy, and Black Power ideology. Moreover, the critical role played by mainstream white politicians, institutions, and organizations in shaping the course and limits of change and black empowerment is unmistakable.

In each city, the arc of grassroots education activism was tied to the changing landscapes of local politics and school desegregation jurisprudence. After navigating the emergence of these movements from the milieu of civil rights activism, litigation, and antipoverty organizing I then explore their development and their relationship to the emergence of Black Power organizing in greater depth. Drawing primarily on relevant scholarship, local media, oral histories, and organizational and governmental records, discussion of community control activism in New York

and Los Angeles builds on existing historiography by not only placing them into a comparative framework, but by integrating them in a broader narrative of community control and revealing their interconnected trajectories. After unpacking their broader significance for our understanding of Black Power organizing, community activism, and public policy, attention is then turned to events in Atlanta where analysis of the legal framework of city elite's school desegregation politics is combined with an exploration of the grassroots community activism that challenged it. Utilizing a rich new collection of oral histories and papers from activists and volunteers associated with the local black community's fight for social justice and their own vision of Black Power, discussion of Atlanta illustrates both the intra-racial class dynamics of the city's black freedom struggle, and its interracial organizational foundations. We begin by exploring the forces which shaped segregated schooling, African Americans' existing civil rights remedies for improving urban education, and their ongoing efforts to define the scope of education policy.

The Pursuit of Integration

The parlous state of inner-city education had its roots in the endemic discrimination and the seismic demographic shifts which had transformed the nation's socio-economic and racial geography, and accelerated urban decline in the decades following the Second World War. White flight to the suburbs, and the resulting creation of economically depressed and overcrowded inner-city black ghettoes, had produced widespread residential segregation. With school catchment areas fundamentally tied to, and reflective of, housing patterns, this racial separation was replicated in many of the nation's classrooms. Indeed, much white flight was motivated by a desire to avoid integrated education. As historian Kenneth Jackson has suggested, the *Brown* decision had inclined 'millions of families [to] move out of the city "for the kids" and especially the […] superiority of smaller and more homogenous suburban school systems.' There they hoped to find 'relief from the pervasive fear of racial integration and its two presumed bedfellows – interracial violence and interracial sex.'[5] As black and other nonwhite children became concentrated in inner-city public schools, an increasing number of their white counterparts attended schools in their outlying suburban neighborhoods which usually had few, if any, minority students.

As white flight and deindustrialization widened the wealth gap between black inner-city and white suburban communities, the system for financing public education helped translate and

[5] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, p.289-290.

perpetuate that inequality into education too. As school districts were funded primarily from local tax revenues, the economic health and resources of a community was clearly reflected in the performance of its public schools. Suburban whites often sent their children to well-funded, modern, local public schools with appropriate enrollment levels, where students generally performed well under high quality, motivated, teaching staff. The reality for most black parents in ghetto communities was quite different. With class sizes sometimes double those in white schools, and a student population with a high percentage of underprivileged (and often educationally disadvantaged) children, teachers' primary concern would often be keeping order in the classroom ahead of teaching. With little money to repair aging facilities or update teaching materials, children in these schools often received outmoded instruction in dilapidated and crumbling school buildings. To cope with severe overcrowding, ghetto schools often divided the day into morning and afternoon sessions, and split the student body between the two. Under this arrangement, known as 'double sessions', children effectively received half of the schooling that children in properly subscribed white suburban schools did. Commonplace in his community, it was, Watts NAACP leader Edward Warren (in language reminiscent of Black Power radicals) argued, a 'deplorable' practice tantamount to 'educational genocide' against local black children.[6] For many parents – especially single mothers on welfare – double sessions not only impacted on their child's education but also meant that childcare demanded more of their time, potentially restricting their employment opportunities. Where children from poor communities needed the benefit of greater investment in educational resources they often received significantly less than children in wealthier communities whose need was generally less pressing.[7]

Given the intimate relationship between education and employment prospects, education assumed even greater significance in a postwar national economy and urban landscape transformed by the restructuring of industry, suburbanization, and modernization. Vast numbers of blue-collar industrial jobs had followed migrating whites from the city to the suburb. The relocation of US industry was followed in the 1970s by serious decline, with jobs in many sectors disappearing completely as a result of deindustrialization, rapid technological change, economic globalization, and the rise of international competition. As semi-skilled and unskilled jobs moved out of reach into the suburbs, or into obsolescence, the expansion of white-collar businesses produced an increasingly computerized, office-based, urban workplace. Numeracy and literacy became essential prerequisites for employment in this new environment. Understanding the importance of quality, modern education to their children's future chances for social mobility and economic security,

[6] NAACP Western Regional Office Records, Carton 15, Folder 13, Press Release, Watts Branch NAACP, June 7, 1967, p.1.
[7] Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, p.468.

many black parents were concerned with the standard of schooling their children received. The prohibitive cost of private education meant the only option for the vast majority of African Americans was sending their children to their local public schools. In urban ghetto communities, these institutions gave local parents few causes for optimism. The inadequacy of inner-city public education, combined with the high drop-out rates it produced, meant vast numbers of minority youngsters entered a changing job market without the necessary skills to compete for remunerative employment.[8] With such a chasm in quality and educational achievement between white and black schools, many African Americans understandably viewed integration of the nation's classrooms as the most direct route to securing a better education for black children.

Although historians have questioned the extent to which the *Brown* decision inspired the civil rights activism of the early 1960s, it certainly stimulated demands for school desegregation across the country, encouraging African Americans everywhere to push back against the provision of unequal education in their communities.[9] Following the ruling, psychologist Dr. Kenneth Clark, a Harlem resident who had himself testified before the court, excoriated New York's Board of Education for implementing policies which, he argued, had produced the segregated and underperforming schools attended by the vast majority of the city's black and other nonwhite children. Disproportionately staffed by inexperienced and substitute teachers, students in these schools, he charged, received woefully inadequate instruction and guidance.[10] Dr. Clark's public criticism shone the spotlight on the manifest racial inequalities within New York's education system, challenging the city's reputation, now under Democratic Mayor Robert Wagner, as a site of enlightened and progressive urban liberalism and harmonious race relations.[11]

In 1955, Reverend Milton Galamison, pastor of one of Brooklyn's most prestigious black churches, was elected chair of the local NAACP Schools Workshop, a multiracial community-level group consisting primarily of local parents. Their main goal, in a bid to improve teaching standards and the educational attainment of local children, was the desegregation of all the schools in Brooklyn's two largest black communities, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brownsville. A strong proponent of social justice, Galamison dedicated himself to the cause of school integration. Ultimately, as historian Daniel Perlstein has suggested, he became New York's 'preeminent civil rights leader' and the dominant figure in black efforts to bring racial equality to the city's school

[8] *Ibid*.,p.450.
[9] Clayborne Carson, 'Two Cheers for *Brown vs. Board of Education', Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 1, (June 2004) pp. 26-31 (p.27); See, Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, pp. 450-492.
[10] 'Study of Negroes in Schools Hailed', *New York Times*, July 15, 1954, p.23
[11] Clarence Taylor, 'Robert Wagner, Milton Galamison and the Challenge to New York Liberalism', *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 31, No.2, (July, 2007), Online: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/justice/downloads/pdf/robert_wagner.pdf.> [Accessed 26/08/2013]

system. Leaving the NAACP after a year, Galamison set up the Parents Workshop for Equality in New York Schools, a grassroots organization that held numerous demonstrations and rallies targeting the Board of Education and its members and petitioning for integration of the city's schools.[12]

Galamison and his acolytes targeted the Board of Education while other groups focused on the city's political leaders. In 1957, pioneering civil rights organizer Ella Baker, then head of the Education Committee of the NAACP's New York branch, organized Parents in Action Against Educational Discrimination (PAAED), a group made up of local blacks and Puerto Ricans. Demanding school integration and a greater role for parents in school policy formation, Baker and her allies demonstrated a broad vision that extended beyond a narrow interpretation of the *Brown* decision. As historian Barbara Ransby has argued, 'to insist that parents be empowered to define their children's education was a more substantive and radical demand than simply saying that black and white children should sit next to each other in class.' Their activism, Ransby suggests, represented the first steps of the struggle for community control that would flourish in the mid-to-late 1960s. However, despite numerous meetings with Mayor Wagner and several large demonstrations, PAAED were unable to convince City Hall to act on the concerns of nonwhite parents.[13] Where action was taken by the city's education officials in the years that followed, the resultant integration schemes, including open enrollment in 1960 and a schools pairing programme in 1962, did very little to correct the racial imbalance in New York's schools.[14]

The zenith of the southern civil rights movement also brought the high tide mark in black New Yorkers' bid for integrated schooling. By the start of 1963, national civil rights groups including NAACP and CORE had joined with local grass-roots organizations to form the New York City-Wide Committee for Integrated Schools, led by Rev. Galamison. By the end of that summer, as President Kennedy's Civil Rights Bill was being debated on Capitol Hill, the committee planned to conduct a large-scale school boycott in a bid to force the Board of Education to establish a timetable and blueprint for desegregating New York's schools. With little official action forthcoming, in February 1964 those plans culminated in approximately 465,000 children (including 92 percent of Harlem students, 77 percent of Bed-Stuy students, and 80 percent of students on the Lower East Side) missing school for a day in protest at apartheid in the city's

[12] Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle for School Integration in New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) p.3.
Daniel Perlstein, *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004) pp.97-98.
[13] Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: a Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) p. 149, 155.
[14] Cannato, p. 270.

schools. It was, as Taylor has suggested, the single largest civil rights boycott of the period anywhere in the country.[15]

Despite these efforts, however, the incidence of segregation in schools continued to rise during the decade following *Brown.* Whereas in 1954 the number of schools with nonwhite student enrollment at or above 90 percent in New York was zero, by 1963 that figure had risen to sixty-one. A major factor in this trend, besides the continuing white exodus to the suburbs, and growing white private school enrollment, was Board of Education policy itself.[16] As Martha Biondi has argued, during a decade of prevarication following *Brown*, in lieu of effective and direct action toward desegregation, the Board had consumed its time investigating and assessing how best to approach the task of school integration. In the wake of the Supreme Court ruling, the board was quick to acknowledge the undesirability of segregated education and affirm its commitment to eradicate it as soon as practically possible. In December 1954, on the heels of Dr. Clark's criticism, the Board established a commission on integration from which five subcommittees originated over the following five years. Each of the subcommittees issued particular policy recommendations, three sets of which, concerning improving educational standards in nonwhite schools, were accepted without incident. The remaining two, however, which dealt with teacher assignment and school zoning, met with fierce, and often overtly racist, resistance from white parents and teachers. It was an opposition to change that the board appeared to share.[17] Ignoring their own commission's recommendations, the board continued to follow policies which served to deepen educational inequality. For example, their school construction policy located new schools in the centre of black and Puerto Rican neighbourhoods, rather than in border areas between white and nonwhite communities from which racially mixed school catchment areas would result naturally. Although rationalized as an attempt to help alleviate overcrowding in existing ghetto schools, it only reinforced segregation and did nothing to address issues relating to the quality of education, teaching staff, or the student experience being provided in those areas.[18] New York's school bureaucracy had committed itself rhetorically to the goal of school integration, but in practice did more to prevent it than achieve it.

In Los Angeles, as in New York, school segregation was underpinned by the city's racial geography and reinforced by calculated and discriminatory school board policy. As Josh Sides has noted, in contravention of its own (supposedly colourblind) student assignment laws, the board

[15] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door,* p. 142; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty,* p. 463.
[16] Biondi, *To Stand and Fight,* p.248; Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door,* p.116.
[17] Biondi, *To Stand and Fight,* p.247; Cannato, p. 268.
[18] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door,* p.116-117.

allowed whites from racially-mixed areas to travel to white schools far from their homes, but denied this right to nonwhite students. Housing patterns and school board policy combined to make the city's schools more racially segregated than the schools in half the southern states. Despite pressure from the Los Angeles NAACP and parent groups to integrate local public schools, for most of the decade following *Brown* the city's school officials brushed school desegregation under the carpet. As in New York, a mixture of leading civil rights and local community groups coalesced to fight for school desegregation as the crescendo of the civil rights movement's direct action phase inspired black Angelenos to greater militancy. At the same time that landmark demonstrations were taking place on the streets of Birmingham, Alabama, the United Civil Rights Council (UCRC) formed in Los Angeles. Made up of parents, community activists, leading clergy and local black politicians (including future mayor Councilman Tom Bradley) along with the local NAACP, CORE, and American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the newly formed group stepped up protests against the educational status quo in the city.[19]

UCRC conducted a series of large-scale marches throughout the summer, one of the last of which came in August 1963 when over five hundred demonstrators marched through the downtown business district to protest a Board of Education hearing. Accompanied by James Farmer of CORE and James Forman of SNCC, their key demands included the redrawing of school district lines to overturn de facto segregation, and the transfer of teachers, and transportation of students, from overcrowded ghetto schools to underutilized white schools. Echoing local white resistance to black demands (and ignoring the board's own discriminatory policy) white board member Charles Smoot rebuked the gathered protestors. 'The Negroes want special status and privilege. They want us to gerrymander the school district on a racial basis.'[20] Smoot's stance symbolized the board's obfuscation and refusal to take meaningful action. The sit-ins, meetings, marches, hunger strikes and other acts of civil disobedience conducted by students and civil rights activists during the course of 1963 produced little in the way of results.[21] With protests proving ineffective, the ACLU filed suit against the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in August 1963. This landmark case, *Crawford vs. Board of Education of Los Angeles*, at the start of a decade-and-a-half long journey through the legal system, would eventually bring the battle to desegregate the city's schools to an end in 1978.[22]

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[19] Josh Sides, *LA City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 2004) p. 159, 163.
[20] 'Integrationists March on Board of Education', *Los Angeles Times*, August 9, 1963 p.2.
[21] Jeanne Theoharis, 'W-A-L-K-O-U-T!:High School Students and the Development of Black Power in L.A.', in *Neighbourhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level* ed. by Peniel Joseph, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) pp.107-132 (p. 110).
[22] Sides, p. 168.

As *Crawford* began in Los Angeles its equivalent case in Atlanta was moving into its fifth year. As the de facto capital of the South, and a bastion of black educational excellence, the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund (LDF) was determined to crack white resistance to racial change in the city's schools. With pioneering black female civil rights lawyer (and Thurgood Marshall protégé) Constance Motley Baker as lead counsel, *Calhoun vs Latimer* was one of the LDF's most significant struggles against southern whites' massive resistance to the *Brown* ruling. In contrast to the education activism in New York and Los Angeles, the battle against school segregation in Atlanta was quite narrowly courtroom-focused, featured relatively little popular protest, and was largely remote from the black community itself, especially the poor and working-class. Indeed, the impetus for the legal challenge to implement *Brown* in the city came principally from the LDF, who pursued the case independent of – and at some points in opposition to – important sections of the local black community. The *Calhoun* case would eventually be concluded in 1973. Running for fifteen years, the case was testament to the power of local whites' resistance to racial change. Lawyers representing the city's school board provided an object lesson in sophisticated legal maneuvering, achieving the appearance of compliance with *Brown,* but with little of the substance. Ordered by a district court to desegregate the city's schools in 1961, the school board's plan involved a highly convoluted and capricious transfer system which placed the onus on blacks and which brought barely even token integration. By desegregating a grade per year, the plan threatened to take twelve years to complete the task. Throughout the 1960s, numerous court rulings on school desegregation provided the LDF lawyers with a number of new legal precedents with which to challenge Atlanta's plan. By meeting those challenges with minimal, piecemeal, and technical changes, the Atlanta school board was able to keep school segregation largely intact. By the end of the decade, as legal scholar Tomiko Brown-Nagin has suggested, although *Calhoun* had ended de jure segregation in the system and brought some integration, it 'had not substantially changed the racial make-up of the school system.'[23]

White Resistance to Brown

White opposition to school desegregation played a vital part in influencing the course of education activism in all three cities. 'Massive resistance' to school desegregation – identified by historian Michael Klarman as the most significant consequence of the *Brown* decision – was certainly not

[23] On white officials' resistance to school desegregation in Atlanta see: Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) pp.131-161; Brown-Nagin, pp.307-409, (quote p.351).

exclusive to the Jim Crow South.[24] The unwillingness of education officials in New York and Los Angeles to commit to school desegregation reflected the general lack of support for school integration among their white citizenry. Although white opposition to racial change outside of the South would deepen with the urban rioting of the mid-to-late 1960s, it was already evident before then. In Los Angeles, black demonstrations at the Board of Education headquarters were often met by the counter protests of local white segregationist groups, including the Committee Against Integration and Intermarriage and the American Nazi Party.[25] Just as 1963 and 1964 witnessed the high tide mark of the civil rights movement's efforts to integrate New York's public schools, it also saw the formation and rise of Parents and Taxpayers (PAT), a militant white anti-busing organization set up by outer-borough Jews and Catholics which grew to include over half a million members. PAT overwhelmed the Board of Education with petitions, conducted large-scale demonstrations outside City Hall and established their own separate private academy to circumvent integration, the first in any Northern city. This united action between two of the city's largest white ethnic groups not only played a leading role in killing efforts toward integrating New York's schools, but would later be revived and cemented in opposition to black efforts to win control over schools in their own communities too.[26]

In Atlanta, preserving the existing racial order was a matter of state law. Where school officials in New York and Los Angeles had given vocal, if disingenuous, support to *Brown*, south of the Mason-Dixon Line the decision was greeted with outrage. From the highest echelons of state politics down, the response in Georgia was characterized by furious rejection of the Supreme Court's findings. In March 1956, the region's political leaders declared their animus to *Brown* in the 'Southern Manifesto' which promised resistance to the 'tyranny' of the court's decision. It was signed by every Georgia representative in the US Congress.[27] Atlanta's more moderate and business-focused white elite took a more reserved approach. Under the guidance of Mayor William Hartsfield, the city's desire to maintain its reputation as a bastion of biracial cooperation, progress, and harmony guided its response to *Brown*. Atlanta's white political leaders had keenly observed the 1957 school desegregation crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas, and, seeing the damage done to Little Rock's reputation and economy, resolved to avoid any such repeat in their city. The first day of school desegregation in Atlanta – in which a mere nine black students enrolled in white schools – was highly policed and coordinated, passing off without violence. Greeted by the nation's political

[24] See, Michael J. Klarman, 'How *Brown* Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 81, No. 1, (June 1994) pp. 81-118.
[25] 'Integrationists March on Board of Education', *Los Angeles Times*, August 9, 1963, p.2.
[26] Jerald Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York : Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 23-26.
[27] Kruse, p.132.

and media establishment as a shining example of successful integration, the day demonstrated both the city's mastery of public relations, and just how limited a school desegregation plan they had been able to conjure.[28]

Even this bare minimum of school integration was too much for some white Atlantans who resorted to a variety of methods to resist school integration. Once enrolled in white schools, the experience of black students was often extremely negative. At best they were ostracized and at worst they were subjected to regular verbal and physical attacks from white students and, on occasion, staff members too. For example, in late 1965, black parents of children at the recently integrated J. Allen Crouch School in central Atlanta complained that the white principal had racially abused their children, that black students had been expelled for defending themselves from violence, and that Klu Klux Klan members had threatened them and their homes.[29] Violence, however, was only one way of discouraging blacks to apply for transfers to white schools. As one local black teacher remembered there was

> …a high school student whose parents I knew. His father was employed as the caretaker of a four-unit apartment complex. This student, without consulting his parents, believed that the landmark decision which eliminated the dual system was law. He marched up to the newly integrated Grady High, and filled out papers to enroll because it was nearer to the white section where his father was living. His application…was sent to his father's employer. That evening his father was fired immediately and he lost both his livelihood and housing which was provided in his contractual agreement.[30]

Faced with the prospect of school integration, many whites fled inner-cities nationwide, as fast as possible, for lilywhite suburbs whose racial homogeneity would be reflected in their local schools. As Thomas Sugrue has suggested, the ability and financial capacity of most middle-class white parents to either withdraw their children from public school, or to move across school district lines, represented a formidable obstacle to blacks' efforts to integrate public schools. As white flight continued, therefore, 'the fixity and impermeability of school district boundaries meant most outlying communities were completely unaffected by calls for educational integration.' During the 1950s, New York lost over 800,000 (predominantly middle-class) whites and gained over 700,000 black and Puerto Ricans, the vast majority of whom were poor. As white children moved to suburban or private schools, the number of white students in New York's public schools decreased by nearly a quarter between 1957 and 1964, with some estimates suggesting that approximately

[28] Brown-Nagin, p.324-325; Kruse, pp.146-152; Wolters, pp.113-119.
[29] 'Integrated School, "Hotbed of Hate"', *The Atlanta Inquirer*, November 13, 1965, p.1, 5.
[30] Georgia Government Documentation Project, Series J, Folder 2, Interview with Pearlie Dove, 9/4/1992, p.32-33.

40,000 left the city's schools every year during that period.[31] During the 1960s, Atlanta's white population of 300,000 declined by 60,000 and a further 100,000 left the city during the 1970s. Consequently, the black proportion of Atlanta's population rose from a third in 1960 to over two-thirds by 1980. Whereas Atlanta's school population had been 70 percent white and 30 percent black when the *Brown* verdict was handed down, by the early 1970s that figure had more than reversed.[32] In Los Angeles, white resistance to integration had been clearly demonstrated by the two-thirds majority vote on Proposition 14 in 1964. Put forward by the white conservative California Real Estate Association, Proposition 14 sought to repeal the Rumford Fair Housing Act of the previous year which had banned discrimination in the sale and letting of property. Though subsequently declared unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court, the wide public support for Prop 14 nevertheless demonstrated the considerable depth of white hostility to residential – and by extension, school – integration.[33]

Black Resistance to Brown

While most attention was focused on white hostility to Brown, not all blacks greeted it with enthusiasm, as events in Atlanta demonstrated. A year after the landmark verdict, over fifty NAACP leaders from across the country met in the Gate City to discuss how to begin getting *Brown* enforced in the South. The meeting culminated in the 'Atlanta Declaration' urging southern branches to petition their local school boards to begin desegregating local schools. However, Atlanta's black leadership elite – with attorney A.T. Walden at the helm – paid this call little heed. They had long favoured negotiation and compromise with the city's white power structure over litigation or direct action, and the arrival of the *Brown* decision did little to change that.[34] Although Walden was listed as co-counsel in *Calhoun* – and the suit was filed in the name of John Calhoun, the then Atlanta NAACP head – the case proceeded under the steam of LDF, not the local black power elite. As Brown-Nagin has suggested, hoping not to inflame white opposition, 'Walden, local black teachers, and other leading members of the black middle-class had embraced gradualism as the best course for implementing *Brown*.'[35]

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[31] Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, p.457-461, 467; Cannato, p. 268.
[32] Kruse, p.5, 234; B. Drummond Ayers, 'Atlanta Strikes Integration Bargain', *New York Times*, April 25, 1973, p.89.
[33] Mark Brilliant, *The Color of America has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) pp.220-224.
[34] Stephen G. N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001) p.100.
[35] Brown-Nagin, p.308.

The city's longstanding pattern of biracial negotiation had seen the black community's interests defined by its African American middle-class core and business elite. Perhaps the biggest and most significant interest group they represented was local black teachers. As Pearlie Dove, a teacher at Clark College in the Atlanta University Center (AUC), has suggested, in black Atlanta 'the teachers were the leaders. They belonged to the NAACP and to the professional organizations. They were the ones who belonged to many of the civil rights groups.' However, given their fragile status at the mercy of the city's board of education and white trustees, 'they […] could be scared off very easily.' Protecting their own economic interests was, naturally, a high priority for them and, as such, it was a high priority for black Atlanta's leadership too.[36]

As historian Adam Fairclough has argued, while many black teachers in the South 'endorsed the general principle of Brown' they nevertheless 'harbored deep misgivings about the prospect of abandoning segregated schools.' Many black teachers stood to lose far more than they might gain. Recognizing this fear, local white-controlled school boards in Georgia, and across the South, used school desegregation as a way to fire and demote hundreds of black teachers and administrators. Moreover, the prospect of being transferred to work in white schools, alongside deeply hostile white staff and pupils, was highly unappealing to many black teachers.[37] Furthermore, many rejected the notion that white schools were superior to black schools. The famous cluster of long established and prestigious black colleges that made up the AUC stood as a testament to the quality of black educational institutions and professional skill. Not only had they produced numerous black notaries (including Martin Luther King Jr.) but they had also trained countless black teachers for the city's schools and, indeed, black schools across the country.[38]

Some black teachers also feared that white schools would not provide the right environment for black students. For example, Alice Holmes Washington, who taught at a number of all-black schools in Atlanta, remembered of her time at South Fulton High that 'when youngsters went to that school they met a professional staff of people who were not just teachers but who were friends, who were surrogate parents, who were motivators, inspirers, and disciplinarians and gave to each student the feeling of a sense of worth.' White teachers in the segregationist South, Washington feared, were highly unlikely to provide as positive an educational experience for black children. Her concerns were shared by some black parents too, and Washington found herself consoling a number

[36] Georgia Government Documentation Project, Series J, Folder 2, Interview with Pearlie Dove, 9/4/1992, p.40.
[37] Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), p.357-358.
[38] Marian Wright Edelman, *Lanterns: a Memoir of Mentors* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999). Edelman's memoirs give an account of her life and education at Spelman College – the all-female black college with the AUC – and provides a fascinating insight into the institutions that make up the AUC.

of them that school desegregation would not be 'the end of the world'.[39] The ambivalence of Atlanta's black middle-class and race leaders to school desegregation derived from the fact that schools in their more prosperous neighbourhoods were often modern, well-resourced facilities with high calibre teaching staff. Schools in the city's poor black neighbourhoods, on the other hand, were 'just the opposite' with dilapidated elementary and high schools running double sessions to cope with overcrowding, understaffing, and a severe lack of resources and up-to-date teaching materials.[40]

The interrelationship of the city's black education establishment and its powerful black leadership has been explained by SCLC leader, and future congressman and mayor, Andrew Young, who lived in a wealthy black city neighbourhood during the 1960s:

> Thanks to the presence of the black colleges in the AUC, black Atlantans were relatively well educated. In fact, when the schools finally were desegregated it was discovered that the average educational level of black teachers in the Atlanta public school system was higher than the average for white teachers. Another result of the strong influence of local higher education was the prevalence of black professionals. Our girls grew up knowing black pediatricians, dentists, and pharmacists, and we kept our accounts at the black bank, Citizens Trust. Jean [his wife] endeavored to keep the girls enclosed in a secure world of church, school, and neighborhood on Atlanta's Westside.[41]

Ensconced in the city's salubrious black enclaves, Atlanta's black middle-class and elite were fundamentally tied by social and professional networks to the city's black educational establishment. Together, they played a powerful role in defining black interests in Atlanta. For some in the Gate City, the political and economic empowerment that the Black Power movement clamoured for was already a reality. Naturally, therefore, Atlanta's black middle-class sought to protect and enhance their status and, as Young's testimony confirms, to isolate themselves from poor communities, just as had millions of whites who left the inner-cities for the suburbs. Physically separated from the city's poor blacks, as black educator (and later local antipoverty director) Suzette Crank has remembered, just like privileged whites, Atlanta's black elite and middle-class didn't 'want their own poor'.[42] Later, in the early 1970s, this sharp class divide would later vitally

[39] Georgia Government Documentation Project, Series J, Folder 6, Interview with Alice Holmes Washington, 15/4/1993, p.25, 45.
[40] Atlanta, Emory University Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Community Council of the Atlanta Area Records, 1960-1974 (hereafter CCAA Records), Box 10, Folder: Atlanta Community Foundation. This folder contains numerous survey reports from 1965-1966 from a wide range of Atlanta's poor black neighborhoods compiled by community advocate Ella Mae Brayboy a number of which detail the parlous condition of local public schools covering all grade levels.
[41] Young, p. 196.
[42] Georgia Government Documentation Project, Series J, Folder 1, Interview with Suzette Crank, 12/4/1993, p.57.

shape the path toward black control over local education in the city, a development that Atlanta's black teachers were at the forefront of.

The Origins of Community Control

In New York City in the mid-1960s, as efforts to bring racial balance to the city's classrooms foundered against the resistance of white parents and the city's leading education officials, local African Americans gave the fight for educational equality a new emphasis. The prospect of school decentralization legislation was seized upon by black activists as a way to both improve the quality of local education, and empower themselves as parents, and as a black community at large. John Lindsay's victory in the 1965 mayoral election meant that an enthusiastic advocate of education reform, with a genuine desire to improve the city's public school system, would be entering City Hall at the start of 1966. During his campaign, Lindsay had been highly critical of the city's educational establishment and lamented the impact of educational inequality on the city's poor and minority communities. Overwhelmed by its responsibility for over one million students, 900 schools, 70,000 teachers and 43,000 administrators, the Board of Education, he argued, had become a monolithic and unresponsive organization:

> For fifteen years every study of our educational system has proclaimed the liabilities of our rigid, over-centralized bureaucracy. 110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, home of the Board of Education, has become the symbol across the country of an administration almost totally divorced from the schools for which it is responsible.[43]

The answer, Lindsay believed, was decentralization. Unlike his predecessor, Mayor Wagner, who had deliberately avoided intervening in school affairs, Lindsay was keen to make his influence felt in education policy. Lindsay's support for decentralization was founded upon his general desire to break down the city's byzantine bureaucracies and to give neighborhoods a greater say in the running of their local institutions and services (a philosophy that, as discussed in chapter one, had underpinned his approach to the War on Poverty).[44] For black education activists in New York, Lindsay's election promised action over the state of the city's schools and established the political terrain upon which the battle to shape school reform would unfold. Public policy would again become a primary site of contest over the scope and direction of black empowerment.

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[43] John Lindsay Papers, Box 91, Folder 79, 'White Paper on Education, October 20, 1965', p.11.
[44] Cannato, p. 268-269, 275.

Education reform could not come soon enough for many black New Yorkers, who saw before them a grave crisis. In 1966, approximately half of all sixth graders in the city's public schools failed to meet the minimum standards in reading and mathematics (nearly double the statewide figure), and by the age of 12, the average black or Puerto Rican student lagged a whole two years behind their white equivalent in terms of overall academic performance. Worse still, educational results among minority students appeared to be declining year on year. By the mid-1960s the need for change appeared to be more pressing than ever.[45] As far as many blacks were concerned, the Board of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the city's white (and predominantly Jewish) teachers' union, were the primary obstacles to a better education for their children. In May 1966, efforts to change the teacher transfer system, which would have seen more experienced teachers assigned to ghetto schools, were strongly resisted by the UFT head Albert Shanker who derided the plan as instituting 'forced transfers' that would damage teacher morale. Black community leader Isaiah Robinson, head of the Harlem Parents Association (and one of HCC's founders and future co-organizer of the first National Black Power conference), suggested that the UFT's opposition to teacher transfer seemed no different to local black parents than the PAT protests against the transfer of white students. Sounding the increasingly militant tone of the battle over education, Robinson warned:

> We do not intend to side step a head on collision with the teachers and the UFT… We will not rest until our children are taught to the maximum of their innate abilities. The lives of our children are more precious to us than the UFT realizes. The die is cast.[46]

As black New Yorkers became increasingly insistent in their demands for equal educational opportunities, a battle over I.S. (Intermediate School) 201, a new school in Harlem, helped shape new demands for community control of local schools which sought to completely transform existing power arrangements in the city's school system. In spite of local opposition, the city's Board of Education elected to build the new $5 million windowless school in the middle of the East Harlem Triangle, a racial ghetto marked by urban blight. By the time it was completed in readiness for the new school year in September 1966, community reaction to the new building was overwhelmingly negative. 'It looks like a prison instead of a school and it will be segregated' declared one angry local mother.[47] Despite the Board of Education's claims that white students from neighbouring Queens, across the Harlem River, would be attracted to the school very few attended and the student body was split between black and Puerto Rican children, reflecting the neighborhood's racial make-up. In response, locals formed the Parent and Community Negotiating

[45] *Ibid*., p.272, p.290; Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, p. 185.
[46] 'Parents Score UFT', *New York Amsterdam News*, May 14, 1966, p.31.
[47] 'Parents Fight Transfer', *New York Amsterdam News*, June 18, 1966, p.35.

Committee for IS 201, a group designed to try and prevent the school from opening unless it was integrated. As the beginning of the new school year in September 1966 drew close, parents planned to picket and boycott the school until their demands were met. With the Board of Education unwilling to sanction the busing of white students, the local parents group set forth an alternative solution to integration: the appointment of a black principal and the creation of a community council with the power to run the school. If the Board of Education and white teachers could not be trusted to integrate schools, or educate black children properly, then it was time, they reasoned, to turn over control of black schools to the only people who could be trusted with the educational welfare of African American students: the parents and local community themselves.[48] However, a week of acrimonious scenes at the picket line outside the school resulted in little immediate and productive action from the Board of Education. With school integration activism in the city having been in decline throughout the previous year, as Taylor explains, the IS 201 demonstrations represented an important turning point, and new direction, in the struggle over school reform in New York.[49]

Some East Harlem locals had already pioneered this new empowering philosophy when they established the East Harlem Block Schools (EHBS) in 1965 as a community controlled alternative to local public education.[50] Growing out of local parent's OEO funded efforts to set up a local nursery school for their children, EHBS expanded year on year until, by 1971, they offered primary education all the way up to the fifth grade, as well as an after school tuition programme. Also on site was a parent-controlled day care centre which, by 1970, was the only part of the operation which received public funds. The rest of EHBS's programmes relied on a $2 weekly attendance fee for students, and donations from private individuals and foundations.[51] Although it would always struggle financially, the school quickly earned a reputation for successfully working with so-called "unteachable" children and achieving impressive academic results. Not only did the students perform well, but operation of the school itself truly empowered their parents. As a report on the school from 1971 explained:

> The parents form the backbone of the administration of the East Harlem Block Schools. The board of directors consists only of parents of children enrolled in the schools; parents have final say over all policy, finance and personnel decisions. Over half of the full-time

[48] Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars: A History of the New York City Public Schools* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) pp.296-298.
[49] For a detailed discussion of the decline in school integration activism in New York, see: Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, pp.146-175.
[50] One book has been written on EHBS and its genesis. See: Tom Roderick, *A School of Our Own : Parents, Power, and Community at the East Harlem Block Schools* (Teachers College Pr, 2001).
[51] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, 'At East Harlem Block Schools the Major Problem is Survival', April 22, 1970.

> staff are parents and community people, many of whom were formerly on welfare. Parents are intimately involved with the daily activities at the schools. Parent-teachers are regarded as on equal footing with professional teachers. All staff meetings include parents and all decisions are made with their full participation.[52]

Still open today, EHBS continues to offer local black and Puerto Rican parents a role in their children's primary education that is unavailable in the public education system. EHBS's reliance on private funding, however, meant that while, in many ways, a model of community control, it was unlikely to ever be widely replicated. While private schools had the potential to help or improve local education, ghetto communities' general lack of financial resources ensured that education activists' focus necessarily remain fixed primarily on public education.

In the wake of the IS 201 imbroglio, the city's plans for school decentralization took a step forward when the state legislature ordered Mayor Lindsay to have a plan ready for review by the start of December 1967. In response, Lindsay assembled a panel of liberal city elites, headed by Ford Foundation President McGeorge Bundy, to investigate and outline a course of action for the city.[53] As Lindsay's liberal group began working on a plan for school decentralization, events at a Board of Education budget hearing in December 1966 demonstrated the growing enthusiasm among New York's increasingly militant education activists for a far reaching and radical solution to school reform: community control. The insistence of gathered black, white, and Puerto Rican community activists (many of whom were associated with the IS 201 controversy) that one of their cohort be allowed to speak at the December 19th hearing (in contravention of formal procedure), precipitated a walkout by the board officials. Once they had left, the activists remained, deciding to create the Ad Hoc Board of Education for the People of the City of New York (soon known as the People's Board of Education). Electing Milton Galamison as their president, the group sent Mayor Lindsay a telegram informing him of their actions and insisting he meet with them. They also demanded Lindsay declare a 'state of emergency' in New York public education, and liquidate the existing Board of Education, replacing it with one which would be 'more responsive to parent-community concerns.' Resolving to occupy the regular board member's seats until the mayor took action, they remained in 110 Livingston Street for three days until eventually removed by police. Following their ejection from the board's headquarters, the People's Board continued to work and present themselves as an alternative to the existing official board, conducted hearings of their own, and releasing position papers on school reform, and education and teacher policy. Swiftly setting up

[52] 'The East Harlem Block Schools: A Program Summary' Report by Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, November 1971, p. 7, p.6, p.5. Online: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=ED125746> [Accessed 30/04/2013].
[53] Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York*, p.77-78.

offices in poor minority communities across New York, their work would play a key role in the debate over the meaning and form of school decentralization in the city.[54]

Perhaps the most influential paper the People's Board released came at the end of February 1967, and was highly influenced by the work of Columbia University sociologist Preston Wilcox, the city's leading black academic community control theorist, a primary intellectual influence behind the IS 201 demonstrations, and future HCC co-founder. The set paper clearly set forth an uncompromising vision of community control, in which a community supervisory body would have total control over all aspects of a schools finances, curriculum, and education policy. Moreover, they would also possess the right to hire and fire teachers and principals at their discretion. As Vincent Cannato has recognized, it was a blueprint for community control that, if realized, would render the Board of Education and the teachers' union 'virtually powerless.' A recipe for controversy, this form of community control was almost guaranteed to set its black and Puerto Rican adherents on a collision course with the overwhelmingly white teachers' union and education bureaucracy. The centrality of racial politics in the debate over school decentralization would become painfully clear when community control was finally put to the test in New York.[55]

In New York in April 1967, faced with growing demands for community control, Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education head Bernard Donovan sanctioned the creation of three experimental school districts in which community control could be tested. The three demonstration districts set up were: East Harlem, which included IS 201 and four feeder schools; Ocean Hill-Brownsville, a desperately poor black and Puerto Rican neighborhood in Brooklyn between Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brownsville which included eight schools; and Two Bridges, a community on the Lower East Side which had five schools and a diverse population of blacks, Puerto Ricans and Asian Americans. The schools in these districts, all with overwhelming nonwhite student populations, were to be put under the control of locally-elected community boards able to hire a lead administrator to oversee the running of the district's schools. Endorsed by Mayor Lindsay, funding for the three districts was to be provided by the Ford Foundation, whose education expert and leading community control theorist Mario Fantini was also seconded to the experimental districts as a consultant.[56]

With community control seemingly close at hand, local parents and education activists prepared to make the most of the opportunity they had been presented with. Community elections in

[54] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, p.181-186.
[55] Cannato, p.282; Perlstein, *Justice, Justice,* pp.14-31.
[56] Cannato, p.298-p.299; Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York*, p. 80-81.

Ocean Hill-Brownsville saw Reverend C. Herbert Oliver installed as head of the district's new community governing board, and he and his fellow board members moved quickly to appoint a Unit Administrator. The man they chose was Rhody McCoy. Having taught in the New York school system since 1949, McCoy (who had counted Malcolm X among his close friends) brought considerable expertise and racial militancy to the role. In East Harlem, David Spencer, a leading member of the People's Board and one of the city's most vocal and militant community control advocates, was elected to head the IS201 district community board.[57]

The experiment, however, was fundamentally flawed from the start. The decision to locate demonstration districts only in poor minority communities ensured that race remained a critical dividing line at the heart of the school reform debate. Moreover, the Board of Education's total failure to properly define the legal boundaries of the districts' powers invited conflict. Both of these problems swiftly combined to derail the prospects for community control, at least as envisaged by New York's poor and minority communities. The struggle between the white, predominantly Jewish, UFT and the demonstration district community boards that the community control experiment precipitated, proved to be its most infamous legacy. Fought most fiercely in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, the bitter dispute crippled the city's public school system and flared tempers, casting a long shadow over race relations in the city.[58]

As community control activism was gathering momentum in New York, demands for school reform on the West Coast began growing in mid-1967. As historian Scot Brown has explained, local cultural nationalist Black Power group US played a leading role in inspiring the first of what became several waves of high school student activism. After the success of their first 'Kwanzaa' celebration in December 1966, the organization declared Malcolm X's birthday - May 19th - as another symbolic black holiday. As the day drew near, US urged black Angelenos to observe 'Kuzaliwa', as they called it, by staying away from work and school. Their call was resoundingly answered by African American students across the city who stayed away from school in their thousands, with many congregating for a day of celebration and picnicking in a city park. The first major moment of student activism that year, US remained an important part of developments as tensions grew and evolved in to protests at city schools in the following months.[59]

[57] Perlstein, *Justice, Justice*,p.5-6; Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York*, p. 64.
[58] Cannato, p.299.
[59] Scot Brown, *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2003) p.77.

According to Manual Arts High School teacher Georgia Logan, when she arrived at the NAACP's downtown office to speak to local branch leader Celes King about the brewing graduation crisis, she encountered Karenga and his allies, who had initially barred her from entering.[60] Community discontent with the situation at Manual Arts was only been temporarily alleviated by Angela Bates' graduation. With 95 percent black enrollment, Manual Arts was typical of the city's nonwhite ghetto schools: badly overcrowded and under resourced, and with low academic achievement. In the months after the graduation crisis, students, parents, and community activists and organizations came together to picket the school, from September till October, demanding change. The demonstrators' anger was primarily directed at the conduct of the school's white principal, unsanitary school conditions, and the inadequacy of the instruction provided.[61]

The protestors formed the United Parents Council (UPC) which was headed by the forty-five year old black radical Margret Wright, one of the most consistent advocates of community control in black Los Angeles. The UPC soon joined forces with the newly formed Black Congress, an umbrella organization of twenty-two local groups that represented a broad cross section of the local African American community. Participating organizations ranged from the Black Panther Party, US, and CORE, to a number of local antipoverty and community groups (including NAPP, Operation Bootstrap, and the Community Alert Patrol), Celes King's NAACP branch, and local churches. The Black Congress threw its weight behind the school protests with many militants – in particular from US – joining the students and UPC on the picket line. Their demands included the removal of Principal Robert Denahy and a say in choosing his replacement, improved facilities and teaching, and greater community influence over school administration. Over time, demonstrations outside the school became violent. Altercations with police, rock throwing, and vandalism resulted in large numbers of arrests, including over one hundred in the course of just one week. Concerned about intimidation by the protestors, over half of Manual Arts' teachers went on strike. Their action was also in opposition to the threat that demands for community control posed to their authority, as well as to the presence of Black Power militants in the picket line; two vital factors which also motivated teacher strikes in New York the following year. Once the violence abated the teachers returned and, ultimately, as historian Jeanne Theoharis has explained, the protestors in did achieve some of their aims. More teachers and guidance counselors were transferred to the school, and various committees were set up to give parents a greater say in school affairs. Principal Denahy, the object of considerable ire, transferred to another district. On the other hand, however, the school

[60] NAACP Western Regional Office Records, carton 15, folder 47, 'A Chronological List of the Events in the Angela Bates Graduation Case, As Compiled by the Manual Arts Faculty Association" June 26, 1967, p.2.
[61] NAACP Western Regional Office Records, carton 15, folder 13, Annual Report of Jesse Scott, Field Director, November 28, 1967, p.9-10.

board increased the number of security guards in the school (a practice they extended following later protests at other schools) a development that angered students and parents. Subsequent school protests in 1968 and 1969, an aspect of black activism in Los Angeles largely neglected until the recent work of Theoharis, were driven by first and foremost by students (who were then joined by the community), unlike those conducted by New York's more parent and community activist-led school reform movement.[62]

Community Control, the War on Poverty, and Black Power

The War on Poverty's capacity for inspiring racial identity politics and invigorating community activism (including welfare rights activism) discussed in chapter one, was especially clear in grassroots movements for educational change in the three cities. The demand for community control was firmly rooted in African Americans' experience of the antipoverty programme. Energizing and emboldening community activism in cities like New York and Los Angeles, the War on Poverty's endorsement of "maximum feasible participation" of the poor both encouraged and legitimized poor black communities' struggle for greater self-determination. As Thomas Sugrue has observed, while Black Power provided the intellectual foundations for community control, the War on Poverty's Community Action Programme provided a model for its implementation.[63]

In New York in particular, community antipoverty and CDC-type organizations and their leaders, who benefitted from the organizational resources and funding provided by the OEO, were vital in mobilizing and sustaining grass-roots movements for community control. For example, some of the most prominent activists in the city included: Helen Testamark, head of HARYOU-ACT's education committee; Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle leader Alice Kornegay; and Evelina Antonetty, a People's Board founder, and head of the OEO-funded United Bronx Parents (UBP), a multiracial (though predominantly Puerto Rican) school advocacy group.[64] East Harlem Block Schools – which became perhaps the most successful vision of community control realized – had been started with OEO funds. Leading community control advocates Preston Wilcox, Isaiah Robinson, and Roy Innis were all founding members of HCC. As discussed in chapter two, Restoration's Sonny Carson and Albert Vann were both prominently involved in education activism in Brooklyn. This profound interrelationship was undoubtedly shaped by the

[62] Brown, pp.82-84; Theoharis, "W-A-L-K-O-U-T!', pp. 111-113,116.
[63] Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, p.474.
[64] Les Matthews, 'Commissioners Visit Harlem and Get an Earful', *New York Amsterdam News*, March 19, 1966, p.7; Ravitch, p. 295.

political leadership of Mayor Lindsay, who (as discussed in chapter one) actively opened the War on Poverty up to the city's minority citizens. In Los Angeles, where Mayor Yorty adopted a less constructive attitude toward antipoverty organizing in the black community, the relationship was less pronounced. The community control movement in Los Angeles became predominantly student-driven, but was supported by a wide range of community groups under the Black Congress umbrella. As we will see, Operation Bootstrap, in particular, was at the forefront of community support for education activism and organizing.

The War on Poverty not only boosted the fight for community control in New York and Los Angeles, it also provided important motivation for it in another way. One intention underlying the struggle for empowerment over local education was the desire to undermine dominant and discriminatory white assumptions about minority cultures which were hardwired into the broader national discourse on nonwhite educational performance. These ideas – which implied a cultural indisposition to learning and academic work – had grown out of the "culture of poverty" theory set out in anthropologist Oscar Lewis's 1958 study of poor Mexican American communities. As historian Adina Back explains, although intended to emphasize the importance of environmental determinism in shaping poor communities, it was all too easily subverted to explain poverty as a result of cultural weakness. As discussed in chapter one, this loose assumption had underpinned much of the social science and liberal policymaking of the 1950s and 1960s, including the War on Poverty. The notion of limited black educational ability was evident in local conservatives' response to Los Angeles's student protestors. Rejecting black calls for more Afro-centric curricula on the grounds they were 'useless to upward mobility', they urged them instead to 'make better use of high schools, apprenticeship programs, trade and technical schools. It is through these doorways that blacks will progress.' Back offers the example of Evelina Antonetty to demonstrate how powerful a motivation these discriminatory ideas provided to school reform activism. Having arrived in the city in 1933, Antonetty had grown up in the public schools of East Harlem and had long resented the cultural marginalization she and other Puerto Ricans felt within the city school system. Demands for community control voiced by activists like Antonetty (and, as Theoharis suggests, Los Angeles's minority students) were a forceful rejection of the cultural analyses of ghetto schools' underperformance, which attributed their failures to the apparent cultural pathologies of nonwhite families and cultures, rather than their chronic under-resourcing and the inadequacy of existing white instruction.[65]

[65] Adina Back, '"Parent Power": Evelina Lopez Antonetty, the United Bronx Parents, and the War on Poverty' in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980* ed. by Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011) pp.184-208 (pp. 185-191); California Republican Assembly

The emergence of Black Power ideology in mid-to-late 1960s was another critical influence in the transformation of education activism in both cities. Education activists' turn towards community control in New York and Los Angeles, and their increasingly militant tone, was part of the wider shift in the black freedom struggle underway at the time, as emphasis moved away from integrationist goals and moderate, conciliatory rhetoric, and toward more forthright and critical demands for solutions that would politically and economically empower, and improve, African-American communities. The presence of Stokely Carmichael and Floyd McKissick – perhaps the two most prominent Black Power advocates in the country at the time – at the picket line outside IS 201 on the first day of school in September 1966 illustrated the relevance of the struggle for New York's schools to the nascent Black Power movement. Similarly, a year later, black militants from US, the Black Panther Party, and other local Black Power organizations, had joined with student protestors in Los Angeles to push for school reform. Fundamentally based on the principle of greater black self-determination, community control was a natural part of the emerging Black Power ideology. As Carmichael declared at the IS 201 protests, 'Negroes have a right to run schools in their areas. White people do. They run the schools in the suburbs where they live and it should be the same in Harlem. It is their right.'[66] The principle of community control was of course not limited to schools, and, as a means to greater self-determination As a 'Community Control of City Services' rally held at I.S. 201 in November 1968 highlighted, the demand for community control could extend over a range of existing urban institutions, with speakers emphasizing the need for local control over not only schools, but welfare centres, the Police Department, and all city social services too.[67]

The theory of community control also resonated with other core aspects of Black Power philosophy. As a route to black economic empowerment, community control was especially promising. Authority over school policy, spending, and teacher hiring all offered the prospect of developing local black economic strength in a number of ways. First, as minority community control advocates from across New York agreed, control over school finances would allow community school boards to direct school spending toward black and other nonwhite contractors or suppliers. Whether it be repairing a school building, or purchasing new teaching materials, school expenditure represented a chance to keep that money within the community and ensure that local

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Records, Box 10, CRA Newsletters 1969-1970, 'CRA News' June 1969, Vol.3, No.3, p.9; Theoharis, "W-A-L-K-O-U-T!', pp. 118-121.

[66] '"Black Power" Moves into Harlem School Battle', *New York Amsterdam News*, September 24, 1966, p.1.

[67] CORE Papers, Series C, Part III, Reel 7, 'Tell it Like it is' NWRO Newsletter, Vol. 15, No. 2, November 7, 1968.

nonwhite companies and their employees would benefit, strengthening the local black economic base in the process.[68]

Second, community control offered the prospect for widening black employment opportunities by addressing the proportional underrepresentation of black teachers in both cities. In mid-1960s, New York minority student enrollment in the city's schools exceeded 50 percent, but only 8 percent of teachers and 3 percent of administrators were black. By early 1968, over forty percent of all students in Los Angeles's schools were nonwhite, nearly evenly divided between the city's two largest minority groups: African Americans and Hispanics. At the same time, African Americans only constituted around 14 percent of teachers and 6.1 percent of school administrators (though they fared far better than Hispanics who made up just 3 percent and 1.3 percent respectively).[69] The hiring of black teachers and administrators in proportional numbers was a demand rooted in a civil rights-Black Power vision of racial justice imbued with greater militancy by black radicals and students. Control over staff selection also promised to make teachers more accountable and responsive to the local community. Existing white teachers were often seen as uncaring, disinterested (and in some cases openly racist) educators concerned more with their pay cheque than with educating black children. Many African American education activists understandably felt therefore that control over hiring teachers and staff – regardless of their colour – offered the best hope for positive and collaborative teacher-community relations in their schools in the future.

Third, control of school policy, educational programmes, and teacher hiring could all help increase black students' potential for future economic progress. In mid-November 1967, the Los Angeles City School Board, as part of their response to the Manual Arts protests and growing discontent among black and Chicano students over the state of their schools, created a special Communications Task Force in South Los Angeles in a bid to improve school-community relations. This task force gave students a chance to air their grievances away from the picket line. In late January 1968, Glanville Lockett, a former student counselor at all-black Jordan High School, attended a meeting with a large group of local high school students arranged by Lou Smith, head of the local organization Operation Bootstrap. Mirroring Manual Arts students' demands, they expressed concern over the quality of the instruction they received, and its failure to prepare them

[68] CORE Papers, Series B, Part III, Reel 4, Memo from Gardinia White to Dr. Marilyn Gittel, November 13, 1968.
[69] MacLean, p. 195; Los Angeles, Los Angeles City Archives, Councilman Tom Bradley Records, Box D84, School – community relations, Board of Education Folder, 'Los Angeles City Schools Public information Office: Racial and Ethnic School Survey Results' March 20, 1968, p.1, 5.

for further education and high wage employment.[70] Extremely low levels of minority enrollment in professional training courses in the city supported their concerns. For example, out of 392 registered students at UCLA's medical school in late 1968, there were no Mexican American students and only two black students.[71] Assemblyman Victor Vesey, head of an Assembly Select Committee set up in 1968 to investigate campus disturbances at the state's universities, agreed with the students, finding that 'present inadequate schools and poor counseling together with false and artificial entrance requirements' had 'systematically screened out even gifted youths from minority communities' severely limiting minority access to higher education in California.[72] Higher quality teaching delivered by more committed and sympathetic staff, would, the students believed, help open a range of better and more lucrative career opportunities to them in future.

Perhaps most importantly, beyond the scope for greater black self-determination and economic empowerment, community control activists' demands for black history courses to be taught in schools, overlapped and reflected another central pillar of the Black Power mission: the importance of education as a tool of black liberation. In early November 1968, as community control controversies raged in New York and Los Angeles, black students at San Francisco State College were commencing a strike of their own, and demanding the creation of the first Black Studies programme.[73] The emergence of Black Studies as an academic discipline during the late 1960s was a direct product of militant Black Power protest, especially that of black students on university campuses across the nation. Black Studies programmes were not only an effort to establish greater black independence and authority in the nation's white-dominated university system, (a sphere in which it was traditionally absent,) they were also about creating and establishing a body of academically-recognized knowledge of the African American experience. That knowledge, in turn, was intended to serve as the basis for the redefinition and celebration of black identity, history, and culture upon which greater racial pride, solidarity, and consciousness could be founded. As Maulana Karenga, now a leading Africana Studies scholar, has explained: 'black studies… came into being in the midst of the black freedom movement as an emancipatory

[70] Councilman Tom Bradley Records, Box D84, F: School – community relations, Board of Education, Glanville A. Lockett, 'Views on my meeting at Bootstrap'.
[71] San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, Kenneth Hahn Collection, Schools, General, 1968-1969, Box 273, Folder 2b, Kenneth Hahn to Chancellor Charles Young, November 26, 1968.
[72] Yvonne Braithwaite Burke Papers, LP 68:24, Assemblyman Victor Vesey Press Statement, n.d., p.2
[73] Fabio Rojas, *From Black power to Black studies : how a radical social movement became an academic discipline* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), p.22.

project that sought to be both an ongoing and profound critique and corrective, both intellectually and socially.'[74]

Community control of local schools and curricula was, therefore, a natural corollary to the clamour for Black Studies courses. As New York high school student James Toponwey of the African American Students Association argued, 'integrated' schools would not change the substance of public education which had come to mean 'You [whites] force your culture on us and deny us a relevant education.'[75] Redefining black identity, and celebrating black culture, could be woven into African American children's education during their earlier formative years, instating racial pride, consciousness, and solidarity in black youth in a way the "whitewashed" and inferior education they received in public schools never would. In this way, community control was seen by some as a vital element in the broader struggle for Black Power. As Operation Bootstrap leader Robert Hall argued, 'We can't have a black revolution, we can't build black dignity, we can't build a black nation if every year [the schools] are turning out a generation of ignorant black children.'[76]

The demand for more culturally relevant public education naturally reinforced the demand for community control, and more black teachers and administrators. As historian Peter Novick has explained, the question of racial authenticity and perspective in education and academia became a central theme of Black Power-era criticism of white authored scholarship and curricula. How could white teachers, from their racially privileged and dominant position, educate African American children about a black past shaped by racial oppression that they could never truly understand? Only black scholars and teachers, it was argued, could be entrusted with the task of writing black history, and of enlightening black children about their cultural identity and heritage, and the society in which they lived in. These concerns were evident among the Jordan High students who, during their meeting with Glanville Lockett at OB headquarters, labeled many of their white teachers 'insensitive' and 'racist', and expressed deep skepticism about the prospect of having their white teachers deliver the black history courses that they were demanding. More black teachers at the school, they argued, was the only solution.[77]

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[74] Maulana Karenga, 'Black Studies: A Critical Reassessment', in *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience* ed. by Manning Marable (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) pp.162-170 (p.163-164).
[75] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, 'Racial Composition Emerges as Key Issue on Experimental District 19', April 17, 1970.
[76] Stanley G. Robertson, 'Two Sides of a Perplexing Coin', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 8, 1968, p. A7.
[77] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp.474-477; Councilman Tom Bradley Records, Box D84, F: School – community relations, Board of Education, Glanville A. Lockett, 'Views on my meeting at Bootstrap'.

Community control also promised to place the social and psychological development of black children in the hands of teachers whose shared racial identity made them, in theory, the best candidates for the job. For Les Campbell, a leader in the Afro-American Teachers Association (AATA), an organization at the heart of black militancy in the community control movement in Ocean-Hill Brownsville, Brooklyn, this was an inescapable truth. The AATA formed as the Negro Teachers Association in March 1964, largely in reaction to Albert Shanker and the UFT's unwillingness to publicly back the public schools boycott led by Reverend Galamison the previous month. In 1966, the group changed its name as black teachers Albert Vann and Les Campbell, both militant Black Power advocates, gave the organization an explicitly ideological focus.[78] According to Campbell, there was a fundamental and insurmountable difference between the AATA and the white teachers' union. The UFT, concerned first and foremost with teachers' pay, benefits and teaching conditions, was not, he argued, 'concerned with the quality of education in the school system at that time.' White teachers, he continued, did not necessarily care about the questions that the black community and black teachers were asking themselves: 'What was wrong with our young people? Why wasn't school reaching our young people?' Only the AATA, he reasoned, could be a teachers' organization that would be genuinely 'centred around the question of providing a better educational opportunity for black youth.' After strongly endorsing community control at their annual convention in 1966, the AATA worked closely with the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Governing Board and Unit Administrator Rhody McCoy, and many of their members taught in the district.[79] Support among black teachers for community control was not limited to New York and in September 1968 – with the Ocean Hill Brownsville experiment underway – the National Association of Afro-American Educators (NAAE) was created during a four day conference held in Chicago. Over 800 black teachers and academics from 37 states attended, with delegates coming from both public schools and higher education institutions. The organization set black control of black schools as its primary goal, and sought to attract black teachers away from the two largest teachers' organizations in the country: the National Educational Association (NEA) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT).[80]

As we have seen, the demand for community control in New York and Los Angeles, which resonated with broad sections of the local black communities, strongly reflected and overlapped with philosophy and organizing of Black Power militants. However, their bold and radical vision of

[78] Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York,* p. 153, 155.
[79] Les Campbell Interview, November 3, 1988, Eyes on the Prize II Interviews, <http://digital.wustl.edu/e/eii/eiiweb/cam5427.0642.028marc_record_interviewee_process.html> [Accessed 30/04/2013].
[80] Atlanta, Georgia State University, Special Collections and Archives, *The Great Speckled Bird,* Vol.1, No. 14, September 13-19, 1968, p.9.

community control required a redistribution of power which was almost guaranteed to meet resistance from those most directly threatened by it. The efforts of entrenched white interests to resist demands for community control would ultimately prove decisive in the battle over school reform.

Community Control Negated, Community Control Defeated

The ultimate defeat of community control in both New York and Los Angeles stood as a testament to the power of white politicians, organizations, and education officials to defend and assert their interests in the face of African American and other minority groups' pressure for transformative educational reform. Unlike their counterparts in New York, grassroots activists in Los Angeles received no support from the city, where leading officials were united in their determination to preserve the status quo as best they could. In late January 1968, a few months after the Manual Arts protests, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Jack Crowther delivered a report explaining his vision for public education in the city. One of Crowther's recommendations was for 'an aggressive and forward-looking program which, although not limited to members of minority groups, would especially encourage and help prepare minority personnel for high administrative roles.' The proposal was a tacit acknowledgement and acceptance of the black and Latino communities' demands for more nonwhite principals and administrators in their local schools. Referring to events in New York, Crowther registered his concern about 'an impression that "the schools don't care about us and don't respond to our needs,"' that, he argued, having been allowed to prevail in some urban areas had led to demands for decentralization and, worse still, for calls 'to turn the schools over completely to the community.' 'I would plead,' he urged, 'that this false impression not be allowed to gain a foothold in our school communities.' With no intention of allowing community control in Los Angeles, Crowther was confident that, if the school board provided 'greater flexibility for local school staffs to adapt to local needs', and ensured that the lines of communication between schools and the community were made more open, that '…this attitude can be headed off.'[81]

As their response to the Manual Arts protests had already suggested, the board endorsed Crowther's position. When demands for community control of schools – this time student-led – were stepped up in again in March 1968, they responded accordingly. After students at six high

[81] Councilman Tom Bradley Records, Box D84, F: School – community relations, Board of Education, Jack Crowther, 'Perspective and Direction: Address to Los Angeles School Board', January 25, 1968, p.11-12.

schools (one black, five Chicano) staged walkouts - again supported by the UPC and Black Congress - to protest the condition and inadequacy of their schools, the Board of Education swiftly acceded to a number of their demands. The black students, from Jefferson High School, got the black principal, vice-principal, and guidance counselor appointed they had called for, a commitment from the board that black history would be taught in the city schools, and the formation of teacher-student committees. Protests by black students at Fremont High School in December later that year yielded similar results. While these developments can be seen as a victory of sorts, the substantive change was minimal, as students came to discover that the appointment of black administrators did not necessarily bring the educational improvements they believed it would. The outcomes were bittersweet in other ways. Following the protests, just as they had at Manual Arts, the Board of Education increased security in the schools, a point of contention among students.[82] African American Congressman Augustus Hawkins petitioned Governor Reagan to use community people instead of professional law-enforcement officers in the schools as a way to ease tensions, but was ignored, and the police presence in the city's predominantly nonwhite schools remained.[83]

Ultimately, community control activism in Los Angeles was able to force some changes, satisfying demands for more black history courses, better college preparation, improved teacher-student communications, and in some instances, the appointment of more black staff. Community pressure had resulted in the removal of principals from four black high schools.[84] However, communities had not gained any real power over school affairs or policy, and, in the years that followed, students increasingly resented the growing security presence in their schools. Disturbances at the city's schools from mid-1969 to mid-1970 resulted in nearly $500,000 in damages to public and private property and injury to 61 police officers. The finger was pointed squarely at 'student and militant group violence' by Mayor Yorty.[85] Indeed, the breakdown of order in the city's minority schools seemed to get progressively worse from this point. As NAPP's education consultant Edward 'Abie' Robinson lamented in early 1973, 'guns on junior and senior high schools campuses, senseless gang shooting and killing, [...] drugs and high school vandalism' came to characterize the urban school experience for many black Angelenos.[86]

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[82] NAACP Western Regional Office Records, Carton 57, Folder 71, 'Emergency Closing of School' Memorandum from Jack Crowther to Los Angeles Board of Education, March 14, 1968; Theoharis, "W-A-L-K-O-U-T!', p. 118-121.
[83] Yvonne Braithwaite Burke Papers, LP 68:24, Augustus Hawkins to Ronald Reagan, March 10, 1969.
[84] NAACP Western Regional Office Records, carton 46, folder 9, 'Presentation of Senate Committee on Education' July 21, 1970, p.2.
[85] Sam Yorty Papers, Box D-0011, F:Assembly Bills, 1970, Mayor's Office Press Release, June 18, 1970, p.1.
[86] NAACP Western Regional Office Records, carton 14, folder 32, Letter from Edward Robinson to Leonard Carter, February 15, 1973.

In New York, the city's decision to allow community control to be tested ensured that the city's schools would prove to be an even more volatile site of activism than they had in Los Angeles. Nowhere did the experiment unfold more controversially than in Brooklyn. On May 8, 1968 the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Governing Board sent telegrams to thirteen white teachers and six white administrators advising them they were no longer required, citing their poor teaching performance and negative attitudes toward community control as reasons for their removal. Outraged at what he considered the violation of the teacher's legal rights and the denial of due process by the community school district leaders, UFT leader Albert Shanker demanded their reinstatement. Later that month 350 white teachers walked out of the district's schools in protest at the governing board's actions. As the schools broke for the summer holiday the governing board began hiring replacement teachers despite the UFT's protests. With the limits of the governing board's powers ill-defined by the Board of Education the racially militant Ocean Hill –Brownsville board was determined to exercise complete control over the recruitment and dismissal of teaching staff, the formulation of education policy and school curriculum, and all aspects of school budgetary and spending issues. Convinced that McCoy and the governing board lacked the legal authority to dismiss teaching staff at will (a teachers' right protected by civil service law), Shanker planned a strike for the first week of the new term, in September 1968. The UFT's opposition, and the mass teacher walkout, seemed only to confirm the governing board and local community's belief that the schools white teachers were more interested in destroying community control than they were in educating black children.[87]

September brought with it the first of three strikes, the last of which ended in late November. At points, the strikes went citywide, and saw more than two-thirds of New York's teachers walk out of school.[88] In between, the whole episode saw ugly scenes unfolding in schools across the Ocean Hill- Brownsville district, which were marked by violent reprisals, death threats, and anti-Semitic and racist abuse. By the end, the radical vision of community control that New York activists had pushed so hard for was destroyed. The UFT prevailed and the School Decentralization Act passed by the state legislature in April 1969 felt like a comprehensive defeat for New York's community control advocates. Evelina Antonetty, People's Board of Education member and head of United Bronx Parents was especially pessimistic. Under the new legislation, she argued 'the [community] boards will be powerless, the election procedure undemocratic and the district lines illegitimate. And the quality of education will not change.' The failure to provide the new community boards with power over teacher recruitment was critical. 'As long as the Board of

[87] Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York*, pp.1-8; Martin Mayer, 'Frustration is the Word for Ocean Hill', *New York Times*, May 19, 1968 p.SM28.
[88] Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, p.476.

Examiners continues to decide who we can hire, they are playing with our childrens' lives. We will not play their game.'[89]

The new legislation divided the city into thirty-two school districts with each of the three demonstration districts subsumed into larger districts. While each of the thirty two districts would elect a community board that board would have virtually no power over teachers or curriculum. Final authority over most aspects of the schools affairs remained with a reconfigured, smaller Board of Education under the direction of a schools chancellor.[90] Bearing the clear imprimatur of its conservative Republican authors, the new law, as leading black education activist Isaiah Robinson lamented, did 'not provide community control, only administrative decentralization.'[91] Anger at the new legislation fueled debate over the merit of participating in the elections at all. Some like Jack Cherry, a member of the predominantly African American antipoverty corporation in South Jamaica, argued that 'we'll do better getting people on to the boards, however weak their powers, than not being on the boards at all.' Others like Antonetty and Albert Vann roundly rejected the process. As Vann explained, 'we (the AATA) do not feel that community control will evolve out of these elections therefore, we are not getting involved.' Disillusionment brought many to boycott the process resulting in a very low turnout for the first community board elections held under the new legislation.[92]

The UFT had initially supported decentralization, believing it offered a chance to increase both parent commitment to schools, and teachers' authority over education. However, as education historian Daniel Perlstein has explained, the radical vision of community control pursued by the city's black communities was seen by the teachers' union as a threat to job security and established procedure, and to unbiased, quality education. Ultimately it became, as Perlstein states, 'a clash between black community activists and white teacher unionists that transformed decentralization from an experiment aimed at increasing parent participation and improving school efficiency into a shattering struggle for the redistribution of political power.'[93]

The decision to only locate demonstration districts only in poor minority communities ensured that race remained a dividing line at the heart of the school reform debate while the Board

[89] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, 'Community Reactions Mixed on School Board Elections', January 21, 1970.
[90] Cannato, p. 348; Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York,* p. 152.
[91] Lesly Jones, 'IS Schools Making it; McCoy "Reads" Execs', *New York Amsterdam News,* March 21, 1970, p.23.
[92] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, 'Community Reactions Mixed on School Board Elections', January 21, 1970.
[93] Perlstein, *Justice, Justice,*p.5, 2.

of Education's failure to properly define the legal boundaries of the districts' powers was critical.[94] These mistakes had been recognized in Los Angeles where in January 1969 African American Assemblyman Bill Greene had proposed unsuccessful school decentralization legislation that would break up the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) into ten autonomous districts. Mindful of events on the East Coast, Roger Segure, executive secretary of the Local 1021 of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) declared that the key issue in decentralization would be 'the measure of control given to local communities, and under what conditions.' It would be essential, he continued, to 'carefully delineate lines of authority' and to ensure that community spokesmen were 'truly representative'. Recognizing the travails of their New York counterparts, Segure made it clear that teachers would not accept any arrangement that left them with 'an inferior or impotent status', and guaranteed that the union would fiercely oppose the barring of teachers on a racial basis (i.e. the removal of white teachers from black districts).[95]

The following year, South Los Angeles's black representatives in the state assembly tried introducing another school decentralization bill, which would allow community control to be piloted in three black districts, as had happened in New York. This time, they sought to leverage white opposition to the recent ruling in the city's ongoing school desegregation case which had seen Judge Alfred Gitelson mandate citywide busing. As one black proponent of the new community control measure argued, not only would blacks welcome it, but conservative whites could support the bill too 'because they don't want any part of the Gitelson decision.'[96] This new approach, however, did not succeed. While the student-led school protests had helped push school reform onto the political agenda, and black politicians had fought to influence developments, it did not produce the kind of decentralization they were seeking: community control. In Los Angeles, the move toward decentralization was taken slowly and ultimately involved little change in the power of the board of education and school superintendent. Speaking in late 1971, Crowther's successor, Superintendent William J. Johnston, explained that school decentralization in Los Angeles aimed only to 'minimize the unresponsiveness of [school] bureaucracy' and 'enhance the opportunity for community and staff involvement in school programs.' 'Overall policy and administration with regard to personnel selection and placement, pupil housing, transportation and assignment, and broad curriculum requirements,' he concluded, would 'continue to reside with the Board of Education and the Superintendent.'[97]

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[94] Cannato, p.299.
[95] 'School Decentralization Plan Probed', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 23, 1969, p.B1.
[96] 'Blacks Back Bill for Local School Control', *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1970, p.C2.
[97] William J. Johnston, 'Integration and Decentralization in Los Angeles', *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 9:6, (1971), p. 12.

Grassroots movements for community control in both cities lacked the political influence, or strength, to win their battles to define the shape and meaning of school reform. In New York, activists had come up against a white union that staunchly defended the rights of its members, as every union must, and which turned the civil rights movement's language of anti-discrimination and colourblindness against them. Antagonism between the two groups cut across racial and ethnic lines, devolving into outright hostility, occasional violence, and lasting bitterness. Yet, despite having the tacit endorsement of Mayor Lindsay and the support of the Ford Foundation, without teachers' support community control was always likely to be out of reach. In Los Angeles, students pushed for change and came up against school officials and state politicians who, conscious of developments in Harlem and Brooklyn, skillfully deflected and absorbed the protest, granting largely superficial change and preserving the status quo. With no leverage to use against entrenched educational power structures, a vision of school reform as radical as community control was unlikely to ever be fully realized. Educational change would proceed along the lines dictated by white, not black and minority, interests.

The Lessons of Community Control from the Bottom-up

Community control movements in both New York and Los Angeles reveal a great deal about the impact of Black Power as a philosophy and organizing tool on the black freedom struggle. Despite the controversy community control engendered, in both cities, it proved to be an important site of unity between black moderates and militants, illuminating the flexibility and broad appeal of Black Power and blurring the lines traditionally assumed to separate them during the period. The picket lines outside Manual Arts had seen parents, Black Power militants, antipoverty activists, clergymen, civil rights leaders, and elected officials gathered together.[98] Across New York, the fight for community control also brought civil rights activists and Black Power radicals together in common purpose. In Harlem, the struggle over local education led to the creation of the Harlem Board of Education Organizing Committee, a similarly diverse group of local interest groups, organizations, and individuals who united to lobby for the creation of an independent and locally-controlled school system in Harlem. Black Power militants on the committee included Floyd McKissick and Roy Innis of CORE. Alongside them were local leaders of moderate or conservative groups like the NAACP and the Urban League, as well as local antipoverty agency leaders, parent groups, and education professionals. Also involved were local politicians State Senator Basil Patterson and

[98] Theoharis, "W-A-L-K-O-U-T!', p. 111.

Assemblyman Charles Rangel, who, just as black Los Angeles politicians had, submitted two ultimately unsuccessful bills for the creation of an autonomous Harlem school district to the state legislature.[99] In Brooklyn, not long after the UFT had called its first strike in September 1968, a public meeting held in Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstrated the breadth of support in the black community for the experimental districts' governing school board's militancy. Reverend C. Herbert Oliver, Chairman of the Governing Board, read out letters of support he had received from four local chapters of the Black Panther Party, nineteen different New York-based NAACP branches, a number of the city's antipoverty agencies, interdenominational faith alliances, and various local parent associations.[100] As teacher and activist Les Campbell explained:

> The strike was a unifying factor in the black community. Groups that had previously been at each others' throat found themselves together at rallies, at meetings surrounding Ocean Hill. It was an issue that, whether you were CORE, or the NAACP, or the Urban League, or the Black Panther Party, or the Republic of New Africa, you could rally around this community issue.[101]

The diversity of community control movements in New York and Los Angeles reveals the extent to which a broad range of community groups, from across the political spectrum, could unite behind aspects of their Black Power-infused message. At the same time, it suggested a syncretic and pragmatic approach to activism on the part of those black communities and organizations. Many community control advocates will have held a different view of community control than their more militant associates. Though Black Power militants played a prominent, and often controversial, part in the cities' community control movements, they were far from the sum of its parts. Many activists identified with, and appropriated, the elements of community control they found most appealing and most likely to improve their children's education. Many agreed that the classroom was the perfect place to teach black children about African-American culture and heritage, and reshape black identity, but disagreed with black radicals' emphasis on class perspective and felt Afrocentric educational programmes were too narrow and limited in scope. Black education, they believed, could be cultural empowering and still be directed towards advancement in white-dominated American society. As one local educator argued, 'We're not interested in teaching middle-class values, but neither are we concerned with educating people to keep them in the ghetto.'[102]

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[99] 'Want Autonomous School system', *New York Amsterdam News*, Jan 25, 1969, p.1.
[100] Sara Slack, 'Angered People Vow to Keep Teachers Out of School', *New York Amsterdam News*, Oct 5, 1968, p.1.
[101] Les Campbell Interview, November 3, 1988, Eyes on the Prize II Interview.
[102] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, 'Racial Composition Emerges as Key Issue on Experimental District 19', April 17, 1970; Les Campbell Interview, November 3, 1988, Eyes on the Prize II Interview; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, p.474.

At root, community control, as a natural extension of Black Power ideology, was flexible, and open to interpretation. This was evident in May 1968, when national NAACP leader Roy Wilkins, gave his backing to school decentralization in New York in spite of its association with Black Power militancy and its unlikeliness to advance school integration, one of the organization's primary goals.[103] At the NAACP's annual convention the following year, the two thousand gathered delegates seemed to agree, passing a resolution endorsing community control. Underlining its flexibility and broad appeal, the resolution read:

> We strongly support the concept of community control of public schools, particularly in the North and West, as a means of achieving fundamental changes in the schools and insuring accountability of public schools for public achievement. We do not believe that community control and desegregation are inherently incompatible or in conflict unless they are made to be by the advocates, white or black, of racial separatism.[104]

This was also visible in Milton Galamison's journey from ardent integrationist to community control advocate. As Clarence Taylor has explained, Galamison was completely opposed to black separatism, which he equated with white supremacist ideology. His support for community control was founded on its scope for greater black self-determination, the chance it gave African American parents and communities to improve their children's future prospects, and the importance of the classroom as a place to build character and pride in black heritage and culture.[105] In this view, a Black Power-oriented community control philosophy was completely compatible with an integrationist one: they both aimed at giving black children a better chance of succeeding in mainstream American society.

Many black parents and communities engaged with the theory of community control because it seemed to hold the promise of empowering them, as well as improving local education. Parents supporting community control in Los Angeles were keen to gain a greater say in the way their children's schools were run and, to a degree, the students' protests did secure a greater input for local families into school administration. Opening new lines of communication between students, parents and staff helped to ease some existing tensions. In New York, community governing boards' control of education policy and recruitment opened up opportunities to empower local parents. As the number of black teachers employed in Harlem and Ocean Hill-Brownsville's schools increased during the experiment, so did the number of "paraprofessionals" they employed too. Many of these paraprofessionals were parents of the school's students and worked in a range of roles, from classroom-based teaching aides to administrators, early child care workers, and student

[103] 'New School System in City is Supported', *New York Times*, May 14, 1968, p.44.
[104] Thomas A. Johnson, 'NAACP Scores 'Hostile' Nixon Acts', *New York Times*, July 6, 1969, p.32.
[105] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, pp.176-180.

behavior monitors. With hundreds of paraprofessionals - the vast majority nonwhite - employed in each demonstration district, they came to form a vital part of the day-to-day running of the experimental district's schools. For parents who remained outside of the classroom innovative educational programmes sought to make them, like paraprofessionals, a genuine partner in their children's education. In Ocean Hill Brownsville, for example, elementary schools ran a Parent-Child Home Reading programme which taught parents the basic reading instruction skills necessary to teach their children to learn to read outside of school too. Community Liaison programmes were also established to inform local parents about all the experimental schemes being run in their children's schools. Many of the educational programmes established in Ocean Hill Brownsville and Harlem were themselves statements of black empowerment, racial identity, and cultural independence as they explicitly rejected and criticized the standardized 'white' criteria for assessment that black students in public schools were usually judged against and which, they argued, reinforced notions of white privilege and superiority. Attacked by Shanker and the UFT as being 'revolutionary', such courses were a powerful, albeit short-lived, symbol of black control of local education.[106] A year on from the start of the Ocean Hill Brownsville crisis, Rhody McCoy lamented that their efforts to turn the classroom into a 'laboratory for educational techniques' had been completely overshadowed by the controversy surrounding the school strikes.[107]

Offering parents and the local community an unprecedented level of influence over and involvement in local education (and in the case of paraprofessionals, a direct role in daily school life), parents across the three demonstration districts generally responded very positively to community control. As Clare Marshall, vice-chairman of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Governing Board suggested, the support and involvement of parents in the district, in all capacities, 'kept us alive during the strike and other crises.' Community control, she continued, had given rise to 'Parent Power'.[108] The demonstration district's innovative educational programmes played an important part in connecting local parents to the community control experiment and there was widespread support among the community for the new teaching methods to be retained once the experimental districts had been broken up by the School Decentralization Act.[109]

Community control's potential for improving education for African American children and empowering the black community attracted many supporters, reflecting the willingness of the black

[106] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, Ronald Smothers, 'State OK's OH Programs hit by UFT', October 7, 1969.
[107] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, Ronald Smothers, '15 Innovative Programs at the Heart of Ocean Hill-Brownsville Experiment', September 22, 1969.
[108] *Ibid.*
[109] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, 'Harlem Pupils Test Experimental Teaching Techniques', January 20, 1970.

community to appropriate ideas, tactics, and establish associations where they promised to be useful and deliver results. School integration had been pursued by education activists in New York because it represented, at the time, the best chances for improving the quality of education available to their children. However, as political changes in the city brought the prospect of school reform, and in the face of obdurate white resistance to school desegregation, parents and community activists latched on to the empowering language and substance of an embryonic Black Power message to foreground a new solution to the problems they faced in their local schools, and to try and shape the course of education reform in the city. Black parent and community groups forged alliances with Black Power militants because they shared considerable common ground on their vision of community control and represented valuable support and energy. At the earliest days of the community control movement integrationists and Black Power militants had protested side by side outside IS 201 in September 1966.[110] When the People's Board of Education was looking for a location to set up in Harlem in early 1967 SNCC, a Black Power organization, gave them space within their Harlem offices.[111] Black Power advocates, typically cast at the extreme edge of black activism, were at the heart of a diverse and community-wide movement.

Community control also proved to be a fertile ground for interracial cooperation between African Americans and other minority groups (as well as some whites too) relations with whom, although not tension free, were far more positive than those which had characterised antipoverty organizing in the two cities. Although dominated by black New Yorkers, the city's community control movement was certainly multiracial. Solidarity between the various ethnic groups was founded on their common target: improving the quality of their children's education. As a Chinese-American mother from the Two Bridges experimental district declared 'We Asian Americans know our fate lies with the Black and Puerto Rican parents. We realize as much as they that our Chinese children are being subjected to inferior education. We join them in their fight.' The language of cultural oppression and racial empowerment that Black Power and community control advocates employed resonated with other minority groups in the city. William Del Toro, a Puerto Rican community activist from the East Harlem community corporation, M.E.N.D., revealed the local community's desire to guard the authority and independence that the experimental districts had given them, and which the redistricting mandated by final school decentralization legislation threatened to erase:

[110] '"Black Power" Moves into Harlem School Battle', *New York Amsterdam News*, September 24, 1966, p.1.
[111] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, p.186.

> We don't want the white middle-class of Yorkville joined up with East Harlem because the white middle-class will dominate. We demand that the [Interim] Board of Education dissolve itself so that we can get on with the job of educating our children.[112]

The power of education in shaping cultural identity was well recognized by other minority groups. Urging the creation of an exclusively Puerto Rican school district, Julio Morales of the East Harlem Coalition for Community Control argued that such a district would help Puerto Rican children 'to gain a sense of identity' and allow their parents to 'program education for Puerto Rican kids who have distinctly different requirements to the blacks of Central Harlem and the white middle-class of Yorkville.'[113] In Los Angeles, black students' school protests during 1968 were relatively limited when set against by those occurring in Latino communities, where students had similarly embraced Black Power militants' language of cultural empowerment, and drew inspiration from black protests in Manual Arts High at the end of the previous year.[114]

Community control activism in New York and Los Angeles reminds us that the black struggle for empowerment took place in a multiracial environment, and overlapped and intertwined with other racial liberation efforts. While the conflict that dominated inter-minority group relations over antipoverty resources and opportunities in both cities was not absent from education activism there was also a high degree of harmonious and productive, multi-racial cooperation, especially among militant groups. In New York, radical group the Young Lords, the Puerto Rican equivalent of the Black Panther Party, declared their 'support for all battles for community control of schools'. In a message to Puerto Rican students the Young Lords echoed the militancy of some of the city's Black Power advocates:

> If your school is messed up, if the administrators and teachers don't care and don't teach – don't let them force you to drop out. Throw them out. The schools belong to us, not them…. Make revolution inside the schools. If the schools don't function for us, they shouldn't function at all![115]

In Los Angeles, the student-led walkouts in black and Mexican-American schools were related, and mutually supportive and reinforcing phenomena. As Theoharis has explained, although the 1967 protests at Manual Arts predated the 1968 walkouts – or 'Blowouts' as they were referred to by the city's Chicano students – black students' 1968 walkouts began, in part, as a sympathetic action in

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[112] Sara Slack, 'School Hearings: Bronx Wins; Manhattan, Brooklyn Lose??', *New York Amsterdam News*, December 13, 1969, p.1.
[113] Community News Service Records, 1969-1976, Reel 1, 'East Harlem Puerto Ricans seek separate school district', October 17, 1969.
[114] See: Theoharis, 'W-A-L-K-O-U-T!', p. 110-131.
[115] Richie Perez, 'H.S. Revolt!' *Palante*, October 16, 1970, Vol. 2, No. 13 printed in *The Young Lords: A Reader* ed. by Darrel Enck-Wanzer, et al (New York: New York University Press, 2010) pp.127-129 (p.127).

the wake of widespread student strikes in East Los Angeles' Mexican-American high schools. A celebrated aspect of local Latino history, the 'Blowouts' resulted from the collaboration between students and militants who, together, shaped school protest. Again, there were significant similarities between the situations faced by black and Latino students. As Carlos Montes a prominent leader of the revolutionary nationalist Brown Berets, (the era's most militant Chicano liberation group,) has recounted:

> Our schools were old and in bad condition, with high drop-out, or push-out, rates and racist administrators and teachers. Over time, we started agitating for bilingual education, better school conditions, Chicano studies and more Chicano teachers. We attended community, school and youth meetings to raise demands for better educational and school conditions. This finally led to the historic East L.A. Blowouts in March of 1968, where thousands of high school Chicano youth walked out of the four predominantly Chicano high schools in the Eastside over a two week period. The Brown Berets were the first to run in to the high schools, yelling, 'Walk out! Walk out!' We eventually won bilingual education, Chicano studies, better school conditions and Chicano teachers and administrators.[116]

Students, parents, and activists in both communities recognized the inferior educational environments and standards offered to them by the public school system and engaged in overlapping protests to try and force change. Indeed, nonwhite freedom struggles were fundamentally linked to the Black Power movement, especially its most radical elements. As the work of historian Jeffrey Ogbar has highlighted, the Black Power movement 'had a profound effect on the symbolism, rhetoric, and tactics of radical activism outside of the African American community' in the late-1960s. 'Radical ethnic nationalism and new constructions of ethnic identity', seen in groups like the Brown Berets and Young Lords, were heavily influenced by black radical groups, and none more so than the Black Panthers.[117] Indeed, as historian Laura Pulido has explained in her study of Los Angeles, the Black Panther Party 'created the political space and inspiration for other activists of colour to pursue more militant and radical forms of political action.'[118] However, it was precisely the racial militancy and demand for transformative change that characterized community control movements in both cities that proved to be their downfall. In advancing such a radical vision of school reform as community control, activists inevitably came into conflict with entrenched interests reluctant to concede power. In both cases, militancy and confrontational politics produced unwanted or ultimately injurious consequences beyond ending the legislative prospects for community control.

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[116] Interview with Carlos Montes, n.d. Online: <http://inside.sfuhs.org/dept/history/US_History_reader/Chapter14/brownberets.htm> [Accessed 2/11/2012].
[117] Ogbar, p. 159.
[118] Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) p.6.

In New York, the schools crisis accelerated the decline of support for liberalism among the city's working, lower-middle, and middle-class white voters, many of whom identified with Albert Shanker who blamed the dispute on the permissiveness of liberals (embodied by Mayor Lindsay and the Ford Foundation) who had privileged the demands of disruptive and violent black militants, over the legal rights of the city's hard-working white citizens. The law and order rhetoric of conservatives like Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan seemed particularly apt in the face of the violent and tense scenes that characterized the New York school crisis. To many white New Yorkers, it seemed to be another symptom of liberal politicians' favouring of minority groups and their inability to preserve order and protect white interests in a changing urban political economy. Furthermore, by badly souring the relationship between the city's blacks and Jews, Podair argues, the school controversy helped to reshape the city's ethno-religious landscape. The fallout from the schools crisis saw race overtake religion as the city's key divide, as working and middle-class Jews joined the white ethnic revival underway in the city, moving closer to New York's Irish, Italian, and Eastern European Catholic populations who had previously been their rivals. As Podair has explained, this process fatally weakened the 'informal political alliance between Jews, blacks, and white Protestants in New York that had defined the city's culture since the end of World War II.' The new conservative alliance between Catholics and Jews made its influence on city politics felt for much of the next three decades, orchestrating a shift to the right which saw a succession of conservative mayors elected to City Hall.[119] Moreover, this decisive new political coalition, Podair has explained, soon turned the language of community control against the very communities that had first used it, making it a rationale for the expansion of white community power. During the late 1970s, as New York experienced its greatest postwar fiscal crisis, they would join with Manhattan elites to elect Ed Koch as mayor, supporting the severe cuts to the city's social service and welfare spending he oversaw, which impacted most heavily on New York's black and other nonwhite communities.[120]

In Los Angeles, while community control protests brought a degree of change, the specter of violence and racial militancy on the picket line also resulted in an increased police and security presence in schools, something that students came to increasingly resent over time. Worse still, as black efforts to secure community control in Los Angeles fell well short of success, similar demands by other local minority groups – once mutually supportive – were turned against wider African American efforts for educational equality. By finding *Crawford* in favour of the ACLU and

[119] Jerald Podair, 'The Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis: New York's *Antigone*', (conference paper presented at the 'Conference on New York City History', City University of New York, New York, October 6, 2001) pp.2-3. Online at: http://www.gothamcenter.org/festival/2001/confpapers/podair.pd

[120] Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York*, p.184.

ordering the LAUSD to submit a plan for desegregation, Judge Alfred Gitelson's 1970 decision brought a longstanding contradiction within multiracial school activism to the surface. As historian Mark Brilliant has argued, by including black and Chicano children in his order, Gitelson extended the meaning of *Brown* 'beyond the black/white binary racial categories in which it had been originally cast.' The result pitted Mexican-American activists' primary target of bilingual education – which relied on the maintenance of predominantly Chicano schools – against the prospect of court-ordered busing to desegregate the city's schools (desired by many blacks), which critically undermined it. During his campaign for re-election in 1970 Governor Ronald Reagan, seeking the Latino vote, used the issue of bilingual education (as distinct from community control) to bolster opposition to school desegregation. Adopting a fiercely anti 'forced busing' platform Reagan gave strong support to bilingual education while on the campaign trail and continued to do so once reelected. Just as he had used the language of 'freedom of association' and property rights to oppose the Rumford Fair Housing Act in 1966 Reagan had now appropriated bilingual education to once more turn interest group identity politics against black Californians' efforts to desegregate their cities.[121]

Ultimately, community control was too inimical to entrenched white interests to succeed. As established in previous chapters, the trajectory of black empowerment was vitally influenced by both public policy and the political support (or lack thereof) of whites. The War on Poverty's potential for mobilizing and empowering poor black communities brought decisive reaction from established urban power structures, who moved to try and nullify that threat and maintain the clientelist bent of urban politics. CDCs and other black economic development policies enjoyed a measure of success because they were deliberately crafted so as to be sympathetic to growing white hostility to existing antipoverty policies and the redistributive economic principles of welfare state liberalism. Although community control initially enjoyed the support of Mayor Lindsay and the Ford Foundation, it was defeated by a white middle-class labour union whose economic and professional interests it threatened, and which was able to exert its considerable power to kill the experiment, and conclusively define the parameters of education reform in the city as they saw fit. In Los Angeles, demands for community control were skillfully absorbed and deflected and, when school decentralization did later occur, it was in a way that strengthened the power of teachers and education officials, and did virtually nothing to increase community influence over school affairs.[122] As we will see in the following section, events in Atlanta demonstrated the ways in which the cause

[121] Brilliant, pp.228, 231, 236.
[122] Priscilla Wohlstetter and Karen McCurdy, 'The Link Between School Decentralization and School Politics' *Urban Education*, Vol. 25, No.4, (January 1991) pp.391-414 (pp.408-411).

of black empowerment could be furthered where there was alignment between white and black interests, and where it promised to reinforce, rather than weaken, class privilege.

Community Control in Dixie?

When Preston Wilcox – the leading black academic community control theorist – extolled its virtues in front of Atlanta's black professional and business leaders, he was a world away from the IS201 protests in Harlem, where the theory had originally emanated. Speaking in early February 1970 at the Butler Street YMCA – the unofficial "Black Chamber of Commerce" and home of black Atlanta's establishment – Wilcox was delivering his message to a room filled with powerful individuals. Among them were wealthy, independent and highly influential black business leaders, educators, professionals and ministers. It was a group whose star was on the rise. In the year leading up to Wilcox's visit, black political power in the city had swelled, beginning a sharp upward trajectory and African Americans now held one-third of all elective offices in the city. Maynard Jackson had become the city's first black vice-mayor. Recent elections had considerably increased black presence on the city's powerful aldermanic council. The city's Board of Education was headed by revered local educator Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, one of three black board members out of a total of ten.[123] 'Now is the time,' Wilcox announced, 'for the communities to take charge of the education of their children as to what they should study and by whom these books are taught.' 'Community control', he concluded, 'promotes better schools, aids in the selection of administrators, teachers, school curricula and eliminates the self-hatred of the black youth'[124] However, whereas, community control had been embraced in New York and Los Angeles by activists seeking to challenge racism and inequality in public education, and politically and economically empower themselves and their communities, Atlanta's black leadership elite were interested in control of a different kind. Rather than pushing for community control, and the decentralization of educational authority to parent and grass-roots activist-led councils, the city's black elite, building on their growing political advantage and power, instead sought black administrative control of the city's school system as a whole. Their efforts to take over the apparatus of public education in Atlanta, and secure the jobs and power it promised, would triumph at the expense of grass-roots education activism in the city's poor black neighbourhoods. Both

[123] Alton Hornsby, *Black Power in Dixie: A Political History of African Americans in Atlanta* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2009), p.128-129; Tuck, p.212.
[124] 'Community Must Control Schools, Says Forum Speaker', *The Atlanta Voice*, February 22, 1970, p.22.

gender and socio-economic class played a defining part in this intra-racial struggle over Atlanta's public schools.

It was not the first time that class had vitally shaped the course of black advancement and racial progress in the city. Following the Second World War, Atlanta's black community had been led by a group called the Atlanta Negro Voter's League (ANVL). The organization was, as Alton Hornsby has explained, 'a handful or two of black aristocrats who spoke for black Atlantan politics and civil rights matters for two decades.' At the top of the pile were men like A.T. 'Colonel' Walden, an attorney and legendary political operator, and Reverend William Holmes Border, the 'dean of the City's black preachers' and pastor of the prestigious Wheat Street Baptist Church. Favouring negotiation and gradualism over protest and litigation, the concessions that Walden and his allies were able to win from the city's white power structure rarely benefitted Atlanta's poorest blacks. The student movement that exploded out of Atlanta in 1960 shook Atlanta's black establishment, and after Walden's death in 1965 the remaining members of ANVL joined forces with the new generation of aspiring black city leaders. This new coalition combined several old ministers of large churches, a number of black college professors, some older businessmen, and a number of young professionals and ambitious businessmen and women. As the decade progressed, these leaders (who came to be known, Hornsby explains, as the 'New Black Power Structure') continued - as the ANVL had before them – to try and ensure that Atlanta remained 'a middle-class black haven.'[125] Local education reform became a vital terrain upon which these efforts unfolded. As we have seen, their lukewarm response to the *Brown* decision reflected the concern it had caused the city's influential and established core of black education professionals as well as the middle and upper-class communities who treasured their black-run neighbourhood schools. During the mid-to-late 1960s, as the city's school desegregation fight dragged on, pupil desegregation became a secondary, even incidental, concern for them. Instead, Brown-Nagin explains, it morphed into a struggle 'over employment discrimination and socioeconomic class as much as a fight about race and pupil education.' Driven by the city's black teachers, these developments underlined their position as one of the city's most powerful black interest groups, a role they had enjoyed for many decades.[126]

Horace Tate, head of the Georgia Teacher and Education Association (GTEA) and school board member, explained his constituents' position on school desegregation in mid-1969. As faculty desegregation in the city had failed to allay their fears over job discrimination, especially over the

[125] Grady-Willis, p.xiii, 12-13; Hornsby, p.119, 124.
[126] Brown-Nagin, p.348.

school system's top jobs, Tate argued: 'Our people believed in integration. But by now they see its placing the Negro in the worst position he's ever been in.'[127] This kind of narrow, sectional view of black interests was echoed by Tate's colleague, and Board of Education President, Dr. Benjamin Mays, who chided black students protesting for Black Studies courses in universities campuses beyond the South. Their demands, he argued, would hurt black colleges in the South by leading northern universities to poach their best academics. 'With the scarcity of black scholars,' Mays complained, 'this would only mean the weakening of black colleges. If we are as concerned as we say we are about blackness, black control, black power, and the like – we should be against any move that would weaken what is definitely our own.'[128] These sentiments, articulated by two of the city's most influential education officials (of either race), revealed the high level support given to protecting and increasing black teachers' power, as well as the underlying assumption that what was good for black teachers, was good for the black community as a whole. With greater black power over the city's school system firmly in their sights, Atlanta's black establishment was soon presented with an excellent opportunity to advance their interests. In April 1971, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Swann vs Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* raised the prospect of court-ordered busing to accelerate school desegregation. The implications of the *Swann* decision for *Calhoun*, the city's ongoing school desegregation case, gave Atlanta's black leaders a bargaining chip with which to force the hand of the city's white power structure.[129]

Recognizing the pervasive hostility to busing among white Atlantans, the city's black leaders – including Mays and Tate – entered into negotiations with their white counterparts who were keen to settle *Calhoun.* Begun in secret, these talks produced an agreement – subsequently known as the 'Atlanta Compromise' – which, in return for ending the prospect of busing by bringing the *Calhoun* suit to a close, secured Atlanta's black elite immediate control over the city's school system. The settlement drew up thirty seven administrative positions (twenty one of which were newly created), and guaranteed blacks at least twenty five of them. Of the top fifteen jobs, eight were designated for African Americans. The whole process reflected the broader acceptance – among the city's black and white leaders – of an affirmative action-inflected proportional distribution of power based on race. However, just like federal contract set-asides for minority-owned businesses that the Nixon administration developed (which the following chapter demonstrates, were especially prevalent at the city level in Atlanta) the designation of high level city jobs for African Americans promised primarily to help the black middle-class and elite, and not the poor who generally lacked the education and training that such positions demanded. The plan

[127] 'Tate Sees Problem', *The Atlanta Voice*, May 11, 1969, p.3.
[128] Benjamin Mays, 'Black Students – Helping? Hurting', *The Atlanta Voice*, May 25, 1969, p.5.
[129] Brown-Nagin, p.363, 368.

was also designed to minimize future pupil desegregation, and left approximately two-thirds of Atlanta's 153 public schools virtually all-black. The busing that was included in the plan was minimal, involving less than 3 percent of the total student body, none of which would involve students from the city's upper and middle-income black neighborhoods.[130]

However, while the rejection of *Swann* by the city's black elites reflected the ambivalence and opposition to busing among Atlanta's black teachers and middle and upper-income communities, it did not chime with many of the city's poor and working-class blacks, a majority of whom favoured busing as a method for desegregating the city's schools. The class politics that informed the school boards' position did not escape one local black newspaper editor who strongly criticized their stance after negotiations became public. 'Blacks living in swanky middle-class neighborhoods,' he complained, 'no longer worry about their poor brothers who must fight the rats. Blacks who have good schools in their neighborhoods are not aiding the less fortunate blacks who need busing to get a decent education for their children.' Atlanta's black elite, he argued, were 'more interested in political status than in racial equality for all people… It makes the sons of Robert E. Lee and the richer sons of Fred Douglass partners in keeping the peace by destroying the power of civil rights.'[131] The Atlanta Compromise, however, did not go unchallenged.

The Fight for Social Justice and Educational Equality in Atlanta's Ghettos

The battle to invalidate the *Calhoun* settlement, and make busing the primary weapon in the fight for educational equality in Atlanta, emerged from a diverse base of grassroots community activism rooted in Peoplestown, one of city's poorest black neighbourhoods. At the very heart of it all was Emmaus House, a local institution established in 1967 by the Diocese of Atlanta which focused on advocacy for the poor, social service provision, supporting local families, and community organizing. The centre's operations were run by local blacks alongside the predominantly white church staff, as well as unpaid workers (who were often white northern college students), all under the leadership of white Catholic priest Father Austin Ford. Emmaus House existed primarily as an advocate for the disadvantaged, and sought to empower the local poor, make them aware of their

[130] *Ibid.*, p.382-383; Paul Delaney, 'The Choice: Integration or Power: Black Pragmatism', *New York Times*, July 15, 1973, p.17.
[131] Atlanta, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American History and Culture, Southern Regional Council Collection, 1944-1977, Box 14, 'Busing Problem is U.S. Contradiction', *The Atlanta Voice*, October 9, 1971, p.2

rights and help them fight for positive change in their community.[132] Strongly committed to their cause, Emmaus House became perhaps the greatest wellspring of African American grass-roots social and economic justice activism in the city.

In mid-July 1968, a leading NWRO spokeswoman from Washington D.C. was invited to speak at the centre, an event which proved to be the launching pad of the city's vibrant welfare rights movement. Following the talk, the five local black welfare mothers in attendance established a neighbourhood NWRO branch. The group elected one of their number, Ethel Mae Mathews, as their president. Mathews would prove to be one of the most committed and hardworking leaders and advocates for social and economic justice in the city. With the help of Emmaus House staff, Mathews and her fellow members quickly expanded the group's membership to over 150.[133] Emmaus House became the focal point of local welfare rights organizing, as a number of other NWRO chapters from other disadvantaged black neighbourhoods also formed under its auspices. By providing both the space for meeting at their headquarters, as well as transport to and from meetings for those involved, Emmaus House provided vital organizational support to burgeoning local welfare rights activism. The following year, along with several local black ministers, Emmaus House worked with public housing tenants to organize tenants' rights groups in housing projects across the city. This produced a city-wide organization called Tenants United For Fairness (TUFF) which, like local welfare rights groups, was a predominantly female-led movement. Over time, TUFF's battles with the Atlanta Housing Authority won some significant victories for poor local blacks. Among these were improved leases, better housing code enforcement, and the establishment of a grievance review procedure that was the first of its kind, and which later became a requirement in public housing nationally.[134] Along with the local welfare rights groups (with whom there was considerable membership overlap), these organizations represented the most energetic grassroots community activism in the city.

Emmaus House's commitment to economic and social justice led the organization to play a central role in carrying the battle for integrated education forward by turning neighbourhood concern over the state of local schools in to a focal point of community activity. In October 1969, the Supreme Court's decision in *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* had forced the

[132] The following discussion of Emmaus House is based primarily upon an oral history project run by Kennesaw State University called 'The Peoplestown Project'. All the interviews referred to here were conducted by Dr. LeeAnn Lands and can be found online at: <http://thepeoplestownproject.com/oral-histories/> [Accessed 27/08/2013].
[133] Grady-Willis, p.136-137.
[134] Dennis Goldstein Interview, July 31, 2009, Online: <http://thepeoplestownproject.com/2011/dennis-goldstein/ > [Accessed 11/05/2013]. A detailed collection of official correspondence, news clippings and tenants' rights organizational material can be found in: CCAA Records, Boxes 12-16.

Atlanta school board to once more adapt to the changing terrain of school desegregation jurisprudence. In *Alexander*, Chief Justice Warren Burger decreed that dual school systems were to be eradicated immediately, invalidating long timetables for desegregation, despite the protestations of the Nixon Department of Justice. Accordingly, the new plan put forward by the city did increase school desegregation, of both pupils and faculty, but kept racial change in the schools to a minimum, increasing black enrollment in white schools, and white enrollment in black schools by less than ten percent. In spite of its modest scope, the new plan was vociferously opposed by large numbers of white Atlantans (including sizable teacher and student protest groups), and the ongoing white exodus from the city's public schools significantly accelerated as a result.[135] The new plan also included a provision that allowed for students in schools where they were in a majority, to apply for transfers to schools where they would be in a minority. Deliberately unpublicized, the rule required that a minimum of thirty children to be signed up before the city would provide transport, a necessity for most local poor parents. As an Emmaus House worker suggested, this requirement 'effectively disenfranchised a lot of parents who would like for their child to transfer because they didn't have the organizational capacity to get up a bus load of kids…. so Emmaus House filled that gap.'[136]

Emmaus House workers, alongside Mathews and her fellow community activists, canvassed local parents (capitalizing on the growing welfare and tenants' rights activist network they were cultivating) to gauge interest in utilizing the new plan's provision. The response was emphatic. As Father Ford has remembered, 'there were a lot of housing projects, and they were all teeming with women who were desperate to improve their situation and help their children. There wasn't any problem with recruiting.' Meeting with widespread approval, their first efforts resulted in nearly four hundred local black children being put forward for transfer. More than an attempt to improve local children's education, it also represented a deliberate and symbolic challenge to the racial and economic dimensions of educational inequality. As Father Ford explained:

> We were determined not to send them just to scatter them around but to have enough of those children in a school so they wouldn't feel isolated. And so we went to E. Rivers and [Morris] Brandon and [Warren T.] Jackson [Elementary Schools] - all the posh schools in town. You know, they operate like private schools, and only rich white people could get there.[137]

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[135] Brown-Nagin, p.360-362; For an in-depth discussion of white resistance to school desegregation in Atlanta, see, Kruse, pp.131-179.
[136] Tom Erdmanczyk Interview, August 31, 2009, Online: http://thepeoplestownproject.com/2011/emmaus-house-oral-history/ [Accessed 12/05/2013].
[137] Father Austin Ford Interview 6th March 2009, Online: http://thepeoplestownproject.com/2011/austin-ford/ [Accessed 29/10/2012].

The high performing schools in wealthy white neighbourhoods in North Atlanta they targeted were almost always under capacity, while schools in poor black neighbourhoods like Peoplestown usually ran at double, and sometimes even triple, sessions to cope with overcrowding. Despite the anger of many of white parents in North Atlanta (including some who were donors to Emmaus House, and who withdrew their support in protest), the black children attended the white schools with little incident. A success, Emmaus House volunteers and local welfare rights activists sought to push back against the city's restrictive desegregation plan and to make busing the primary remedy for improving the education received by poor black children across the city.[138]

In Peoplestown, the fight for school desegregation resulted naturally from the developing grassroots black community activism that flowed through Emmaus House. What began in mid-1968 as welfare rights and tenants' rights activism, became a much broader struggle for, and commitment to, social and economic justice, one dedicated entirely to improving local conditions and giving the poor a greater say in the decisions that affected their lives. As one Emmaus House worker has remembered, at the start, local activists focused on 'basic rights such as obtaining higher welfare payments and using formal grievance hearings to dispute termination or reduction of benefits or other improper decisions by their caseworkers.' Over time, as they 'developed confidence in speaking out, and other leadership capacities' they came to address other issues such as 'better pay for black workers, securing better housing and food, and electing better government officials.'[139] As historian Rhonda Williams' work on the activism of female African American public housing tenants in Baltimore has suggested, this kind of activism was influenced by the grassroots organizing spirit and philosophy evinced by radical Black Power groups like the Black Panthers.[140] It was part of a Black Power-oriented agenda primarily concerned with transformative social and economic justice politics, the redistribution of power and resources from the top-downwards, the democratization of local institutions, and resisting racial and gender oppression. Unlike more mainstream visions of Black Power (discussed in the previous chapter) that were cultivated by some white politicians, black community organizations, and Black Power advocates, it attributed far less value to the pursuit of economic nationalism, and was less attached to the symbolic value of black ownership. Black empowerment – political or economic – was valuable only where it served the greater cause of reforming and democratizing American institutions and society in the pursuit of social, economic, and racial justice for all.

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[138] David Morath Interview 10th August 2009. Online: http://thepeoplestownproject.com/2011/david-morath/ [Accessed 12/05/2013].
[139] Peoplestown Project, Dennis Goldstein Interview, July 31, 2009,
[140] Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 191.

Emmaus House was a vital space where this local vision of community empowerment was supported and developed. One room of the Emmaus House was dedicated to the running of what was known as the Poverty Rights Office (PRO), which acted to help locals deal with practical problems they faced. As one EH worker has explained:

> The kind of work that they [the PRO] did, we did on a walk-in basis: somebody's electricity was cut off, somebody needed to apply for welfare or get Social Security benefits, somebody was having a housing issue, all sorts of things like that, and we'd just go out and do.[141]

Not dissimilar to the 'community survival' programmes run by the Black Panther Party, Emmaus House ran free baby feeding and food surplus programmes. A food cooperative was also set up and ran at the centre for several years in the early 1970s.[142] Beyond community support, the PRO played an especially important role in the development of local activism through their printing and distribution of the *Poor People's Newspaper*. Appearing every six weeks, the *Poor People's Newspaper* carried articles that enumerated and explained local people's rights, as well as relevant developments concerning a wide range of agencies and organizations, including: welfare, housing, Supreme Court decisions, and prisoner's rights, amongst many others. Not only was the newsletter a vital organizational tool, Ethel Mae Mathews' regular opening articles were the platform from which she became such an important and respected local leader.[143]

Emmaus House was also directly concerned with helping locals win greater political power. On top of voter registration and education work, the organization sponsored candidates from the community to run for local office and supported their campaigns. In 1969 and 1973 Ethel Mae Mathews ran for a seat on the city council. Although unsuccessful on both occasions, her candidacy did lead to the removal of the city's $500 candidate filing fee requirement which, she argued, unduly penalized the poor and limited their ability to run in local elections. In 1972, local black resident and Emmaus House volunteer Margret Griggs (whose daughter participated in the centre's busing programme) was persuaded by Father Ford to run for election to the Board of Education, which she did successfully later that year.[144]

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[141] Peoplestown Project, David Morath Interview 10th August 2009.
[142] Margret Griggs Interview, August 31, 2009, Online http://thepeoplestownproject.com/2011/margaret-griggs/ [Accessed 12/05/2013].
[143] For example, the January 28, 1971 issue discusses: tenants' rights; free school lunch programmes; changes to prison visiting procedures; income tax return filing advice; Medicaid; Legal Aid representation changes; and housing code enforcement. For the PPN repository: Atlanta History Center Kenan Research Center, Muriel Lokey Papers, MSS 967; Peoplestown Project, Dennis Goldstein Interview, July 31, 2009.
[144] Grady-Willis, p. 138; 'Mrs. Mathews Sues to Enter Council Race', *Atlanta Daily World*, May 3, 1973, p.1; Peoplestown Project, Margret Griggs Interview, August 31, 2009.

There were also some direct links to Black Power radicalism. Gene Ferguson, one of the small but committed cadre of local Black Panther Party activists, who was also a leading figure at Emmaus House, was especially important in this respect. When Ferguson was not running the BPP's local free breakfast and other survival programmes, he was teaching local children at Emmaus House about black history, and running numerous other programmes. Along with Columbus Ward (another fellow black leader at Emmaus House who had also been a member of the BPP) Ferguson ran an after school children's club called 'Liberators' which provided meals, ran educational field trips to city government buildings and museums and elsewhere, and allowed local children to engage in the arts and drama.[145] As an institution, Emmaus House embraced Black Power, just as the people they worked with had. As EH staff member Sister Marie Bodell remembered, the staff felt part of:

> … a great community-building opportunity. Gene, of course, helped lay out black history, and we had Sister Mary Joseph who made a beautiful sign that was in the front entrance for decades that said, "black is beautiful". "Black power" and "I'm black and I'm beautiful" were chants that the kids would say all the time.[146]

While the relationship between Emmaus House and Black Power activism and ideology is far from typical of white religious groups – and especially Catholics – parallels did exist elsewhere. Historian Patrick Jones' work on the black freedom struggle in Milwaukee, Wisconsin has highlighted the enduring association between white Catholic priest Father James Groppi and a group of young Black Power militants who worked together to fight for racial and economic justice, and black empowerment in the city during the late 1960s and early 1970s.[147] However, the interracial and faith-based Black Power organizing in Atlanta and Milwaukee was unusual. Indeed, Catholics were often identified with opposition to civil rights and social justice activism. For example, the McCarthyist anticommunist populism of the early Cold War was rooted in broad catholic support, and key, anti-liberal, conservative ideologues in the 1950s such as William F. Buckley and L. Brent Bozell Jr., were also Catholics.[148] In many northern cities like New York, Chicago, and Detroit, white catholic working and lower middle-class ethnic groups like Italian and Polish Americans were often associated with anti-civil rights protests and fierce resistance to

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[145] Grady-Willis, p. 177-178, 210; Silvia Griggs Britt Interview, August 16, 2009 Online <http://thepeoplestownproject.com/2011/silva-griggs-britt/>[Accessed 12/05/2013].
[146] Sister Marie Bodell Interview, July 23, 2009 Online: <http://thepeoplestownproject.com/2011/mimi-sister-marie-bodell-2/> [Accessed 12/05/2013].
[147] Patrick Jones, '"Not a Color but an Attitude": Father James Groppi and Black Power Politics in Milwaukee' in *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* ed. by Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University, 2005), pp. 259-281.
[148] Patrick Allitt, 'American Catholics and the New Conservatism of the 1950s' *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 7, No.1, (Winter, 1988) pp.15-37; Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: the Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) p.18, 107.

integration during the 1960s.[149] Along with similar activism in Milwaukee, the collaboration between Emmaus House and local black community activists complicates the dominant image of the relationship between white catholic groups and the black freedom struggle.

With their busing programme running successfully, Emmaus House and their local allies seized upon a new development to try and broaden its scope. Just as the *Swann* decision moved the city's black and white elites to begin negotiations to settle *Calhoun*, by endorsing busing and rezoning as methods to achieve a degree of racial balance in school districts, it also inspired community activists in Peoplestown to file a lawsuit of their own. As Emmaus House worker David Morath has explained:

> Charlotte-Mecklenburg had a [metropolitan] school district, and we had looked and thought probably more could be done if we looked at Atlanta on a metropolitan basis [rather] than just the city of Atlanta. There were areas on the edge of the city of Atlanta where there were more opportunities for whites and blacks to mix. So, the NAACP, which had the original court case was not interested in pursuing this because the Atlanta school board had just turned majority black. So the city school district was in black control and we were starting to get into the black power verses integration debate. [Instead of pursuing the NAACP as a partner,] we picked up with ACLU. Margie Pitts Hames was the attorney, and we signed up plaintiffs to sue for [desegregating as a] metropolitan school district.[150]

The resultant case was *Armour v. Nix* which, led by Hames (one of the state's leading civil rights lawyers, whose past cases included a number of important poverty and women's rights issues), had local African American welfare mothers as the bulk of its plaintiffs. As far as local activists were concerned, school desegregation was the best thing that could happen. As Ethel Mae Mathews explained to the court in 1973, 'What we are searching for is equality for our children and the Metro suit is the only way to get it.'[151] By demanding a broader jurisdictional scope for school desegregation remedies in Atlanta, a victory in *Armour* would necessarily supersede any settlement of the *Calhoun* case that the city's black white leaders might produce from their ongoing negotiations.[152] The courts would ultimately decide which of the two opposing visions of black empowerment would prevail.

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[149] See, for example: Alan B Anderson, *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 1985).
[150] Brown-Nagin, p.364; Peoplestown Project, David Morath Interview 10th August 2009.
[151] Marcia Cross-Briscoe, 'Atlanta Metro School Suit: A Search for Equality', *Southern Changes.*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (1978) pp. 11-12. Online: <http://beck.library.emory.edu/southernchanges/article.php?id=sc01-2_005> [Accessed 12/05/2013].
[152] Brown-Nagin, p.373.

Black Control Triumphant

Filed on June 8, 1972, the arrival of *Armour* forced discussions over *Calhoun* between the city's biracial elites to reach to a conclusion a few weeks later. On one side of the negotiating table was the white contingent, which was dominated by school board members, including the Superintendent of Schools John Letson. On the other side, the black leadership group was led by Lonnie King, a celebrated former SNCC activist and leader of the city's student sit-in movement. Alongside King were Benjamin Mays and other black school board members, Atlanta Urban League head Lyndon Wade, and perhaps the most influential black businessman in Atlanta, insurance company executive Jesse Hill Jr. Lonnie King, in particular was crucial to the process as it was his position as head of the Atlanta NAACP that made an out of court settlement possible. Filed by the former branch president John Calhoun in 1958, the Atlanta branch retained its central role in the case in theory, if not in practice. Having given the reins over to the LDF, local involvement in the case had been, and was, very limited. Seeking to bring the case to a close, King used his position as the case's defacto sponsor to begin wrestling control of the *Calhoun* away from the LDF. After much legal maneuvering (which included temporarily firing LDF as counsel) King and his fellow negotiators eventually presented the court with their agreed settlement in February 1973, which sacrificed further busing in return for putting administrative control of the public school system in black hands. Hames immediately filed an objection to the settlement and argued for the right of those affected to have their voices heard on the settlement, securing her clients the chance to testify before the *Calhoun* judges. In early March, a series of hearings gave Atlanta's poor black community the chance to speak out in favour of busing and to challenge the notion that Lonnie King spoke for all black Atlantans. Despite impassioned testimony from poor and working-class blacks, including Ethel Mae Mathews, Edward Moody, and prominent tenants' rights leader Eva Davis, the judges ultimately approved the settlement, once more declaring Atlanta's school system unitary.[153]

The settlement's main protagonists were quick to defend their work. Lonnie King argued 'What we've come up with is a compromise, but it's the only solution that could be negotiated that will guarantee quality education for blacks.' King also stressed that large numbers of middle-class black parents had told him in no uncertain terms that they wanted an end to the school desegregation saga. Not only was the ongoing turmoil unsettling for their children, they argued, but,

[153] *Ibid.*, p.373-374, 382. For a detailed discussion of how King was able to gain control of the case see: pp.376-382.

fearing that black children would get the short straw, they were also concerned over the distance their children might be bused. Many others, King suggested, were not convinced their children would get a better education in white schools than they already received in their local black school. Board of Education president Benjamin Mays explained his backing of the compromise a different way, framing it as part of the broader economic interests and public relations image of a city in which African Americans were starting to gain political hegemony:

> 20 years ago or so when school desegregation was just starting in the South, Atlanta schools were 70% white and 30% black. Now they're 80 percent black and 20 percent white. It's a matter of white flight and private schools, the old story. Massive busing would be counterproductive at this point. We'd end up with no whites to bus. Then what would happen to Atlanta and all this progress and growth we're always bragging about? Even with the compromise, it may be too late.[154]

Other local leaders also backed the settlement, insisting the plan had strong local support. Recently-elected Congressman Andrew Young argued it was an opportunity for blacks to gain more power in city government and State Representative Billy McKinney praised the fact that it would not 'disturb' black neighborhoods. Reverend J. E. Lowery, chairman of the SCLC board, argued it was the best plan the city could come up with because it stopped 25,000 black children being bused. 'Busing just to have a certain number of black students sitting with whites is not meaningful and borders on being racist.' Although SCLC moved quickly to distance itself from this view, Lowery remained firmly behind the compromise. A dissenting voice was offered by Reverend Joseph Boone, a close ally of Father Ford, Emmaus House, and the city's welfare rights groups. A consistent advocate of Atlanta's disadvantaged, Boone decried the settlement calling it 'anti-black' and a product of black political 'busybodies' who had ignored the wishes of the city's poor blacks.[155]

The impact of the settlement reverberated far beyond the city. King and his fellow branch officials were swiftly suspended by the national office, as developments in Atlanta were met with dismay at the NAACP's New York headquarters. The plan, they argued, was incompatible with the organization's primary mission. As one board member asserted, 'we're fighting for the integrity of our national policy, and that integration must be maintained. There are compromises and there are compromises, but we cannot repudiate our national policy.' The problem, as general counsel for the NAACP's national office Nathaniel R. Jones explained, was that the Atlanta compromise represented a dangerous new policy that threatened to 'turn the clock back to segregated schools.'

[154] B. Drummond Ayers, "Atlanta Strikes Integration Bargain" New York Times, April 25, 1973, p.89
[155] *Ibid*.,; Peoplestown Project, David Morath Interview 10th August 2009.

Indeed, Jones argued, it had already set a precedent as, in short time, lawyers in school desegregation cases in Grand Rapids, Michigan and Knoxville, Tennessee entered the Atlanta compromise into their proceedings. The national organization's response was unequivocal, and in August 1973, following an inquest, the national office expelled all the Atlanta branch members and started the organization afresh.[156]

After the schools compromise was upheld by the courts the only case that threatened it, *Armour v. Nix*, recommenced. If successful, the ACLU's suit would require a metropolitan-wide school desegregation initiative that would invalidate Atlanta's existing arrangements. Events elsewhere, however, severely damaged its chances of success. In June 1974, a Supreme Court dominated by conservative Nixon appointees overturned the decision in *Milliken v. Bradley*. In *Milliken*, Detroit district court judge Stephen Roth had found the city's residential segregation to be the result of both public policy and the discriminatory practices of realtors, and mandated large scale interdistrict busing to integrate white and black schools across the metropolitan area. The Supreme Court's rejection of Roth's findings effectively absolved suburban whites of any responsibility for desegregation, seemingly dooming efforts toward metropolitan-wide school integration. *Armour* dragged on until May 1980 when the Supreme Court endorsed the local courts decision to dismiss the case in late 1979. With defeat came the end of further court-ordered busing as a solution to desegregate Atlanta's public schools.[157]

Different Paths, Different Outcomes

Struggles over public education unfolded differently in all three cities with each providing an insight into the various ways Black Power translated into, and helped reshape, black community activism at the local level. Battling to define the scope of public policy, activists in New York and Los Angeles foregrounded a vision of transformative school reform intended to reconfigure existing power arrangements within their local school systems. These grass-roots movements for community control proved to be a fertile ground for cooperation between moderates and militants alike. Black Power radicals worked alongside civil rights advocates, clergy, students, antipoverty workers, and parents in the fight to improve local education, blurring the lines between them. The fracturing of

[156] Paul Delaney, 'Atlanta NAACP Faces Expulsion', *New York Times*, July 9, 1973 p. 69; Paul Delaney, 'Spread of Atlanta School Plan Reported by NAACP Aide', *New York Times*, July 22, 1973 p. 19; Brown-Nagin, p. 399-400. For a detailed discussion of the hearing see, *Ibid*., pp. 395-400.
[157] Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty,* p. 486-487; Brown-Nagin, p. 425-426. For a detailed discussion of the *Armour v. Nix* proceedings, see, *Ibid*., pp. 409-429.

the black freedom struggle, that supposedly followed the emergence of the 'Black Power' slogan in mid-1966, did not translate so readily into the education activism in New York and Los Angeles in the late 1960s. In Atlanta, grassroots education activism was channeled through a local faith-based community organization headed by a white Catholic priest. Bringing together local black residents, Black Power activists, and female welfare and tenants' rights advocates, with white church staff and student volunteers, their Black Power-inflected social and economic justice activism illuminates a fascinating and understudied example of interracial cooperation. Almost entirely interdependent, they fought collectively for a vision of education reform that sought to empower local poor black mothers, and challenge the city's intra-racial socio-economic order and disrupt its well established pattern of racial and class politics.

Education activism in these cities highlight a number of significant trends. First, it reveals the place of public policy as a vital axis of community activism along which Black Power – and African Americans' attempts to secure greater self-determination and economic power and opportunity more broadly – was negotiated. Second, the diversity within these movements demonstrates the wide appeal (in part, if not in whole) of Black Power at the grassroots level, as well as its influence across racial boundaries. Black Power's flexibility was matched by the pragmatism of grassroots activists' approaches to protest and militancy. Finally, it broadens the list of actors involved in the development of Black Power philosophy at the everyday, community level. As Theoharis has suggested, the place of high school students on the frontline in Los Angeles (a largely neglected aspect of the city's history) shows us how 'Black Power evolved at the grassroots from years of struggle around issues of schools, jobs, and housing.'[158] Similarly, the extensive involvement of antipoverty groups in community control activism in New York highlights the importance of the War on Poverty in providing an organizational and intellectual framework within which a grass-roots vision of black empowerment was incubated. Community activism in Atlanta revealed the ways in which local people and institutions could come together, across racial boundaries, to forge their own brand of Black Power politics, one in which racial, class, and gender oppression were inseparable.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly in the context of this thesis, the defeat of grassroots education activism in all three cities underlines the success of white mainstream politicians, institutions, and organizations in absorbing, deflecting, subverting, and defeating African American movements for transformative and redistributive political and socio-economic change. The course of educational reform in Atlanta also highlighted how narrower visions of black empowerment,

[158] Theoharis, "W-A-L-K-O-U-T!', p. 123.

skewed toward to economic and political interests of black and white elites, were able (with the endorsement of local white leaders) to prevail. While pressure for black control of public education in New York and Los Angeles came predominantly from the grass-roots level, in Atlanta the opposite was true. The settlement of *Calhoun* in 1973 must be understood as part of the broader trend towards increasing black power in Atlanta, a work in progress that was gathering momentum in the early 1970s. As Atlanta gradually became majority black, the city's African American leaders stepped up their efforts to gain full administrative control of the city and its institutions. As Lonnie King explained at the time, 'It's a chess game. The school compromise was just one move.'[159]

Brown-Nagin is right to suggest that the Atlanta case 'powerfully illustrates how the black middle-class's aspiration to consolidate not only political power, but also their economic power, shaped events.' What is less tenable, however, is her suggestion that it should be seen as a movement for community control.[160] Atlanta's school desegregation politics was guided by a view of black empowerment informed primarily by professional and class concerns, and predicated on increasing and concentrating power in the hands of privileged groups who already held it. Atlanta's black elite came to covet control of the city's schools, seeing it as a source of jobs, and as a way to protect the professional rights of the city's large contingent of black teachers. Although not an explicit part of the school settlement discourse, the gendered implications of the episode were also clear. As the city's largely male, professional elite negotiated to foreclose the possibility of substantial busing they subordinated the interests of the city's welfare rights groups and their overwhelmingly poor female leadership who supported busing and school desegregation. As such, it was fundamentally antithetical to the community control movements in New York and Los Angeles, which demanded the redistribution of power from the top downwards, to the powerless and disadvantaged.

Overall, therefore, the trajectory of educational reform in each of the three cities reinforces the overarching argument of this study: that opportunities for black progress were made available where they privileged middle-class values and leadership, and endorsed (or did not threaten) white interests and the existing socio-economic and political order. As the final chapter demonstrates this trend became especially clear, and even more pronounced, in Atlanta and Los Angeles under black city leadership during the 1970s. At the heart of it, again, would be public policy.

[159] B. Drummond Ayers, 'Atlanta Strikes Integration Bargain', *New York Times*, April 25, 1973, p.89.
[160] Brown-Nagin, p.358.

Chapter Four: Black Mayors and Black Progress: The Limits of Black Political Power

In September 1972, Atlanta Mayor Sam Massell delivered a speech before an audience at the city's prestigious Emory University. Meditating on the theme of ongoing racial and socio-political change, which had characterized his speeches for the previous year, Massell delivered a warning about the impact of quickening black progress:

> We are beginning to see signs of self-confidence on the part of the have-nots who are getting their first taste of affluence… the fear of losing security because others are gaining it causes a class struggle quite costly to the very prosperity the rich want most to preserve. […] Perhaps the most significant switch of fear from one group to another is that which is taking place in many major cities between blacks and whites . The transition from second class citizenship by the black community, the members of which have been suppressed all their lives, to a status of equality with whites in all walks of life, is difficult to cope with, even by the most conscientious.[1]

Although Massell's point was about blacks and whites in general, it was also highly self-referential. A charismatic young liberal and the city's first ever Jewish mayor, Massell had been elected in 1969 and was building up to running for reelection in 1973. Brought to power on the strength of black support, Massell had done a great deal during his three years at the helm to increase black participation in city government, and local African Americans' share of municipal jobs had increased appreciably. While Massell was keen to run the city in partnership with the local black elite, he still envisaged blacks as the junior partner. However, as Atlanta became majority black at the start of the 1970s, the city's well-established and assertive black leadership were increasingly inclined toward assuming the senior role in city government. The city's first ever black vice-mayor, Maynard Jackson, had been elected alongside Massell in 1969. By 1973, many felt the time was ripe to for a black candidate to take the reins at City Hall. Fully cognizant of this shift in city politics, Massell cautioned that:

> 'The young, the poor, the black have a heavy responsibility. Adjustment to the use of rights long denied is in and of itself taxing of mind and body, but conquering that alone is not enough. Those who move into formerly forbidden territories must take care lest they rush the entire structure. […] If you are black and have become powerful, you must be able to

[1] Atlanta, Atlanta History Centre, Sam Massell Jr.,Papers, box 27, folder 26, 'Fear to Eternity: Remarks at Emory University' September 25, 1972, p.4.

> think white to understand their needs. To do less will destroy all that has been gained by the struggles up to this point.[2]

Unless blacks were willing to 'think white' and govern in their interests, he argued, middle-class whites and white businesses would continue to abandon the city for surrounding suburbs, further weakening the city's already declining tax base and putting its economic future in jeopardy. The insinuation was clear: black control of City Hall was likely to exacerbate this trend. Continuing to work in partnership with a white mayor, therefore, would be in the best interests of the whole city, black and white.

Pointedly, Massell first delivered this message in October 1971 at the Butler Street YMCA, the major black community forum in the city, where it encountered a largely hostile reception. Waiting newsmen heard former SNCC activist John Lewis express his disappointment with the Mayor's speech. 'It is wrong for the mayor of a city like Atlanta to suggest that black people should not be concerned about their own political destiny.' African Americans, Lewis continued, 'should have an interest in controlling this city. We are a majority of this city, and we should control it.' Another audience member declared that the implication that black conduct, rather than white racism, was to blame for white flight was 'an insult to all blacks who think…. We are not responsible for white folks running from the city of Atlanta.' African American City Alderman Henry Dodson reflected that, in spite of the mayor's advice, he believed he didn't have to 'think white to get along in this society. I can think black and get along in this society.'[3]

Massell's words did little to soften local black leaders' resolve to run a black candidate to challenge their mayor at the next election, in a bid to secure the political control at the local level they coveted. While black representatives in Congress and state legislatures were in a position to influence the direction and scope of public policy, power over the decisions that affected the most immediate circumstances of daily life for urban black communities often resided at the local level, in City Hall. Local public education, city development and urban renewal projects, welfare and public housing departments, law enforcement and public transit, and municipal and social services all, generally speaking, came under the authority of city government. The political turn in the black freedom struggle that intensified in the mid-to-late 1960s brought large numbers of African Americans into power at the local level, on the back of strong black support, precisely because

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[2] *Ibid*, p.6.

[3] WSB-TV newsfilm clip of African Americans reacting to a speech by Mayor Sam Massell, Atlanta, Georgia, October 6, 1971. Online: <http://crdl.usg.edu/cgi/crdl?action=retrieve;rset=003;recno=3;format=_video> [Accessed 10/06/2013]; WSB-TV newsfilm clip of African Americans reacting negatively to Mayor Sam Massell's speech on politics and government, Atlanta, Georgia, October 6, 1971 online: <http://crdl.usg.edu/cgi/crdl?format=_video&query=id%3Augabma_wsbn_64296&_cc=1> [Accessed 10/06/2013].

control of city politics offered the chance to deal with problems such as unchecked urban decay, housing code violations, inadequate sanitation services, police brutality, street repair and maintenance, and under-resourced and failing public schools.

However, as this chapter demonstrates, once black mayors found themselves in charge at City Hall, addressing the socio-economic issues facing their black constituents, and correcting the longstanding neglect of inner-city ghetto communities proved very difficult. At the root of this difficulty lay the fundamental truth that Massell had touched upon in his speech, and which underpins this thesis as a whole: the importance of white concerns, demands, and pressures to the vitality and direction of African American protest, politics, empowerment and progress. Bringing together the major themes of this thesis, this chapter is primarily concerned with exploring how the longer trajectory of public policies that were intended to coopt and modify Black Power (discussed in chapter two), and white resistance to redistributive city policy more generally, affected the scope and nature of black progress and empowerment under black city leadership through the 1970s. The majority of this chapter is dedicated to exploring the these themes and nature and impact of black city leadership on the black community by focusing on events in Los Angeles and Atlanta during the 1970s, two cities which, in 1973, elected their first black mayors: Tom Bradley and Maynard Jackson.[4] (Because I am interested primarily in the result of black political control this chapter does not explore New York City politics in depth, given that the city's first black mayor – David Dinkins – was not elected until 1989.[5])

In general, black political power during the Black Power era has received growing attention from historians over the last decade, and has been the focus of political scientists for much longer. The scholarship which has been produced on African American mayors commonly identifies the

[4] While both historians and political scientists have looked at the mayoralties of both Bradley and Jackson there is not an overabundance of studies on either. The only major study that looks specifically at Bradley's tenure is Raphael Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). No such study yet exists for Maynard Jackson. However, a number of scholars have written about Los Angeles and Atlanta specifically, covering Bradley and Jackson's mayoralties in the process. This scholarship – which is built on in this chapter – includes: Josh Sides, *LA City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Heather Parker, 'Tom Bradley and the Politics of Race' in *African American Mayors: Race, Politics, and the American City* ed. by Jeffrey Adler and David Coburn (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) pp.153-177 ; Ronald Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Alton Hornsby, *Black Power in Dixie: A Political History of African Americans in Atlanta* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2009); J. Phillip Thompson, III, *Double Trouble: Black Mayors, Black Communities and the Call for Deep Democracy* (New York; University of Oxford Press, 2006); Clarence Stone, 'Partnership New South Style: Central Atlanta Progress' *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 36, No.2, (1986) pp.100-110; Mack Jones, 'Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta: Myth and Reality', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol.439, (Sept., 1978) (pp.90-117).

[5] On Dinkins's administration, see: Thompson, *Double Trouble*, pp.155-263; Roger Biles, 'Mayor David Dinkins and the Politics of Race in New York City' in *African American Mayors: Race, Politics, and the American City* ed. by Jeffrey Adler and David Coburn (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) pp.130-152.

numerous factors that conspired to limit black political power. The first wave of black mayors, including Carl Stokes in Cleveland and Richard Hatcher in Gary, Indiana (both elected 1967) and Kenneth Gibson in Newark (elected 1970), at the start represented what can be seen as an 'idealistic' brand of black city politics. Their efforts to compensate for years of black exclusion by realigning resources and power in favour of their African American constituents encountered strong resistance – especially where those efforts were designed to benefit the black working-class and poor in particular. Often having to take a combative stance in the face of hostility from white voters, local and state governments and bureaucracies, and city departments (especially police departments) such efforts were further hamstrung by fiscal difficulties that were made worse by continuing white flight. Confronted with these issues, their options were limited. While Stokes declined to run for a third term in 1971 and withdrew from city politics, Hatcher and Gibson adjusted their sights and programmes to the political and economic pressures they faced. The result in both cases was a significant retrenchment of their social welfare spending and efforts to help working-class and poor blacks.[6]

The experiences of this first wave of African American mayors was instructive for subsequent black city politicians who, with few exceptions (most notably Harold Washington in Chicago and Coleman Young in Detroit), have since tended to distance themselves from issues primarily affecting poor black and other minority communities. As political scientist J. Phillip Thompson, III, has explained, most have adopted a more race-neutral, technocratic approach. This approach has often been characterized by an agenda aimed at the interests of middle-class whites and blacks, deference to private business interests, and a fiscally conservative approach to city spending which has generally done little to challenge existing patterns of inequality. While the black poor have got poorer, the black middle-class and elite have generally enjoyed increasing opportunity and prosperity, and have (unlike their working-class and poor counterparts) become more fully integrated into the nation's political and economic mainstream. As a result, in the eyes of many political scientists, black political power during this period has predominantly resulted in a step backward in the pursuit of social and economic justice.[7]

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[6] See: Leonard N. Moore, *Carl B. Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); James B. Lane, 'Black Political Power and its Limits: Gary Mayor Richard G. Hatcher's Administration, 1968-1987' in *African-American Mayors: Race, Politics, and the American City* ed. by Jeffrey Adler and David Colburn (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) pp.57-79; Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation.*

[7] See, for example: J. Phillip Thompson, III, *Double Trouble: Black Mayors, Black Communities and the Call for Deep Democracy* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 2006); Adolph Reed, Jr., *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-segregation Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Michael C. Dawson, *Not in Our Lifetimes: The Future of Black Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011) pp.63-135; Robert C. Smith, *We Have No Leaders: African Americans in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (SUNY Press, 1996). For discussion of Harold Washington and Coleman Young, see: Manning Marable, *Black Leadership* (New York: Columbia

As this chapter demonstrates, Bradley and Jackson's mayoralties throughout the 1970s provide two important, contrasting, examples of how black political power evolved at the city level, and the forces which shaped its development. Like other 'idealistic' black mayors before him, Jackson began his tenure as a strong racial advocate who supported a more redistributive course for city politics. However, he too would eventually abandon his commitment to working-class and poor blacks. Bradley, on the other hand, was something of a forerunner of the race-neutral, technocratic, black politician that would become so prevalent through the 1980s and beyond. Committed to the principles of colourblind democracy, Bradley had a deeply held belief that increasing opportunity, rather than redistributing wealth, was the key to alleviating black poverty. In part as a consequence, Bradley's political philosophy was heavily weighted towards meeting the demands of downtown business elites and middle-class taxpayers. The result was a largely ineffective approach to combatting poverty, and working-class and poor neighbourhoods in Los Angeles further declined under Bradley, as they came to in Atlanta under Jackson too. The broader pattern of increasing inequality came to characterize their leadership of both cities, though in different ways.

For middle-class and elite African Americans in both cities, black city leadership proved to be far more beneficial. Public policy was vital to the advances that they made. Building on the existing scholarship, what I aim to do here is frame the development of black political power at the city level in Los Angeles and Atlanta, and the progress made by African Americans under Bradley and Jackson, as part of the broader negotiation of Black Power (through the public policies discussed throughout this thesis) and white efforts to limit the scope of socio-economic change in general. Examining the personal papers and oral histories of key players, as well as the media coverage in black and white newspapers, this final chapter relates the development of Bradley and Jackson's political programmes to the period's powerful economic forces and political discourses, and, most importantly, to the policy shift that grew out of the War on Poverty, the growing welfare crisis, and mainstream white engagement with Black Power.

Just as the War on Poverty had vivified a broader debate about the nature of government and stimulated a welfare backlash that sharply constrained the potential for redistributive social and economic justice politics, it also played an important part in skewing the benefits of public policy under black city leadership toward the black middle-class and elite. The alternative solutions for dealing with economic inequality that Kennedy and Nixon had established reflected declining

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University Press, 1998) pp.127-146; Heather Ann Thompson, 'Rethinking the Collapse of Postwar Liberalism: The Rise of Mayor Coleman Young and the Politics of Race in Detroit' in *African-American Mayors: Race, Politics, and the American City*, ed. by David Colburn and Jeffery Adler (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) pp. 223-248.

majority support for redistributive social spending on poor inner-city minority communities. Emphasising black integration into the economic mainstream through capitalist business development and a greater role for the private sector in meeting black employment needs, these policies – and the principles that underpinned them – came to define black city executives' political scope for advancing black interests. During the 1970s, important aspects of Kennedy and Nixon's economic development and affirmative action-oriented black business support programmes became further entrenched in federal policy, lending black mayors' efforts to advance black interests in these areas a political legitimacy that policies aimed at helping the black poor lacked.

Ultimately, it will be demonstrated that the combination of these pressures and opportunities decisively defined black political power. Despite considerable differences between Bradley and Jackson's respective political profiles and platforms, the progress that local blacks made under their administrations broadly followed the same pattern: overwhelmingly benefitting middle-class and elite blacks, and disproportionately disadvantageous for their poorer black constituents. While this pattern was powerfully shaped by the myriad economic and political pressures that Bradley and Jackson both faced when in office, I argue that black progress made under their leadership was also a legacy of mainstream white efforts to negotiate Black Power, and dictate the pace and direction of black empowerment, that this thesis has explored. Black middle-class success, therefore, was in part a result of a political project shaped by white interests and resistance to socio-economic change, that was endorsed by, and flourished under, black city leadership. For both mayors, affirmative action city hiring and municipal contract disbursement were the most viable avenues for black progress that they were able to advance during their time at City Hall. Grounded firmly in the pro-private enterprise and black capitalist integration politics advanced by Robert Kennedy and Richard Nixon, the opportunities these policies presented had the effect, intentionally or otherwise, of promoting intra-racial inequality and class division in the black community. At the same time, reorienting city policy to address the concerns of working-class and poor blacks proved virtually impossible. As such, with the benefit of hindsight, black city leadership can be seen to have presided over an early stage of what Thompson has referred to as the 'programmatic abandonment' of America's inner-city poor, at all levels of government, that underpinned ascendant conservative national government under Ronald Reagan during the 1980s.[8]

After first examining the different factors that drove the growth of black political power, this chapter then explores the mayoralties of Tom Bradley and Maynard Jackson, and the developments, political debates, and policies that guided their leadership during the 1970s. The two

[8] Thompson, *Double Trouble*, p. 14.

men operated on significantly different political landscapes and, in some key respects, articulated divergent political messages. However, the ultimate legacy of their tenures was a pattern of black progress and city policy that was heavily advantageous to the interests of middle-class whites and blacks and of downtown economic elites. In the process, their mayoralties underline both the longer term impact of white engagement with Black Power, and the powerful sway that white interests and mainstream political discourses held over the direction and scope of black political power.

The Growth of Black Political Power

In June 1974, a number of African American politicians, from across the former Confederacy, came together to found the Southern Conference of Black Mayors (SCBM), choosing symbolically to headquarter the organization in downtown Atlanta, an historic centre of black power and prestige. The newly created organization stood as testament to the rapid increase in the number of black elected officials that had occurred since the late-1960s. Just six years earlier, at the start of 1968, there had been no black mayors in the South, and had not been since Reconstruction. By the end of 1974 there were sixty six. A year later the figure climbed to eighty two. In a region where white supremacy and racial terrorism had kept the vast majority of African Americans shut out of the political process for over a century, it seemed nothing short of a political revolution. This seismic change was not confined to the South. In November 1967, Carl Stokes in Cleveland, Ohio, and Richard Hatcher in Gary, Indiana, had become the first African Americans to be elected mayor of major American cities. A decade later more than 200 black mayors had been elected, and by 1990 that figure was over 300. Nationwide, the number of black office holders – from Congress down to local school boards, judgeships, and a range of local governance positions – rose from 1,124 in March 1969, to 3,499 by May 1975. As SCBM chairman (and recently elected first black mayor of Atlanta) Maynard Jackson argued, African Americans had come to the realization that 'the methods for achieving equal rights are changing, and that the dominant battleground lies at the ballot box and through city hall.'[9]

The upsurge in the number of black elected officeholders during the late-1960s and 1970s rested on many different overlapping and interconnected factors which converged with, and were

[9] New York, Schomburg Center, Twenty First Century Foundation Papers, box 8, folder 3, Letter from Bernard Porche to Robert Browne, November 7, 1974; Jeffrey Adler, 'Introduction' in *African-American Mayors: Race, Politics, and the American City* ed. by Jeffrey Adler and David Colburn (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), pp.1-22 (p. 1); Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion,* p.134; Randall Harber, 'Black Mayors Report New Shift in Movement', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 21, 1974, p. A8.

amplified by, the emergence of vociferous demands for 'Black Power' from mid-1966 onwards. Perhaps the most fundamental of these were the powerful demographic forces that had transformed the nation's urban and racial geography over the previous three decades. The 1970 Census Bureau report revealed that over half of African Americans lived in urban centres, with a third of all blacks residing in just fifteen cities. New York City claimed the largest number of black residents – 1.6 million – which accounted for 21.2 percent of the local population. Los Angeles had the sixth largest at just over half a million, approximately 17 percent of the population. Atlanta's black community, though half the size of Los Angeles's, accounted for a slim majority of the city's residents (51.3 percent).[10] As white flight and black migration to the cities continued, the concentration of blacks in America's inner-cities naturally produced increasing black electorate strength that helped to deliver black candidates to office. The voting strength of urban black communities beyond the South was also boosted by a different demographic trend. One estimate suggested that the birth rate among black urban migrants between 1940 and 1960 increased 150 percent, a development which undoubtedly underpinned the sharp increase in the number of voting age blacks from 10.3 million in 1964 to 13.5 million in 1972.[11]

The landmark legislation won by longstanding voter registration activism and the civil rights protest was also a critical part of increasing black political power. As political scientist Charles Hamilton has explained, the 1965 Voting Rights Act led to the number of registered black voters in the South more than doubling, from 1,530,634 in 1965 to 3,448,565 in 1972.[12] When it expired in 1970, President Nixon signed into law a revised version of the five year act which, broadened by moderate and liberal Republicans and Democrats, extended its scope beyond the South, to cover the whole nation. Importantly, during the 1970s, the Supreme Court viewed the revised legislation through the prism of federal commitment to affirmative action, producing rulings that allowed for the creation and protection of majority black (and other minority) voting districts. The result, as Kotlowski has explained, was that the 1970 Voting Rights Act did a great deal to 'enhance minority voting strength and office holding'.[13]

Bringing African Americans into the electoral process had been a longstanding and primary goal of the civil rights movement (as it had been throughout the longer sweep of the twentieth century black freedom struggle,) and the intensification of voting rights activism during the first

[10] Jack Rosenthal, 'One-Third of Blacks Found in Fifteen Cities', *New York Times*, May 19, 1971.
[11] Richard L. Stevens Papers, 1964-1969, box 4, folder 6, Charles E. Silberman, '"Beware the Day They Change Their Minds!"', *Fortune*, November 1965, p.154; Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion,* p.134.
[12] Charles V. Hamilton, *The Bench and the Ballot: Southern Federal Judges and Black Voters* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 1973) p. vii.
[13] Kotlowski, pp.87-94.

half of the 1960s was another vital factor behind the increase in black political representation in the years that followed. In particular, the voter registration work undertaken by SNCC, CORE, and the NAACP, often in tandem with the Southern Regional Council's Voter Education Project (which was backed by the Kennedy administration and several northern liberal foundations), did a great deal, not only to dramatize the need for voting rights legislation but also to inspire rural southern blacks to embrace electoral politics.[14] This was taken a step further by SNCC who helped indigenous-led grassroots efforts to supplant local Democratic Party formations, in the hope of remaking American democracy by fatally undermining the political architecture of white supremacy in the South. The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), in particular, encapsulated SNCC's ethos of participatory democracy, and their belief that black communities had to be allowed to develop their own leadership skills, and define their own agendas, free from outside influence, so that they could use the democratic process to affect the kind of social and economic change that they most desired. These efforts had highly significant consequences. The MFDP's attempt to unseat the regular lilywhite state delegation at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City in August 1964, though unsuccessful, was a vital step toward growing minority representation within the apparatus of the Democratic Party.[15] Similarly, SNCC-inspired black political organizing in Lowndes County, Alabama produced the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) which was committed to voter registration, political education, and community organizing, and ran indigenous black candidates for every type of local office. In the process, the symbol of the Black Panther, which was emblazoned across LCFO insignia, became a powerful new icon in the black freedom struggle which soon became irrevocably identified with Black Power. Both the MFDP and the LCFO highlighted the importance of organizing for political power to SNCC's activism, and the experience of both organizations was important in SNCC's transition into a Black Power group in the mid-1960s.[16]

From the beginning, winning greater political power for African Americans was a fundamental goal of the Black Power organizing that developed during the mid-to-late 1960s, as two of the slogan's earliest advocates made clear. Speaking in July 1966, CORE's Floyd McKissick

[14] Manfred Berg, *The Ticket to Freedom: The NAACP and the Struggle for Black Political Integration*, (University of Florida Press: Gainesville, 2005) pp.181-185.
[15] For detailed discussion of the MFDP challenge see, for example; Dittmer, John, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), pp. 273-302; Forman, James, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), pp.386-400.
[16] Hasan Kwame Jefferies, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt*, (New York University Press: New York, 2009) p.5. For discussion of LCFO and Black Power, see: pp.143-206. Cleveland Sellers has described the importance that he and his fellow SNCC activists attributed to the defeat of the MFDP challenge in their evolution toward Black Power. The whole episode at Atlantic City, he asserted, 'was to the civil rights movement what the civil war was to American history: afterward, things would never be the same.' (Cleveland Sellars, & Robert Terrell, *The River of No Return: The Autobiography of a Black Militant & the Life and Death of SNCC* (Jackson, Miss.,; University Press of Mississippi, 1990), p 111.)

suggested that the emergence of Black Power represented 'phase two' of the civil rights movement, in which securing political power became vital to consolidating the movement's hard won legal victories, and ensuring that they 'are actually translated into more earning power, better education, and adequate housing.'[17] Black Power, Stokely Carmichael explained in September 1966, was fundamentally concerned with giving blacks their rightful share of political power and making the promise of democracy a reality for African Americans:

> Black Power is not being in charge of something white people control. Black Power is when we pick the person and put him into place and make sure he is responsive to our needs. In its simplest form it is the demand for majority control in areas where black people are the majority and a proportional share of key decision making posts in areas where they are in the minority. […] it is a way for [black people] to come together to stop oppression by any means necessary. It is a way they can force government, white liberals, and other structures, to attend to their problems. It is a way that black people can come together and get themselves out of the bag.[18]

The climate created by the 'Black Power' movement that emerged in mid-1966 succeeded in sharpening the focus of black communities across the nation on the task of electing blacks to public office. As political scientist Cedric Johnson has suggested, it 'effectively reoriented the terms of black public debate from the task of attaining equal constitutional protection, which framed local struggles against desegregation since the landmark 1954 *Brown* decision, toward the actual seizure of state power.'[19]

Fundamentally committed to increasing black political power, Black Power activists were an important and active part of electoral politics, campaigning for black candidates for public office. The work of a number of historians, including Leonard Moore, Komozi Woodard, William Chafe, Matthew Countryman, and Robert Self has revealed the important role that Black Power advocates played – often as part of broader community-wide political activism – in efforts to elect African Americans to office in cities such as Cleveland, Newark, Greensboro, Philadelphia, and Oakland.[20] Where the civil rights movement had focused on winning legal and political rights, the Black Power movement shifted the emphasis toward increasing African Americans' direct access to resources

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[17] New York, Schomburg Centre, SNCC Papers, A:VIII:170, 'Black Power Impact,' *Wall Street Journal*, July 22, 1966.
[18] Lerone Bennett Jr., "Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power" *Ebony*, September 1966, p.26-27
[19] Cedric Johnson, *Revolutionaries to Race Leaders: Black Power and the Making of African American Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) p.xx.
[20] See, for example: Leonard N. Moore, *Carl B. Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation*; Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Self, *American Babylon*.

and the levers of power and, on the surface, the results had been spectacular. However, the question of what kind of Black Power politics – if any – would be realized under the black city politicians once they were elected remained to be seen. In the following sections I explore the mayoralties of Tom Bradley in Los Angeles and Maynard Jackson in Atlanta, through the 1970s, to see what black political power meant for African Americans in both cities. I begin by examining how their electoral campaigns, and their respective political platforms, were shaped by local political and social conditions, and broader national political discourses and developments

Race and Running for Office: The Case of Tom Bradley in Los Angeles

The realities of running for office and governing at a time of on-going conservative political realignment had a powerful effect upon the ability of black municipal politicians such as Bradley and Jackson to address the needs of their poorest constituents. The political climate of deepening white racial resentment over the welfare system made pursuing redistributive social spending and city policy when in office, or promising it while on the campaign trail, problematic for all politicians. Given the strong racial overtones that permeated debates over welfare state liberalism, it was even less viable for black politicians, and especially for those running in majority white cities. In Los Angeles, where African Americans made up just 18 percent of the city's population – only the second largest local minority group – it would have been very difficult, perhaps impossible, for Bradley to be elected advocating issues such as redistributive social and city spending which were so strongly identified with poor inner-city blacks. His electoral success owed much to the fact that he didn't attempt to. Indeed, Bradley's self-image and political outlook and were strongly shaped by his own career which was, in many ways, an advert for the potential of black self-help and initiative.

As political scientist Raphael Sonenshein has explained, the trajectory of Bradley's own career, up from poverty to the top levels of mainstream American life, played an important role in forging his political philosophy and identity. As a star athlete at UCLA, then as the first black police lieutenant in the LAPD, and then as the first African American to sit on the City Council, Bradley's own experiences of excelling and breaking the colour line made his life a powerful story of an individual's ability to overcome discrimination through hard work and talent. This was an image that appealed to whites as well as blacks. In particular, Bradley was an affirmative symbol for the city's black middle-class establishment (of which he became a leading member during his three decade rise to the top). Bradley himself seemed to lend weight to the mainstream narrative,

constructed through the public policies analysed throughout this thesis, that black progress would come from efforts to facilitate greater black self-reliance and individual initiative, and not through government social welfare programmes which encouraged dependency. However, while his life became a symbolic metaphor for 'black upward mobility in the face of great odds', as Sonenshein suggests, it could also 'obscure the conditions of those blacks unlikely to rise up as well.' Bradley had always been a prominent advocate of greater racial understanding, and a critic of racial discrimination, but his own experiences instilled in him the firm conviction that African Americans could overcome the problems they faced themselves, and realise the American Dream, if they worked hard enough. Therefore, Bradley strongly believed that increasing opportunity, rather than redistributing wealth, was the way forward for African Americans, a belief which would guide his leadership at city hall. [21]

Bradley's outlook was further shaped by the political realities of running for office in a multiracial, white majority city. Since 1963, as a City Councilman for the tenth district, (a section of the city that was approximately 50 percent white, 35 percent black, and 15 percent Asian American,) Bradley had become well versed in presenting himself as a race-neutral candidate who would govern for the whole city, and not just on behalf of sectional black interests. He was always at pains to emphasize his non-racial and non-partisan stance to the city's multiracial electorate: 'I would say for myself, press treatment to the contrary notwithstanding, I am not the Negro candidate for mayor. I am the candidate for mayor deeply committed to a liberal Democratic philosophy, who is black.'[22] Although blacks were a significant part of the electoral coalition that supported Bradley in both elections, they were not its major part. Bradley had established a large base of white support during his time on the City Council which stretched citywide in the mayoral elections. As Bradley's campaign manager Maury Weiner explained, this was predominantly made up of the city's white liberal (and predominantly Jewish) middle and upper middle-income voters, many of whom were members of the leading statewide Democratic organization, the California Democratic Council.[23]

The dominant place of middle-class whites in Bradley's electoral coalition was, perhaps unsurprisingly, strongly reflected in the political platform on which he ran. Although Bradley's

[21] Raphael Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) p.59-60.
[22] Los Angeles, CA, UCLA Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 1434, Folder 2, Tom Bradley Campaign Speakers Manual, July 1969, p.7; *Ibid.*, Box 1434, Folder 3: Position Papers, 1969, Tom Bradley Statement, March 5, 1969.
[23] Los Angeles, CA, UCLA Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, Mervyn Dymally Interview, UCLA Oral History Program and the California State Archives, State Government Oral History Programme, Volume 1, (1996-7) p. 221; Heather Parker, 'Tom Bradley and the Politics of Race' in *African American Mayors: Race, Politics, and the American City*, ed. by David Colburn and Jeffery Adler (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) pp.153-177 (p.159).

middle-class white supporters were broadly supportive of liberal politics and African Americans' fight for racial justice, they were also profoundly concerned with the rising tax burden they faced as property owners. Federal, and not local, government, he believed, should bear responsibility for the cost of social welfare provision. Consequently, a commitment to tax relief for the city's homeowners was a key plank of Bradley's campaign platform, a priority which essentially precluded a commitment to reconfiguring the existing resource balance of city politics. The rest of his message focused primarily on administrative matters such as fiscal responsibility, eliminating government waste, and eradicating the culture of graft that had developed under the Yorty administration. Although Bradley lamented urban inequality, he rarely explicitly addressed issues affecting the black poor. When he did speak about their problems, or more generally about black advancement, it was almost always in terms of community development and minority business support, and affirmative action; approaches to solving inequality that did not increase welfare spending or threaten tax rises. He was especially keen to enlist greater business involvement in the effort to solve urban poverty, believing that private enterprise could 'teach poverty communities about how the system works, that it can work and to develop a stake in it.'[24] In doing so, Bradley echoed and wholly endorsed the principles and policies that Kennedy and Nixon had espoused, underlining their entrenchment in mainstream political discourse and urban policy.

Given Bradley's strong identification with taxpayers' interests, the man he faced in the 1969 mayoral election – conservative Democrat incumbent Sam Yorty – was not able to exploit white concerns over the prospect of black city leadership leading to greater social spending on black ghetto communities. Instead, Yorty targeted a different, but no less powerful, concern among white voters: the threat of black radicalism to law and order. Ever since its emergence, the Black Power slogan had been identified by opponents and the mainstream media with dangerous, volatile black militancy and political radicalism. No group seemed to better fit this stereotype than the BPP, a group whose spectacular rise in Oakland, California, from late 1966 onwards, to state and national prominence helped mark the State out as a vital site of Black Power radicalism.[25] Labeled by FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover as 'the greatest threat to the internal security of the nation', the Black Panthers became the main target of the Bureau's Counterintelligence Programme (COINTELPRO),

[24] Tom Bradley Papers, Box 1434, Folder 2, Tom Bradley Campaign Speakers Manual, July 1969, p.21.
[25] On the BPP's development in Oakland, see: Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Self, *American Babylon*, pp.217-256.

a brutal campaign of state-sponsored repression directed against Black Power, New Left, and countercultural radicals orchestrated by the Nixon administration.[26]

As a 1976 Senate-led inquiry into the FBI's conduct revealed, the Panthers were the subject of 233 of the 295 COINTELPRO operations. Often conducted in league with local law enforcement agencies these operations comprehensively disrupted and undermined the activities of BPP branches nationwide.[27] In Los Angeles, the FBI deliberately exacerbated an on-going feud between the local chapter of the Panthers and Ron Karenga's US organization which resulted in the killing of two Panther leaders by US members on the UCLA campus in January 1969, as well as numerous other beatings and shootings.[28] On December 8, 1969, heavily armed LAPD squadrons raided three Panther buildings resulting in the arrest and trial of eighteen party members. One of the raids, at the Panther's Central Avenue offices, resulted in a five hour fire fight in which three policemen were wounded and during which the police dynamited the building's roof.[29]

The repression of the BPP and other radicals was a powerful statement in the fierce, on-going contest over the meaning and nature of American culture. As Nixon lauded 'Middle America' for its patriotism, respect for authority, and faith in the traditional, Christian values of American political and social life, he simultaneously endorsed the repression and vilification of dissenting radicals whose lifestyles and politics were branded deviant and 'anti-American'. The message being sent by the FBI, the Nixon administration, and local and state authorities was clear and intensely political: there was no place in mainstream American society and politics for leftist protest and dissent.

Tom Bradley's campaigns for City Hall in Los Angeles revealed the degree to which Black Power radicalism was successfully scandalized during the late-1960s. Over the course of early 1969, Bradley emerged as a genuine contender to unseat Yorty. As election day drew near, and Yorty found himself behind in the polls, he began to exploit white prejudice and fear by raising the spectre of Black Power militancy and radicalism. Alleging that his opponent had connections to black radicals, he warned that, if Bradley were elected, 'the militants would come down and intimidate the city council…and then what could the police do? How are they going to handle the

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[26] *Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports On Intelligence Activities And The Rights Of Americans, Book III, Final Report of the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities*, (hereafter referred to as *Church Committee Reports, Book III*), p.20.
[27] *Church Committee Reports, Book III*, p.187-188.
[28] *Ibid.*, p.188-191. For a detailed discussion of the feud between the BPP and US, see: Brown, pp.107-130.
[29] David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2001) p.271; Black Panther Party Collections, Box 1, Folder 13, Leaflet by Committee to Defend the Panthers 'Support the Panthers' (n.d.)

black militant friends of the mayor who are there to back him?'[30] Implying guilt by association, Yorty dedicated the entirety of his final pre-election day press conference to reciting a nine page paper listing the various accusations he had made about Bradley and his apparent association with Black Power militants and 'extreme liberals'. The most damaging charge, (later proved to be untrue,) was that Bradley's campaign coordinator Don Rothenberg had 'presided over a meeting to raise money to buy guns for the Black Panther Party' in the Bay Area in July 1967.[31] On the defensive, Bradley retorted:

> Day after day he has injected into this campaign the lowest and vilest element in American politics today. Day after day he has appealed to the fear and doubts which lurk in many minds. His appeal is irrational, divisive and hateful. But I am convinced it is the last gasp of a desperate man, seeking to salvage victory from the bitter dregs of the past.[32]

Regardless of how unpalatable Bradley and his supporters found Yorty's negative campaign rhetoric, it had the desired effect. In a state where Black Power radicalism was a prominent and current issue, Yorty's tactics proved especially effective. On election day, eighty percent of the city's voters turned out to hand Yorty a 53 to 47 percent victory over Bradley. While his opponent had enjoyed massive majorities in the city's black districts, voters in many of the city's white precincts (and a number of Chicano districts too) changed their minds and, having voted for Bradley in the Democratic Primary, switched to Yorty on election day instead.[33] Success in overcoming Bradley in this manner did come at something of a cost to Yorty as he attracted opprobrium from journalists and commentators across the nation. On the defensive, Yorty rebuked one critic – the prominent African American and U.N. diplomat Ralphe Bunche – that it was 'the Bradley camp who FIRST introduced racism into the Los Angeles Mayoralty campaign' through their 'calls for black bloc voting power' and 'efforts to form a black-brown coalition' he insisted. However, Yorty's protestations did little to undo the lasting damage the campaign had done to his reputation.[34]

Challenging Yorty again four years later, Bradley encountered similar attacks from his opponent. As he had the previous election, Yorty spent his final press conference before voters went to the ballot boxes branding Councilman Bradley a 'radical left-winger' and 'sort of a black

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[30] Parker, p.158.
[31] Sam Yorty Papers, box C-2080, F: Mayor's Letters 1969, John Chamberlain, 'These Days', *Kings Features Syndicate*, June 13, 1969 p.1-2; Kenneth Reich, 'Yorty Confines Response to 2 Subjects at News Conference', *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1969, p.1.
[32] Tom Bradley Papers, box 1685, folder 3, Tom Bradley Speech, May 16, 1969.
[33] NAACP Western Regional Office Records, carton 10, folder 41, Richard Bergholz, 'White Voters Made the Difference: Precinct Tallies Show how Bradley Lost' pp.1-4.
[34] Sam Yorty Papers, box C-2080, F: Mayor's Letters 1969, Letter from Mayor Yorty to Ralphe Bunche, June 4, 1969.

nationalist'. Erroneously identifying one of Bradley's campaign volunteers, John Floyd, as a member of the Black Panther Party, Yorty also argued that Bradley, like the BPP, was 'very antipolice'.[35] Bradley had not been helped by a public endorsement from Black Panther Party leader Huey Newton, his response to which was swift and unequivocal: 'I did not seek, do not want, and I reject the endorsement.' It was, Bradley suggested, 'an obvious, desperate trick by the Yorty campaign because he is trailing so badly in the polls.' It was all too reminiscent, he complained, of when 'thousands of "Black Power" bumper stickers' appeared in the predominantly white San Fernando Valley in the final days of the 1969 election. 'We later learned,' Bradley explained, 'that those stickers were ordered, paid for and distributed by the Sam Yorty Campaign Committee.'[36] Yorty responded by arguing that if Newton's endorsement embarrassed his opponent 'it's his own fault, because his activity in the past would warrant the endorsement.'[37] This time, however, Bradley won a convincing victory.

If Yorty's victory in 1969 had demonstrated the degree to which the demonization and repression of Black Power radicalism that intensified under the Nixon administration had helped to delegitimise leftist politics, his loss in 1973 reflected different political realities. First, the fallout that followed his 1969 campaign tactics played an important role in limiting their effectiveness four years later, especially in light of four years of relative urban peace (whereas 1969 had been proceeded by four summers of urban rioting). Second, Bradley had spent the intervening four years reinforcing his political image and message as a friend and advocate of middle-class and business interests, successfully underlining the distance between radical black politics and his own agenda.[38] Last, after four years of repression, the incarceration of multiple leaders, and a high profile internal schism, the BPP had, by 1973, moved to a more moderate and conciliatory position. This included an active and formal engagement in the political process, with Chairman Bobby Seale and Information Minister Elaine Brown running for mayor of Oakland and a seat on Oakland city council respectively.[39] The BPP of 1973 was a different proposition to the BPP of 1969, making Yorty's scare mongering less resonant than it had previously been.

Overall, for African Americans, the broader message of repression of black radicalism was clear. At the same time that groups like the Panthers were being repressed and vilified, organizations like Restoration and WLCAC, and black capitalist ventures, were being supported by

[35] Richard Bergholz, 'Yorty Declares Foe as "Radical Left Winger"', *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1973, p.D1.
[36] 'Bradley Denounces Newton's Backing as Campaign Trick', *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1973, p.3.
[37] Richard Bergholz, 'Newton's Support of Bradley is Warranted, Yorty Declares', *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1973, p.3.
[38] See: Sonenshein, pp.101-113.
[39] See: Murch, esp. pp.191-228; Self, *American Babylon*, pp.298-316.

the state, and giving a more mainstream, middle-class, and reformist face to the pursuit of Black Power, starkly underlining the type of Black Power politics that would be tolerated. Indeed, Tom Bradley's own political outlook demonstrated the place of this narrative within black Democratic politics. Adapting to the exigencies of this mainstream political discourse, Bradley was a cheerleader for the kind of pro-business development, middle-class oriented vision of Black Power that politicians like Nixon and Kennedy had sought to encourage. As Bradley had explained when setting out his bid to become the city's first black mayor in 1969, Black Power, in his eyes, meant:

> economic power; the quest for economic opportunity and economic growth; political power; voter registration and education about the political process to develop confidence it will really work; and intellectual power through equal opportunity in education. All of the forgoing lead to a stake in society for the black man necessary for the preservation of peace and due to every man in a country such as ours.

What his vision of Black Power did not include, he was at pains to emphasize, was any association with 'violence and disorder.'[40] As Bradley explained in a letter to a supporter, 'there is no place in a democratic society for the motto "by any means necessary."'[41] At the polls on election day in 1973, Bradley's middle-class oriented, pro-taxpayer platform saw him secure the necessary multiracial, cross-sectional support he needed to take him to office. Indeed, as historian Heather Parker has noted, Bradley's multiracial coalition was so broad that even without the votes of the city's two largest black voting districts, he would still have won. In terms of votes, therefore, his victory owed more to white and Latino support than it had to local African Americans.[42]

Race and Running for Office: The Case of Maynard Jackson in Atlanta

In Atlanta, Maynard Jackson's political image and message – substantially different to that of Tom Bradley in Los Angeles – was also vitally shaped by the political climate in which he operated. Whereas Bradley's political philosophy and race-neutral stance was a response to the political and economic concerns of the middle-classes and white majority, Jackson began his political career as a far more forthright advocate of black empowerment and economic justice. This was not only a matter of personality (Jackson having little of Bradley's faith in the promise of colourblind democracy), but also one of local racial politics and demographics. As a city that became majority black at the start of the 1970s, Atlanta offered Jackson a much greater scope for running on a

[40] Tom Bradley Papers, Box 1434, Folder 2, Tom Bradley Campaign Speakers Manual, July 1969, p.17.
[41] *Ibid.*, Box 1434, Folder 3, Tom Bradley Letter to Claudia Room, April 22, 1969.
[42] Parker, p.160.

platform that advanced ostensibly 'black' interests than had Los Angeles for Bradley (had he been inclined to do so). Moreover, there was a heightened sense of expectation among the city's black community that black city leadership would explicitly work in their favour. This sentiment was especially pronounced among Atlanta's well-established and politically influential black elite, who saw in the election of a black mayor the path to (at the very least) genuine biracial control over local decision making and a greater share in the city's economic fortunes. As the local schools compromise (discussed in the previous chapter) suggested, firm progress toward these were goals was already being made before Jackson's election.

Forthright racial advocacy had characterized Jackson's political career from the beginning. His unswerving opposition to racial discrimination had driven his first foray into electoral politics when, in 1968, the bold young attorney had challenged U.S. Senator Herman Talmadge. Although he failed to unseat the staunch segregationist and former state governor, Jackson did not have to wait long for his first taste of political success. The following year, he was elected as vice-mayor alongside Sam Massell, the young Jewish candidate for mayor who had been vice-mayor under outgoing incumbent Mayor Ivan Allen. Like Allen, Massell was a liberal with a reputation for progressive racial views. Despite Massell's close connections with Allen (who had consummated the relationship between downtown economic elites and City Hall), the business elite backed a different candidate – white moderate Republican state representative Rodney Cook. Massell's victory was achieved thanks to winning 96 percent of the black vote, along with the support of Atlanta's Jewish voters. Citywide, he claimed just 18 percent of the white vote. The election of a young black liberal vice mayor and a young liberal Jewish mayor seemed to underline the city's reputation for racial harmony and progress.[43]

The fact that the black vote, growing in proportional strength as white flight continued, had been so decisive in the election did not go unnoticed in the black community. An ambitious man, Jackson used his position as vice-mayor as a platform to build his reputation, and to cultivate and articulate his political image and message. Unlike Bradley in Los Angeles, Jackson consistently offered strong, vocal, support to the city's poor black communities throughout his time as vice-mayor. This became evident when, just two months into Massell's tenure, 3,000 of the city's sanitation workers (seventy five percent of whom were black) threatened to strike, demanding a 4.5 percent pay increase for those in the city's lowest salary bracket (which most of them were). Having been brought to power primarily by the black vote, the episode immediately tested Massell's political loyalties. At negotiations with local leaders, and national representatives from their union,

[43] Hornsby, p.125, 128.

the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Mayor Massell stood firm, denying their request and insisting that the city lacked the money for pay increases. In response, the sanitation workers commenced industrial action. While local black leaders strived behind the scenes to negotiate a compromise, local welfare rights activists joined the striking workers on the picket line in solidarity. Lasting over a month, the strike was brought to an end with a deal that saw the city agree to drop pending legal action against the union pickets and to reinstate those workers it had fired during the strike. The pay rise offered, however, was far below what the workers had demanded.[44] Jackson backed the sanitation workers, and was highly critical of the mayor, arguing that the compromise was completely inadequate. The city, he insisted, had 'a responsibility to anticipate its needs, so that its employees could receive a living wage.'[45]

Although Jackson firmly endorsed black economic empowerment through minority business development and affirmative action (as his tenure as mayor would amply demonstrate), he did not share the faith of politicians such as Bradley that it was an approach that promised to solve the problems facing the city's poor black neighbourhoods. As he explained to the Urban League National Conference in 1970:

> We have to understand, I believe, that Black Capitalism is not our panacea. […] in order for it to make any difference in all our lives, it would, I believe, have to have a significant and lasting corrective effect on the lives of the masses of Black Americans and not just the talented tenth.[46]

Better social services, neighbourhood improvement works, and jobs, Jackson insisted, were required for Atlanta's poor black citizens. As vice-mayor, Jackson was also especially vocal about the need for more black police officers. Furthermore, he criticized the high incidence of police brutality in the city's poor black neighbourhoods, and the department's apparent disinterest in effectively enforcing the law in those same communities. This criticism underlined his image as a politician with a deep concern for Atlanta's deprived black communities, as well as the middle-class and elite. Having firmly identified himself as a candidate committed to 'the politics of unbought and unbiased social change', when Jackson finally announced his candidacy in early 1973, Atlanta's black community eagerly and confidently anticipated the prospect electing the city's first African American mayor. Running on a platform that emphasized securing local blacks a greater share of political and economic power in the city, tackling crime and reforming the police department, and

[44] Hornsby, p. 130-131; Grady-Willis, p.170-171.
[45] Mack Jones, 'Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta: Myth and Reality', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol.439, (Sept., 1978) (pp.90-117) p.115.
[46] Albany, State University of New York, M. E. Grenadier Library, Urban League of Northeastern New York papers, series 3, box 1, Maynard Jackson Speech, National Urban League Conference, July 22, 1970, p.5.

addressing the concerns of the city's poor, Jackson went into the election with strong black support behind him.[47] However, as Jackson would discover, his strong identification with the black poor and support for redistributive social spending would be far less popular among white Atlantans.

Throughout the late-1960s and 1970s white racial resentment among the nation's lower middle and middle-class white voters as the tax burden of growing welfare enrollment became an ever larger cause of concern. Conservative politicians' critique of welfare state liberalism tapped into this powerful and growing sentiment. Few captured taxpayer disillusionment and resentment better than California Governor Ronald Reagan who chided liberals for creating a 'welfare never, never land' and lamented the injustice of 'redistributing the earnings of the productive to the non-productive until we achieve the monotonous mediocrity of the ant heap.'[48]

Growing white animosity toward redistributive liberalism, and the increasing polarization of American politics and society it fueled, was magnified by the debate engendered by the Nixon administration's proposal to reform the nation's welfare system. Introduced in August 1969, the Family Assistance Plan (FAP) promised to dissolve the existing, much lamented, AFDC programme, and replace it with a guaranteed national income that would ensure that no family received less than $1,600 annually. It was a proposal that pleased virtually no one.[49] After three years of debate and dispute, liberals failed to overcome conservative opposition, or, indeed, even reach agreement among themselves over either the scope of the FAP and its funding, and it died in the Senate in late October 1972. By ending with 'combative conservatives ascendant, Republican liberal marginalized, and Democrats divided' as historian Felicia Kornbluh has argued, the defeat of the FAP fit a pattern that would characterize U.S. politics for the generation to come.[50] The crushing defeat of liberal Democratic nominee Senator George McGovern in the 1972 presidential race

[47] Hornsby, pp. 139- 143; Grady-Willis, p.187, 189.
[48] California Republican Assembly Records, Box 10, CRA Newsletters 1969-1970, 'CRA News' May 1970, Vol.4, No.3, p.3, 11.
[49] Supporters of a guaranteed minimum income, including many liberal Democrats, antipoverty fighters, civil rights and Black Power organizations, and many on the Left, argued that the baseline figure was far too low; not even half of what was broadly considered to be the 'poverty line'. Welfare rights activists and their allies insisted on the need for a minimum of $5, 500 per year and lambasted work provisions included in the FAP (labeling them 'workfare') which obliged welfare recipients to undertake designated available employment as a condition of continued enrollment. FAP's opponents, on the other hand, rejected it for much different reasons. As historian Gareth Davies has suggested, in the eyes of conservatives and many of the nations' white working and middle-class voters, the theory and rhetoric of 'entitlement' that underpinned the concept of a guaranteed minimum income, was antithetical to the nation's core values. In their view, Davies argues, a guaranteed income would undermine peoples' work ethic, and individuals' accountability for their own lives, as well as representing an unconscionable extension of government responsibility. See: Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1996).
[50] Felicia Kornbluh, '"Who Shot FAP?" The Nixon Welfare Plan and the Transformation of American Politics' *The Sixties,* Vol.1, No.2, (December 2008) pp. 125-150 (p.127). For an in depth discussion of the congressional debate over FAP with special focus on the role played by liberals in its defeat, see: Dominic Sandbrook, *Eugene McCarthy: the Rise and Fall of Postwar American Liberalism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004). pp.233-238.

confirmed the rising tide of voter discontent with liberalism and redistributive social and economic justice politics. Dismissing McGovern's economic programme, (which included federal job programmes for full employment, progressive tax reform, and a guaranteed minimum income,) as 'socialist dogma', Nixon romped to victory with nearly 61 percent of the popular vote, one of the largest margins in U.S. history.[51]

As the race wore on, Jackson's supposedly liberal opponent, Mayor Massell, sought to exploit the powerful white racial resentment that undergirded welfare backlash politics. In the case of Maynard Jackson, his support for the city's poor and working-class blacks left him vulnerable to charges that he would favour African Americans over the city's white taxpayers. Massell had not failed to notice the political tide turning during the course of his administration. As a majority black city since 1970, the prospect of being challenged by an African American candidate at the next election was increasingly likely, and Massell decided to take preemptive action. During the second half of 1971, the mayor's rhetoric shifted toward warning of the dangers of black political control of the city. This message, well captured in his 'Fear to Eternity' speech (discussed at the outset of this chapter), became a dominant theme at the mayor's public appearances throughout 1972. The underlying message for white Atlanta was that growing black political power was a threat to their, and the city's, interests. Massell also pursued other methods to highlight this issue and to try and nullify growing black electoral strength. In December 1971, Massell submitted a proposal to the state assembly that would have, without a referendum, expanded the city limits to take in an extra 50,000 people, practically all of whom were white, in time for them to participate in the 1973 mayoral election. Subsequently defeated in the state senate, Massell maintained that the plan was not racially motivated, despite its clear racial overtones.[52]

As the election drew near, Massell's rhetoric became ever more alarmist, portraying Jackson as a militant racial advocate, perhaps even black racist, who would be incapable of impartially governing the city. African American control, he asserted, would inevitably be aggressively anti-white. Jackson's advocacy of the black poor and redistributive politics, he insinuated, would see city resources, services and jobs, redirected to the black community. 'One can almost see them,' he stated provocatively, 'dancing in the streets in anticipation of a black takeover.' Black control of City Hall, he insisted, would be disastrous for the local economy.

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[51] George McGovern: 'Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida', July 14, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25967 [Accessed 25/6/2013]; NWHM Part 2: President's Meeting Files, 72-8-13, Charles Colson, Memorandum for the President's File, August 14, 1972, p.1; 1972 Election Statistics Online: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showelection.php?year=1972 [Accessed 25/6/2013].

[52] Jones, 'Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta', p.102.

Whites would flee the city in greater numbers and 'real estate would really drop to the bottom.' Dismayed by his opponent's attempts to exacerbate racial fears and tensions, Jackson lamented: 'He's in the gutter with this type of attack.'[53] Massell's message was reinforced by his campaign slogan – 'Atlanta – Too Young to Die' – which was accompanied, Jackson has recalled, by television commercials 'that made Atlanta look like an abandoned Western mining town, with tumbleweed blowing through the streets…. Atlanta's too young to die.'[54] Massell's tactics, however, did not bring him victory. In a run-off election, Jackson won handily, taking over 95 percent of the black vote and, importantly, nearly 18 percent of the white vote, predominantly from white liberals based in north Atlanta's middle and upper-middle income enclaves.[55]

Bradley and Jackson's campaigns were significant for a number of reasons. They demonstrated the different ways in which race, and broader mainstream political discourses concerning black radicalism and redistributive politics, influenced the nature of local politics. Divergent racial landscapes and political conditions in both cities played an important part in shaping the tone and content of Bradley and Jackson's respective political platforms. As a black candidate in Los Angeles, where less than one fifth of the population was African American, Bradley had strived to present himself as a race neutral, non-partisan liberal, a position to which he was deeply and genuinely philosophically committed. He entered office at the start of 1974 with a programme that was fixed primarily on relieving the property tax burden on local homeowners, and pledging to improve city government in the interests of all. With an electoral base that relied most heavily on middle and upper-income whites, Bradley naturally catered first and foremost to their concerns. As a result, redistributive social and economic justice politics were downplayed and avoided, and safer, more politically viable strategies such as economic development and affirmative action hiring touted instead. In Atlanta, where blacks were a far more significant part of the electorate, the liberal Jackson was able to win election while advocating the reorientation of city policy toward Atlanta's disadvantaged black communities, as well as endorsing a proportional share of economic and political power for local blacks, an approach that would benefit the black middle-class and elite primarily.

Consequently, while race had proved to be a controversial and divisive issue in the elections in both cities, the differing local contexts had seen it exploited in subtly different ways. In

[53] 'Mayor in Gutter', *The Baltimore Afro-American*, October 16-20, 1973, p.5.
[54] Maynard Jackson Interview, Eyes on the Prize II, October 24, 1988. Online:. <http://digital.wustl.edu/e/eii/eiiweb/jac5427.0710.075maynardjackson.html> [Accessed 9/6/2013].
[55] Ronald Bayor, 'African American Mayors and Governance in Atlanta' in *African-American Mayors: Race, Politics, and the American City*, ed. by David Colburn and Jeffery Adler (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) pp.178 -199 (p.180).

Los Angeles, where Yorty primarily targeted voter concern over law and order and black radicalism, his attempts to play on fears of the prospect of racially biased, anti-white, black political control had been only half-hearted. This was largely down to Bradley's success in cultivating a race-neutral, pro-taxpayer political image and message. The fact that blacks were a relatively small minority local population-wise also made such a fear less immediate. However, in a southern city that had recently become majority black, and against a vocal racial advocate like Maynard Jackson, the threat of anti-white black governance promised to resonate with white Atlantans. In this scenario, the supposedly liberal Massell was no less immune to exploiting racial fears than the conservative Yorty. Racial fear mongering as a political tool, it seemed, could be used by both conservatives and liberals alike. Although Bradley and Jackson's victories had both required a significant proportion of non-black votes (especially so in the case of Bradley) the solid electoral bloc of white working, lower-middle, and middle-class voters who opposed them confirmed the on-going and deepening polarization of U.S. politics.

Finally, while both victories highlighted the growing racial and political divide between liberals and conservatives, they also, as historian Heather Ann Thompson has suggested, demonstrated the enduring strength of liberalism as a political force at the city level. The elections of liberal black mayors such as Bradley and Jackson, and others in the 1970s through the 1980s (for example, Coleman Young in Detroit and Harold Washington in Chicago) undermines the dominant and declensional narrative of liberalism during this period, which, largely through the prism of national politics, projects a pattern of zenith followed by precipitous and lasting decline from the mid-to-late 1960s. Well into the 1980s, at a time when conservatives were firmly ascendant in Washington D.C., white and minority voters aligned, in so-called 'rainbow coalitions', to bring liberal black politicians to power in cities across America, in the process underlining the complexities and the local and regional fault lines of the nation's on-going political realignment.[56]

Exactly what kind of politics these liberal, coalition-supported black mayors would result in, however, was another question entirely. How would Bradley and Jackson's different platforms translate into political action when faced with the realities of municipal control? And to what extent would black Angelenos and Atlantans benefit under an African American city government? The following two sections examine how and why, once in office, irrespective of their divergent political platforms and approaches, black city leadership in Los Angeles and Atlanta under Bradley and Jackson broadly delivered the same result: racial progress characterized by growing opportunity

[56] Thompson, 'Rethinking the Collapse of Postwar Liberalism', p.224-225.

and prosperity for the black middle-class and deepening disadvantage for their poor and working-class black constituents.

Deferring the Dream: Black Mayors and the Urban Poor

Throughout their campaigns, Bradley and Jackson had received overwhelming support from local African Americans, many of whom were rapturous at their success. In the wake of their momentous elections, black expectations were sky high. In Los Angeles, leading local black newspaper the *Los Angeles Sentinel* ran a five part editorial special on Bradley's victory over the month and a half following his election. Under the banner 'Bradley's Victory Ends Plantation Years', the paper's leading political commentator, Booker Griffin, envisaged a new era of independent black politics in the city. Bradley's election, Griffin declared, meant that 'the black community is liberated from the plantation yoke and is free to seek its own directions and own dynamics.'[57] South of the Mason-Dixon line, in Atlanta, the response was even more exuberant. As Jackson has recalled, the feeling abounded that 'overnight, Valhalla will be found, heaven will come on earth and it's all because the Black mayor's been elected.' However, as Jackson continued, 'things just don't work that way.'[58] While some African Americans in Atlanta and Los Angeles benefitted a great deal from black control at City Hall, poor and working-class black neighbourhoods generally fared badly. A range of interlocking and mutually reinforcing economic and political pressures – some of which were beyond their control – guided and constrained Bradley and Jackson's approaches to the problems of the urban poor; approaches which did little to prevent the continuing decline of inner-city ghetto communities and which, in some ways, served to exacerbate it.

On-going global and national macroeconomic shifts had a profound effect upon poor urban minority communities in cities such as Los Angeles and Atlanta during the 1970s and beyond. As historian Godfrey Hodgson has explained, a broad range of economic problems stemmed from persistent inflation which, already an issue at the start of the 1970s, reached drastic proportions in the mid-1970s when the price of crude oil doubled following the Arab Oil Embargo of 1973. These inflationary pressures accelerated the on-going decline of American manufacturing. Faced with rising costs driven by inflation, and prices held down by the growth of global competition (in particular from Far Eastern and Western European countries), profits plummeted and many

[57] Booker Griffin, 'Bradley's Victory Ends Plantation Years', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 7, 1973, p.A7. The remaining four parts of Griffin's election analysis special report appeared in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* editions dated June 14th & 19th and July 12th & 19th 1973.
[58] Maynard Jackson Interview, Eyes on the Prize II, October 24, 1988.

corporate leaders in the U.S. began relocating their operations to cheaper labour markets overseas, or downsizing their U.S. workforce.[59] These trends had serious consequences for American workers. For example, in Los Angeles, as Sides has noted, steel, rubber and automobile industries contracted massively during the 1970s and 1980s, with ten major corporations shutting their local plants during that period. One estimate suggested that between 1978 and 1982, 70,000 blue-collar jobs disappeared from the city.[60] In Atlanta, where industry was on a smaller scale than in Los Angeles, the same trend was apparent, with Department of Labor statistics revealing a loss of over 8,000 jobs from the city in just one year leading up to February 1976. The loss of low-skilled industrial jobs was largely offset by the growing number of white-collar, skilled employment positions created by the on-going shift toward increasingly technological and more office-based work environments (which demanded high-level literacy and numeracy) and low-paid jobs in an expanding service sector (which often held little hope for career progression).[61]

The massive loss of blue-collar jobs brought by economic recession and industrial restructuring was especially injurious to a national black community already locked in a severe unemployment crisis. According to Department of Labor figures, black unemployment rose from 9 percent in June 1974 to nearly 15 percent in just twelve months. During the same period, total unemployment had risen from 5.2 percent to 9.2 percent as the number of jobless jumped by over 3 million. For some, these statistics were conservative. As National Urban League (NUL) head Vernon Jordan argued, the government's numbers were misleading because official definitions of the labour force omitted millions of people who 'by any measure, other than the official one, are unemployed.' The NUL's 'Hidden Unemployment Index' Jordan explained, put the figure for black unemployment at 26 percent, a figure which reflected a joblessness rate of two-thirds among black teenagers.[62]

Federal policy did little to help poor Americans during the 1970s. Caught in the trap of stagflation (inflation coupled with recession and high unemployment), the Nixon administration introduced wage and price controls in a bid to control inflation. These controls, however, were not designed to decrease unemployment and had the effect of increasing the economic squeeze on working-class Americans. This approach, Jordan later argued, was tantamount to 'economic warfare on poor and working people'. Black groups such as the NUL and the Congressional Black Caucus

[59] Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996) pp.188-190.
[60] Sides, p.180-181.
[61] AFL-CIO Civil Rights Department, Southern Office Papers, Series II, Subseries B, Box 1596, Folder 67, Letter from Davey Gibson to Al Kehrer, February 4, 1976, p.1; Sides, p.184.
[62] Urban League of Northeastern New York papers, Series 3, Box 1, National Urban League 1975 Annual Conference Materials, p.4; *Ibid.*, Vernon Jordan Speech, National Urban League Conference, July 27, 1975, p.6.

(CBC) urged the government to instead pursue full employment measures as a way to deal with economic problems, including the revival of massive federal employment programmes last seen under the New Deal, progressive reform of the tax code, and incentivizing private businesses to hire. However, both the subsequent Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter administrations responded to persistent inflationary and unemployment pressures with economic policies that predominantly sought to cut taxes and federal spending, rather than increase them.[63]

At the same time that economic problems made life harder for poor and working-class Americans, they also made it harder for black elected officials to pursue city policies that would improve the lot of their poor black constituents. In the tough inflationary economic climate of the 1970s, government social spending came under increasing attack from conservatives who sought to exploit taxpayers' concerns over such policies and their own economic wellbeing. At the same time that redistributive city policies were becoming less politically viable, the continuation of deleterious trends that weakened city finances made them less fiscally feasible too. Escaping the tax burden of mounting social welfare costs – seen by many as an unjust use of their tax dollars – was one of a myriad of factors that inspired continuing white flight (of both families and businesses) to the suburbs, where they successfully insulated themselves from the cost of inner-city government. This, in turn, further eroded the tax base of many cities, making it very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain existing social service levels in what were predominantly poor minority inner-city communities.[64] In the case of New York in the early 1970s, dwindling fiscal resources and spiraling costs pushed the city toward the brink of bankruptcy, precipitating an extraordinary and seismic transformation of city government. In 1975, leading executives of the financial institutions that held the majority of the city's mountainous debt refused to allow city government to avoid defaulting by renegotiating terms. They instead demanded, and orchestrated, a radical restructuring of city finances which directed the vast majority of all city revenues straight to creditors, leaving only the bare minimum for the running of essential public services. This resulted in the devastation of social spending and public assistance programmes, and a crushing (and arguably fatal) blow to powerful municipal unions whose members' wages and benefits were drastically reduced. This episode not only highlighted the power of entrenched white economic interests but, as political scientist David Harvey has explained, in hindsight, it was a pivotal moment in global economic history. As the first major example of the kind of aggressive corporate interest-driven economic restructuring that compelled the retrenchment of state responsibility for social welfare provision, it was a landmark

[63] Urban League of Northeastern New York papers, Series 3, Box 1, Vernon Jordan Speech, National Urban League Conference, July 27, 1975, p.2, 8-10; Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan; A History, 1974-2008*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2008) pp. 35-41, 78-85.
[64] Thompson, *Double Trouble,* p.11,14.

step on the road toward the global neoliberal economic revolution led by the Reagan administration and other conservative governments worldwide (for example, Great Britain under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher) during the 1980s and beyond.[65]

Although the nature of New York's experience was not typical, dealing with entrenched economic interests seeking to dictate the direction of city government was a problem that many municipal leaders faced during the 1970s. As insurgents within existing urban political arrangements, black city executives often found themselves faced with white business elites intent on asserting themselves and maintaining their influence in local politics. Depending on the agenda that they sought to pursue, this group could represent a very significant problem for black mayors. Since the New Deal, as Thompson has explained, public policy in the nation's cities had been strongly influenced by a broad coalition of business interests, including real estate developers, major business leaders, banking and insurance executives, lawyers, and construction businesses. Sharing a common interest in securing federal subsidies for 'public infrastructure to promote private investment and economic growth', their broad vision of 'pro-growth' politics dictated city government be dedicated to maintaining and developing downtown business districts, ensuring law and order in the central city, improving transport infrastructure, and encouraging private enterprise and greater profitability through pro-business fiscal policy. At a time when suburban communities were continuing to increase in size and wealth, drawing more and more white families and businesses away from the inner-cities, the loss of city revenue this produced necessarily therefore threatened the interests of downtown white economic elites. With city resources increasingly rare, business leaders became even more hostile toward policies that did not meet their demands, either directly or indirectly (such as, for example, city spending on poor neighbourhoods). Indeed their staunch opposition to redistributive politics underpinned the creation of inner-city ghettos since the 1930s, which, in turn, highlighted the dominance of pro-growth urban politics during the four decades since the Great Depression.[66]

The economic crises of the 1970s, and broader white public resentment of redistributive politics, created a climate in which there was even greater pressure on black mayors to defer to the interests of downtown economic elites. Pursuing policies that might exacerbate white flight, such as increasing taxes to fund city social spending, was not only discouraged by pro-growth interests, but it also threatened to exacerbate urban decline and confirm prejudiced white predictions of economic catastrophe under inexperienced and biased black city leadership. In Los Angeles, however, Tom

[65] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 2005), pp.45-48, 3.
[66] Thompson, *Double Trouble,* p.40-41.

Bradley's own fiscal conservatism and political outlook meant his programme was already broadly in tune with that of the city's white taxpayers and economic elites. By the end of his first term he could boast of having kept his promises on taxes, having cut government spending by $200 million, presented three balanced city budgets, vetoed various proposed tax increases, and secured a 10 percent cut in the property tax rate.[67]

Bradley's political programme, however, did not necessarily mean a total abandonment of the city's poor minority neighbourhoods. Having pledged to avoid tax increases, Bradley's efforts to address the severe housing, unemployment, and social problems that beset South Central and East Los Angeles rested on securing greater federal funds for the city, an endeavor in which he met considerable success during his first administration. Whereas federal grants to the city sat at $80 million when Bradley took office in 1973, they grew to $400 million within two years, and reached nearly $900 million by the end of the decade. Part of this extra revenue was directed toward efforts to improve the lives of the city's poorer citizens. Among these were after school educational programmes, efforts to address housing shortages, and increased police patrols. His administration also ran a scheme similar to that run by Restoration in Brooklyn, which sold rehabilitated properties to local residents in poor communities at low prices via advantageous mortgage arrangements, as well as working with financial institutions to combat redlining. In keeping with Bradley's political philosophy, pro-business and economic development based solutions completed his administration's favoured policies for tackling local urban poverty.[68] This approach was designed – just as Kennedy and Nixon's had been – to try and maximize opportunity and aid to poor minorities at the minimum political risk.[69]

Bradley's firm faith in the capacity of pro-capitalist development politics to deal with economic inequality and recession led him to actively increase the influence of the city's economic elite at City Hall. In April 1974, Bradley established an Ad Hoc Economic Development Committee composed almost entirely of representatives from the private sector. Just under a year later, in March 1975, as unemployment and inflation worsened, Mayor Bradley, along with the City Council, created an economic development structure within the city government based on the recommendations made by the Ad Hoc Economic Development committee.[70] One long-term result of this was the redirection of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds away from the city's poor neighbourhoods, and instead towards the central business districts. This shift

[67] Tom Bradley Papers, Box 597, Folder 1, 'Tom Bradley First Term Record' January 19, 1977, p.2
[68] *Ibid.*, p.5; Los Angeles, CA, UCLA Department of Special Collections, Oral History: 'The Impossible Dream: Tom Bradley', April 13, 1979, p. 274-5, 270-271; Parker, p,160, 164.
[69] Sonenshein, p.163.
[70] Tom Bradley Papers, Box 597, Folder 1, 'Issue Paper on Economic Development' (1977) p.1.

was justified with the assertion that investment in the downtown area would produce trickle down benefits to the city's poor neighbourhoods via the extra jobs such investment might be expected to produce. In reality, few jobs resulted from such development, and the loss of funds only accelerated the on-going decline of the city's ghettos.[71] Furthermore, Bradley's partnership with the city's economic elites – who were highly concerned with the maintenance of law and order – disinclined him from effectively challenging the LAPD (an organization he had poor relations with throughout his five terms in office). With police brutality an issue that was especially important to working class and poor blacks in inner-city ghettos, Bradley's failure to aggressively pursue police reform was a severe disappointment for many of his black constituents. Committed first and foremost to making Los Angeles a 'world class city', throughout his five terms in office, as Sonenshein has explained, Bradley's mayoralty was characterized by a political agenda that was strongly oriented toward the interests of downtown business elites and middle-class taxpayers.[72]

The programmes that Bradley did intend to help the city's poor black communities did little to stem the decline of South Central, which was being ravaged by large scale corporate disinvestment and urban decay. The jobs created by his administration's business-oriented economic development programmes did little to redress the balance. Worse still, their reliance on expanded federal funding streams made them vulnerable to conservative tax and spending measures which shook both California, and then the nation, from the late 1970s onwards. The passage of Proposition 13, a property tax limitation measure approved by two-thirds of California voters in 1978 which cut $7 billion from state government funds, greatly impacted on city finances, necessitating severe cutbacks in essential services. This trend was exacerbated by the massive reductions in federal support for urban social welfare spending that followed the election of Ronald Reagan to the White House in 1980, precipitating the hyper-decline of ghetto communities such as South Central Los Angeles over the following decades.[73]

Whereas Bradley's mainstream political and economic credos saw him swiftly align himself with Los Angeles's white downtown power structure, in Atlanta, Jackson's political vision put him in direct opposition to the city's white business elite. As political scientist Clarence Stone has written, Atlanta's business community had long been accustomed to holding sway over city government, and had been an effectively organized group since the 1940s. Business interests were

[71] Thompson, *Double Trouble*, p.17.
[72] Sides, p. 194. As Sides notes, although Bradley did succeed in getting the LAPD to stop using their controversial 'choke hold' on suspects, the number of shootings that occurred barely changed at all over the course of his administration. On Bradley's pro-business policies and approach, see: Sonenshein, esp. pp.163-175.
[73] Los Angeles, CA, UCLA Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, California Democratic Council Papers, Box 20, Folder 1, State of California, California Voter's Pamphlet: Primary election' June 6, 1978, p. 56-58; Sides, p. 195; Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, p.193.

represented by Central Atlanta Progress (CAtP), a non-profit development corporation concerned with public policy, land use, and investments in the central city, which was made up of over 200 local downtown property holders, business leaders and executives. In the recent past, CAtP had enjoyed a very close partnership with Mayor Ivan Allen (who had been head of the city's Chamber of Commerce prior to his election), and, although they had not backed his successor, they nevertheless worked productively with Massell. Maynard Jackson's forthright racial advocacy, however, threatened to seriously disrupt the existing power arrangements which were so favourable to the city's white economic elite. As Stone explains, Jackson set out under the assumption that his election was 'a mandate for social reform which the business leaders as well as other sectors of the community' should support. It did not take long for Jackson to realize that his efforts to deliver on his campaign promises to tackle the problems facing Atlanta's poor black neighbourhoods, and pursue his ambitious programme for black empowerment, would not go unchallenged. CAtP would be the most formidable source of resistance.[74]

Alongside growing popular hostility to redistributive politics, the financial pressures the city faced made success in this effort even more difficult. In order to counteract budgetary shortfalls, and avoid cutting services and laying off city workers, Jackson proposed increasing local taxes (primarily property taxes) by $6.2 million. It was vital, he argued, that the city's middle-class and elite accept a greater tax burden. 'We've cut down below the bone. We're down to the marrow… you can't go anymore unless you kill the victim.' However, his proposal was soundly rejected (six-to-one) by the city council's finance committee, which passed a measure instead raising revenue by cutting city employee pay.[75] Faced with constrained finances, historian Ronald Bayor has explained, Jackson resolved to reprioritize the use of existing city funds. Money previously earmarked for downtown business district redevelopment was redirected toward revitalizing the city's poor black neighbourhoods, including, housing construction and rehabilitation, and improving sanitation, street maintenance, recreation facilities, and social services.[76]

Furthermore, Jackson pursued a bold, two-pronged approach to reforming the Atlanta Police Department, one part of which involved significantly increasing the number of black police officers. His strong commitment to affirmative action in city hiring saw the percentage of black officers increase from 23 percent when he took office, to over 35 percent by the end of his first

[74] Clarence Stone, 'Partnership New South Style: Central Atlanta Progress' *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 36, No.2, (1986) pp.100-110 (p. 101-102,105).
[75] Harold Andrews, 'Tax Proposal Challenges Well-to-do Atlantans' *Atlanta Voice*, December 21, 1974 p. 1.
[76] Bayor, p.182.

term. The other part involved the symbolic removal of white Police Chief John Inman, who was a pariah in the black community. With a reputation for brutality under his command, twenty-three African Americans had died at the hands of Atlanta police between July 1973 and July 1974.[77] Local Black Panthers were especially critical of Inman, lambasting him as the 'triggerman' for 'powerful, wealthy racist right wing elements' in Atlanta who were hell-bent on stopping 'black and poor people gaining control of their lives.' After his attempts to fire Inman had been stymied by the local courts, Jackson effectively demoted Inman through an administrative reorganization (a revised city charter) which circumvented Inman's authority by subordinating the police department and its leaders under a Public Safety Commissioner. For local blacks, it was a welcome victory which brought a significant reduction in the incidence of police brutality in the city; for white business leaders it was an alarming and unwelcome development under the city's brash new African American mayor.[78]

The bold city leadership, weighted toward the concerns of poor local blacks, that Jackson had given during his first year in office brought a hostile response from the city's white business elite and their allies. Local corporate leaders were angered by the redirection of funds away from the central business district, especially as CAtP were planning a number of major downtown redevelopment projects for which they expected the city's fiscal support.[79] For the first half of his administration, Jackson has recalled, the city's newspapers were 'almost hysterical'.[80] One local journalist described Jackson's redistributive policies as 'demagogic action on behalf of poor blacks'. The new mayor's police reforms, and his strong commitment to affirmative action in city government hiring and contracts, were seen by others as proof that Jackson was unable to govern the biracial city even handedly.[81] In September 1974, CAtP sent an open letter to the mayor and city council president warning that many of the organization's members were contemplating leaving the city because of an increasing crime rate and Jackson's apparent disrespect for the police department (evidenced by Inman's sacking), the changing racial balance in the city's workforce, and the 'perceived attitude of the mayor as anti-white.'[82]

Jackson understood that his vision for black progress would be a shock to the system for the city's economic elites and that his approach was more combative than they were used to. He also

[77] Jones, 'Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta', p.109, 116.
[78] Palo Alto, CA., Stanford University Green Library, Huey P. Newton Foundation Records, Series 2, Box 57, Folder 7, Georgia State Black Panther Party Press Release, May 2, 1973, p.1; For a detailed discussion of the Inman sacking, see: Hornsby, pp.143-147.
[79] Stone, p. 102-103.
[80] Maynard Jackson Interview, Eyes on the Prize II, October 24, 1988.
[81] Bayor, p.185.
[82] Jones, 'Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta', p.110, 113, 111.

believed they would adjust to, and accept, his commitment to reorienting city policy towards the interests of the black community. As he has recalled, 'I […] fervently wanted the business community to work hand-in-glove with me as we went through this transition. I didn't want to do it in a confrontational way. […] But my job was to do it, one way or the other.' It soon became clear that Jackson's initial confidence that they wouldn't 'walk away from the relationship' was 'dead wrong.' 'Times got hot, even some of the closest friends I had in the business community […] said, "Maynard, that was the dumbest thing I've ever seen, and goodbye."…. So, I miscalculated.'[83] By the end of his first term in office, Jackson came to fully appreciate the necessity of having downtown leaders' support. Not only could they make life very difficult through political pressure and negative publicity but, in an environment where city tax resources continued to decline, they represented a vitally important source of private investment in the city. In that sense, they were the primary bulwark against the city's insolvency. Pursuing an agenda that failed to meet their demands proved untenable in the longer term and as he prepared to run for re-election in 1977 Jackson began to change tack accordingly. Although Jackson would retain a strong commitment to advancing black interests through affirmative action and city contract disbursement and black business support, he drastically curtailed the redistributive aspects of his political programme for Atlanta.[84]

The shift in policy direction, Bayor explains 'was abrupt.' In 1977, Jackson responded to the pressure and criticism from local business leaders over his use of CDBG funds to improve poor local black neighbourhoods by establishing the Mayor's Office of Economic Development which was dedicated to maintaining a strong central business district. From that point on, Jackson largely abandoned his redistributive spending on poor black communities, reinstating public works improvement projects in the downtown area as the top priority for CDBG funds. Jackson also removed a number of his own black appointees to city government who had earned the disapproval of the CAtP's leaders. No event more clearly underlined Jackson's change in emphasis than his response to the city's sanitation workers when, in March 1977, they threatened to strike unless they were given a fifty cents-per-hour pay increase. As vice-mayor seven years earlier, Jackson had offered the workers strong support during their battle with Mayor Massell. Faced with the same situation as mayor, however, Jackson did exactly what his predecessor had done: refused their demands, and insisted that the city had no money for raises. Jackson promptly fired the nearly 1,000 city employees – the vast majority of whom were low-income blacks – when they decided to go on strike following his refusal of their demands. Although many were rehired over the following year, Jackson had delivered an unmistakable message about the new priorities of his administration. His

[83] Maynard Jackson Interview, Eyes on the Prize II, October 24, 1988.
[84] Thompson, *Double Trouble*, p.41.

administration's commitment to issues affecting poor and working-class blacks was over. Economic and class interests would once again come to define politics and progress in Atlanta.[85]

The mayoralties of Bradley and Jackson reveal a great deal about the powerful influence that white interests, and the mainstream political discourses, ideas, issues, and policies that asserted and defended them, had on black city politics. Despite the different approaches they had taken to addressing the needs of the black poor, both on the campaign trail and once in power, they both eventually occupied the same position. Redistributive policies were either avoided or abandoned in favour of pro-business and economic development programmes tailored to the needs and interests of economic elites. This common outcome highlights the degree to which Bradley and Jackson's ability to help disadvantaged blacks was constrained by a number of factors: broader white taxpayer backlash politics; ongoing economic trends and difficulties at city, national, and global levels; and, perhaps most decisively, the pervasive and powerful influence of white economic elites.

For many African Americans, black political power proved far less of a positive development than they had first hoped. In particular, the impact of city spending cuts on inner-city black neighbourhoods was felt unevenly in the black community, along lines of class and gender. This trend in urban policy – at a time when the incidence of single parent female headed families in ghetto communities was increasing – ensured that poor and working-class black mothers and their children continued to be most heavily affected by governmental retreat from urban social spending. At the same time, Bradley and Jackson's pro-business, economic development policies did little to stem the tide of inner-city ghetto decline. However, while Bradley was reluctant, and Jackson proved unable, to sustain a commitment to the interests of their poor and working-class black constituents, their political programmes proved highly advantageous to other sections of the black community in Los Angeles and Atlanta.

The Path of Least Resistance: Class interest, Affirmative Action, and Minority Business Support Under Black City Leadership

In Los Angeles, Bradley's pro-business stance, and his failure to identify with the issues affecting the inner-city poor, drew significant criticism from social and economic justice advocates and disadvantaged local blacks. In Atlanta, Dorothy Bolden, a prominent community organizer who, as

[85] Bayor, p.185-186; Maynard Jackson Interview, Eyes on the Prize II, October 24, 1988.

head of the National Domestic Worker's Union (NDWU) represented thousands of low-income black women in the city, captured the similar disappointment that Jackson's leadership had generated among the city's once hopeful black poor. Mayor Jackson, she lamented, 'started off being' a good choice but 'ended being a bad one. […] He didn't do what I thought he was going to do.'[86] Middle-class and upper-income blacks in both cities took an altogether different perspective on Bradley and Jackson's records. Fully supportive of their mayors, they heralded Bradley and Jackson as valuable and inspiring symbols of black progress who did what they could to advance black interests in extremely challenging circumstances. As such, they argued, it was vital that the whole African American community show racial solidarity with their black political representatives, and they urged the black poor and working-class to continue supporting both men. However, as this final section argues, black middle-class and elites' solidarity with Bradley and Jackson rested less on race than it did on the fact that generally, unlike for their poorer black counterparts, African American city leadership served their interests, significantly broadening their scope for economic and political empowerment.[87] The nature of black progress under Bradley and Jackson owed a great deal the policy shift (explored in chapter two) which sought to negotiate Black Power and channel black demands for empowerment through greater integration into the mainstream economy. As those policies, and the assumptions that underpinned them, were developed, adapted, and further entrenched in local and national politics, they skewed opportunities for black advancement firmly toward the black middle-class and elite.

In one respect, as Marable has pointed out, an apparent bias within black politics toward the interests of middle-class and elite blacks could be explained on grounds of mutual interest. After all, the vast majority of African American elected officials tended to be drawn from the ranks of the black middle-class and professional elite and, as such, their 'ideological outlook and basic political practices tended to align them more with other parvenu elites than with the black working-class.'[88] At a time when middle-class and wealthy whites were increasingly demanding tax relief, and smaller, pro-business government, there is no reason to think that their equivalents in the black community would not also favour the same approach. While Bradley's consistently middle-class, pro-business agenda suggests this kind of innate class-leaning, Jackson's initial commitment to redistributive politics complicates our view of him in this respect. In both their cases, a more salient factor in explaining the deeply uneven progress made by blacks under their leadership resulted from the most politically viable opportunities black elected officials had for advancing black interests.

[86] Atlanta, Georgia State University, Special Collections and Archives, Voices of Labor Oral History Project, Dorothy Bolden Interview, August 31, 1995, p.39.
[87] Parker, p.168-170; Jones, 'Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta', p.115.
[88] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, p.134-135.

Whereas growing resistance to redistributive politics among white voters and business interests had severely constrained their ability to help poor and working-class blacks, the entrenchment of affirmative action and minority business development in federal policy under the Nixon administration helped foster a political climate in which city employment and contracts policy became the primary and most legitimate means to advance black interests. The economic opportunity this opened up to the black community – as the cases of both Los Angeles and Atlanta demonstrate –was fundamentally skewed toward benefitting the black middle-class and elite (and men in particular).

Although affirmative action policy reached its zenith under President Nixon, when it was installed (alongside minority business development) as one of the primary federal approaches to meeting the black demand for equality, as several historians have shown, it had grown out of two decades of federal government-led fair employment practice legislation aimed at eradicating racial discrimination in the workplace.[89] President Kennedy had been the first to enter 'affirmative action' – the theory of taking positive steps to increase black employment – into the political lexicon. It was subsequently identified by Lyndon Johnson as a way to speed the path to black economic empowerment as black disillusionment with joblessness, poverty and racism fuelled four consecutive summers of turmoil in the nation's inner-cities.[90] The fundamental principle underlying affirmative action – accelerating the integration of African Americans (and especially unemployed black men) into the nation's economic mainstream – was also at the heart of Kennedy's CDC blueprint. Not only did it seek to bring the private sector further into the battle against endemic black unemployment, poverty, and urban decay but its provisions which mandated tax incentives for businesses who boosted black employment (by locating operations in ghetto areas and employing locals) was tantamount to affirmative action. Both civil rights and Black Power advocates were firmly behind affirmative action. Having long insisted upon the need for proactive policy that would help to remedy past discrimination, African American leaders pushed for greater federal action to overcome what Stokely Carmichael called the 'institutional racism' that restricted nonwhites to low-wage employment, and kept many in poverty. Others battling against discrimination strongly endorsed the policy for the same reasons. Women's movement activists seized upon the federal government's support for overcoming racial job bias to highlight the extent of endemic gender discrimination in the workplace, and the failure of existing equal employment opportunity structures to treat it seriously. Adding a powerful voice to the clamour for affirmative

[89] For the most recent, in-depth analysis of affirmative action's roots, see: Antony Chen, *The Fifth Freedom: Jobs, Politics, and Civil Rights in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
[90] Terry H. Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness: a History of Affirmative Action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) p.61, 91-93, 99. On the development of affirmative action under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, see: pp.49-108.

action, female activists would eventually succeed in making it an important tool in the battle against gender inequality.[91]

Keen to reorient federal civil rights policy toward advancing economic opportunity for minorities, Nixon took affirmative action a stage further by carrying forward the Philadelphia Plan, an existing pilot scheme which applied Johnson's September 1965 Executive Order 11246 (which forbade employment discrimination by federal contractors) to a number of federally-funded construction projects in Philadelphia. The notorious racial discrimination in local labour unions would be undermined by stipulating increased minority hiring as a precondition to involvement on any construction projects receiving government funding. In the process of developing the Philadelphia Plan, Kotlowski explains, Nixon took affirmative action to a new level by endorsing the setting of 'goals and timetables' in the bid to overturn employment bias. This would allow progress toward making equal employment opportunity a fact to then be measured and monitored. A theory of proportional representation was loosely adhered to which had emanated from civil rights groups' efforts to discern whether or not a company discriminated in its hiring policy in the first place. If the proportion of a company's staff who were black was significantly lower than the proportion of the local population that was black, this was deemed to likely indicate racial discrimination. (The principle of proportional representation became an important one in civil rights and Black Power discourse about political and economic empowerment. Demands for a proportional share of jobs, contracts, political office were nothing more than demands for blacks to be given their 'fair share'.) This principle would play a significant role in shaping both black expectations under black city leadership and also progress made by African Americans under that leadership.[92]

Under Nixon, affirmative action became a vital part of the policy shift intended to coopt and modify Black Power that this thesis is concerned with. The pragmatic Nixon backed affirmative action in part because, like his theory of Black Capitalism, it did not threaten to offend broader public opinion among the Silent Majority in the same way that welfare state liberalism did. Affirmative action did not require the direct redistribution of wealth (via increased taxes, or social spending on the poor) or the expansion of government's scope or responsibility through federal government public employment programmes. Rather, it sought to channel black and minority

[91] MacLean, p.105-108. For a discussion of Latino and women's response to affirmative action legislation see, pp.117-184. For an exploration of how affirmative action inspired minority rights activism, see: John David Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[92] Kotlowski, p. 97; Anderson, p.117, 94. As Anderson explains, while the principle of proportional representation was loosely accepted by the Nixon administration in their endorsement of goals and timetables, it had been rejected by the Johnson administration on the basis that the generally lower levels of educational attainment amongst African Americans would likely ensure that qualifications would be trumped by racial preference in hiring.

employment demands into the mainstream economy and existing government employment structures. Furthermore, by seeking to open up the American workplace to minorities, it ostensibly chimed with core aspects of the nation's work ethic and success myth, and fit into the politics of the welfare backlash. Affirmative action would help increase minority employment; those who found jobs could then provide for themselves and their own families, and would not be dependent on government. In these ways it perfectly complimented his Black Capitalism initiatives, as the establishment of federal contract set-asides for minority businesses.

Affirmative action also resonated with Nixon's own meritocratic principles. A person's potential to succeed, he believed, should be governed only by their ability and willingness to work. In this sense, Nixon found denying black people the opportunity to reach their potential because of their race as offensive as he did the advantages enjoyed by many privileged white liberal elites by virtue of their social connections. Affirmative action would, therefore, help eradicate a false and unjust barrier to personal success and individual initiative. Finally, just as Nixon's support of black business development was designed to grow the black middle-class and win them over to the Republican fold, affirmative action was similarly intended to offer African Americans the scope for greater upward mobility. Widening employment opportunities in public and private sector employment promised first and foremost to benefit those blacks best prepared to take advantage of those opportunities. This often meant those most qualified and best educated. Furthermore, affirmative action opened up the nation's universities to greater minority participation, further widening the educational gap between disadvantaged blacks and their middle-class counterparts. Affirmative action did not, then, offer great potential for tackling endemic unemployment among the nation's growing black urban underclass. In this way, it fit with the middle-class tilt of Nixon's approaches to dealing with the black demand for economic empowerment.[93]

Although it represented a step away from redistributive liberal social spending, many conservatives objected to affirmative action, for a number of reasons. First, affirmative action seemed to be a blatant violation of the very colourblind antidiscrimination statutes set down in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that it was intended to make a reality. Here, as Anderson has suggested, lay the fundamental contradiction between the civil rights movement's vision of a colourblind society and affirmative action. In seeking to eradicate racial discrimination through positive action toward the hiring of minority workers, affirmative action explicitly required employers to consider race as a fundamental and decisive factor in their hiring process. In the eyes of many conservatives, affirmative action therefore, by definition, constituted unfair racial

[93] Kotlowski, p. 9, pp.97-155; Fergus, *Black Power, Soft Power*, pp.153-162.

discrimination (often called 'reverse discrimination') because it gave minorities preferential treatment, predominantly at the expense of whites. Second, anger over 'goals and timetables' revolved around the notion that such devices really represented 'quotas'. This, in turn, raised the prospect of race trumping aptitude in the selection process; a corruption of core meritocratic American ideals which threatened a decline in workplace standards. Third, many in the business community argued that government dictates concerning employment policy infringed on their freedom to run their businesses as they saw fit. In doing so, they concluded, the government was overstepping its bounds by interfering in the free-market mechanism and artificially jeopardizing a company's performance. Finally, many business owners were also concerned that their white employees would respond badly to the prospect of working alongside nonwhites. In all cases, the underlying concern (apart from racial prejudice) was the fear that businesses might lose money through affirmative action, a concern that was magnified by the national economic strife of the 1970s.[94]

Despite opposition and the controversy engendered by the Nixon administration's endorsement of goals and timetables, affirmative action became established at the heart of the federal government's attempts to tackle discrimination in the job market specifically, and economic inequality more generally, during the early 1970s. Strongly supported by liberals in the Democrat-controlled Congress, affirmative action was advanced by the Equal Employment Opportunities Act (EEOA) they helped to pass in January 1972. A landmark piece of legislation, the EEOA revised Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (which outlawed discrimination against nonwhite and female workers) by increasing federal enforcement powers and spreading its coverage to include a greater percentage of private businesses and for the first time, crucially, both state and local government too. This provided the legal ground that black elected officials such as Bradley and Jackson operated on when they sought to boost the number of African Americans and other minorities employed by City Hall.[95]

Once in office both Bradley and Jackson pursued vigorous affirmative action programmes in city employment. While on the city council, Bradley had, alongside fellow black councilman Billy Mills, fought for stricter enforcement of the 'Greater Los Angeles Plan', the city's own version of the Philadelphia Plan.[96] One of the most important tasks Bradley was faced with as he began his administration was to appoint the city commissioners who would put his political stamp

[94] See: Anderson pp.161-216; MacLean, pp.207-211; The philosophical debate over the merits of affirmative action that unfolded at the time is well captured in: Steven M. Cahn ed., *The Affirmative Action Debate* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
[95] Anderson p. 134-136; Bayor, p. 182.
[96] Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4727, Folder 16, Press Release, November 25, 1971.

upon, and establish his influence within, the city's bureaucracy. As Parker explains, Bradley had 140 of these appointments to make and retained only seventeen Yorty appointees, none of whom sat on the most important boards. By appointing twenty one African-Americans, thirteen Latinos, and ten Asian Americans Bradley made city government far more racially diverse and representative than it had ever been. Bradley's first act as mayor was to issue Executive Order No. 1 which established a forthright affirmative action policy for city government hiring and contracts. Although Bradley himself rarely spoke about affirmative action as a black issue, framing it more broadly as a way to increase minority and female employment in general, he appointed African American Bill Elkins, a strong racial advocate, to oversee its development and implementation. Results were impressive, and blacks were the racial group that benefitted most from the city's affirmative-action programmes under Bradley during his five terms as mayor from 1973 until 1992. During that period, as Parker had shown, the number of blacks in high paying municipal positions – where they had been severely underrepresented – went up dramatically, doubling in many categories. By 1992, when blacks represented only 13 percent of the city's population (down from 17.9 percent in 1973 thanks to the growing Latino population) they represented 21.2 percent of the city's employees.[97]

In Atlanta, Jackson set out to make city government truly biracial, as fast as possible. During his first year in charge, Bayor explains, African-Americans accounted for 80 percent of all new city hires and nearly 60 percent of those appointed to the highest two job grades. Of the twenty seven leadership positions in city departments and agencies that Jackson filled, fifteen were given to blacks and the remaining twelve to whites. Considerable progress was made in increasing the black share of municipal employment. In 1970, under Jackson's predecessor Mayor Massell, just over 38 percent of the city workforce was African American, which included 7 percent of its administrators and 15 percent of city professionals. By the start of Jackson's second term in 1978, nearly 56 percent of city employees were black and the percentage of African American administrators and professionals had risen to 32 and 42 percent respectively.[98]

Both Bradley and Jackson also used city contracts and spending as a way to leverage a change in private sector employment patterns, in the same way that federal affirmative action policy did. However, pursuing this route was not easy. In Los Angeles, Bradley has recounted the resistance he met from some corporate business leaders. One of the biggest battles he faced was against major local car manufacturers, General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler, who had refused to sign the affirmative action pledge that City Hall demanded under its new black mayor, arguing that the

[97] 'The Impossible Dream: Tom Bradley', April 13, 1979, p. 261, 265; Parker, p.161, 161-163.
[98] Bayor, p.181.

goals and timetables it set were too demanding. Bradley responded by terminating city procurement from those firms. When Bradley remained steadfast in his promise not to do business with them, despite a vehicle shortage crisis in the police department, a negotiated settlement was reached with the automobile giants who agreed to the city's affirmative action hiring policy. For Bradley, it was an important and symbolic victory:

> I think it set a principle that if we could take on the biggest corporations in the country on affirmative action and win and preserve our ordinances, they were going to be secure against any attack by any other companies. […] That was, I think, the major breakthrough. It was important not only to Los Angeles but to other cities that had similar kinds of affirmative-action ordinances. As a consequence, now every company willingly and quickly agrees to this approach.[99]

In Atlanta, for example, Maynard Jackson targeted the local downtown banks as an area where business executives could do more to promote minority employment. In this case, the city held nearly $600 million of its tax funds in six major white-run downtown banks. Jackson was especially keen that the banks in question take positive steps to hire and promote blacks to middle and senior management positions where they were almost entirely absent. Through informal negotiations with the banks during the first year and a half of his tenure at City Hall he hoped to prod them into action. As Jackson has recalled, taking this soft approach had resulted in 'zero' being accomplished. 'I don't mean almost zero. I mean, zero.' Jackson decided to change tack, and advised the banks that they had thirty days to comply with the city's affirmative action policy, or face losing the city's accounts. With only one bank, the First Georgia Bank, having come to terms with the city before the deadline the mayor made good on his threat. It did not take long for the remaining five banks to acquiesce. As Jackson explained, 'on day 31, we moved the smallest account we could find from uncooperative bank A, it was a $500,000 account, just a half million dollar account, moved that into First Georgia Bank, and I think, ah, the message was heard.'[100]

Boosting black businesses was the other main way in which black mayors were able to successfully and consistently cater to black interests. This was done through the disbursement of city contracts and resources, an approach to remedying racial and economic inequality which, again, had emerged from mainstream white engagement with Black Power and which was firmly established and legitimized under the Nixon administration. Through the administration's Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE), Nixon expanded the percentage of federal procurement dollars that went to black businesses from approximately $9 million when he took office, to $250

[99] 'The Impossible Dream: Tom Bradley', April 13, 1979, p. 263-264.
[100] Maynard Jackson Interview, Eyes on the Prize II, October 24, 1988.

million by 1975. In the process, the Nixon White House initiated what became known as contract set-asides. These, as economist Thomas Boston has explained, fused affirmative action with minority business development by designating an increasing proportion of federal contracts to minority-owned businesses. Again, the underlying goal was the integration of blacks into the nation's economic mainstream. Between 1968 and 1977, $2.2 billion in federal contracts was awarded to minority businesses under this scheme. As minority businesses expanded their operations due to increased federal revenues, they became more viable entities within the broader mainstream economy. During the same period (1969-1975) the total purchases made from minority owned businesses increased by over 250 percent, rising to $475 million. A similar effect was seen with black banks as the Nixon administration increased the amount of federal funds held with them from $35 million in 1971, to $80 million in 1973. Over that period, the total amount of both public and private investments in those same banks more than doubled, from approximately $400 million to over $1 billion.[101]

To an even greater degree than affirmative action city hiring, minority business development tended primarily to benefit the black middle-class and elite; the group from which entrepreneurs tended to emerge, and whose access to educational opportunity gave them a distinct advantage over poor and working-class blacks in the free-market economy. As discussed in chapter two, the fundamental principle that underpinned pro-capitalist venture and economic development policies was that supporting black business and increasing mainstream economic opportunity for African Americans would boost the black middle-class. This, in turn, would help lift up the black poor. Directing greater revenues to black-owned business enterprises was intended to put more money, indirectly, into black communities via the hands of black businesses owners and then onwards to their employees. This faith in the capacity of the American private enterprise system to reduce economic inequality, rather than exacerbate it as its critics complained, would prove misplaced in the longer run, especially when neoliberal economic restructuring during the 1980s and beyond did much to further widen the poverty gap.

Just as the on-going retrenchment of federal and city social spending on the nation's ghetto communities disproportionately affected poor black women and children, business development policies that were skewed toward the black middle-class and elite tended, first and foremost, to benefit black men. The world of mainstream American business had always been a bastion of white male privilege and power (a fact that still remains largely true today). The assumption and fact of

[101] Thomas D. Boston, *Affirmative Action and Black Entrepreneurship* (New York: Routledge, 1999) p.11; Kotlowski, p. 141, 144-145.

male dominance characterized the black business world just as much as it did the white. This was clear in the testimony of Norman Hodges, Chairman of the National Association of Black Manufacturers and Director of the Green Power Foundation Inc., a Los Angeles-based minority business development and support organization, when he spoke before an SCLC convention in held in Chicago in 1973. Profiling the type of black entrepreneur who could achieve prominence in the world of American business, Hodges explained:

> He's a black man who's got the drive of Henry Ford, trying to develop a safe and sound automobile that can be afforded by all people in this country. He's as committed as Carnegie, developing an industry of steel. He's got the vision of a Vanderbilt, breaking through the mountain paths to establish the Trans-American railroad, and in 1960, he has the taste of Col. Sanders making a fortune selling fried chicken that blacks have been frying for over a hundred years. The list could also include men like Edison, Rockefeller, and Woolworth.'[102]

While policies aimed at developing black businesses, therefore, certainly had the capacity to see wealth increased and spread throughout the black community, and could help make those businesses (as Kennedy had envisaged) a generator of urban improvement, they also predominantly concentrated economic benefits among a restricted class. Those who gained most from such policies tended to be black men from the middle-class and elite. While this fundamental gender and class bias was not always explicitly articulated within the discourses surrounding white efforts to negotiate Black Power and the scope and direction of black progress, it was always there. Channeling black advancement and empowerment through the nation's mainstream political and economic institutions necessarily rested on the same gender and class dynamics and values that dominated white American society.

Whereas Tom Bradley did not put special emphasis upon funnelling city contracts to black businesses (largely because of his race neutral stance), he firmly believed in and practiced the politics of black economic development, and set up an Office of Small Business Assistance during his first term which offered financial and technical help to minority and other disadvantaged businesses in the city.[103] Maynard Jackson, on the other hand, was firmly committed to 'levelling the playing field' for black businesses in Atlanta. When he came to office in 1973 Jackson found that out of city contracts worth a total of $33 million, just $41,500 worth went to black-owned firms. As a majority black city, he argued, black businesses ought to have a fair share in the city's economic success. Jackson's election would bring white business's monopoly over Atlanta's city spending to an end. Indeed, Jackson made boosting black businesses through city contract

[102] 'Black Business: The Need For a Giant Step', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 12, 1973, p.A9.
[103] Tom Bradley Papers, Box 597, Folder 1, 'Tom Bradley First Term Record' January 19, 1977, p.6.

disbursement a major focal point of his political programme for black advancement, perhaps more so than any other black elected official in the country.[104]

In the process, Jackson overcame considerable resistance from the city's white economic elites and helped to give black businesses a prime role in the city's growth and development. No single project showcased Jackson's commitment to supporting black business and bringing them into the city's economic life better than the construction of Atlanta-Hartsfield International Airport during his first term in office. Jackson decided early on that he wanted 25 percent of all contracts related to the project to go to black-owned businesses. In spite of fierce and sustained criticism from white business leaders and the local white press, who argued that his plan was too aggressive and was unfair on local white businesses, Jackson remained steadfast in his determination to see black businesses benefit from the city's plans. The largest capital construction project in the South, worth an estimated total $1 billion, it was a stunning success. Delivered on time (despite Jackson's decision to hold up the project until the target for black business involvement was met) it was widely praised for its smooth administration and completion. As Boston explains, the project was hugely significant for black businesses in Atlanta and beyond (many black companies from across the country worked on it). It allowed many to break into non-traditional industries, others worked on new economies of scale or diversified, leading to rapid growth and increasing profitability.[105]

Atlanta's black business development and support efforts not only emerged from the policy shift designed to negotiate and mainstream Black Power and African American demands for empowerment, they also helped to further entrench minority business development into federal policy. On the heels of Jackson's successful airport project, the Public Works Employment Act and Omnibus Small Business Act, passed in 1977 and 1978 respectively, set percentage targets for the first time by requiring that minority-owned businesses receive a minimum of 10 percent of federal procurement contracts and of the business related to federally-funded public works projects. At the same time that the Carter administration was cutting social welfare spending, it had written support for minority business more boldly into law through federal contract set-asides. Under the Reagan administration, when federal support for social welfare spending was decimated, federal procurement from minority businesses continued to rise. In 1981, they received 3.4 percent of all federal procurement expenditures. By 1994, they received 8.3 percent, or $14.4 billion.[106] As policies which primarily benefitted the poor and working-class blacks (and women in particular)

[104] Maynard Jackson Interview, Eyes on the Prize II, October 24, 1988; Boston, p.13.
[105] Boston, p.12-14. For an in-depth discussion of the airport project, see: Hornsby, pp. 159-163.
[106] Boston, p.12-14, 11; Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, pp.183-186.

were being pared back aggressively, alternative political approaches which aimed to bolster and expand the black middle-class became ever more tightly fixed in national policy.

Black Power, Black Politics, and Black Progress

Some black politicians saw political power as a vital opportunity to challenge and transform the nation's existing and dominant white political cultures and philosophies, and for pursuing the radical democratic transformation sought by welfare rights activists and groups like the Black Panthers. As African American state representative for South Central Los Angeles Mervyn Dymally explained to his fellow black elected officials at the California Black leadership Conference held in Los Angeles in June 1971:

> White political power has failed in the quest to establish a just society. Black political leadership may be the last tool sharp enough to do the job. For, in the final analysis, black politics has become the new cutting edge of the Black Power movement. And, unlike most white politics, black politics has justice as its ultimate goal… […] justice for the masses of people whose dignity has been dwarfed by the contradictions of a system that is in need of reform.[107]

For the majority of African Americans in Los Angeles and Atlanta, however, black city leadership was anything but a generator of improvement and social and economic justice. Under Tom Bradley, who was elected in 1973 and served five consecutive terms, South Central Los Angeles declined precipitously as unemployment worsened, disinvestment continued apace, and gang warfare and a crack cocaine epidemic swept through the area throughout the 1980s. Mayor Bradley's pro-growth corporate and middle-class interest politics, along with the cuts in city services following the passage of Prop 13 in 1978, only served to worsen this decline. While the local black middle-class and elite experienced unprecedented gains under his leadership, Bradley's last year in office was marked, somewhat poignantly, by the riots of 1992 which dramatized the simmering discontent and social disaffection bred by the decline in local ghetto communities he had simultaneously overseen.[108] Deep disillusionment with Bradley's policies and his failure to identify with the black poor and the issues they faced, Thompson explains, had the effect of demobilizing large numbers of black voters. From Bradley's first campaign for mayor in 1969 to the end of his five terms in 1993,

[107] Los Angeles, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, 20th Century Organizational Files, 1912-1980, Box 7, Folder 22, Mervyn Dymally, 'The Face of Justice in California' June 25, 1971, p.1-2.
[108] Sides, p. 202-203, 201. For discussion of the 1992 LA riots, see, for example: Lynell George, *No Crystal Stair: African Americans in the City of Angeles* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994); *The Los Angeles Riots: Lessons for the Urban Future*, ed. by Mark Baldassare (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994).

black voter turnout in the city decreased by 38 percent.[109] In Atlanta, Jackson's first two terms vitally shaped the future course of black city politics. Beginning with his successor, former SCLC leader and Congressman Andrew Young, in the decades since 1980 Atlanta's black political leadership have taken Jackson's pro-growth politics and close cooperation with the business community to ever greater levels.[110] During that period, as Grady-Willis has explained, intra-racial inequality in Atlanta has only deepened, with the city's wealthy black suburbs expanding steadily over the last three decades (thanks in part to many Northern black professionals relocating to the city to take advantage of the economic opportunities available). The poor, however, have become ever more marginalized in the city's political affairs (a trend which worsened sharply during Young's mayoralty). Despite this, cross-class racial solidarity has prevailed in Atlanta politics as black voters have continued to elect pro-growth black mayors in the Jackson and Young mold to office throughout the three decades since. The result, Grady-Willis concludes, is that today there are 'two Black Atlantas, one middle-class to affluent and the other working-class to destitute.'[111]

The pro-business development, middle-class interest oriented policies examined in this and other chapters – which emerged from white engagement with Black Power – were only one of many factors which drove wealth inequality. They were, however, an important one. Atlanta offers an especially good example of this. In November 1985, the Atlanta chapter of the National Association of Minority Contractors held a banquet in Maynard Jackson's honour. Elliot Marsh, the group's president, praised Jackson for maintaining his commitment to affirmative action. As a group, they had a great deal to thank him for. Since 1976, black businesses had received a quarter of a billion dollars in city contracts. When Jackson had entered office less than one-fifth of one percent of city contracts went to black-owned businesses. By the end of his second term, they received over a third. When he rose to speak, Jackson thanked the audience and spoke of his pride at having run 'the most successful affirmative action program in the history of this nation'. Jackson's successor, Mayor Andrew Young, was also there to pay tribute: 'we thank you for taking on those hard battles and dealing with those issues when the way was lonely.'[112]

However, the reality was that while Jackson's policies had proved very beneficial for a select group of African American business leaders, they had done little for the majority of the city's black citizens. As Emma Darnell, head of the city's affirmative action programme, has since acknowledged:

[109] Parker, pp.164-170; Thompson, *Double Trouble*, p.47.
[110] Thompson, *Double Trouble*, pp. 59-61; Bayor, pp. 188-196; Reed, pp.117-162..
[111] Grady-Willis, p. 210, 206-207.
[112] 'Atlanta contractors host "Thank You" Banquet for Ex-Mayor Jackson' *Jet*, November 25, 1985, p.27.

> the initiative which we undertook in the '70s to open up the government to minority workers and businessmen led to success for a few, but for the great majority of minority businessmen in Atlanta, our initiatives had no effect at all. Our unemployment rates were as high before we instituted the affirmative action program as they were afterwards. And of course that is because government alone cannot do the job. We had enormous successes. We saw during the seventies in Atlanta blacks moving into positions all over downtown where they'd never been before. That's because the city had forced businesses to hire them in order to do business with the city. […] but overall, if you looked at the real economic condition of the average Black person in Atlanta, […] not those in the clique, but the everyday working class black during this period, [they] simply did not see the benefits of what we tried to do.[113]

It is here that we find the success, and longer term consequences, of white engagement with Black Power illuminated. As this chapter – and this thesis more broadly – has argued, the efforts of white politicians, institutions, and organisations, to control the meaning of Black Power, and define the political parameters of how racial progress could occur, played a vital and understudied role in guiding black advancement during the Black Power era. The underlying emphasis of public policy – authored by whites and supported by many blacks – on creating economic opportunity for the middle-class, and in promulgating middle-class social and political values, played a tangible and underappreciated role in making possible the progress that the black middle-class made during the 1970s and beyond. The policy shift intended to coopt Black Power, along with broader white resistance to socio-economic change and redistributive liberalism, also helped sow the seeds of greater economic inequality. Rather than challenge the class and gender biases in mainstream American society, black politics – as it became defined by the political opportunities and pressures created by white interests and opposition – served instead primarily to reinforce them. Black city politicians, as in the case of Bradley and Jackson, could be important actors in these developments. The vision of Black Power that many black mayors helped to realize, therefore, was that which had been so powerfully shaped by mainstream white America.

[113] Emma Darnell Interview, Eyes on the Prize II, October 27, 1988. Online: <http://digital.wustl.edu/e/eii/eiiweb/dar5427.0325.035marc_record_interviewee_process.html> [Accessed 9/6/2013].

Conclusion

In 1966, Carmichael argued that American democracy required a radical transformation if African Americans were ever to attain social, economic, and racial justice. Existing civil rights remedies, he explained, had failed to challenge the structural inequalities of the American economy and society. Black Power, as he envisaged it, would bring about the necessary transformation by redistributing power and wealth down to the poor, oppressed, and disenfranchised.[1] In Carmichael's eyes, therefore, Black Power was fundamentally about reorienting the black freedom struggle to serve the interests of America's black urban and rural poor: 'a means for the black poor to get together, define their needs, and put people in power to achieve them.' As such, he explained, the new slogan represented 'a call, perhaps the last call, to the black middle-class to come home. It is a demand that black haves make common with the black have-nots.'[2] In his view, the black middle-class had to shift priorities and look beyond narrow class interest and individual aspirations for the greater good. Seeking assimilation into the mainstream American middle-class, – a 'perpetuator of black oppression' and the 'backbone of institutional racism' – he argued, would do nothing to serve the broader cause of black liberation from white oppression and exploitation.[3] However, as this thesis suggests, Carmichael's grassroots-oriented vision of Black Power – as a force for transformative political change and social and economic justice – was only one of many. Black Power was a flexible and ambiguous concept and the goals it broadly encompassed – black political, economic, and cultural empowerment – had wide appeal among African Americans. Defining no single path for achieving those goals, Black Power was open to interpretation. In the tumultuous, highly charged urban political landscapes of mid-1960s America, Black Power's meaning was constantly being contested, and was always evolving and being adapted to suit different needs and contexts. As this thesis has argued, mainstream white politicians, institutions and organizations played a vital yet understudied role in that process.

At the centre of white engagement with Black Power ideology – and white efforts to define the scope and character of black progress and socio-economic change more broadly – lay the tool of

[1] Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 215. As Carson explains, the vision of Black Power that SNCC and Carmichael articulated reflected the organization's increasingly critical analysis of mainstream American society and politics.
[2] Lerone Bennett Jr., 'Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power', *Ebony*, September 1966, p.26-27.
[3] Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p.40–41.

public policy. It was through public policies, and the battles to define them, that mainstream whites sought to both cultivate, and appeal to, an alternative, more middle-class interest oriented and conservative interpretation of Black Power than that articulated by racial agitators such as Carmichael. The developmental arc and longer term impact of these efforts has been mapped through close analysis of a number of public policies, including: the Johnson administration's War on Poverty; Robert Kennedy's CDC programme; Richard Nixon's Black Capitalism initiatives; and local education reforms in all three cities. Exploring how black community activists in New York, Los Angeles, and Atlanta used public policies, how they fought to define their meaning and potential for effecting change, and how they impacted upon the communities they targeted, has illuminated several significant themes.

First, it has revealed more fully the impact and longer term significance of the War on Poverty. As the first major federal policy since the New Deal explicitly intended to deal with economic inequality, the full extent of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty, I argue, is yet to be wholly reflected in the current historiography. As existing scholarship does recognize, by legitimizing inner-city poor communities battles for greater self-determination, economic empowerment, and urban improvement – and boosting them with federal resources – the War on Poverty had a catalyzing effect on black community activism.[4] As a driver of racial identity politics and nationalist organizing in black and other minority communities, the War on Poverty became an important part of the soil from which Black Power emerged in cities such as New York and Los Angeles. As this study's close analysis of black community organizations such as CAEHT and WLCAC, as well as of the grassroots movements for community control in New York and Los Angeles, makes clear, the War on Poverty was an important site of Black Power's development at the local level as it merged with, and helped to transform, existing black activism and protest.

Beyond the black community, the War on Poverty's impact was even more significant. Helping to expand grassroots movement for social and economic justice, and triggering an

[4] See, for example: Gordon K. Mantler, *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition and the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2013); Robert Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East L.A.* (Norman, OA.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); William S. Clayson, *Freedom Is Not Enough the War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Kenneth S. Jolly, *Black Liberation in the Midwest: the Struggle in St. Louis, Missouri, 1964-1970* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Lisa Gayle Hazirjian, 'Combating NEED: Urban Conflict and the Transformations of the War on Poverty and the African American Freedom Struggle in Rocky Mount, North Carolina' *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 34, No. 4, (May 2008) pp. 639-664; Guian A McKee, *The problem of jobs: liberalism, race, and deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The politics of public housing: Black women's struggles against urban inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). The most important recent publication which explore these themes is a rich edited collection of local case studies in: *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980* ed. by Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

expansion of the nation's welfare rolls, the War on Poverty also played a vital part in stimulating broader political debates and developments that reshaped the nation's political landscape. The debates, welfare backlash politics, and white racial resentment that the War on Poverty generated played a critical role in inspiring alternative political solutions to dealing with economic inequality and meeting the challenge of Black Power which shared its innate class and gender biases. It is only by following the trajectory of the War on Poverty's impact, and excavating its longer term consequences that the full extent of its significance for U.S. politics and the course of future reform is revealed. By outlining the antipoverty programme's impact on future landscapes of reform from which white political engagement with Black Power emerged, this study sheds light on a previously overlooked aspect of the War on Poverty's history.

Second, this thesis underscores the flexibility of Black Power by exploring how and why mainstream white politicians and institutions sought to negotiate its meaning, as well as how black communities themselves interpreted and adapted Black Power ideology to suit their needs. Inspired by the emergence of Black Power radicalism, and the limitations (and the gendered and class politics) of the War on Poverty, Robert Kennedy and Richard Nixon established policies intended to coopt and modify Black Power that were designed to appeal to the more conservative strands of Black Power ideology.[5] Seeking to cultivate a mainstream, middle-class interest oriented brand of Black Power politics that aimed to reinforce the nation's existing political and social order, these public policies were adapted to the political sensibilities of an increasingly conservative white voting public. White mainstream engagement with Black Power rested on the fact that many African Americans simply did not share the political worldview that Carmichael and other Black Power, and social and economic justice advocates, articulated. Indeed, rather than questioning middle-class values and the institutions of American society, many African Americans endorsed them. Instead of radical, transformative political change, what many blacks wanted was a greater chance to participate in American life as it was; a chance to realize the American Dream.[6] The policy initiatives advanced by Kennedy and Nixon were intended to make that chance a reality.

[5] On Kennedy's CDC programme, see: Edward R. Schmitt, *President of the Other America: Robert Kennedy and the Politics of Poverty* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010) pp.123-128. For a discussion of Nixon's Black Capitalist initiatives, see: Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power and the Making of American Politics*, pp.196-231; Devin Fergus, 'Black Power, Soft Power: Floyd McKissick, Soul City, and the Death of Moderate Black Republicanism', *Journal of Policy History*, 22 (2010), pp.148–192; Dean J. Kotlowski, *Nixon's Civil Rights: Politics, Principle and Policy* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2001); Robert E. Weems & Lewis Randolph, 'The National Response to Richard M. Nixon's Black Capitalism Initiative: The Success of Domestic Détente' *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, (Sept., 2001) pp.66-83.

[6] For a perspective on this in the postwar period, see: Andrew Weise, '"The House I Live In": Race, Class, and African American Suburban Dreams in the Postwar United States' in *African American Urban History Since World War II* ed. by Kevin Kusmer and Joe Trotter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) pp.160-178.

Aiming to channel African American energy through business, economic development, and urban regeneration programmes, they aimed to grow the black middle-class, and draw inner-city communities away from protest, radical and redistributive politics, and violent extremism. In the process they offered a path for black empowerment intended to endorse and strengthen, rather than challenge, the status quo. Black Power and radical politics did not have to go hand in hand. Exploring how black communities used these policies illuminates how the negotiation of Black Power, and the fight for black advancement in general, unfolded at the local level. Close examination of organizations such as Restoration, Operation Bootstrap, and Harlem Commonwealth Council reveals the different local institutional forms and legacies of the civil rights-Black Power era, some of which survive today and remain a relatively neglected aspect of the history of Black Power. Analysing these organizations, along with the grassroots education activism in all three cities, once more underlines the flexibility and adaptability of Black Power ideology and reveals how it translated into the lives and activism of ordinary African Americans at the local level. Furthermore, in the process of investigating the evolution of African American community activism the lines between the civil rights and Black Power phases of the black freedom struggle become blurred. The relationship between the two becomes further complicated as the roots, contours, and differing trajectories of African Americans' fight against racial discrimination at the local level are revealed.

Third, this study highlights the enduring and definitive power of mainstream whites to dictate the course and character of black progress during the Black Power era. White efforts – through public policy, political power structures and institutions, and professional and community organizations – to defend the racial and socio-economic order and maintain white privilege were prevalent, powerful, and often decisive. The opposition of established authorities to the redistribution of political and economic power was made clear by their efforts to stymie the War on Poverty's potential for mobilizing and empowering poor communities. The defeat of grassroots education activists in all three cities further underscores how whites successfully resisted African Americans' demands for empowerment through transformative and redistributive political change. In the case of Atlanta, the course of educational reform revealed how mutual class interest could be exploited, and racial change channelled, through solutions that bolstered or at best modified the existing socio-economic and political order rather than challenged it. This trend became especially clear in Los Angeles and Atlanta under black political leadership during the 1970s.

Speaking at the Congressional Black Caucus annual dinner in October 1974, Maynard Jackson admonished the $100-a-plate audience that black political power had to serve the broader

cause of black liberation. It had to work, he argued, in the interests of all African Americans. Black elected officials must not, he pleaded, forget about their 'Brothers and Sisters who are still locked in the dungeons of deprivation.' It was no good if black political leadership helped only to 'open up a handful of $20,000 a year jobs in business and government. The fight is for freedom.'[7] However, the direction of city policy in Los Angeles under Tom Bradley, and in Atlanta under Maynard Jackson, followed the very pattern Jackson had criticized, though in different ways. Their respective approaches to city government stemmed from the differences in their ideas about how best to serve the interests of their African American constituents, and their cities at large. Whereas they both agreed on increasing opportunity for black businesses and middle-class professionals, they differed on how to tackle black poverty. Jackson fought to realign city resources toward Atlanta's poor black neighbourhoods – a fight he eventually abandoned in the face of white resistance and pressure. Bradley, on the other hand, was a standard bearer for mainstream, pro-business approaches to solving inequality that were fundamentally linked to pro-black middle-class policies, and which had been forged in the negotiation of Black Power by dominant white interests set on dictating the direction of socio-economic change. The progress made by blacks in both cities during the 1970s underlines the decisive role played by whites in limiting political opportunities for reorienting city policy toward addressing the needs of disadvantaged blacks, and in widening economic opportunity for middle-class and elite blacks. As this thesis argues, perhaps the most significant factor in governing the direction of black politics and the pace and character of racial change during this period was the ways in which mainstream white politicians, institutions, and organizations were able to successfully defend and assert their interests in the face of African Americans' efforts to win greater political and economic power.

This leads us to the final and broader overall theme: the implications of the negotiation of Black Power through public policy – along with white resistance to socio-economic and political change more broadly – on African American society in the longer term. In sum, the efforts of mainstream whites to influence the direction and scope of racial and socio-economic change and black empowerment were highly successful. The policies established by Kennedy and Nixon represented an important moment in 1960s public policy which cemented middle-class advantage further into the federal government's approach to tackling economic inequality. Seeking to reconfigure existing political solutions for tackling economic and racial inequality, these policies represented a pan-partisan political project to coopt and nurture Black Power which was tailored to the on-going conservative realignment. As such, they mark an important stage of the retreat from

[7] Atlanta, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture, Dorothy Lee Bolden Papers, Series IV, Box 1633, Folder 181, John Lewis Jr., '4 Widows Cited by Caucus, 3,000 Hear Mayor Jackson' *The Baltimore Afro-American*, October 5, 1974, p.1.

existing liberal social policy that would later accelerate under President Reagan during the 1980s and beyond. The potential of these policies to advance the interests of the black middle-class were magnified under black political leadership in both Los Angeles and Atlanta.

While working-class and poor blacks found themselves increasingly marginalized from the benefits of city politics under black municipal leadership, the black middle-class and elite, in contrast, enjoyed considerable opportunity for political and economic empowerment and made significant progress. One of the primary reasons for this was the development, and deeper entrenchment in federal policy, of Kennedy and Nixon's pro-business and economic development policies. At a time when advocates of redistributive social and economic justice politics were increasingly marginalized in national and local politics, public policy initiatives that had been forged in the mission to modify and coopt the Black Power impulse by boosting black middle-class development constituted the most viable avenue for advancing the interests of local African Americans available to both Bradley and Jackson. As the black middle-class and elite enjoyed unprecedented levels of prosperity, poor and working-class communities endured precipitous decline. While the deepening of intra-racial inequality under black city leadership cannot be solely attributed to those public policies, they nevertheless played an important part in the process. As such, I argue, they provide a perspective on Black Power and its relationship to mainstream politics that has been overlooked by much of the existing historiography of the period.[8]

Overall, therefore, this thesis incorporates the story of black middle-class success into our understanding of Black Power's impact upon American society and politics. In the process, it challenges normative ideas about the relationship between middle-class success and Black Power (as it is popularly understood, i.e. as a radical and militant ideology). As the black middle-class continued to make progress during the mid-to-late 1960s through the 1970s – through the Black Power era – the apparent tension between the two was perfectly captured by African American *Chicago Tribune* journalist Leanita McClain. In her article entitled 'The Middle-Class Black's Burden', which appeared in *Newsweek* in October 1980 and catapulted her to national prominence, McClain explained:

> I am a member of the black middle-class who has had enough of being patted on my head by white hands and slapped in my face by black hands for my success. Here's a discovery that too many people will find startling: when given opportunities at white collar pencil

[8] Black Power historiography has changed a great deal over the last decade and a half and has undermined the shallow and largely negative stereotypes popularly associated with it. For some of the best of this scholarship, see: Introduction, footnotes 12, 19, and 20. Despite these recent advances, the relationship between mainstream white politicians and institutions and Black Power remains relatively neglected within the field of study.

> pushing, blacks want the same things from life that everyone else does. These include the proverbial dream house, two cars, an above average school and a vacation for the kids at Disneyland. We may, in fact, want these things more than other Americans because most of us have been denied them so long. Meanwhile the folks we left behind in the 'old country', commonly called the ghetto, and the militants we left behind in their antiquated ideology can't berate the black middle-class enough for "forgetting where we came from." We have forsaken the revolution we are told, we have sold out. We are Oreos, they say, black on the outside, white within. The truth is we have not forgotten; we would not dare. We are simply fighting on different fronts… [9]

This notion – that black middle-class success and Black Power were somehow in conflict – is at issue here. Indeed, rather than viewing black middle-class success as a betrayal of 'the revolution', this thesis reveals the ways in which they were in fact related. It was precisely because of the emergence of radical Black Power – and its advocacy of the politics of 'revolution' – that mainstream white politicians, institutions and organizations sought to engage with Black Power through a number of the public policies examined in this thesis. At the core of that engagement with Black Power was an appeal to the sentiment among African Americans that McClain had expressed so clearly: the desire to be part of the American mainstream, to share in the American Dream and enjoy the comforts and opportunity of middle-class life.

In this sense, McClain's suggestion that the black middle-class was 'fighting' on a 'different front' from those committed to the 'revolution', is especially apt. Indeed, this thesis can be thought of as an exploration of how mainstream whites participated in the battles to negotiate Black Power's meaning and to define the scope of racial progress, on those different fronts – in support on one and in opposition on the other. Their success on both fronts underlines the extent to which African Americans' progress toward two of the main goals that Black Power encompassed – political and economic empowerment – was shaped most powerfully by white interests. Ultimately, therefore, the most decisive force in the negotiation of Black Power was white power.

[9] Conservative Party of New York State Records, 1962-2004, Series 7, Box 3, Folder 87, Leanita McClain 'The Middle-Class Black's Burden', *Newsweek* (n.d. October 1980). For more on the literary career of Leanita McClain, see: Richard Guzman, *Black writing from Chicago: in the world, not of it?* (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 2006) pp.250-259; Leanita McClain and Clarence Page, *A Foot in Each Word: Essay and Articles* (Evaston: Northwestern University Press, 1986).

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