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Forgetting How to Hate: The Evolution of White Responses to Integration in Chicago, 1946-1987

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

FORGETTING HOW TO HATE:
THE EVOLUTION OF WHITE RESPONSES TO INTEGRATION IN
CHICAGO, 1946-1987

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
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PROGRAM IN HISTORY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Mary Jane Farrell recognized the ominous signs that appeared two blocks away from her brick bungalow home in Gage Park. In the summer of 1986, the first black families crossed Western Avenue—the *de facto* dividing line between her working-class, white-ethnic, residential neighborhood on the Southwest Side of Chicago and the adjacent African-American “Black Belt.” Trouble began immediately. Greedy realtors used the prospect of racial change to harass her frightened neighbors into selling their homes at a loss. Unidentified hooligans lobbed firebombs at the new black families who bought them above market value.¹

None of this was new to Farrell. Similar dramas had unfolded across numerous neighborhoods on Chicago’s South and West Sides since the end of World War II, a history Farrell understood all too well. Both the panic peddling and the violence stirred up painful memories within Farrell. A forty-four-year-old Irish Catholic mother of thirteen children and the wife of a firefighter, similar patterns of demographic transition forced her family to move out of their former neighborhoods. Yet Farrell lamented the forfeiture of old friendships and communities even more than the equity in her previous homes. Leaving West Englewood stung the most. In West Englewood, she remembered how her kindly Italian neighbors babysat her children and taught her new recipes. These close bonds dissolved once the first black family

¹ At the start of World War I, The Black Belt boundaries were 22nd Street to the North, 31st Street to the South, stretching only several blocks east and west of State Street. See Wallace Best, “Black Belt,” in *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, eds. Janice Reiff et.al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), accessed July 31, 2012, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/140.html>. The Black Belt extended to the lake and as far South as 51st street by the start of World War II.

moved onto their old block on Honroe Avenue. Virtually overnight, most of her Italian friends left. Farrell tried in vain to organize the diminishing number of white residents, arguing that “if we don’t move, we get integration. If we all move, it’s resegregation.”²

The Farrells were among the last white holdouts in West Englewood. They tried to befriend and welcome their new black neighbors. They got along well with the middle-class black families who first arrived, but the situation deteriorated when impoverished African Americans joined them. At that point, even the black families with the money to do so left West Englewood. The poorer ones who replaced them intimidated her family. Black youth attacked and insulted her kids as they walked to the parish school of St. Justin the Martyr. They threw rocks at her children from the alley whenever they tried to play in their own backyard. The Farrells finally gave up on West Englewood when her daughter, then in the first grade, suffered a concussion after a black student smashed her head against a coat rack and mocked her as a “white honky.” Similar to other neighborhoods which underwent rapid racial change, West Englewood soon suffered from a lack of resources, a diminished commercial base, abandoned homes, and higher crime.³

Gage Park now faced a similar threat, but Farrell kept the same resoluteness she displayed in West Englewood a decade earlier. She vowed to prevent her current home from meeting a similar fate to her earlier abodes. Unlike in West Englewood, she received help. Gage Park had a strong community organization looking for people with her level of fortitude. She became a member of the Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation (SPNF), an alliance of

² Tom McNamee, “The Struggle Along Gage Park’s Color Line,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 7, 1986.

³ Ibid.

seven Southwest Side Catholic parishes and one neighborhood association, to combat abusive real estate practices and economic disinvestment. Farrell and other members of the federation pledged to give families who wanted to stay on the Southwest Side the means to do just that. They loudly broadcasted their struggle to the rest of the city and the nation when they famously opposed Chicago's first African-American mayor, Harold Washington, with a "white ethnic agenda" meant to keep the city responsive to their demands for stable neighborhoods. Yet to Farrell, this did not mean prohibiting racial minorities from moving to Gage Park. Despite what she experienced in West Englewood and other South Side neighborhoods, she still believed in racial integration; provided her neighborhood remained prosperous and safe. As she explained to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, "As soon as white people realize they're gonna have to live in integrated neighborhoods if they want to live in Chicago, the better off they'll be...[but] we're not gonna be the last ones. No way will that happen again."⁴

Farrell's personal history reflected a larger question no one in Chicago satisfactorily answered: could predominantly working-class, lower middle-income white ethnic neighborhoods integrate without facing spasms of violence and economic decline? Southwest Side residents knew of few affirmative examples. The neighborhoods which successfully mixed together people of different races in Chicago, such as Hyde Park, possessed wealthier populations, powerful anchor institutions which commanded substantial resources from the government, or both. This poor track record did not deter the SPNF from working to stabilize Southwest Side neighborhoods against white flight. Following the organizing guidelines elucidated by Saul Alinsky, the federation pestered real estate firms, financial institutions, and politicians through

⁴ Ibid.

persistent picketing and protests. These aggressive tactics, however, led some civil rights organizations, the media, and liberal Southwest Side residents to categorize its goal for neighborhood stability as a racist code for segregation.⁵

This reputation came with the turf the federation and similar organizations on the Southwest Side represented. Since the end of World War II, the Southwest Side served as a frequent arena for those who wished to advance or restrict civil rights in Chicago. The Airport Homes riot of 1946 in the West Lawn neighborhood foreshadowed the difficulty and outright failure of integrated public housing. Numerous other white South Side neighborhoods copied the patriarchal violence Southwest Siders exhibited at the Airport Homes in their own bids to keep African-Americans out of their neighborhoods throughout the remainder of the 1940s and 1950s. Twenty years later, the Chicago Freedom Movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. exposed the racial steering practices of Southwest Side real estate firms and led a march calling for fair housing laws through the area's most prominent civic space, Marquette Park. King received a brick in the head for his efforts from an angry white mob numbering in the thousands. The Southwest Side's stigma only grew in the years to come. In 1971, a local Catholic priest broke with the church and successfully ran for alderman on a segregationist platform. That same year, a

⁵ The "Alinsky model" refers to the pioneering organizing techniques and philosophy of Saul Alinsky. Alinsky believed that economically disadvantaged (and therefore disempowered) communities could make up for what they lacked in money with their physical numbers. This meant unifying typically disparate community bodies—such as churches, block clubs, businesses or unions—into a larger "umbrella" organization by appealing their self-interest and identifying common problems to solve. The organization would then utilize its numbers to protest, picket, and agitate political or economic elites into giving them what they wanted. To create the umbrella organization, however, the community must first hire an outside, professionally-trained organizer (at first Alinsky himself; later on students of his Industrial Areas Foundation) to outline strategy and identify "indigenous leaders" from the neighborhood. After a few years, these identified leaders would run the organization and the hired organizer would leave. Alinsky first demonstrated the viability of this model in Chicago's most infamous meatpacking neighborhood, Back of the Yards, in 1939. The organization he helped create with a local park district supervisor, Joseph Meegan, the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council, still exists today. See Sanford Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky—His Life and Legacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), xiii-xvi; 47-76.

neo-Nazi party made a small storefront building located two blocks away from Marquette Park its headquarters and staged several destructive rallies during the next decade. One *Chicago Tribune* reporter remarked in 1976 that to Southwest Siders, “the word ‘nigger’ is spoken as if it is the standard appellation from Webster’s” to describe African Americans.⁶

The vicious reception given to King, so palpably immortalized in popular historical documentaries such as *Eyes on the Prize* (1987-1990), and the visibility of the racist figures who followed the open housing march through Marquette Park dominates the historical memory of the Southwest Side. Yet a closer examination of what happened in the decades before and after in 1966 demonstrates that attitudes toward integration on the Southwest Side were not universally hostile and changed over time. Hatred no longer monopolized white responses to racial integration when Mary Jane Farrell became concerned about the fire bombings near her home in 1986. I argue that the emergence of grassroots organizations sympathetic to the civil rights movement – and in some cases led by civil rights veterans – during the 1960s encouraged Southwest Side residents to tolerate racial integration. They allowed for the possibility of a Southwest Side which was not racially homogenous and challenged an existing paradigm of violent resistance to African Americans which previously flourished in white working-class neighborhoods across the urban North. Although violence and racist mindsets never completely ceased, by the 1970s most residents turned to peaceful methods for addressing integration, whether for or against. They used Alinsky-style community organizations, block clubs, parent-teacher associations, and civic associations as a vehicle for the transformations they desired or wished to prevent.

⁶ Jeff Lyon, “In Marquette Park, No One’s Best Friend is Black,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 8, 1976.

The surge in civic participation, especially after 1966, reflected the powerlessness Southwest Side residents felt against the myriad of political and economic forces which underwrote the blockbusting, redlining, and mob violence that jeopardized the social fabric of their communities. Yet although many agreed upon the need for action, no single organization fully united concerned residents under one banner. Instead, these organizations frequently fought with each other over ideological, strategic, and personal disagreements. Their positions on integration existed on a spectrum. Racially conservative civic associations hoped to keep African Americans out of the Southwest Side by every possible legal (and in some cases illegal) means, and they viewed professional community organizations as an unwelcome intrusion orchestrated by civil rights groups or liberal “social engineers.” The parish federation staked out a less committed position on race, speaking out in favor of neither integration nor segregation. They instead emphasized solutions to the problems faced by existing white ethnic homeowners. On the other hand, their predecessor and rival, the Southwest Community Congress (SCC), claimed a similar Alinsky heritage but overtly advocated for racial integration. These divisions also explain how some problems, such as the stubborn persistence of racial violence into the late 1980s, remained beyond the ability of any one group to resolve. Extremist groups such as the neo-Nazis often directly encouraged young, male youth to ignore peaceful channels of social activism in favor of rioting and vandalism against any African Americans who tried moving into the Southwest Side.

Grassroots organizing enabled residents to tackle fears they had about their loss of status in an evolving metropolitan landscape. Southwest Side residents believed they occupied a unique but precarious space, the “peripheral neighborhood,” which was physically situated between the

booming suburbs and Chicago's economic heart, the Loop. They argued that their peripheral status contributed to a broader political, social, and economic marginalization. Southwest Side residents accused the city's most prominent politicians of caring more about the prestige of the Loop than their modest residential neighborhoods. They also noted how the nearby suburbs which siphoned away Southwest Side families received new infrastructure, schools, and investment often denied to their communities. They reasoned that this neglect explained why both civil rights groups and neo-Nazi extremists from outside the Southwest Side used local parks to pursue divergent agendas without the consent of those who lived there. Consequently, Southwest Siders felt overlooked, undervalued, and written off. Community organizing combatted this inattention, using agitation to make the concerns of the periphery central to all in Chicago.

Organizations such as the SCC and SPNF also allowed white residents on the Southwest Side to address racial integration in a manner compliant with the new emerging national discourse on race. The successes of the civil rights movement in the South, as well as the sympathetic media coverage offered to activists in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and other progressive groups by the press, marked violence as immoral and unjust. Southwest Side residents quickly became cognizant of how the rest of the nation envisioned them. Both the SCC and SPNF contested accusations that every person who lived on the Southwest Side agreed with the Nazis or other extremists. These organizations instead blamed realtors, politicians, and bankers—not African Americans—for the dangers their neighborhoods tackled. Yet their rejection of the violent resistance to integration which defined Chicago's early postwar history did not only stem from external pressure. Many of the founders and early leaders of the SCC and SPNF,

or earlier forerunners such as the South Lynne Community Council (SLCC) and Southwest Committee on Peaceful Equality (SCOPE), genuinely supported the civil rights movement. Some even participated in the Chicago Freedom Movement through the SCLC or Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) before starting their organizing work on the Southwest Side.⁷

The evolution of the civil rights movement during the late 1960s also encouraged the leaders of Southwest Side community organizations to work in white working-class neighborhoods such as Gage Park. The growing influence of black nationalism and black power discouraged cross-racial membership in civil rights groups in favor of a separatism which stressed self-reliance.⁸ Consequently, white activists who still wished to fight racism were encouraged to do so in their “own” communities. The fact that many did so through the framework of Alinsky-style community organizing has been ignored or unexamined by chronicles of the civil rights movement. Alinsky doubted the ability of his organizations to improve race relations or check the debilitating progression of white flight. After all, Alinsky stressed uniting people on the basis of their self-interest and shared problems, and he deemed this practical emphasis incongruent with the idealism which characterized civil rights activism in the South and in Chicago. Prior efforts by Alinsky and his lieutenant organizers to build a lasting

⁷ Rodger Streitmatter, Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff point out the press played a profound role in building sympathy for the civil rights movement, and media coverage of the Chicago Freedom Movement cast white ethnics on the Southwest Side into roles once reserved for the likes of Bull Connor. See Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 395-407; Rodger Streitmatter, *Mightier Than the Sword: How the News Media Have Shaped American History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press), 189-191; Andrew Wiese, “Neighborhood Diversity: Social Change, Ambiguity, and Fair Housing,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 17 (June 1995): 114; Reynolds Farley and William Frey, “Changes in Segregation of Whites from Blacks during the 1980s,” *American Sociological Review* 59 (Feb. 1994): 23-45.

⁸ Stanley K. Arnold, “Building the Beloved Community: Philadelphia’s Interracial Civil Rights Organizations and Race Relations, 1930-1970” (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1999), iii-xx; Matthew J. Countryman, “Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia, 1940-1971” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1998), iv-15.

interracial community organization in Chicago proved futile. The split of the civil rights movement along racial lines, however, made Alinsky-style organizing compatible with the goals of the white activists who now advanced the cause by working in the white ethnic neighborhoods the Southwest Side. Nonetheless, the tension between pragmatism and idealism never fully ceased. The SCC and SPNF split over ideological differences, with the former more enthusiastic about racial integration and the latter dismissing such an attitude as unrealistic and counterproductive to resolving their neighborhood's immediate concerns.⁹

Changes in the Roman Catholic Church also facilitated white working-class community organizing on the Southwest Side. Historians such as John McGreevy, Eileen McMahon, and Gerald Gamm argue that Catholics traditionally demarcated their social spaces by tying the notion of residency to religious identity. The boundaries of a parish marked where one neighborhood ended and another began. The tendency of a parish to cater to one specific ethnic group, especially before World War II, provided incentive for Italians, Irish, Lithuanians, Poles, and other European immigrants to purchase their homes within walking distance of their parish church. The need to maintain close proximity to the parish nurtured a fierce territoriality that accounted for the dogged resistance to racial integration of many white ethnic communities.¹⁰

⁹ Horwitt, 317-319; 468-470; Steve Bogira, "Racial Integration is Possible in Chicago," *Chicago Reader*, November 22, 2012; Luke Bretherton argues that while community organizations share a similar populist quality with the civil rights movement, it also possessed authoritarian qualities which could be used to promote a more "anti-political," conservative agenda. See Bretherton, "The Political Populism of Saul Alinsky and Broad-Based Organizing," *The Good Society* Vol 21. No. 2 (2012): 261-278.

¹⁰ John McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1-6; 207-248; Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholic Stayed* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1-10; 175-260; Eileen McMahon, *What Parish Are You From? A Chicago Irish Community and Race Relations* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1995), 1-5; 27-65; Wendell Pritchett (*Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1-8; Louis Rosen, *The South Side: The Racial Transformation of an American Neighborhood* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998); Timothy Neary, *Crossing*

Following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), however, church leaders charged lay Catholics to form new groups which addressed social issues relevant to the faith, such as racism. Many Southwest Side Catholics participated in a community organization to answer the church's call for the advancement of racial justice. Still, not every parishioner supported the community organization their church belonged to; many resented their church's involvement in neighborhood affairs entirely. Segregationist civic associations and block clubs buttressed their aims with an anti-clerical stance. They decried the church's endorsement of racial integration and civil rights as inappropriate and demanded that their priests disengage from social activism. They came to see their own pastors as foreign operatives, and they justified their staunch opposition to Alinsky organizations on the grounds that they represented the integrationist prerogatives of the church over those of the homeowner.¹¹

The propagation of civic activism on the Southwest Side thus simultaneously reaffirmed and rejected the parish as a source of communal identity. The members of the SPNF saw the parish as central to their lives, but the nature of their organization as a multi-church alliance meant that they also identified with an entity larger than a single church. Catholic churches on

Parish Boundaries: Race, Sports, and Catholic Youth in Chicago, 1914-1954 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). Daniel Kay Merkwowitz argues that while Jews often became the most 'suburbanized' of all white ethnic groups, they also often remained the last white presence in neighborhoods which became African-American as storeowners or landlords. See Merkwowitz, "The Segregating City: Philadelphia's Jews in the Urban Crisis," Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2010, 1-14. Lila Corwin Berman makes a similar argument to Merkwowitz, noting that while most Jews moved to the suburbs, they retained a commitment to urban progressivism. See Berwin, *Metropolitan Jews: Politics, Race, and Religion in Postwar Detroit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). Kevin Schultz argues that religious distinctions amidst Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish whites in the United States became less pronounced after World War II as the country extolled its "pluralist creed in religion" and suburbanization promoted a more middle-class, homogenized way of life. This "pluralist creed," however, failed to materialize in racial terms. See Kevin Schultz, *Trifith America: How Catholics and Jews Held America to Its Postwar Promise* (New York: Oxford, 2013).

¹¹ Stacie Taranto, *Kitchen Table Politics: Conservative Women and Family Values in New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 12; 36; McGreevy, 151-152.

the Southwest Side also provided these community organizations crucial funding and a large pool of potential leaders from the clergy and laity. Given the overwhelming numbers of Catholics compared to Protestants and Jews on the Southwest Side, any organization which lacked the support of local parishes suffered from a diminished reach, if not outright irrelevance.

The blossoming of organizing on the Southwest Side also inspired white working-class women to seek their own avenues for empowerment. Many leaders in the Southwest Community Congress also belonged to the Southwest Side branch of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Through the YWCA and SCC, they focused on improving the living conditions of women and children as a way to stabilize their neighborhoods and offered badly needed health and childcare services. Their involvement in the YWCA also provided them a forum to comprehend another major change reverberating throughout American society, the women's rights movement. Although few identified as feminists, viewing bell-weather issues such as birth control as incompatible with their Catholicism, they kept themselves informed about the movement through sponsored workshops, forums, and panels. They found certain elements of the feminist movement appealing, such as the Equal Rights Amendment, and gave consciousness raising a utilitarian edge by bringing women together in programs that offered vocational skills training.

This study of the Southwest Side builds upon the historiography of the postwar urban crisis, a phenomenon broadly defined as the decay of Northern urban centers through white flight, racial turmoil, economic disinvestment, and deindustrialization. The starting point for this corpus of scholarship is historian Arnold Hirsch's influential *Making the Second Ghetto* (1980). Hirsch argues that Chicago's segregationist housing pattern resulted from efforts by government,

business, and white ethnic homeowners to keep the city's increasing African-American population confined to a narrow "Black Belt." While politicians and businesses proposed economic redevelopment plans to contain the ghetto, white ethnics relied upon communal violence and intimidation. Hirsch accounts for two factors behind their brutality: first, as people only one or two generations removed from immigration, white ethnics viewed living in racially homogenous neighborhoods as essential to proving they had become fully American; second, the financial realities of working-class life meant that home ownership required a significant investment. Fears that integration harmed their property values exacerbated their racial intolerance.¹²

Historian Thomas Sugrue posits long-term structural change in the industrial economy as the chief culprit in fostering racial antagonism. Sugrue argues that Hirsch's analysis of the "material" conditions of the white working class warranted a deeper review, and that the obsession over home ownership in Northern cities derived from the continual erosion of jobs from 1940 to 1970. Focusing on Detroit, Sugrue notes that automakers eliminated jobs in the city as a way to circumvent the concentrated power of organized labor—just after hundreds of African Americans moved to the city in pursuit of factory work during World War II. The shrinking job pool worsened long-standing racial tensions. Many black residents lost economic mobility as entry-level factory jobs disappeared, and the financial security of white families became

¹² Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 171-212. Other studies of racial formation and ethnic identity point out that the growing sense of whiteness among America's immigrants stretched across generations and hardly constituted a postwar phenomenon. See John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 113-206; David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 57-92; Thomas Gugilelmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 129-171.

increasingly dependent upon home values when the loss of the better-paying positions soon followed. Like Hirsch, Sugrue asserts that the postwar urban economy predisposed many white neighborhoods to violently resist residential integration.¹³

Together, Hirsch and Sugrue provide the template for explaining the racial violence that plagued cities during the 1940s and 1950s. White ethnics, jealously guarding their home ownership in racially homogenous neighborhoods as a right and to preserve their monetary commitment, resorted to “massive resistance” against any effort to integrate their neighborhoods. Both identify several characteristics of “massive resistance”: verbal and physical harassment of black persons in private and public; vandalism; riots in public spaces; and a vigilante mindset to ward off unwelcome racial outsiders. This template remains the bedrock for the most scholarly evaluations of race, space, and housing in the Urban North.¹⁴

¹³ Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3-14. Benjamin Bowser elaborated a similar argument a decade earlier, arguing that white racism made economic sense in a zero-sum capitalist system. See Bowser, “Race Relations in the 1980s: The Case of the United States,” *Journal of Black Studies* Vol 15. No. 3 (March 1985): 307-324.

¹⁴ There have been some notable additions to this interpretation since 2005. Beryl Satter's observation that the drama of blockbusting had tripartite roles based on religious identity: white ethnic Catholics provided the homes and the stiffest resistance, Jews served as the contract sellers, and Protestants ran the banks. See Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: How the Struggle Over Race and Real Estate Transformed Chicago and Urban America* (New York: Picador, 2010), 11-12. Amanda Seligman's argument that white ethnic neighborhoods efforts to save their neighborhoods—including violent resistance—stemmed from a lack of representation and power vis-a-vis the Daley machine and city hall. See Amanda Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1-12. Rachel Woldoff offers a similar claim, stating that flight provided white urbanites with the means a catch-all solution to problems which arose in integrating neighborhoods and decaying urban cores. See Woldoff, *White Flight/Black Flight: The Dynamics of Racial Change in an American Neighborhood* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011). Andrew Diamond maintains that male youth culture, both black and white, served as the source of virtually all violent interracial conflict in Chicago from 1919 to 1968. See Andrew Diamond, *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908-1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 1-16. Jordan Stanger-Ross provides a recent corrective to this model in his study of an Italian neighborhood in South Philadelphia. While Stanger-Ross affirms the territorial nature of white neighborhoods in postwar America, he argues that their inhabitants did not easily forsake their ethnic identity in favor of assimilation. Instead, ethnicity remained an important way to establish neighborhood boundaries, yet lacked universality, due to the differing political, economic, and social realities of a city (e.g. how Italians maintained their ethnicity in Philadelphia differed from their counterparts in Toronto). See

These explanations, however, fail to fully address more complicated and diverse white responses to racial transition and integration evolved after the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Since Sugrue and Hirsch point to economics as a dominant causal factor for white ethnic violence, the logic of this template dictates that any in-depth study of this later period merely accounts for the acute symptoms, not the motor force, of urban racial turbulence. Yet while Chicago's economy (as well as the economies of many other Northern cities) declined throughout the 1970s, the new community organizations on the Southwest Side discarded older tropes of racial conduct in favor of non-violence. While property values retained importance to white ethnic Chicagoans on the Southwest Side throughout the 1970s, the aftermath of the King march proved that any efforts to "stabilize" the neighborhood accepted the tenets of the civil rights movement. Although some conservative figures on the Southwest Side still refused to do so and even converted their obstinacy into political gain, such stands proved fleeting as civic associations and their champions became marginalized at the expense of professional community organizations during the 1970s.

The chronological and topical scopes set by Sugrue and Hirsch also overlook how feminism affected white working-class women in racially contested neighborhoods. This vacuum remains even in the most recent scholarship. A notable exception is historian Amanda Seligman, who showcases women's involvement in community organizations on the West Side of Chicago during the 1960s. Seligman argues that at the start of the decade, women never held any leadership positions a man wanted, and most female officers remained recording or

Jordan Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian: Urban Change and Ethnic Life in Postwar Toronto and Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 1-8.

corresponding secretaries. Over the course of the 1960s, this changed; women became presidents and vice-presidencies, and one, Gail Cincotta, achieved national prominence. Unfortunately, Seligman does not explain the mechanisms of this shift in community leadership, a problem this dissertation addresses by exploring the relationship activist women on the Southwest Side had to the rejuvenated feminist movement which paralleled the racial and housing crises in their neighborhoods. Through the YWCA and SCC, these women learned of the movement and carefully weighed its merits, even if they refused to directly identify it. On their own terms, however, they exercised some of its ideals to provide tangible benefits for all women on the Southwest Side.¹⁵

The way these blue-collar women approached feminism questions the standing belief that the movement was the exclusive domain of middle-class or upper-class, college-educated white women. This perception stems from the high visibility of younger, radical groups, whose confrontational tactics garnered a majority of the media attention during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The earliest attempts to historicize the movement, most notably historian Sara Evans' semi-autobiographical *Personal Politics*, cemented the place of that demographic at the center of women's liberation. Recent work by writer Gail Collins affirms this point of view by emphasizing the generational divide among feminist women: older liberals stayed with organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) and emphasized reform

¹⁵ Seligman, *Block by Block*, 183-208. Her most recent work also emphasizes the central role women played in another vital urban grassroots organization, the block club. See Seligman, *Chicago's Block Clubs: How Neighbors Shape the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 7. Terry Haywoode argues that working-class women's engagement with the feminist movement relied heavily upon the ability to create a sense of community and not through appeals to individual identity. They needed to build organizations which "seemed like natural extensions of the family." See Terry Haywoode, "Working-class Feminism: Creating a Politics of Community, Connection, and Concern" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1991), iv-v; 1-33.

through legislation, whereas younger women's liberationists repudiated the chauvinism of the New Left by calling for their own revolution. While Collins acknowledges that millions of women, of all classes and ages, identified with the women's liberation movement to some degree by 1972, she does not indicate what working-class women thought about feminism nor how they became involved.¹⁶ Challenges to this perspective dispute the heavy emphasis of late 1960s and early 1970s feminism, arguing the movement represented the spectacular outburst of a trend that extended back to the end of the progressive period in the early twentieth century. Historian Nancy MacLean states that working women carried the torch in the "dark ages" (the 1950s) of feminism in unions and the YWCA. Dennis Deslippe explores how male and female unionists worked for gender equality in the postwar era and argues that union women made important contributions to the feminist movement—particularly in the realm of equal pay for equal work—that is overshadowed by the careers of the more famous leaders.¹⁷

¹⁶ Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 24-102. Winifred Breines' also places the origins of women's liberation with the young, well-educated middle-class, particularly in *Community Organization and the New Left, 1962-1968: The Great Refusal* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982). Breines more recent studies, *The Trouble Between us: An Uneasy History of White Women and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) and *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) add more nuance to the Evans' narrative by paying attention to how race and consumerism shaped the movement's identity during the 1950s. Alice Echols points out that for many radicals, gradual integration into public roles was too slow, and even socialism had sexist assumptions that made it inadequate for women's needs. See Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 3-22. Collins does complicate the generational divide slightly, by including Friedan under the banner of women's liberation with the revolutionary groups, while simultaneously admitting "they had little in common." See Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2009), 178-212. Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor complicate these narratives by arguing the spectacular nature of the women's movement in the 1960s had important antecedents in the immediate postwar period, despite being remembered as a nadir for feminism. Still, they exclusively focused on the middle or upper-class white women who formed the core of the National Women's Party as the feminist community. See Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945-1960* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), 5-15.

¹⁷ MacLean argues that the only reason the second-wave feminist movement became so spectacular rested on the groundwork done between 1920 and 1965 by groups outside of the white, middle-class "mainstream:" the National Consumers League, National Council of Negro Women, and the YWCA. See Nancy MacLean, "Gender is

The civil rights and feminist movements were not the only agents of change affecting the Southwest Side during the 1960s and 1970s, according to a variety of historians. Although contemporaries such as Christopher Lasch denounced the decade as a period of stagnation, excess, and narcissism, recent historical assessments now see it as a crucial turning point in American politics, economics, and society. Bruce Schulman deems the 1970s as a “great shift” due to the resurgence of conservatism, the final collapse of the New Deal coalition, the growing power and influence of the Sunbelt, and the proliferation of “personal liberation” movements (particularly in terms of race, gender, and sexuality). Edward Berkowitz argues that Americans lost faith in academic and governmental expertise due to unpopular foreign policy, domestic scandals such as Watergate, and the strains caused by inflation and fuel shortages. Politicians with anti-statist messages made impressive gains.¹⁸ Kevin Kruse and Matthew Lassiter demonstrate that the “great shift,” particularly in the case of politics, had a spatial dimension. Kruse argues that southern whites who left the city for suburban living discarded collective identities in favor of individualism, choosing personal profit over neighborhood ties. Lassiter notes that the “silent majority” took its cue from bipartisan middle-class whites in the Upper South, who “rallied around a ‘color-blind’ discourse of suburban innocence which depicted segregation as the class-based outcome of meritocratic individualism” and denounced the federal government as overreaching and oppressive.¹⁹

Powerful: The Long Reach of Feminism,” *OAH Magazine of History* Vol. 20 No. 5 (Oct. 2006): 19-23; Dennis Deslippe, “*Rights Not Roses*,”: *Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 1-9

¹⁸ Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 203-225; Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Society, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), xi-22; Edward Berkowitz, *Something Happened* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 2-12; 132-177.

Other scholars of the conservative revival point to how politicians such as Barry Goldwater, George Wallace, and Richard Nixon convinced disaffected Southern, suburban, and urban whites that the Republican Party could roll back the perceived excesses of liberalism and civil rights. On the surface, the Southwest Side fits right into the narratives of the conservative revival, a place where blue-collar white voters punished political candidates that supported fair housing laws and rewarded those who opposed such anti-discrimination measures. Furthermore, the willingness of local civic associations to defend their actions in the name of homeowners' rights and the "freedom to associate" echoed the suburbanite "color-blind" discourse described by Kruse and Lassiter.²⁰

¹⁹ Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 1-15; 78-81; Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1-20; Lassiter and Andrew B. Lewis, eds., *The Moderates' Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1998), ix-20. Other histories of the modern South provide useful context on both the urban crisis and the conservatism it helped inspire. Jason Ward implies that the North lacked conditioning to the anxieties to "black civic equalities" which long existed in the South, leading to more spontaneous violence than the comparatively "coordinated" segregationist movement in the South. The "long" civil rights movement grew along with a segregationist counterpart in the South that set the table for the more respectable Southern conservatism described by Kruse and Lassiter. See Ward, *Defending White Democracy: The Making of a Segregationist Movement and the Remaking of Racial Politics, 1936-1965* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 1-7; 178-182.

²⁰ Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008), xi-xiii, 3-19; Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), xi-xvi, 488-516; Rick Perlstein, "Thunder on the Right: The Roots of Conservative Victory in the 1960s," *OAH Magazine of History* Vol. 20 No. 5 (Oct. 2006): 24-27;; Elizabeth Shermer, *Sunbelt Capitalism: Phoenix and the Transformation of American Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). Thomas Sugrue and James Wolfinger provides additional insight to these common explanations for the collapse of postwar liberalism by arguing that the New Deal order and consensus rested on racial separatism and inequality from the start. Without this important pillar, the always tenuous union of disparate sectional, class, racial and ethnic interests fell apart. See Thomas Sugrue, "Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1964," *Journal of American History* Vol. 82 No. 2 (Sept. 1995): 551-578; "Labor, Liberalism, and Racial Politics in 1950s Detroit," *New Labor Forum* No. 1 (Fall 1997): 19-25; James Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided: Race and Politics in the City of Brotherly Love* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press), 1-5. Jefferson Cowie supports these scholars with a cultural perspective, noting that the anger working-class white Americans felt over taxes, unemployment, and "compulsive" integration (busing) led sparked a "blue-collar revival" in politics and popular media. However, this revival had energy but no direction, causing them to support Republican politicians who gutted unions in the 1980s. See Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working-Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 1-20, 357-370. Judith Stein defines the "shift" as the decision by the federal government to curtail inflation over encouraging growth, which benefited the

Yet a recent triumvirate of monographs and dissertations analyzing conservatism and liberalism in Philadelphia qualifies the narrative of Southern conservative ascendancy. Giuan McKee and Abigail Perkiss both argue that liberalism thrived in the 1970s and beyond in certain urban neighborhoods. McKee states that black neighborhoods rallied around progressive causes to ameliorate the ruinous effects of the transition to a postindustrial economy, although they failed to build a lasting alliance with the white working-class. Perkiss argues that highly-educated, upper-middle class white neighborhoods were receptive to integration and fostered the creation of a peaceful, prosperous interracial community. Timothy Lombardo does not dismiss the importance of conservatism in Northern cities, but he rejects the notion that urban, blue-collar white ethnics merely absorbed “color-blind” conservatism from the South. Lombardo instead posits the conservatism of Philadelphia’s white working-class as its own unique local phenomenon which spawned from their fears of African-Americans, rising crime rates, and resentment of a government which they believed exploited them for the benefit of racial minorities.²¹

financial sector over manufacturing to the detriment of the working and middle classes. See Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), xi. *Southwest Parish and Federation News*, July-August 1976, Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation Records, Box 19, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL. Sugrue supports Kruse and Lassier's arguments examining how white suburbanites in the North also relied on “color-blind” racial discourses to maintain segregation. See Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 465-511. Matthew Frye Jacobsen notes that a renewed emphasis on ethnicity among third and fourth generation immigrants across the country served as another way for urban whites to dismiss structural explanations for racism and distance themselves from any sense of responsibility for *de facto* segregation in the North. This “white ethnic revival” derived from the identity politics made possible by the civil rights movement, spread across 1970s popular culture, aided conservatism, and limited future efforts to eliminate racial inequality. See Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 1-11; 312-389. Dan Carter notes that conservative figures such as George Wallace made major headway in urban white ethnic neighborhoods in the North, presaging Nixon's electoral victories in 1968 and 1972. See Dan Carter, *Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 325-414.

Civic associations on the Southwest Side adhered to an ideology of racial conservatism which prioritized “the right” to live in a completely white community as a countermeasure to an encroaching state, the civil rights movement, and communism. Like mainstream conservatives, they bemoaned governmental power, defended the idea of the free market, and championed traditional religious practices; they stood out, however, in their insistence for formal measures to keep blacks out of their neighborhoods and schools. Racial conservatives on the Southwest Side represented a new iteration of a Midwestern conservative tradition centered upon Chicago.

Although the Democratic Party controlled both the mayoralty and the city council since the Great Depression, Chicago became a nexus of conservative and right-wing activity during the 1940s.

The isolationist America First movement drew the bulk of its membership from within several hundred miles of Chicago. The *Chicago Tribune* under editor/owner Robert McCormick served as one of the leading conservative platforms for criticism of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. The city also harbored an anti-Semitic, fascist-sympathizing, anti-war organization of mothers led by Lyril Clark van Hyning. Far-right ideologues such as Joseph Beauharnais attempted to legitimize the use of racial violence to prevent integration by creating a

²¹ Guian A. McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Abigail Perkiss, *Making Good Neighbors: Civil Rights, Liberalism, and Integration in Postwar Philadelphia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Timothy Lombardo, “Making Blue-Collar Conservatism: Race, Class, and Politics in Frank Rizzo’s Philadelphia” (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 2013), xvi-xvii; 8-28. Jeffrey Hegelson discerns similar trends in his study of black neighborhood politics, arguing that deindustrialization and white flight did not stop African-Americans in Chicago from forging a neighborhood-centric liberalism which served as the bedrock for the election of Harold Washington. See *Crucibles of Black Empowerment: Chicago’s Neighborhood Politics from the New Deal to Harold Washington* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 2-13. Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Cal Winslow also reject the argument that the white working-class fueled the rise of right-wing politicians such as Barry Goldwater and George Wallace, deeming suburbanites and corporations as responsible. They also state that that the 1970s rivaled the 1930s in terms of labor militancy, with the decline in traditional unions offset by the organization of service and government workers. See Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Cal Winslow (eds.), *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below During the Long 1970s* (New York: Verso, 2010).

metropolitan-wide, all-white “league.” Segregationist civic groups distanced themselves from any affiliation with violent actors by the 1960s, but they shared a similar disdain for inter-racialism, intellectual elites, and liberals as their predecessors.²²

Gender also shaped segregationist activity on the Southwest Side. While white men often justified the use of force against black Chicagoans by imagining themselves as the protectors of their supposedly helpless wives and daughters, racially conservative women on the Southwest Side mounted some of the most effective campaigns against racial equality in Chicago in the name of motherhood and the family. Women such as Mary Cvack successfully prevented the integration of their children’s schools by rallying mothers from across the Southwest Side to defend the “neighborhood school.” They believed that bussing in students of a different race made their children vulnerable to the “social engineering” of an out-of-touch municipal, state, and federal bureaucracy that neglected the fundamentals of education in favor of black rights. Mothers, they argued, knew their children’s instructional needs far better than any overly-educated school administrator or politician. They sought to give parents greater input in the policymaking of the city’s school system. To this end, anti-bussing mothers on the Southwest Side orchestrated protests and demonstrations against school integration which garnered considerable media attention. They carved out effective political roles for themselves by amplifying their perceived domestic authority.²³

²² Colleen Doody, *Detroit’s Cold War: The Origins of Postwar Conservatism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 4-6; 76-91; Glen Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right: Mothers’ Movement and World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 87-100; Wayne S. Cole, *America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940-1941* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), vii-x; 60-61; Robert B. Horwitz, *America’s Right: Anti-Establishment Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party* (Hoboken: Wiley Books, 2013), 19.

²³ These women’s practices recalled the “housewife activism” or “housewife populism” described by several historians of women in twentieth-century grassroots politics. See Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina

Recent works such as Lombardo's resist categorizing the opposition of white ethnics to integration as a simple, mindless "backlash." Still, Lombardo does re-affirm a common argument that neighborhoods like those on the Southwest Side harbored a bastion of prejudiced residents who abandoned their traditional political allegiances once the Democratic Party extended the benefits of New Deal liberalism to other racial groups in the 1960s.²⁴ Other scholars contest this depiction. Sociologists and political scientists of the 1970s and 1980s used survey and voting data to determine that the Republican Party's success did not stem from a major shift in Americans' ideological leanings. In 1977, Andrew Greeley stated that NORC surveys proved white ethnic Catholics did not defect from the Democratic Party in greater numbers than any other constituency, and they expressed greater support for integration over the course of the 1970s. He further claimed that media coverage of racial incidents in Marquette Park or South Boston obfuscated this data. Almost a decade later, the political scientists Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers confirmed Greeley's findings. They argued that political opinion polls revealed that Americans expressed more opposition to liberalism in principle than in practice and attributed the election of Ronald Reagan to the flaws of his opponents. Juliet Saltman stated that many white, black, and integrated organizations in racially changing neighborhoods all contributed to a

Press, 1995), 218-248; Alexis Jetter, Annelise Orleck, and Diana Taylor, eds., *The Politics of Motherhood: Activist Voices from Left to Right* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997), 1-12; Michelle Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), xiii-xx.

²³ Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2005); George J. Marlin, *The American Catholic Voter: Two Hundred Years of Political Impact* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2004), xix-xx; 224-284; David Riddle, "HUD and the Open Housing Controversy of 1970 in Warren, Michigan," *Michigan Historical Review* Vol. 24. No. 2 (Fall 1998): 3-36.

²⁴ Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2005); George J. Marlin, *The American Catholic Voter: Two Hundred Years of Political Impact* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2004), xix-xx; 224-284; David Riddle, "HUD and the Open Housing Controversy of 1970 in Warren, Michigan," *Michigan Historical Review* Vol. 24. No. 2 (Fall 1998): 3-36.

national, progressive “neighborhood movement” that challenged institutions the civil rights movement only confronted with minimal success, such as the mortgage banking industry or Federal Housing Authority. More recently, Dennis Deslippe argues that many working-class white ethnics denied both “middle-class suburban notions of racial innocence” and “idealized equality in post-Civil Rights America” in favor of an “ethnicclass progressivism” which did not impede governmental measures to improve the socioeconomic standing of racial minorities but asked for similar aid.²⁵

Yet neither “ethnicclass progressivism” nor the standard narratives of ethnic conservatism suitably explain the breadth of community activism seen on the Southwest Side. The residents of the Southwest Side neither fully repudiated the civil rights nor embraced it. They were not a monolithic bloc. The juxtaposition of an interracial SCC, the wary moderation of the SPNF, working-class women’s activism of the Southwest YWCA, segregationist civic associations, and extremist violence demonstrated that the Southwest Side fostered multiple reactions to social change during the 1960s and 1970s. There was no shortage of support for conservatives—conservative political candidates fared better in the polls at the municipal, state, and national level than their liberal counterparts. Still, conservatism did not overwhelm the other grassroots

²⁵ Andrew Greeley, *Why Can't They Be Like Us* (New York: E.P. and Dutton Co., 1971), 1-18; 153-164; Greeley, *The American Catholic: A Social Portrait* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 1-5; 115-124; Janet Saltzman Cahfetz and Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, “Growing Conservatism in the United States? An Examination of Trends in Political Opinion Between 1972-1980,” *Sociological Perspectives* Vol. 26 No. 3 (July 1983): 275-298. Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers also foresaw that the Democratic leadership’s embrace of “business oriented, centrist viewpoints” at the expense of its traditional labor constituency would harm the prospect of liberalism in the long run, a rather prescient call in the wake of the 2016 Presidential election. See Ferguson and Rogers, *Right Turn: The Decline of Democrats and Future of American Politics* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 3-28; 200-219. Juliet Saltman, *A Fragile Movement: The Struggle for Neighborhood Stabilization* (New York: Greenwood, 1990), 17. Deslippe, ““We Must Bring Together a New Coalition,””: The Challenge of Working-Class White Ethnics to Color-Blind Conservatism in the 1970s,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* No. 74 (Fall 2008): 154-165.

organizations on the Southwest Side.²⁶ If the liberalism of the SCC constituted a minority viewpoint on the Southwest Side, the organization's narrower base of support did not prevent it from scoring several important victories over the civic associations which opposed them. Nor did the area's social conservatism deter members of the Southwest YWCA from obtaining better health care services for women of all ages. Although these different organizations sometimes conformed to standard ideological definitions, no completely impermeable boundaries existed between them. The SCC, SPNF, and civic associations all opposed the placement of public housing units on the Southwest Side. Some residents joined multiple organizations. The SPNF's "white ethnic agenda" against Harold Washington, viewed as emblematic of the Southwest Side's conservatism by the press, included some progressive ideas about neighborhood redevelopment which allowed the organization and the mayor to later find common ground.²⁷

The fragmentation of the Southwest Side's residents underscored their remarkable level of social engagement during the late 1960s and 1970s. Although sociologist Robert Putnam argues that the postwar era was characterized by declining "social capital"—his measure of falling membership in bodies such as civic associations—the array of organizations on the Southwest

²⁶ For example: the victory of Republican Charles Percy over the liberal Democratic stalwart Paul Douglas in 1964; or the gains Reagan made among white ethnic voters in the 1980 and 1984 presidential election. See Peter Colby and Paul M. Green, "Election 1980, Downstaters Decide," *Illinois Issues* (Sept. 1981) Vol. 7 No. 9: 6-9; Nick Panagakis, "Illinois' Close Presidential Election," *Illinois Issues* (Jan. 1989) Vol. 15 No. 1: 34-35.

²⁷ Daniel T. Rodgers argues that disunity served as a dominant theme in postwar America. See *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 10-12. Although Rodgers focuses mostly on major thinkers and philosophers—such as Milton Friedman and Michel Foucault, he admits that the permeability of fracture enabled popular culture and society to exert influence and change intellectual structures and institutions. Rodgers perspective echoes Myron Marty, whose 1992 overview of United States history from 1960-1990 deems the shift from a modern to postmodern sensibility as one of the themes of American "everyday life" (the other being identity politics and technology). Unlike Rodgers, Marty is more precise with his periodization, claiming that American's widespread skepticism in longstanding institutions, particularly government, started the shift to the postmodernism of the late 1960s and early 1970s. See Myron Marty, *Daily Life in the United States, 1960-1990: Decades of Discord* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), xv-xviii; 87-98.

Side represented multiple viewpoints. Other scholars point out that the threat of racial transition often stimulated grassroots activity in white urban neighborhoods, a claim supported by journalist Ben Joravsky's observation that the 1960s and 1970s signified a "golden age" of community organizing.²⁸

Forgetting How to Hate explores these issues through a mostly chronological narrative. The first chapter recounts the failed effort of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) to move black World War II veterans into the Airport Homes project in the West Lawn neighborhood. The CHA's progressive director, Elizabeth Wood, hoped to use the Airport Homes as a test run for a broader enterprise to alleviate a low-vacancy housing crisis and eventually integrate the rest of the agency's housing. White ethnic residents in West Lawn greeted the black families with a fearsome mob that eventually drove the latter group out. The city's first major housing riot of the postwar era, the Airport Homes became the model for similar scenes of mass violence across the entire South Side of Chicago. An ethos of patriarchal violence, as well as the recent deprivation of legal tools to keep African-Americans out of their neighborhoods, motored the white hostility. Civic associations, which prior to World War II promoted segregation through restrictive

²⁸ Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1-9; Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Touchstone Books by Simon & Schuster, 2001); Ben Joravsky, "Alinsky's Legacy," in., *After Alinsky: Community Organizing in Illinois*, ed. Peg Knoepfle (Sangamon State University Press, 1990), 1-10; Paul Green, "SON/SOC: Organizing in White Ethnic Neighborhoods," in *After Alinsky*, 23-34; Mckee, 182-210. A recent dissertation by Renee LaFleur makes a provocative claim that the revitalization of community organizations in Chicago during the 1960s and 1970s resulted from the same drive to make a better form of democracy that propelled the New Left—although in the case of community organizations, this had a more local scope. See Renee LaFleur, "Democracy in Action: Community Organizing in Chicago, 1960-1968" (PhD diss., Ohio University, 2011), 9-24. There are of course some pitfalls in trying to discern something as imprecise as "attitudes" or "reactions" through civic associations and community organizations. Not every resident participated in this type of grassroots activity; many ignored it entirely. Nonetheless, polling data about this topic suggests that resident interest remained high. A 1978 Gallup poll showed that 89% of "urban residents" were interested in joining a community organization and over half already belonged to one. See David Frank Emmons, "Community Organizing and Urban Policy: Saul Alinsky's and Chicago's Citizens Action Program" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1986), 4.

covenants, offered tacit and explicit support for mob violence. While such behavior led to chastisement from the metropolitan press and civil rights organizations, virtually no one from the Southwest Side or other white neighborhoods issued similar reprimands. Violence served as the dominant mode of white resistance to racial integration until the late 1950s.

Yet as Chapter Two demonstrates, the use of violence did not remain unquestioned forever on the Southwest Side. As the boundary between the white and black South Side shifted westward, a new organization of homeowners, South Lynne Community Council, became the first organization on the Southwest Side to contend with the blockbusting and disinvestment which had ravaged other white neighborhoods to the east. Liberal in orientation, leaders of the South Lynne Community Council argued that the passage of civil rights laws at the local and national level would be a more effective method to prevent the decline of their neighborhood than attacking black homeowners. The South Lynne Community Council invited black property owners to join its ranks and chided those who clung to violence. Although successful for more than a decade, the organization's embrace of the civil rights movement caused nearly half of its members to abandon it. The diminished organization then proved too weak and isolated to overcome the well-intentioned, yet disastrously implemented Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, which spurred on a renewed wave of blockbusting that drove out nearly every white resident by the early 1970s.

Many people throughout the rest of the Southwest Side were indifferent to the South Lynne Community Council during the 1960s, at least until that organization dissolved. As explained in chapter three, the end of the South Lynne Community Council and the chaotic violence displayed against King and the Chicago Freedom Movement in 1966 caused many

residents to feel they lacked power over what transpired in their neighborhoods. More than one hundred Catholic parishes, Protestant churches, businesses, and other groups hired a professional organizer and formed the Southwest Community Congress (SCC). The arrival of an interracial Alinsky-style organization to unite the Southwest Side, however, only precipitated larger divisions. Like in the case of South Lynne, homeowners and civic associations who completely rejected integration refused to participate. They instead created their own coalition committed to thwarting the SCC. They viewed the SCC as the puppet of radical integrationists. While the SCC scored some major victories in its early years, civic associations successfully backed the candidacies of racially conservative political figures who pledged to “hold the line” against integration.

Chapter Four examines the difficulties the SCC faced in winning popular support from the community. Their liberal approach toward integration alienated conservative homeowners in civic associations and moderates who did not join either side. The community organization faced several other setbacks in the early 1970s. The city government failed to prosecute blockbusting realtors the group exposed, money proved scarce, and the intrusion of a small neo-Nazi party led to recurring violence in Marquette Park. Despite these obstacles, the SCC incubated other approaches to achieving neighborhood stability outside of the usual agitation prescribed by the Alinsky model. One such alternative, an economic development corporation, deemed the preservation of Southwest Side’s commercial arteries as important as its residential blocks. Chapter Five examines another alternative with ties to the SCC, an organization of working-class women who strived to improve their neighborhoods by making the Southwest Side more hospitable for themselves and their families.

Chapter Six details how the waning fortunes of the SCC spurred the creation of a second Alinsky-style organization which resolved to learn from its predecessor's missteps, the Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation. An alliance of seven Catholic parishes and organized by a veteran of the Chicago civil rights campaign, the parish federation professed to champion residents who did not support the SCC nor the traditional civic associations. The parish federation adhered to a more orthodox approach to community organizing than the SCC and refused to take an overt stance on integration or segregation. SPNF leaders instead claimed to give existing residents on the Southwest Side the tools to level the playing field against powerful, wealthy interests which risked destroying their neighborhoods out of greed. They attacked real estate firms and financial institutions more belligerently—and successfully—than the SCC, becoming the largest grassroots organization on the Southwest Side by the end of the 1970s. Not all of their plans bore fruit. A massive redevelopment plan garnered more accusations of racism than resources, and the federation's overtures to City Hall for help fell on deaf ears in successive mayoral administrations. Their opposition to Mayor Jane Byrne in the 1983 mayoral primary unintentionally contributed to the victory of Chicago's first black mayor, Harold Washington, who they believed inconsiderate and ignorant of their plight.

The final chapter delineates how the parish federation drew Washington's attention, and that of the entire city's, to the Southwest Side. A year into Washington's first term, the parish federation united with a similar organization on the Northwest Side of Chicago to form an unprecedented alliance of working-class, white ethnic communities, the Save Our City, Save Our Neighborhoods Coalition (SONSOC). The SONSOC promulgated a multifaceted "white ethnic agenda" for neighborhood revitalization and reinvestment and demanded Washington's support

in making it a reality. The creation of the SONOSOC occurred at a time when a considerable number of Black, Hispanic, and Arab families started moving into the Southwest Side. As a result, the press, civil rights organizations, and the SCC construed the white ethnic agenda's plea for "saving" as a racist ploy, albeit a popular, well-organized one. Yet if resentment against the perceived ascension of racial minorities at their expense—both on the block and in City Hall—motivated some supporters of the SONSOC, the coalition also provided an opportunity for Chicago's white ethnics and the mayor to reach an understanding with each other. Both sides realized they shared similar aims in restoring the city's residential neighborhoods after decades of neglect by previous mayors. Washington endorsed several key planks of the SONSOC's platform, most notably a proposal to insure home values against panic peddling through the creation of a special taxing district. Washington's death complicated its implementation, but the eventual passage of a statewide home equity assurance law became the federation's crowning achievement.

The home equity law signified the highwater mark for community organizing on the Southwest Side. Although both the federation and SCC survived until the late 1990s, both groups suffered from an aging membership and dwindling resources in their twilight years. Their efforts did keep the Southwest Side a viable community for working-class Chicagoans, but younger white families chose preferred the larger homes and better performing schools of the suburbs. In their place came the Latinos, African-Americans, and Arabs who predominate on the Southwest Side today. Still, both the new residents and remaining white leaders, pastors, and activists recognized that the Southwest Side still needed capable grassroots organizations, no matter the race of who lived there. Out of the ashes of the SPNF and SCC they built an organization which

utilizes familiar Alinsky-style strategies while better accounting for the area's present-day racial and religious diversity. Like the white ethnic activists who predated them, Southwest Siders today rely upon their community organization to fight the terrors of urban neighborhoods in the twenty-first century: the subprime lenders who facilitated a global economic collapse and the wave of foreclosures which followed in its wake. While the past organizations studied in this dissertation no longer exist, the same determination to help ordinary people realize their power stayed. It remains one of the most important legacies of the white ethnics, parishes, businesses, and institutions which once called the Southwest Side home.

CHAPTER ONE

HATRED CANNOT BE PUNISHED

On a cold afternoon on December 5, 1946, Vernon Jarrett, a young reporter on his first assignment with the *Chicago Defender*, one of the most prominent African-American newspapers in the nation, drove across Chicago's South Side to the mundane residential neighborhood of West Lawn to cover an extraordinary event. That day, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) attempted to move two black families into the Airport Homes housing project, a collection of temporary shelters erected on an open field at 60th Street and Karlov Avenue for veteran soldiers returning from World War II. For the CHA, *Defender* reporters, and hundreds of thousands of other African Americans inhumanely crammed into a narrow ghetto located farther east, the integration of the project marked a tentative, yet hopeful step in addressing Chicago's severe racial segregation.

The residents of West Lawn and other white neighborhoods on the Southwest Side, however, had a different reaction. They saw the arrival of the first black residents as an invasion to be repelled by any means necessary. A large, vicious mob formed around the housing project, shouting "Niggers, go home" and "Kill the dirty communists." They also promised to honor the newcomers with a lynching. The priorities of Jarrett and other members of the media, black and white alike, quickly changed from covering the chaotic scene to self-preservation when the wild crowd identified them as "white nigger-lovers" to be punished. Unable to safely retreat to their cars, they ducked into one of the project's homes. The shoddy construction of the unit spared their lives. The wet, damp unit prevented a group of teenagers from succeeding in their

attempt to, in their words, “barbecue all you niggers and white nigger lovers.”¹ Eventually the Chicago Police Department escorted Jarrett and his trapped companions to safety.

The terrible scene at the Airport Homes project repeated itself numerous times across the city’s South Side during the next two decades. Jarrett bore witness not just to the city’s largest race riot since 1919, but the creation of an easily imitable blueprint that many copied. Numerous other white working-class neighborhoods resorted to rhetorical and physical brutality to keep out black residents, with an ideology steeped in patriarchy, anti-communism, and white supremacy that expressed deep admiration for the legal segregation of the Deep South. Consequently, violence became the default response to integration. Men, particularly teenagers, often carried out the most egregiously violent activity as a way to define their manhood. Likewise, white civic and improvement associations that assumed the lead in the fight against integration in Chicago professed to uphold the sanctity of the American family by organizing themselves along a domestic ideal that deferred to male leadership. The revival of separate spheres ideology in the immediate postwar era became a valuable tool for these associations to claim superiority over black Americans and their progressive white allies, validating their endeavors to keep Chicago segregated. The resistance to the CHA and the Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR) represented opportunities for the men in charge of improvement associations to keep their neighborhoods white while projecting their authority throughout their communities and to city hall.

¹ Vernon Jarrett, “Racial Hatred: Then and Now,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 22, 1972; Jarrett, “Trapped in a Home While Mob Howls,” *Chicago Tribune* July 2, 1976; *Chicago Tribune*, November 22, 1976; Jarrett, “Don’t Blame the Press, Chicago,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 10, 1983.

Originally from the small town of Paris, Tennessee, Jarrett grew up in the Jim Crow South. He, like many other blacks from the South, imagined Chicago as a city of opportunity, free of the constraints of legalized racial segregation designed to hold him down. Arriving four months before the Airport Homes riot, he soon learned that a different set of rules made Chicago as effectively segregated as any place in the South. The Airport Homes riot even suggested that racism in his new hometown surpassed the kind he experienced as a child. Reflecting upon what he observed four decades later after a long, distinguished career in journalism and civil rights, he admitted “I had a hard time coping. I saw more anti-black venom than I’d ever seen in the south...in Chicago there was more real venom.”² Jarrett concluded that southern segregation stemmed from “habit,” but racism in Chicago was grounded in pure hatred. “I was called 'nigger' more times in one two-hour period at Airport Homes than during an entire lifetime in Tennessee,” Jarrett lamented, “never in Tennessee had a mob covered my back with spit.”³

The site of this extraordinary malevolence was amidst a collection of the largely residential, working-class, Catholic, white-ethnic neighborhoods which comprised the Southwest Side of Chicago. Forty-Seventh Street marked the northern boundary, Cicero Avenue the western, Ashland Avenue the eastern, and the Beltway Railroad tracks the southern. Most residents lived in the older eastern neighborhoods, such as Brighton Park, Gage Park, and Chicago Lawn, which all reached residential maturity between 1910 and 1940.⁴ One story brick bungalow homes with modern amenities such as full bathrooms predominated across most of the

² Florence Hamlish Levinsohn, “Where Vernon Jarrett Is Coming From,” *Chicago Reader*, March 24, 1988.

³ Jarrett, “Heaven’s Ugly Side,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 7, 1999.

⁴ These neighborhoods were essentially all “built up” and populated by 1930. All had more than 30,000 people.

area's housing blocks and lured thousands of upwardly mobile families from older, crowded neighborhoods such as Back of the Yards, Bridgeport, and Pilsen.⁵ The Depression and the material demands of World War II, however, stunted the growth of neighborhoods to the west of Central Park Avenue: West Lawn, West Elsdon, and Archer Heights. The lack of homes did not mean an absence of people or activity. The United States government constructed a massive defense plant complex, designed by famed industrial architect Albert Kahn, on 432 acres of marshland between Cicero Avenue, Pulaski Avenue, the Beltway Rail Tracks, and 77th Street in West Lawn in 1942. Built over the course of two years, the Dodge Chicago plant contained six million square feet of facilities and 7,000 miles of underground piping. Seventeen thousand workers from established Southwest Side communities, other parts of the city, and the suburbs worked day and night to construct engines for B-29 bomber planes during the war.⁶

Although the plant closed at the war's conclusion, the availability of land, railway infrastructure, and existence of older, smaller industrial corridors left the western half of the Southwest Side poised for explosive growth in the 1940s and 1950s. Chicago faced a severe housing crisis that made neighborhoods such as West Lawn attractive to private—and public—development alike. The rest of the city, particularly Chicago's African-Americans, lacked such a luxury. For decades, Chicago's black population lived in a narrow corridor on the South Side between 22nd Street and 63rd Street, Cottage Grove Avenue and State Street, known as the

⁵ Dominic Pacyga, "Moving on Up,": The Chicago Bungalow and the American Dream," in *The Chicago Bungalow*, eds. Pacyga and Charles Shanabruch (Chicago: Arcadia, 2003), 118-128.

⁶ Douglas Knox, "West Lawn," in *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, eds. Janice L. Reiff et. al. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004), accessed June 15, 2012, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1339.html> and "Ford City Complex Has a Past Most Don't Remember," Chief Engineers Association of Chicagoland, accessed June 17, 2012, <http://chiefengineer.org.p=2186>.

"Black Belt." Two large black migration waves to Chicago from the Deep South, the former after World War I due to a boll weevil infestation of Southern agriculture and the latter during World War II to fill manpower shortages for war plants, overwhelmed the Black Belt's housing capacity with hundreds of thousands of new residents.⁷ Unscrupulous landlords exploited this scarcity by ignoring building codes, often subdividing their buildings into "kitchenette" units only separated by flimsy cardboard walls. Electric and water utility services were spotty at best. These haphazard conditions made the Black Belt a dangerous place for its residents: apartment fires claimed over one hundred lives and the infant mortality rate for black Chicagoans tripled that of white families during the 1940s.⁸

A variety of factors kept the Black Belt geographically tight. Quality housing, let alone new housing, did not exist for anyone in Chicago—white or black. More housing in Chicago was demolished than built during the Depression and the war, as the Chicago Plan Commission deemed hundreds of thousands of housing units as "blighted" or "substandard." A major legal barrier also limited black residential mobility: restrictive covenants. These legally-binding private agreements, prevalent in half of the white neighborhoods in Chicago, prevented homeowners from selling to non-white buyers (and in some cases, certainly ethnic or religious minorities, such as Jews).⁹

⁷ Chicago's black population increased from 44,103 to 492,265 as a result of two Great Migrations." See United States Census Reports, 1890-1960.

⁸ Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 16-26. Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), 36-41; Vernon Jarrett, "Gory Hand of Covenants Evident in Fire Deaths," *Chicago Defender*, October 25, 1947.

⁹ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 28-29.

Discrimination was central to federal government policy as well. Federal Housing Authority (FHA) guidelines prohibited loans to black neighborhoods—or "threatened" white neighborhoods near black neighborhoods—on the racist notion that non-white communities automatically depressed property values. Less legal means contained the Black Belt, too. White youth gangs enforced racial and ethnic boundaries by intimidating and beating any outsiders who trespassed through their public spaces. The most spectacular example occurred during the July 27, 1919 race riot, which started when white teens stoned a black teen to death for swimming to into the white part of a beach. The violence escalated when white street gangs, often in the guise of an "athletic club," invaded the Black Belt, attacking any person they could find and burning down their property. Black Chicagoans retaliated in kind. The "riot" lasted for an entire week, leaving 38 black and white Chicagoans dead before 6,000 National Guard troops restored order. Although the city would not witness a repeat of such a catastrophe in the interwar years, street gangs continued to demarcate and enforce their turf through force.¹⁰

Knowing that the return of thousands of veterans from Japan and Europe would only exacerbate the housing crunch, the CHA implemented a temporary solution to provide relief. Under federal contract, the CHA constructed "emergency" housing for veterans and their families. The city acquired workers' barracks from war factories in other states and transported it by truck back to Chicago. Given the lack of available land, the CHA only reassembled the housing on open sites: school grounds, parks, or vacant lots. Consequently, this meant the city's fringe areas—such as the Southwest Side—hosted the bulk of the veterans' projects. Federal aid

¹⁰ Thomas Philpott, *The Slum and the Ghetto: Immigrants, Blacks, and Reformers in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press, 1991), 170-178; Andrew Diamond *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908-1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); *Chicago-Daily News*, December 2, 1946.

came with one significant stipulation: black veterans had to receive "a fair proportion" of the temporary housing. This did not alarm the CHA executive secretary, Elizabeth Wood, a politically and socially progressive New Deal advocate who viewed integration as necessary and just. She also enjoyed the backing of Chicago mayor and machine boss Edward Kelly. Although Kelly was not a staunch liberal, he believed in gradually integrating the city's public housing. To this end, he gave the CHA and Wood almost complete independence, sheltering the agency from the far more provincial aldermen on the Chicago City Council.¹¹ Wood, the CHA and the CCHR—an interracial alliance of government officials, clergy, and civic organizations dedicated to promoting racial tolerance in Chicago—knew that white residents near the proposed veterans housing locations harbored discriminatory attitudes. They reasoned, however, that the transient nature of the housing would prevent any serious violence.¹²

The CHA planned to place one such project in the Southwest Side, the Airport Homes, to be assembled on a block of land owned by the Chicago Board of Education. The CHA first tested the waters by building the Ashburn Homes, located just a few blocks south of West Lawn and the Dodge Chicago plant at 79th Street and Kostner Avenue. Surrounded by vacant land and giant factories, the Ashburn Homes elicited few complaints when black veterans joined their white counterparts at the project. Likewise, a Northwest Side veterans project, the Sauganash Homes at Foster Avenue and Cicero Avenue, generated some verbal griping when thirteen black

¹¹ Roger Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War: Mayor Edward J. Kelly of Chicago* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), 135. According to Biles, Kelly "cautioned that the proportion of blacks admitted to previously all-white housing projects should be limited at first to 10 percent of the total residents, noting that blacks constituted 10 percent of the city's population."

¹² Joe Borgia, "A Return to West Lawn, Birthplace of Our City's Peculiar Brand of Bigotry," *Chicago Reader*, December 5, 1986. Community Area microfiche, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago, IL.

veteran families moved in, but no violence.¹³ The CHA and CCHR had reason for optimism as the Airport Homes neared completion in the fall of 1946, an outlook that would be decisively shaken by the months-long resistance of West Lawn residents to integration.

The men of West Lawn led the charge. Although the official CCHR memorandum suggested that the initial signs of trouble over the Airport Homes began in August 1946, West Lawn residents voiced their opposition immediately after learning that the CHA chose the site at 60th and Karlov in late March of that year. Within two weeks, the West Lawn Community Council (WLCC), which claimed to represent more than 3,000 families, organized a protest. WLCC leaders circulated a petition that garnered 1,191 signatures, reportedly all in a single day. They immediately sent their concerns directly to Mayor Kelly. The executive chairman of the WLCC, Thomas B. Mackie, explained that the housing project harmed their property values and deprived West Lawn of needed school or park space. Mackie also blasted the project for using recycled worker barracks and added that "our letter of protest to the mayor also points out that the homes are of entirely unsuitable construction and are actually unsanitary."¹⁴ Mackie promised further action from the WLCC if the CHA attempted to complete the Airport Homes—or any other veteran housing—in their neighborhood. After receiving no response from Mayor Kelly, a WLCC board member elaborated on their defiant stand, stating that war veterans "deserve everything they can get, but they are not getting much in this case." The WLCC also planned a special meeting on further actions to take against the CHA on May 11, the project's initial completion date.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *Southwest Herald*, April 10, 1946.

Major delays in construction, however, stalled this day of reckoning. Labor shortages, strikes, and general incompetence on the part of the CHA's subcontractor postponed the opening of the Airport Homes. Elizabeth Wood used the delay to address and dismiss WLCC complaints. Wood stated that given the sheer demand for housing, the CHA could not eliminate the Airport Homes or any other emergency project. Wood also said that once finished, the Airport Homes would not harm property values: the site would look far less unseemly following a new paint job and landscaping. She tried to quiet WLCC anxiety, declaring that "These houses certainly are not the ultimate in veteran desires...but they are good temporary homes and will provide an emergency stop-gap in the housing problem. As to fears for the future, the houses will be torn down at the end of three years."¹⁶

This failed to pacify the WLCC representatives. Mackie wrote another, sterner letter to Kelly. He chastised the mayor for ignoring them. Mackie claimed that the mayor passed off their concerns to subordinates in the "Chicago housing committee."¹⁷ This finally elicited a reply from city hall. Kelly and the Chicago Plan Commission both sent letters to the WLCC in early June. While the content of the mayor's letter was not disclosed, the Plan Commission assured the WLCC that a playground would be constructed at 60th and Karlov after the emergency project's scheduled dismantlement.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Southwest Herald*, April 17, 1946; *Chicago Tribune*, April 21, 1946.

¹⁶ *Southwest Herald*, May 15, 1946.

¹⁷ *Southwest Herald*, May 22, 1946.

¹⁸ *Southwest Herald*, June 5, 1946.

Although the WLCC failed to dissuade the mayor or the CHA from finishing the project, more construction delays meant that the Airport Homes did not open until September. While only sixteen units were initially fit for habitation, the project's completion caused further agitation among West Lawn residents. The CCHR met with the CHA over concerns on the "very considerable degree of antagonism and belligerence that has developed in the neighborhood surrounding the project." The official CCHR memorandum on the Airport Homes noted that residents protested at the site at the end of August over fears that the CHA might offer leases to "minority groups." Fearing the tension could escalate into more serious disorder, the CCHR asked trade unions and veterans groups to contact any of their members living in West Lawn and encourage them to behave peacefully. This failed. As the number of occupied apartments rose, West Lawn residents turned to vandalism and smashed the windows of unfinished units.¹⁹

In accordance with the CHA and federal government's non-discrimination policy for the emergency housing, several black tenants were offered leases for the remaining apartments with a scheduled move-in window of mid-November. Before this could happen, dozens of white veteran families not awarded leases seized keys from the project office and inhabited fifty-nine apartments on election day, November 5. The CCHR received reports that many of the "squatter" families took this action in order to prevent black occupancy of the project. Efforts to evict the squatters for trespassing sputtered in court when the presiding judge granted the illegal residents a three-week extension. The squatters used the reprieve to build up support among West Lawn residents. They circulated a petition that demanded the CHA publish the list of prospective

¹⁹ Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, "Memorandum on the Airport Homes," Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL. This document is not paginated.

veteran housing tenants and fully explain its tenant selection criteria. Leading Southwest Side community groups proved more than receptive, as the WLCC allied with the nearby West Elsdon Civic Association and Burr-Ellyn Civic Association to present a united front against the CHA. All three groups backed the squatters and pledged to aid them. They accused the CHA for manufacturing an "atmosphere of apprehension and uncertainty" in their neighborhoods. The legal white tenants of the project itself also protested black residents over concerns for their safety, stating in their own petition to the CHA that "we believe the indiscriminate mixing of white and Negro families will not encourage racial tolerance but on the other hand will create ill feeling."²⁰

The squatters' cause aligned well with the main objectives of Southwest Side civic associations. Prior to World War II, white community activism across the South Side of Chicago often centered around these voluntary organizations which existed to maintain or increase the property values in their neighborhoods. The first associations, created at the end of World War I in white neighborhoods bordering to the city's Black Belt, attracted upwards of 1,000 paying members and used violence to keep black families from moving in. By the end of the 1920s, these civic associations colluded with the Chicago Real Estate Board to write racially restrictive covenants into deeds. With the law on their side, civic associations did not need to use force to keep their neighborhoods white and became seen as respectable institutions within their communities. The West Lawn Community Council and its partners existed for the same reasons other civic associations did. Yet as they existed in newer neighborhoods on the city's periphery,

²⁰ Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, "Memorandum on Airport Homes"; *Southwest News-Herald*, November 14, 1946, *Southwest News-Herald*, November 21, 1946. The *Southwest Herald* bought the *Southwest News* in October 1946.

they lacked the convenient protection offered by restrictive covenants. This made their confrontation against the CHA all the more desperate.²¹

The squatters did not take over every vacant apartment, and the CHA decided to proceed with the move-in of one black veteran family in spite of the growing controversy. In preparation for the project's first black family, the CCHR executive director, Thomas Wright, met with the police captain of the Chicago Lawn station to arrange security for Theodore Turner and his family on November 16. That Saturday afternoon, Wright supervised the move-in and witnessed the formation of a mob. According to his report, West Lawn men and women of all ages rushed to the project when the cars of Turner and his friends (who were black and white veterans) arrived. The mob gathered in front of Turner's apartment. The crowd made "loud shouts and vicious insults" toward the black veteran, such as "Run the black bastards out of the country," and "Hitler was right."²² The mob pelted cars owned by black drivers with rocks. A gang of teenage boys rushed and tipped over the car of another CHA official in full view of the small police detail, who made no arrests. Police reinforcements and inclement weather eventually dissipated the crowd by Saturday evening. At Turner's request, police escorted him and his

²¹ Wendy Plotkin, "Deeds of Mistrust: Race, Housing, and Restrictive Covenants in Chicago, 1900-1953," Ph.D., diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 1999. Thomas Philpott estimates that upwards of 85% of Chicago was covered by restrictive covenants, making the Southwest Side a rather noticeable exception, 184-200. A map of restrictive covenants on the South Side of Chicago created by Robert Weaver demonstrates that most neighborhoods lacked them west of Ashland Avenue; a strip of homes to on the Airport Homes eastern boundary, however, did possess them. Nonetheless, most of West Lawn and West Elsdon lacked restrictive covenants entirely. See Arnold Hirsch and Thomas Weaver, "Racially Restrictive Covenants on Chicago's South Side in 1947," in *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, eds. Reiff et. al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), accessed August 10, 2016, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1761.html>.

²² Borgia.

friends away from the scene. Rattled by the hostility, he gave back his keys to the CHA. His family never returned to the Airport Homes.²³

The CCHR and CHA regrouped and kept their resolve to integrate the project. Mayor Kelly pledged more extensive police protection for any future tenants regardless of their race and agreed to read a statement, crafted by CCHR representatives, iterating the city's commitment to non-discrimination. Issued on November 20, the statement decried the "incidents of lawlessness against minority groups" during Turner's failed move-in, called the squatters illegal occupants, and proclaimed that "These homes are, and will, continue to be available to veterans and their families without regard to race, creed, or color." Kelly also declared that he supported the CHA's need-based tenant selection process and pledged "special training" for officers in the Chicago Police Department "to ensure the democratic and impartial handling of all incidents in the future involving racial, religious, and national minorities."²⁴ The CCHR also met with the commissioner of the Chicago Police Department to give recommendations on how to conduct "special training" in racially tense situations.

West Lawn residents plotted their next moves as well. Under advice from their legal counsel and having received offers of shelter from sympathetic homeowners, the squatters gradually moved out of the Airport Homes by December 2. On December 1, the WLCC held a special, open meeting to all West Lawn residents, chaired by Thomas Mackie, to develop a strategy on how to keep the project white-only. One member suggested they remedy the lack of a restrictive covenant. The WLCC did not technically pursue that course, but they settled on three

²³ Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, "Memorandum on Airport Homes"; *Chicago Defender*, November 30, 1946.

²⁴ Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, "Memorandum on Airport Homes."

resolutions that concurred in principle. First, the WLCC demanded that the CHA reserve all apartments in the project for veterans in the local ward. Second, the WLCC called for a "public investigation" of the CHA "to determine the means of selection of veterans to occupy the Veterans Emergency projects." Finally, the WLCC insisted that Elizabeth Wood resign from her post in favor of a veteran. No longer content with petitions and letters, the WLCC bussed residents to a city council meeting on December 3 to make their position on integrated public housing known in person.²⁵

Approximately two hundred West Lawn men and women took four charter buses downtown that morning as part of a "delegation" to Mayor Kelly and the city council. In truth, the WLCC brought the mob to city hall. At the start of the council's meeting, their alderman, Democrat Michael Hogan of the 13th Ward, proposed that the housing committee discuss the WLCC resolutions the following week. His constituents booed him. The *Southwest News-Herald* reported that "one woman screamed 'We have babies to take care of at home,' and another yelled 'Take it up now or never!'"²⁶ The situation deteriorated further when Mayor Kelly rose up and left for another appointment. Some members of the delegation tried to jump the balustrade and attack a black press photographer. Sensing the crowd's hostility, another alderman suggested that the council hold an emergency meeting of the housing committee when the Council adjourned that afternoon.

²⁵ "Memorandum on Airport Homes"; *Southwest News-Herald*, December 5, 1946; *Chicago Tribune*, December 1, 1946; *Chicago Tribune*, December 4, 1946; *Chicago Sun*, December 1, 1946; *Chicago Sun*, December 2, 1946. The "local ward" in question is the 13th Ward.

²⁶ *Southwest News-Herald*, December 5, 1946.

At this later meeting, Alderman Hogan recognized his earlier error in angering his voters by trying to table their proposals. Now he formally presented it to the council and ardently defended every part of it. To assist with the local residency requirement, Hogan proffered a litany of white 13th ward veterans for the CHA to consider. The CCHR reported that the "people from the 13th ward hysterically applauded his remarks." Hogan then asked for members of the delegation to speak, including the restrictive covenant advocate from the December 1 WLCC meeting, Mackie, and the head of the West Lawn Improvement Association. Not surprisingly, all spoke in favor of their proposal and received loud applause from their neighbors. The housing committee called up speakers to present a different points of view: representatives from the Chicago Industrial Union Council, the American Veterans Committee, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Chicago branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the United Negro and Allied Veterans of America, and the Chicago Council Against Discrimination. These speakers claimed the CHA's non-discrimination policy was needed and right, which further agitated the crowd. When those speaking on the housing committee's behalf suggested that the West Lawn opposition was based in racial bigotry, the audience cried, "We don't mean that,"—"We've never said that."²⁷

Elizabeth Wood was the final speaker at the meeting. Clarifying the CHA's tenant selection policy for the delegation and the council, Wood pointed out that the Veterans Emergency Housing program had 25,000 applicants for just 3,400 units. She added that too much of Chicago was built out to place the projects elsewhere. Reserving one project exclusively

²⁷ Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, "Memorandum on Airport Homes"; *Chicago Sun*, December 4, 1946; *Chicago Daily-News*, December 4, 1946.

for residents of its ward was impossible under such circumstances. Wood noted that numerous criteria weeded out the applicant pool: veteran status, city resident status, need for shelter, and "family composition" (the applicant had to be a married father). Race or religion would never void an application. She stated that "preference shall be given [to] applicants from the neighborhood in which the project is located, but under no circumstances shall the project be filled entirely by such families. The factor of housing need shall prevail regardless of the community of residence."²⁸ The meeting ended after Wood's testimony, and the chair of the committee suggested possible future hearings, although these never materialized.

CHA officials proceeded with another wave of move-ins of both black and white tenants on December 5. Given the especially violent role young men played during the November 16th riot, the CHA and CCHR hoped that moving black families on a weekday morning, at a time many neighborhood men went to work, would prevent a similar disaster. This tactic proved unsuccessful. As early as 8:30 A.M., West Lawn women, elderly men, and children gathered outside of the Airport Homes project. The crowd shouted numerous insults at the police, newspaper photographers, CHA and CCHR representatives, and even Catholic clerics as the first white tenants moved in. The mob's activities became much more physical when the possessions of two black veterans, John Fort and the Letholian Waddle, arrived on site. Stone throwers smashed the windshield as the drivers struggled to get the vehicle safely in the project. When the police on site attempted to guard the vehicle, "a great many women...began to fight with the policemen, kicking and screaming and slapping them."²⁹ White ministers on behalf of the CCHR

²⁸ Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, "Memorandum on Airport Homes."

²⁹ Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, "Memorandum on Airport Homes; *Chicago Sun*, December 6, 1946.

moved in the black families' furniture in the hope that the mob would merely verbally, not physically, assault clergy. The situation only worsened as the day progressed and the men joined the mob after their shifts ended. The car of a United Negro and Allied Veterans member "was surrounded and tipped over," and CCHR observers feared the conflict might grow into a city-wide race riot. Only constant police reinforcements kept the crowd from breaking through the project, but their ruthless display worked: other eligible black families decided not to move to the Airport Homes.³⁰

The violence on November 16 and December 5 proved harrowing and life-changing for the black veterans and progressive civic leaders present. The hypocrisy of the mob's behavior shocked Letholian Waddle. Forty years later he recalled that "A lot of the people were Polish refugees. I was saying to myself, 'I was born and raised in this country, and a lot of them ain't never done anything here, and they standin' there and tellin' me where I should live.'" Ida Turner claimed her husband Theodore experienced severe trauma and remarked that 'He's carried that scar all the way through life. He would say to friends: 'Man, this country's no good—you go to war and you fight, and what happens when you come home, you're not even a first-class citizen.'" Her husband fell into poor health and died in Englewood, by then an all-black ghetto, in 1968. Unable to ever secure decent housing and trapped in one of Chicago's poorest neighborhoods, John Fort jumped in front of a Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) train on January 1, 1981.³¹

³⁰ Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, "Memorandum on Airport Homes"; *Chicago Tribune*, December 6, 1946; *Chicago Tribune*, December 9, 1946; *Southtown Economist*, December 8, 1946; *Chicago Daily-News*, December 6, 1946.

³¹ Borgia.

The mob reconvened on December 6 to continue their fight, even in the face of an enlarged police presence. Teen boys unable to damage the project itself turned their wrath toward any unwanted passerbys, smashing the window of a coal truck operated by a black driver. Gangs of youth vandalized cars near the project they believed belonged to CCHR and CHA officials. Fearing for their safety, the police escorted Fort, Waddles, CHA and CCHR away from the project in a paddy wagon. Even with the principal objects of their fury absent, the crowd continued to grow in size and violence as night approached. A portion of the mob burnt a cross at the corner of 61st Street and Kedvale Avenue. The large crowd of men and boys shoved police officers and hurled bricks at them, and again "several men and boys attempted to tip over" police cars. Although lacking in no shortage of candidates, the police only arrested six men, primarily in their teens and twenties, for this unruly behavior.³²

The size of the mob gradually diminished over the weekend as the police detail increased and the weather turned intemperate. The violent protest did not completely cease—a group of residents stoned another moving truck under police escort—and several hundred residents protested around the project at night with placards.³³ By December 11 the situation became peaceful enough for the wives of Fort and Waddles to join them at the project. Still, neither family would be safe during their short tenancy at the Airport Homes. The Forts and Waddles could not go to work, church, or store without a police escort. Residents hounded them with signs that said "Down with Communism" and "Fight for Americanism" whenever they left their apartment. They relied on CCHR members and a few sympathetic white veteran families to

³² "Memorandum on Airport Homes"; *Chicago Tribune*, December 7, 1946; *Chicago Sun*, December 7, 1946.

³³ *The Chicago Sun*, December 10, 1946.

procure basic goods such as milk, since the local dairy refused to deliver to them. The last straw came on February 15, 1947, when "white hoodlums" fired four bullets from a car through a window in the Forts' apartment. Both families moved out shortly thereafter.³⁴

The metropolitan press unanimously defended the CHA, Mayor Kelly, the CCHR, and condemned the West Lawn rioters. For the city's leading black newspaper, *The Chicago Defender*, the violence evoked dark memories of the Deep South, arguing that "the evil spirit of the unwashed knights of the Ku Klux Klan sauntered around the West Lawn community...it was beyond a shadow of a doubt a planned vandalism on a community scale."³⁵ *The Defender* found some positives from the ordeal: the actions taken by the city to integrate the project proved to one columnist that "the copious quantities of pro-democracy propaganda poured out during the war did not all disappear with the ending of hostilities."³⁶ A *Chicago Daily-News* editorial stated that selecting public housing tenants "on any other basis than need" constituted a "violation of fundamental rights," as both black and white citizens paid taxes toward its construction. The *Daily-News* editors also praised Mayor Kelly for defending non-discriminatory public housing. For this reason, the editors argued that the actions of West Lawn residents were "indefensible" and that the black veterans who endured their antagonism showed tremendous fortitude.³⁷ A *Chicago Sun* editorial concurred, while partially absolving West Lawn residents for their complicity in the violence. Acknowledging that "the spirit of Nazi storm troopers walked the

³⁴ Borgia; *Southwest News-Herald*, March 1, 1947; *Chicago Defender*, March 1, 1947.

³⁵ "It Happens in Chicago," *The Chicago Defender*, December 14, 1946.

³⁶ Walter White, "People, Politics, and Places: X-Mas Optimism," *The Chicago Defender*, January 4, 1947.

³⁷ "Housing and Race," *Chicago Daily-News*, December 7, 1946. "Stop This Violence," *Chicago Daily-News*, December 11, 1946.

streets of the West Lawn community...to express hatred, prejudice, and tolerance," The *Sun* editors believed that "those who succumbed to prejudice have been misled by unscrupulous hatemongers. When they know all the facts, and have calmly thought them over, they must decide that West Lawn is America, too."³⁸

West Lawn residents agreed they represented America, but their definition of "America" vastly differed from that of the *Chicago Sun* editorial board. A local Business Men's Association offered its own interpretation for the disorder at the Airport Homes and a future solution to civic leaders and city officials. The association acknowledged their commitment to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. They agreed that black Chicagoans faced a desperate housing situation and deserved decent living quarters but not through integration. The association alleged that subversive agents wanted to use integration to undermine the United States Constitution and overthrow the lawful government. These unidentified "persons are attempting to mislead and delude the colored people by a propaganda of false accusations of discrimination and unfair practices by white people." The association proposed that the best way to honor "equal protection under the law" for both white and black Chicagoans was through segregation. Integration only functioned to spark race riots on the part of "over-zealous idealists" who wanted to institute a new totalitarianism.³⁹

Integration also made no economic sense to them, as it depressed white property values. This collection of businessmen suggested an alternative (and wholly implausible) segregated housing strategy instead: build up vacant lots in black neighborhoods through black savings and

³⁸ "West Lawn is America, Too," *Chicago Sun*, December 7, 1946.

³⁹ "Memorandum on the Airport Homes," CHM.

loan associations. The problem with this plan rested on the fact that no such room existed in the city's Black Belt. Furthermore, since only a handful of black savings and loan associations existed, sufficient capital was non-existent to fund the slum clearing necessary to construct new buildings. The association's plan allowed for black families to purchase homes in white neighborhoods under strictly controlled conditions: only in neighborhoods adjacent to the Black Belt (and therefore miles away from the Southwest Side) and with the approval of "a committee of both white and colored appraisers." Finally, the association advocated for a separate-but-equal approach to city services and education in order to keep the city segregated.⁴⁰

Other West Lawn men asserted themselves after the riot in the political arena. Although Alderman Hogan ultimately supported their resolution at City Council on December 3, his initial attempt to bypass the discussion hurt his standing among 13th Ward voters. The chief of his ward's Democratic organization, Michael Flynn, feared that both Hogan and the party lost credibility among West Lawn voters and withdrew his support from the incumbent. Flynn's decision mirrored that of the machine as a whole. Kelly's relative racial liberalism, along with a reputation for corruption, ruined the mayor's—and the machine's—standing among white voters across the city. Democratic Party leaders convinced Kelly to not seek re-election, choosing instead the scandal-free, socially-conservative Martin H. Kennelly.⁴¹ The process of succession was not nearly so simple in the 13th Ward. Fifteen candidates stepped forth to try and fill the power vacuum: a machine Democrat, two Republicans, and thirteen independents. Given the turmoil over veterans' housing, most candidates touted two credentials: military service and

⁴⁰ "Memorandum on the Airport Homes"; Satter, 43-45.

⁴¹ *Southwest News Herald*, February 6, 1947.

disapproval to the project, making any prospective woman candidate ineligible. Two frontrunners quickly emerged—Michael H. McDermott, Flynn's handpicked candidate, and the independent John E. Egan, a former 13th Ward machine alderman from 1933-1939 until Flynn forced him out in favor of Hogan.

The Airport Homes riot motivated men of very humble means to take a shot for a seat on the Chicago City Council. One such candidate, Marvin C. Wolfe, assessed his fitness for office almost exclusively on his opposition to the Airport Homes. Under the slogan "Put the VICIOUS WOLFE in the City Council," he proudly touted that he was one of the men who confronted Kelly on December 3. Wolfe also questioned the sincerity of McDermott's and Flynn's opposition to the CHA, pointing out that they never attended any improvement association meetings. A lack of funding hamstrung Wolfe's campaign, but he touted that weakness as a strength. As a veteran living in a basement apartment with a wife and two children, he had an acute knowledge of the housing crisis other candidates lacked. To this end, he pledged to be "one of the greatest fighters who ever represented the people of the 13th Ward" by establishing "a strong restrictive covenant to keep undesirable people out."⁴² Wolfe was not the only dark horse candidate to use the Airport Homes to gain on the frontrunners. Another independent, Al Kumkis, echoed Wolfe's tactics. Kumkis claimed Egan lacked the competence to handle the CHA after his acceptance of an endorsement from the disgraced incumbent.⁴³

Fearing that 13th Ward voters were prepared to chuck the Democratic machine entirely, McDermott and Flynn published advertisements and press releases assuring voters that they

⁴² *Southwest News-Herald*, February 20, 1947.

⁴³ *Southwest News-Herald*, February 20, 1947.

would continue the fight the community started the previous spring. McDermott proclaimed that "I am unilaterally opposed to the type of housing project located in this ward at 60th and Keeler...being an overseas veteran myself, I fully realize the hardships suffered by returning veterans in finding a place to live...but I know the vets want homes of more permanent construction, they are not interested in raising their families in huts."⁴⁴ The February 25 election validated his concerns. Although his 10,740 votes topped the rest of the field, this failed to secure the majority needed to win. Instead, McDermott faced a run-off election with the second place finisher, Egan. The decisive factor in the run-off would be the 6,884 voters who sided with the two Republican candidates. Aware that these voters leaned toward the independent over the Democrat, the machine stepped up its advertising in the weeks leading up to the run-off. A full page ad in the *Southwest News-Herald* boasted that McDermott was "SUCCESSFUL IN BUSINESS...PROVEN IN COMBAT" and placed his opposition to the Airport Homes at the top of his platform. McDermott even promised to secure permanent public housing for the ward—reserved entirely for white veterans who already there.⁴⁵ Unfortunately for McDermott and Flynn, 13th Ward residents remained unconvinced. Egan defeated McDermott by a tally of 22,260 votes to 19,270 (53.4% to 46.6%), becoming the only independent candidate elected alderman in the 1947 election cycle⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *Southwest News-Herald*, February 6, 1947.

⁴⁵ *Southwest News Herald*, March 6, 1947. *Southwest News-Herald*, March 13, 1947. *Southwest News-Herald*, March 27, 1947.

⁴⁶ *Chicago Tribune*, April 15, 1947.

The model for neighborhood defense displayed by West Lawn improvement associations proved portable and upgradable. Against the backdrop of the surging civil rights movement in the Deep South and anti-communist hysteria nationwide, similar organizations responsible for later riots at Fernwood Park (1947), Peoria Street (1949), Trumbull Park (1953-1955), and Calumet Park (1957) intensified the racial antipathy and the violence to bolster their resistance to any force, real or imagined, that tried to integrate their communities. The result was that by the end of the 1950s, South Side improvement associations viewed their fight against integration as a life-and-death struggle with national—even international—implications. The political stakes grew as well: these later riots sacked another mayor, the head of the CHA, and transformed the city's housing policy.⁴⁷

New sources of anxiety emerged for South Side white neighborhoods following the *Shelley v. Kraemer* Supreme Court decision in 1948. This case declared that no state could legally enforce a restrictive covenant without violating the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. With one of their most reliable tools for maintaining a segregated neighborhood denied to them, white communities now had to account for activity on the real estate market, and not just the CHA, in keeping their blocks exclusively white. Ironically, improving housing trends for white Americans also proved troubling. As the private housing market roared back to the life through new suburban developments fueled by FHA and VA loans, white Chicagoans of sufficient means moved out of the city entirely. Suburbanization left most black and working-class white families stuck on the South Side. Discriminatory FHA and

⁴⁷ Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 198-202; Hirsch, "Massive Resistance in the Urban North: Trumbull Park, Chicago, 1953-1966," *The Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 539.

VA policies prevented the former from securing mortgages, and the latter lacked the ability to move with much of their savings tied up in their current house.

For middle-class black families, however, the end of restrictive covenants and white emigration to the suburbs meant housing now existed in neighborhoods next to the Black Belt. While this provided a small measure relief from the grave overcrowding which defined pre-war black neighborhoods, it was a pyrrhic victory. Unable to secure financing from white-controlled banks or savings and loan associations, black families became dependent upon exploitative real estate speculators to obtain these properties. The speculator offered cash to white homeowners in blocks close to the Black Belt, usually well below the home's value but enough to provide a down payment in another city neighborhood or the suburbs. The speculator then flipped the property to prospective black buyers desperate to escape the Black Belt for an inflated price. The installment contract served as the weapon of this residential plunder: a speculator lured a prospective buyer through a low down payment but retained title to the property until every other payment—at high monthly rates—was made. One missed payment meant eviction, and the speculator could repeat the process with another buyer to tremendous profit. Limited black options and white fear, a choice between staying in the fire traps of the Black Belt or taking their chances with an unfair installment contract, enabled a "dual housing market" to flourish across the urban North.⁴⁸

Fittingly, one large housing riot occurred over such a real estate transaction. On July 25, 1949, Roscoe Johnson, a postal worker and graduate student at the University of Chicago, and

⁴⁸ Satter, 6; Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 28-35; Antero Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010); Seligman, "'Apologies to Dracula, Werewolf, Frankenstein': White Homeowners and Blockbusters in Chicago," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (Spring 2001): 70-95.

his wife Ethel, a case worker for the Cook County Bureau of Public Welfare, moved into an apartment they purchased at 7153 S. St. Lawrence Avenue in the Park Manor neighborhood.⁴⁹ They found the property through an ad placed in the *Defender* that promised a "reasonable down payment." Although eager to leave the Black Belt, the Johnsons had reservations about moving into an all-white neighborhood. By 1949 Park Manor was a high tension area, and 71st Street served as the new southern boundary for the Black Belt. The "real estate man" behind the deal assured them that "the only trouble we might have would be for someone to throw a brick in the window."⁵⁰

The real estate agent's assessment was an understatement. Once their white neighbors realized Roscoe Johnson was not a mover and had in fact bought the property, a "menacing" crowd of 150 people gathered outside of his apartment building. Similar to what happened at the Airport Homes, ambivalent police officers on site allowed for the crowd to grow further. By the next day, thousands of whites from Park Manor terrorized the Johnsons and launched sorties across 71st Street to vandalize black property. Like their counterparts in West Lawn, the Park Manor Improvement Association (PMIA) did nothing to stop the violence; they instead promised to remove the Johnsons in a "gentlemanly manner."⁵¹

Yet at least one Park Manor resident in the mob outside the Johnsons' flat viewed the PMIA's leadership and their "gentlemanly" plan as incapable of mounting an effective

⁴⁹ Park Manor is located within the Greater Grand Crossing statistical area. Its present day boundaries are the Dan Ryan Expressway, the Chicago Skyway, and 79th Street.

⁵⁰ Thomas Wright, Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, "Documentary Memorandum: The White Circle League," Appendix A, 1, CHM.

⁵¹ Wright, 43.

opposition to the dangers posed by racial integration. Joseph Beauharnais, a tall, mustachioed, balding fifty-year old World War I veteran and owner of a leather manufacturing plant, decided to take matters into his own hands. Beauharnais believed integration could not be held off on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis given broader national trends.⁵² He cited a litany of developments the previous year: President Harry S. Truman's order to desegregate the military, the Supreme Court's ban on restrictive covenants through the *Shelley v. Kraemer* decision, and the defeat of the Dixiecrats in the presidential election.⁵³ White homeowners in Chicago, in his opinion, needed to unite across the city to maintain the color line. He created an organization for this purpose, the White Circle League of America (WCLA). Beauharnais expressed a far blunter, more extreme position on race than the West Lawn Community Council or the Park Manor Improvement Association. Per a confidential CCHR memorandum on the League's activities, Beauharnais' chief motivation stemmed from "his deep hatred for the 'niggers.'" He viewed the NAACP and communists as collaborators in a national plot to destroy the traditions of white democracy through a "race-mixing" agenda in the country's largest metropolises and claimed to have infiltrated that civil rights organization in order to counter its strategies. Beauharnais also claimed to be fighting on behalf of white sexual honor and argued for strict segregation of schools; otherwise "these [black] boys 'paw' the white girls." He offered a comprehensive solution. The state merely required a gubernatorial order to ban African-Americans from moving to Illinois and the eviction of all black criminals upon the completion of their prison sentence. He

⁵² Wright, Appendix C, 3-4.

⁵³ Beauharnais even penned a letter to Truman's Secretary of Defense, Louis A. Johnson, to protest the desegregation order as it forced white men to work along side black men "without their consent" and violated the "natural law of segregation." See Wright, Appendix I, 3.

promised to sacrifice his life to this end, and called for one million more white Chicagoans to do the same.⁵⁴

Beauharnais first distributed his literature at meetings of neighborhood associations, factories, and community buildings across the South Side in September 1949. Articles in his newsletter targeted men and appealed to their sense of manhood. His first piece stated that integration was "unworkable, unnatural, and a violation of a white man's rights" enabled by a wayward federal government that had been "intimidated by the negro." Beauharnais argued that white men must fight to preserve their families: "Where can you move, under the present set-up, and have the assurance that your property, life, women and children will be safe from negro infiltration?" White men needed to take vigilant action now unless "our great grand-children start turning out in various dark shades."⁵⁵ The first sentence on the membership application continued this line of appeal, declaring "I agree firmly with the basic principle of the White Circle League of America—that the CREATOR intended the white race to remain white and I pledge myself to stand up and protect white womanhood...from the organized aggressions of the Negro." Moreover, the League sought to preserve the "liberty to be and live as a white man" and claimed that the Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed such rights.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Thomas Wright, Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, "Documentary Memorandum: The White Circle League," 1-2, CHM. Beauharnais was a Dixiecrat in all but name, and he cited Southern Democrats' defiance of the federal government in the name of state's rights and white people as an inspiration for the WCLA. In this sense, the WCLA suggests that the Dixiecrats had a larger impact on the views of Northern whites than they ever intended. See "Klan Outfit Plans New Terror Campaign," *The Worker: Illinois Edition*, January 14, 1951; Sarah McCulloh Lemmon, "The Ideology of the Dixiecrat Movement," *Social Forces* Vol. 30 No. 2 (Dec. 1951): 162-171. Jason Ward argues that the Southern sympathies held by Beauharnais and his attraction to the Dixiecrats ideology stemmed from existing fears over "black civic equalities." See Ward, *Defending White Democracy: The Making of a Segregationist Movement and the Reawakening of Racial Politics, 1936-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 2-8.

⁵⁵ Wright, "Documentary Memorandum: The White Circle League," Appendix A, 2-4.

These hysteric appeals paid off. By November 9, Beuharnais had enough followers to file for articles of incorporation. He softened his rhetoric for the application, listing the League's official purpose as "education as to customs, civic, and social standards and charitable purposes among its members, the maintenance of schools therefore, and the dissemination of information and literature appertaining thereto, and to safeguard the property of its members and tax research therein." To the dismay of the CCHR, the state granted the League's charter.

The League's first official meeting occurred at the Woodlawn Boys' Club on December 17, 1949. Approximately 200 people, mostly middle-aged men with a smaller amount of middle-aged women, attended. CCHR and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) observers noted that they all signed petitions circulated by the League, but considerably fewer paid for membership cards or subscriptions to the League's newsletter.⁵⁷ Beuharnais emphasized the need for a city-wide white organization by inviting several veterans of previous efforts to stem integration to give "expert" testimony, including Paul Christiano, a WCLA member from West Lawn. Christiano summarized his community's fight against the CHA and its effectiveness. He then insulted Elizabeth Wood and the CHA to "applause and snickering" before making an encouraging final remark: "if we can do it at the Airport Homes we can do it anywhere." After two more guest speeches, Beuharnais then took the stage himself. He began his scatter-shot keynote by telling the audience that communist Jews conspired to integrate Chicago. He then warned against racial intermingling, noting that he went to a dance held after a "Progressive

⁵⁶ Wright, "Documentary Memorandum: The White Circle League," Appendix B, 1.

⁵⁷ An FBI informant estimated that the crowd gave Beuharnais \$135.20. The FBI kept a file on Beuharnais which they maintained until 1968, although it was only sporadically updated after the middle of the 1950s. See "Federal Bureau of Investigation, File #105-291," p. 36, Ernie Lazar FOIA Collection: Extreme Right Groups, accessed March 1, 2014, https://archive.org/details/foia_White_Circle_League_of_America-Chicago-1.

Rally" at the DuSable community center where black men danced with white girls. Beauharnais concluded with an abrupt transition to politics. He claimed to have no political aspirations but encouraged League members and those at the meeting to vote for candidates who shared his beliefs.⁵⁸

After an intermission, Beauharnais gave a second, much longer speech demanding a "separate economy for Negro and whites" and an end to "mongrelization." After exhausting the audience, he refused to take questions and ended the meeting. For all the interest the idea of the League generated among the attendees, Beauharnais' domineering style alienated much of the crowd by the end, as only a third remained. He seemed more interested in promoting himself than creating an effective organization. Throughout the night members of the audience asked to speak, only to have their request summarily denied by Beauharnais. One young man, exasperated after Beauharnais repeatedly cut him off, angrily yelled "I'm against the niggers as much as anyone here" before storming off with several other friends. The meeting also circumscribed women's participation. At the start of the meeting, "a pretty young girl" took a seat on the stage with the rest of the speakers. She never spoke a word. Indeed, she only functioned as a visual aid, a tactile reminder of what integration threatened to spoil.⁵⁹

Beauharnais' egotism, lack of charisma, and treatment of his organization as a tin-pot dictatorship prevented the WCLA from ever growing beyond his immediate family and roughly twenty die-hard supporters. His extremism alarmed the CCHR, but the civil rights organization decided that the League had no chance so long as the media kept Beauharnais out of the

⁵⁸ Wright, 5.

⁵⁹ Wright, "Documentary Memorandum: White Circle League," 6-7.

limelight. This assessment proved partially correct. Within a few years, the WCLA constituted Beauharnais alone, and he faced bankruptcy after selling his factory to commit to the organization full-time. Ironically, Beauharnais successfully garnered more media attention as the WCLA floundered. A CCHR affiliate, the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee, accused Beauharnais of violating Chicago's anti-riot ordinance and the state's criminal libel law for his claims about African-Americans. The city's municipal court agreed, issuing a warrant for Beauharnais' arrest.⁶⁰

While the courts punished Beauharnais with the maximum penalty under the law—a \$200 fine—and a circuit court judge revoked the WCLA's state charter without a hearing, the trial generated the controversy the CCHR feared. After the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the conviction, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) agreed to assist Beauharnais in filing an appeal of the state court's decision to the Supreme Court of the United States. He became a symbol not only of white Chicago's racial hatred, but of the contested relationship between notions of personal liberty and civil rights in postwar America.⁶¹ While the ACLU admitted they found Beauharnais' beliefs distasteful, they viewed his conviction as proof that the "group libel statute" of the state's civil rights law unconstitutionally restricted freedom of speech and the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.⁶² The ACLU and the state made their arguments

⁶⁰ "Accuse Bias Group Head of Defamation," *Chicago Daily Sun-Times*, January 24, 1950. The specific law was § 224a of Division 1 of the Illinois Criminal Code, Ill.Rev.Stat.1949, c. 38, § 471. One Park Manor woman disliked Beauharnais for being an "atheistic psycho" who too often flaunted his personal wealth over his neighbors by driving around in a black Cadillac. She offered to infiltrate the WCLA on the FBI's behalf. The agent she contacted refused to encourage or discourage her but would accept any information she might provide. See "Federal Bureau of Investigation, File#105-291," p. 27, Ernie Lazar FOIA Collection: Extreme Right Groups, accessed March 1, 2014, https://archive.org/details/foia_White_Circle_League_of_America-Chicago-1.

⁶¹ "Racist Cult Loses Its Charter," *Chicago Daily-News*, June 30, 1950; FBI, 131; Wright, "Documentary Memorandum: White Circle League," 9-13; *Chicago Tribune*, June 30, 1950.

on November 28, 1951, and the Vinson Court issued its decision on April 28, 1952. In a close five-to-four decision, the Supreme Court ruled that the statute neither compromised freedom of speech nor the Fourteenth Amendment, much to the disappointment of Beauharnais and the ACLU. Illinois' troubled racial history influenced the majority opinion, with Justice Felix Frankfurter noting that the state suffered numerous outbursts of mob violence inflamed by "utterances of the character here in question" since the murder of the abolitionist Reverend Elijah Lovejoy in 1837.⁶³

A lack of members, money, and defeat by the nation's highest court killed the WCLA, but these setbacks failed to diminish Beauharnais' hate as he grew older. Beauharnais went on a quixotical odyssey for relevance instead of retirement. He coordinated a "Nationalist Convention" at the Como Inn, an Italian restaurant on Chicago's near Northwest Side in the summer of 1952, which barely attracted fifty participants. Frequently linking the WCLA's goals to the platform of the Dixiecrat Party, he attempted to rebirth his organization in the South. Beauharnais convinced a Florida roofer—and Ku Klux Klan member—to open a WCLA branch in Florida in 1954, although it had no more success than its Chicago parent. Beauharnais' extremist rhetoric alienated him from other southern towns: a potential representative from Florence, S.C., ultimately declined to associate with "a new Klan organization." The FBI, which surveilled Beauharnais since he created the WCLA, noted that his activity slowed considerably

⁶² United States Supreme Court, *Beauharnais v. Illinois*, 343 U.S. 250 (1952).

⁶³ "Supreme Court Acts on Pleas in 2 Illinois Cases," *Chicago Tribune*, October 9, 1951; *Beauharnais v. Illinois*, 259.

after 1955. In 1962, however, he received one last chance to stand in the limelight thanks to an organization belonging to the race he despised so much: the Nation of Islam (NOI).⁶⁴

In February of that year, the NOI held its annual American Muslim Congress at the International Amphitheatre on the South Side of Chicago on Saviours' Day, their most important holiday. Every major NOI leader attended, including Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad. Although well-known as advocates for racial separatism and black nationalism, the NOI placed several ads in newspapers weeks ahead of the congress that invited anyone to attend and speak, regardless of their race, religion, or political affiliation. Two of the few hundred whites who accepted were Beauharnais and George Lincoln Rockwell, the founder of the American Nazi Party. Both spoke in front of 6,000 black Muslims, by far the largest audience Beauharnais ever addressed. He showered Muhammad with praise for opposing race mixing as much as he did—the first recorded instance of Beauharnais saying anything positive about a black person. He said he felt “honored” to be on the same stage with Muhammad. He even boasted of “preaching” NOI teachings to whites in Chicago and the South. Muhammad thanked Beauharnais for the kind words, but added that “he could not recall anything the Nazis or WCLA had ever done for him” and refused to make an alliance with either group.⁶⁵ Once again, Beauharnais failed. He spent the final eight years of his life poor, obscure, and in ill health until his death in 1970, never fulfilling the ambitious goals he set for himself.

⁶⁴ FBI, 234-235, 241-242, 348-349; “Crackpot has NAACP Rival: It's NAAWP,” *Chicago Defender*, July 26, 1952; “NAACP and More,” *Chicago Defender*, August 16, 1952; FBI-2, 91-93; FBI-2, 230-235.

⁶⁵ The FBI noted that mainstream papers downplayed the crowd size, while the NOI overestimated it. The 6,000 is their figure. See FBI-2, 386-390; “U.S. ‘Nazi’ Praises Black Muslim Chief,” *Chicago Daily News*, February 26, 1962; “U.S. Nazi Boss Among 3,000 at Muslim Rally,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 26, 1962.

The radical white supremacist rhetoric, anti-communist paranoia, and violent posturing Beauharnais personified, however, proved potent in more skillful hands. The battle between the CHA and the South Deering Improvement Association (SDIA) over the integration of the Trumbull Park Homes signified the apex of patriarchal violence on the South Side. The longest period of sustained violence against integration in Chicago's history, the obstinacy of the South Deering community begun as a riot but transformed into a siege that lasted two years. Unlike the WCLA, the SDIA successfully fused ideological extremism with massive resistance into a form capable of impacting mainstream Chicago politics. The leader of the SDIA, Louis Dinnocenzo, exhibited far more allure and savvy than Beauharnais, commanding the loyalty of thousands of residents across the Southeast Side. The SDIA spewed similar racist bile in their newspaper, the *South Deering Bulletin*, which had an impressive circulation of 3,500 readers in a neighborhood of only 9,000 people. The popularity of the SDIA forced both Democratic and Republican ward committeemen to curry favor with its members and shelter them from the legal troubles that hindered Beauharnais. Support from within the political mainstream ultimately allowed the SDIA to defeat the CHA and end the careers of Elizabeth Wood and Mayor Kennelly.

By 1953, the CHA operated twenty public housing projects in the city. Only four, including the Trumbull Park Homes, were completely white. Initially built by the Public Works Administration in 1938, the SDIA initially welcomed the project, believing it would be reserved for white tenants. The CHA and Wood never agreed to such restrictions and instead planned to integrate the project in a controlled manner. On July 30, 1953, the first black family, the Howards, moved into a Trumbull Park Homes apartment. South Deering wasted no time in welcoming the Howards to the neighborhood. By August 5, a crowd of fifty gathered around the

project and smashed windows. These groups of people steadily increased in size over the week and diversified their hostility. They threw sulfur candles through project windows, set several apartments on fire, damaged cars owned by black drivers, and vandalized a neighborhood liquor store across the street from the project. Although more police arrived to fortify the project, mobs of several hundred people continued to form and damage the project over the next two years.⁶⁶

The extended insurgency of South Deering stemmed from the CHA refusal to cave into the violence. The agency continued to move black families into the project, eventually peaking at twenty-five in 1955. Bombs became the weapons of choice even as the police kept hundreds (and at one point 1200) police officers guarding the project around the clock. The police organized special security checkpoints, "sentry huts," barricades, and phone lines to defend the project, which the CCHR admitted turned the Trumbull Park Homes into "a besieged fortress."⁶⁷ The Chicago Police department arrested nearly 300 people over a fourteen-month period. Still, the black families in the project remained unsafe. Donald Howard carried a revolver, and in one incident he fired it in the air to scare off a crowd intending to harm him. Efforts by black tenants to play a softball game at Trumbull Park necessitated a guard of 650 police; even then, a portion of the white mob that congregated to watch attacked one of players who tried to recover a foul ball. The violence never completely ceased, although by 1956 it diminished enough to reduce the number of officers on site to ninety-three.

⁶⁶ *Chicago Daily-News*, August 10, 1953; *Ibid.*, August 11, 1953; *Ibid.*, August 28, 1953; *Chicago Sun-Times*, August 11, 1953; *Ibid.*, August 12, 1953; *Ibid.*, August 18, 1953.

⁶⁷ Commission on Human Relations, "The Trumbull Park Homes Disturbances: Documentary Report Number I, August 1953-March 1954," 6, CHM. Commission on Human Relations, "The Trumbull Park Homes Disturbances: Documentary Report Number II, April-June 1954," 1, CHM.

The political price for integrating the project proved staggering. Elizabeth Wood steadily lost authority after Kelly's forced retirement. Mayor Kennelly allowed the city council to assume control over the CHA, snuffing out its interracial vision. In 1948, the state of Illinois, at the aldermens' request, permitted the city council to veto any locally funded housing project. Months later, the state passed another law enabling the council to block federally funded projects as well. Bereft of any support within the machine, Wood nonetheless remained committed to her personal convictions and attempted to integrate existing CHA properties in white wards.⁶⁸ During her bout with bronchitis in 1954, a CHA commissioner wrote a report that recommended the creation of a new executive position and called for the demotion of Wood to a social role. Historian Bradford Hunt notes that this constituted a "sexist response" to her tenure, relegating one of the most visible and formerly powerful women in Chicago government to a less important post in favor of a man. The administration of the CHA now mirrored that of the numerous improvement associations which opposed it during the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the male-dominated political machine and City Council. The WLCC finally got their wish: the CHA made a veteran, a retired general, the new executive director. Wood did not take her demotion lightly, writing a scathing statement against the CHA commissioners who plotted against her. She was fired the next day.⁶⁹

The tethering of the CHA and the firing of Wood did not save Kennelly. The numerous housing riots during his mayoralty hurt his standing among white voters, who believed him

⁶⁸ Arnold Hirsch, "Martin H. Kennelly: The Mugwump and the Machine," in *The Mayors: The Chicago Political Tradition*, Paul Green and Melvin Holli, eds. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 139-140.

⁶⁹ D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 86-87; 102-103.

ineffective in keeping the Black Belt contained. Kennelly also withered against the South Deering violence and agreed to parley with SDIA representatives. Kennelly capitulated and froze the admission of black families to the project. Only after the "freeze" did the violence steadily diminish. Black voters also lost faith in Kennelly after this display of cowardice, viewing him as incapable of addressing their concerns after the effective surrender to white terrorism.⁷⁰ Richard J. Daley, who became head of the machine as the Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Organization in 1953, used Kennelly's unpopularity to assume the mayor's office for himself. Tellingly, he did so with both the endorsement of the SDIA *and* the *Chicago Defender*.⁷¹

Dinnocenzo, the president of the SDIA, directed the fight against the CHA and integration on the Southeast Side of Chicago. He encouraged readers of the area's most important paper, *The Daily Calumet*, to put political strain on the Mayor and CHA by "walking up and down the streets. Let the authorities know you are protesting. Make it necessary to keep the police out here. Other districts over the city are screaming mad about the loss of police protection."⁷² Dinnocenzo pledged to "carry on the fight with your continued loyalty. We will not use violence but we will employ pressure within every legal means we know of to eliminate this situation."⁷³ This statement was misleading: the SDIA provided legal assistance to some of the many men arrested for disorderly conduct or violating the city's anti-riot ordinance, but an ACLU observer also witnessed the SDIA provide funding to obtain the explosive devices thrown

⁷⁰ Hirsch, "Massive Resistance in the Urban North," 539.

⁷¹ Commission on Human Relations, "The Trumbull Park Homes Disturbances: Documentary Report Number III, July 1954-November 1954," 2. Hirsch, "Massive Resistance in the Urban North," 540.

⁷² *Daily Calumet*, December 8, 1953.

⁷³ *Daily Calumet*, January 5, 1954.

by the recurrent mobs.⁷⁴ The *Daily Calumet's* editor actively supported Dinnocenzo's stand by invoking a similar logic to that of the White Circle League. Two weeks after the violence began, the *Calumet* editor disagreed with all the major metropolitan paper's denunciation of the violence, stating, "If a majority of people decide they want to live by themselves, under our system of government they have every moral right to do so...there is absolutely no racial strife of any kind between our scores of creeds and colors—except when a man or agency attempts to mix them socially."⁷⁵

Like Beauharnais, the members of the SDIA claimed to fight for whites on a scale more epic than their immediate neighborhood. They successfully secured their own blocks and parks, but national developments warranted continued vigilance. To the SDIA, their fight against integration provided a bulwark against an overbearing state corrupted by communist influences. South Deering would be a model for America: a patriotic community where every man, woman, and race knew its place. Accordingly, the leadership of the SDIA was almost exclusively male; its members re-elected Dinnocenzo as president throughout the 1950s and his top aide, Carl Buck, edited the *South Deering Bulletin*. Women who became officers received junior roles such as secretary or "fourth vice president."⁷⁶ Dinnocenzo's popular support among the community became a mandate for him to dominate the organization. Monthly reporting meets typically only reported the president's comments and positions.

⁷⁴ Arnold Hirsch, "Massive Resistance in the Urban North."

⁷⁵ *Daily Calumet*, August 15, 1953.

⁷⁶ *South Deering Bulletin*, December 21, 1961.

The *Bulletin* fawned over the "fiery" Dinnocenzo for his masculine virtues compared to liberal integrationists such as Elizabeth Wood or academics:

He fights fiercely, but he fights fairly. He isn't afraid to talk up to anyone from the top to the bottom; from reputable newspapermen to muckrakers [sic] who specialize in twisting the facts and inciting trouble...although he can get steamed up in a report to the association at its regular meetings, he can also keep a cool head when battling our cause. This is so whether Louie may be found in the chambers of His Honor, the Mayor, or talking to the man in the street.⁷⁷

Wood, on the other hand, "lost her fancy \$15,000 per annum job...because she double-crossed the community and the directors of the CHA in 'forgetting' to first institute an educational campaign on mixing whites and blacks before throwing them together."⁷⁸ Dinnocenzo challenged intellectual elites as well. When the University of Chicago hosted a panel on racial violence that brought together academics, CHA officials, and SDIA officers, the *Bulletin* praised their president for expertly refuting the "usual brain-wash talk" through his sound reasoning and patriotic sentiments.⁷⁹

The SDIA affirmed white masculine power by assuming the responsibility for the sexual purity of their wives and daughters. The *Bulletin* depicted black men as possessing an uncontrollable lust for white women only checked by the vigilance of men in the SDIA. One *Bulletin* article attributed the rape of a white girl by a black man to the "communistic influence of the NAACP" and that in the expanding Black Belt, "no woman or girl, young or old, is safe walking the street."⁸⁰ Anything short of the most stringent efforts to prevent integration left your

⁷⁷ *South Deering Bulletin*, December 9, 1955.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *South Deering Bulletin*, March 8, 1956.

⁸⁰ *South Deering Bulletin*, March 6, 1958.

family vulnerable. As another editorial stated, “Whose wife or child will be next on the black criminals list: yours or mine.” The lack of a question mark, of course, was intentional: such an atrocity was inevitable if white men took insufficient steps to protect their women. No wonder then that the *Bulletin* encouraged white residents to purchase firearms.⁸¹

The propensity of the SDIA to castigate the women of their neighborhood as constantly weak, defenseless sexual victims also justified their exclusion from the more important, visible tasks of neighborhood defense. White women, while vulnerable to the black sexual menace, also possessed moral and intellectual faults that made them susceptible to miscegenation. The *Bulletin* published stories about the trauma of voluntary interracial relationships from across the country to chide women about their own failings. One article stated that intermarriage only resulted in “defilement, degradation...eventually bloodshed to both races...’Only the white and black trash intermarry.”⁸² Another cautionary anecdote described how a white mother in Washington D.C. attempted to put her interracial children from a previous marriage up for adoption. Now properly married to a white man, the children became embarrassing symbols of her past. Her new family had no place for them. The *Bulletin* drove the point home to the readers, stating, “Wonder how many White women have made the same mistake.”⁸³

The subordinate position of women in the SDIA manifested itself in its activities and celebrations. The SDIA hosted an annual Fourth of July celebration that presented an ostentatious display of patriotism to prove the American virtues of their racist views, and the

⁸¹ *South Deering Bulletin*, October 30, 1958.

⁸² *South Deering Bulletin*, July 22, 1955.

⁸³ *South Deering Bulletin*, September 3, 1955.

organization left nothing to chance. Men predominantly staffed the committee responsible for organizing all the activities and raffles, with the exception of the "Refreshment Counter." Seven out of nine people in charge of serving food and drinks during the festival were women. Leisure activities and contests during the festival also reinforced the domestic ideal of the 1950s. While men could partake in cigar smoking, a greased pig competition, and tug-of-war, women had a rolling pin throwing competition. The male activities provided an arena for neighborhood men to flaunt their masculinity; women's activities stayed rooted in domesticity. The celebration also provided a venue for local politicians to pay homage to the SDIA and reaffirm their commitment to segregation. Both the Democratic and Republican ward organizations, as well as the aldermen, attended the Fourth of July festivals.⁸⁴

South Deering women conformed to prevailing gender norms in other respects. Women picketed outside the project whenever their husbands worked their shifts. They formed their own associations and clubs that provided refreshment and support for a group of male "vigilantes."⁸⁵ Ladies Aid groups within local churches also did their part to maintain the racial order. Once the neighborhood's last Protestant church folded after its ministers supported integration, twenty women raised funds to establish a new, white-only Protestant institution. The *Bulletin* applauded these women for upholding the communities "morals" and keeping the "Negro and white trash" out.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *South Deering Bulletin*, June 3, 1955.

⁸⁵ *South Deering Bulletin*, August 9, 1956.

⁸⁶ *South Deering Bulletin*, May 15, 1958.

To the SDIA, the fact that their men and women conformed to such idealized gender roles spoke to the superiority of white America and justified racial segregation. Endorsing a speech from a Southern black minister who criticized the social practices of young black Americans, the *Bulletin* editor said, "He goes on to say that it is very disheartening to see the negro women and girls disport themselves in public without a semblance of dignity or self-respect. They appear in taverns, restaurants, or on the sidewalks laughing loudly and allowing so-called playboys to playfully pat them—not particular where...their language is the same as the male, masculine and terrible."⁸⁷ The SDIA believed that a lack of well-defined masculine and feminine spaces, behaviors, and activities made black women over-sexed parasites who ruthlessly exploited the Aid for Dependent Children. South Deering, on the other hand, stood for more wholesome values. *The Bulletin* reprinted a *Chicago Tribune* "Voice of the People" letter from a white mother who stated that "there are some cultures in Chicago which disapprove of promiscuous living by unwed mothers at the expense of taxpayers."⁸⁸

Nothing more symbolized the utter failure of black social standards than Emmett Till and his mother, Mamie. Till was a fourteen year-old Chicago boy who was brutally murdered in Mississippi on August 28, 1955 for allegedly whistling at a married white woman, Carolyn Bryant, in her grocery store. The *Bulletin* stated that the true crime rested in the fact that black Chicago children lacked proper parenting while growing up, making them bold enough to make "suggestive remarks" to white women. An anonymous South Deering woman, "Just a Mom," wrote a letter to the *Bulletin* about the murder, dismissing the whole controversy as a "fuss." She

⁸⁷ *South Deering Bulletin*, June 30, 1960.

⁸⁸ *South Deering Bulletin*, February 1, 1957.

claimed that Mamie Till's demands for justice against the "alleged" killers, Roy Bryant (Carolyn's husband) and J.W. Milam, only obscured the threat that integration posed to stable households maintained by white mothers. Just a Mom pleaded with the readers, "What about all the white children who are being raped and murdered by negroes of all ages? It's all hush-hush about that. Don't they think we white mothers have hearts, too?"⁸⁹

Till's murder became one of the foremost tragedies of the postwar civil rights movement and a symbol of black Americans' struggle for equality in both the North and the South.⁹⁰ Ironically, the SDIA seemed to recognize this at the time. The SDIA connected their own fight against integration with that of the white South through both rhetorical and practical means. One editorial praised the South, stating "These good people have been crucified by the newspapers, T.V., and radio-stations" for resisting "night-stick tactics" to force integration. The *Bulletin* reprinted editorials from Southern papers that shared its hardline view on race. The metaphor invoked Biblical justifications for slavery as contemporary proof of the necessity of segregation. A few Southerners subscribed to the *Bulletin* and wrote letters of support. One from Mobile, Alabama, stated that "Down in this country, we are for you 100%."⁹¹ The SDIA paper even reached Congressman James C. Davis of Georgia, one of the ninety-nine Southern politicians who signed the "Southern Manifesto" in 1956, a declaration of their opposition to integration following the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in 1954. Davis wrote the *Bulletin* a

⁸⁹ *South Deering Bulletin*, September 10, 1955.

⁹⁰ Timothy Tyson, *The Blood of Emmett Till* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017) and Elliot Gorn, *The Lynching of Emmett Till* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), forthcoming.

⁹¹ *South Deering Bulletin*, November 18, 1955.

congratulatory letter on its third anniversary.⁹² Dinnocenzo penned a front-page special feature for a Southern segregationist publication, *The White Sentinel*. He also went on a three-week tour through small towns of the South in the spring of 1958. While these overtures never resulted in a deeper partnership with racist organizations in the South, they demonstrate how the ideology of urban white-working class violence transcended parochial limits.

The Calumet Park riot provided a fitting capstone for a violent era. Although not directly caused by a housing conflict, the brawl stemmed from the tensions in nearby South Deering. The SDIA victory did not eliminate, but only encouraged, extremely discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. A black social club from Woodlawn hosted a picnic in the park that drew the ire of 150 white teenaged boys and girls, who attacked club members with "bottles and iron rods...like Indians in a Western thriller."⁹³ Once news of the attack spread, white residents in the East Side and South Deering neighborhoods roamed through the streets looking to do damage. The mob smashed twenty-five cars and injured thirty-five people, including a two-year old boy. South Deering residents in particular used the violence as an opportunity to launch a new assault against the remaining black tenants in the project, breaking into apartments and smashing televisions and furniture. The city marshaled 934 officers to restore order.⁹⁴

The response of the city, even under Mayor Richard J. Daley, echoed that of his predecessors. His office issued a press release denouncing the violence. He scheduled conferences with civil rights organizations, black churches, and other progressive groups.

⁹² *South Deering Bulletin*, May 22, 1958.

⁹³ *Chicago Defender*, July 29, 1957.

⁹⁴ *Chicago Defender*, July 30, 1957.

Nonetheless, the riot and an obvious lack of progress in race relations left many media observers in a poor mood. The *Defender* editors concurred with Edwin C. Berry, executive director of the Chicago Urban League, who claimed "this city is the fruit of segregation and that Chicago is the most segregated large city in the United States...the people's plea for 'open occupancy' has been ignored." The editorial concluded that "it seems strange that segregation bars are being lowered in the deep South while in Chicago we are raising them higher!"⁹⁵ Some mainstream papers echoed the opinion expressed in the *Defender*. *The Chicago-Daily News* encouraged the city to punish the instigators, but the title admitted that "hatred can't be punished."⁹⁶ A *Sun-Times* editorial noted that "no law-abiding citizen can look with equanimity upon such a wanton disregard for personal and property rights" and called for the city to "arrest everyone possible" in order to prevent another shameful outbreak. An editorial cartoon that accompanied the piece showed a massive tiger labeled as "racial hatred" pouncing on picnickers in the park.⁹⁷ The lack of convictions for the rioting justified the pessimistic outlook. Nearly four months after the riot, only 5 of the 133 people arrested were convicted. None ever went to jail.

Not surprisingly, such convictions failed to deter the eruptions on the Southwest Side and elsewhere. "If you were a white resident of the area," Vernon Jarrett recollected about the Airport Homes riot twenty-five years later, "there was only one way to think [publicly] and that was think hate or remain silent."⁹⁸ The various improvement associations that supported these

⁹⁵ "Our Segregated City," *Chicago Defender*, September 10, 1957.

⁹⁶ *Chicago Daily News*, July 30, 1957.

⁹⁷ "To Cope with Mobs," *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 31, 1957.

⁹⁸ Jarrett, *Chicago Tribune*, November 22, 1972. The brackets here are from the original author.

riots faced little competition. No integrationist civic organizations existed in West Lawn or South Deering. This local consensus allowed improvement associations to successfully frame the neighborhood riot as a “protest” against a multitude of external foes, such as communists, the NAACP, and the federal government, who backed the growing civil rights movement. The tactics of brute force and the ideas underpinning it proved too potent for the city to challenge, as the fates of Kelly, Kennelly, and Wood revealed. For the Southwest Side and other white working-class communities in Chicago, transcending this violent paradigm first required change to come from within.

CHAPTER TWO

A GOOD PLACE TO WORK AND PLAY; A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE AND STAY

A rash of juvenile crime in the spring of 1957 alarmed Irene Simolke, a middle-aged housewife of four who lived on the 6300 block of Damen Avenue in the South Lynne neighborhood. As South Lynne was an older, predominantly working-class white ethnic residential community with housing stock dating back to the late nineteenth century, Simolke feared that the Chicago Police Department devoted inadequate resources to counter the growing criminality. She invited several neighbors on her block who expressed similar concerns to a meeting in her kitchen on a rainy Friday night that May to discuss solutions. Afterwards, local businessmen in the 63rd-Ashland Chamber of Commerce encouraged Simolke and other Damen Avenue residents to create a civic organization to represent South Lynne. Reconvening in her kitchen the following month and now nineteen men and women strong, these homeowners drafted a constitution, chose officers, and raised money to found the South Lynne Community Council (SLCC). Within three years, the SLCC grew to 1,500 paying members, eight Protestant and Catholic churches, and several dozen businesses. Simolke served as its first chairman.

Simolke and the other early SLCC members quickly realized that their beloved neighborhood, a one square mile area bounded by 59th Street to the north, 67th Street to the south, Western Avenue to the west, and Ashland Avenue to the east, exhibited other symptoms of deterioration besides delinquents and greaser gangs. Park facilities and playgrounds lacked sufficient maintenance. Numerous vacancies appeared on the 63rd Street commercial strip.

The large rail yard between Western Avenue and Hamilton Avenue became an illegal dumping ground for automobiles and garbage. Several landlords allowed their properties to fall into disrepair in South Lynne's eastern half, attracting vermin. Packs of dogs roamed the streets, alleys, and yards, leaving foul mementos in their wake.¹

The SLCC faced an even greater challenge that made addressing all these quality of life issues difficult, one that few South Side neighborhoods adequately solved by 1957: racial change. By the late 1950s, Ashland Avenue was the new dividing line between the white Southwest Side and the expanding "Black Belt." Neighborhoods to South Lynne's east, such as West Ogden Park and Englewood, became the latest communities to succumb to rapid racial turnover caused by discriminatory lending practices and real estate speculators. Although no black families lived in South Lynne at the time of the formation of the SLCC, many residents looked across Ashland and feared that they were next to suffer from economic disinvestment and neighborhood decline. The signs of decay and neglect throughout South Lynne suggested that some homeowners and businesses already viewed such an outcome as inevitable.

The typical remedy other white civic associations prescribed—on the Southwest Side and other parts of the city—called for intimidation and force against any black homeowners who dared to purchase property in their neighborhoods. Yet while South Lynne residents shared many of the anxieties that sparked the infamous race riots during the 1940s and 1950s, the SLCC repudiated these violent methods. The SLCC initially refused to endorse either segregation or integration.

¹ "South Lynne Seeks Group Participation," *Chicago Tribune*, July 27, 1961; Minutes of June 7, 1957, South Lynne Community Council Records, Box 2 Folder General Meeting Minutes, CHM; *South Lynne Community Council News*, October 1959, CHM; "South Lynne Picks New Officers," *Chicago Tribune*, May 27, 1958; "South Lynne Leaders Assumes New Post," *Chicago Tribune*, September 17, 1961. ¹ South Lynne encompassed roughly the northern half of what today is known as West Englewood

They instead adopted a different tactic: peaceful strategies to renovate their neighborhood and convince existing homeowners to stay.

The history of the South Lynne Community Council and the people it represented deepens current interpretations of how white working-class neighborhoods received and responded to the civil rights movement in the urban North. Although a new wave of studies emphasizes the importance of the movement's evolution in northern cities, certain myths persist. Most residents in neighborhoods like South Lynne in the late 1950s are typically depicted as ignorant at best, and hostile at worst, to the movement and its supporters. Others describe sympathetic urban whites as conscientiously dormant until mass media "woke" them up with their vivid portrayals of the Freedom Movement in the South in the early-to-mid 1960s.² While some recent scholarship corrects the problem of black passivity presented in some of the major postwar studies of race and space in Chicago, the polarized binary of inertia and antagonism continues to define working-class white communities.³

The members of the South Lynne Community Council did not comfortably fit into this framework. Several years before the arrival of Dr. Martin Luther King to Chicago and within the boundaries of their small neighborhood, they confronted questions of national importance: open housing, equal opportunity in education, and the necessity of extending the full rights of

² Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*; Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: NYU Press, 2008); Gene Roberts and Kevin Kilbanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 3-12. Sugrue's epic synthesis is perhaps most responsible for the renewed emphasis on the Northern civil rights movement, but there were important precursors. See Cynthia Taylor, *A. Philip Randolph: The Religious Journey of an African American Labor Leader* (New York: NYU Press, 2005); Megan Taylor Shockley, *We, Too, Are Americans: African American Women in Detroit and Richmond, 1940-1954* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

³ Lionel Kimble Jr., *A New Deal for Bronzeville: Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights in Chicago, 1935-1955* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015); Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

citizenship to a long disenfranchised racial minority. They reckoned with their own biases, assumptions, and fears about race, although their decision to ultimately align themselves with the civil rights movement left many South Lynne homeowners embittered and mistrustful of the SLCC.

The SLCC's pacific course suggested that an increasing number of white Chicagoans found violence distasteful. But it also revealed that plenty of hardline racists remained. South Lynne dealt with only a handful of blockbusting realtors in its first five years, and the neighborhood stayed completely white until late 1960s. The organization's refusal to state a clear position on integration in these early years allowed members with regressive views on race to project a segregationist vision onto the SLCC. The admittance of the first black property owner to the SLCC in 1962 created a large dissident faction determined to take it over and recast it as an all-white "keep out" group. Rival white improvement associations adjacent to the SLCC's borders encouraged violence against black homeowners and instigated housing riots that threatened to destabilize South Lynne.

The SLCC endorsed open housing, viewing it as a means to spare their community from white flight. They argued that block-by-block racial change was impossible if every white neighborhood in Chicago welcomed black residents at the same time. The dissident homeowners aligned itself with a movement sponsored by the Chicago Real Estate Board dedicated to defeating open occupancy in the name of individual property rights and the United States Constitution. The fight over the SLCC thus became emblematic of the growing divide among white working-class city dwellers over the nature—and place—of civil rights in their community. Grassroots progressivism and conservatism rose together and in opposition to each other in

South Lynne.

The SLCC by-laws hardwired the organization's early ambiguity on race into its foundation. Its founders organized the non-profit corporation expressly:

to unite the people of the community in a program to maintain and improve the area as a good place in which to live; to encourage neighbors of different backgrounds to live and work together to: (a) maintain and improve their property in accordance with building code and zone laws (b) promote health, safety, and welfare projects in the community (c) build mutual confidence and neighborliness (d) encourage and support social, recreational, and cultural improvements.⁴

"Different backgrounds" meant ethnicity or occupation, not race, to the SLCC in 1957, as the neighborhood was completely white. The by-laws further stated that only property owners and tenants within the SLCC's boundaries could become members.⁵ Still, the possibility that residents of any racial group might join if they bought property in South Lynne worried some of the original members of the SLCC. In an early meeting prior to incorporation, one member asked whether or not the SLCC could deny property to "undesirable buyers and tenants." The general consensus was "not through any organizational channels."⁶ When another member told a real estate company that the SLCC "organized to stop the colored from moving in," Simolke demurred during a public steering committee meeting that "legally we could not say such a thing." Another officer quickly changed the topic and insisted that such a question missed the point, because the SLCC had "a multitude of civic improvements as our purposes."⁷ The SLCC avoided discussing integration directly in its early years. Instead, organization leaders

⁴ Articles of Incorporation, South Lynne Community Council (SLCC) Records, Box 1 Folder 1, By-Laws Articles of Incorporation, CHM. The SLCC received its charter in September 1958.

⁵ Council By-Laws, SLCC Records, Box 1 Folder 1, CHM.

⁶ Minutes of July 5, 1957, SLCC Records, Box 2 Folder 1, CHM.

⁷ Minutes of Steering Meeting, June 6, 1958, SLCC Records Box 2 Folder 3, CHM.

publicized the actions it undertook on behalf of the people already living in South Lynne.

Additionally, the name “South Lynne” represented a recent rebranding effort by homeowners to distinguish their neighborhood from Englewood, which by 1957 suffered from a notable economic decline after massive racial turnover. Prior to the formation of the council, the area the founders pledged to organize was more commonly known as West Englewood. The name South Lynne harkened to the distant past, referring to the original subdivisions planned by land speculators in the nineteenth century. By rejecting West Englewood in favor of South Lynne, the council recalled a quainter era when its neighborhood’s years of growth still lay ahead of it. Of course, the name South Lynne also implied that the neighborhoods’ inhabitants, in contrast to the misfortunate community to the east, were not black.⁸

The SLCC scored a notable victory against blockbusting at 59th Street and Damen Avenue in the summer of 1959. An unnamed real estate speculator harassed homeowners near this intersection for over a year. On behalf of these weary residents, SLCC members under Simolke’s leadership “harrowed the police to prosecute him” and then brought the speculator to court on multiple occasions. The SLCC lamented that the peddler’s strong political connections allowed him to escape justice, but a strong showing by council members at his next hearing forced the court to take action. This call for mobilization proved effective, and the council defeated the peddler three months later.⁹

⁸ South Lynne originated as part of 320 acres of land owned by Joseph W. Drexel. Drexel sold these acres to Asa Vail and Nicholas J. Vail in 1860. The Vails chose the name South Lynne when dividing this large parcel for sale, although why they settled on the name South Lynne is unknown. The name fell out of disuse by the early twentieth century as the neighborhood grew until its revival in the late 1950s. See “South Lynne: Unpleasant News for Purchasers,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1875; Interview with Peter Pantarotto, July 23, 2015.

⁹ *SLCC News*, September 1959, CHM; *SLCC News*, November 1959, CHM. The SLCC declined to provide further details on this case, summarizing the victory by stating that “details are a fascinating story but there is no room for them.”

The leaders of the SLCC believed that maintaining and improving the neighborhood's existing qualities discouraged real estate speculators from plying their craft in their community. Panic peddling failed if they removed "panic" from the equation. To this end, a writer in the SLCC newsletter encouraged members to "be positive, take courage, be patient, and be generous...fear and panic are useless. Our purpose is to develop the tools for an orderly approach to our problems - housing, delinquency, crime, safety, health." SLCC leadership pointed out that contrary to speculator claims, eighty-five percent of all neighborhoods in the United States saw a rise or no change in property values. They acknowledged that youth gangs existed within its boundaries but argued that an organization with attentive members who reported such activity to the police would break them up.¹⁰ Maintaining a calm approach meant that the South Lynne residents could avoid the barbarous, illegal violence that plagued other white neighborhoods afraid of integration. "We strive to work out a positive policy and program," claimed one publication. "We want not to keep out any one but to keep up the fine South Lynne we have; to keep in the fine South Lynne people who are here." White flight was impossible if no one wanted to move.¹¹

The real estate speculator represented only one of the "two evil, money-hungry, humanity-hating kinds of men who mask as business men" according to SLCC leaders who pledged to eliminate from South Lynne. Irresponsible landlords "who live somewhere in Florida or an upper class suburban area in a palatial home while tenants in another neighborhood crowd into firetrap rooms" constituted the second. The organization conducted a survey of blocks in its

¹⁰ *SLCC News*, November 1960, CHM.

¹¹ *SLCC News*, May 1960, CHM.

eastern half near the Ashland Avenue racial boundary, recorded any obvious housing code violations, and reported hazardous properties to the city. A high-ranking police captain from the middle-class Beverly neighborhood on the Far Southwest Side, Albert Anderson, owned one such six-flat at 6600-02 Marshfield Avenue. Mice, rats, and bugs infested the apartment building, jeopardizing the health of the tenants and nearby property values. The SLCC alerted the city and a leading Southwest Side newspaper, the *Southtown Economist* about the violations, which prompted Anderson to quickly sell the building instead of making the necessary repairs.¹²

Not content to let such a derelict property linger on the market, the SLCC stepped up the pressure on Anderson by informing his boss, Police Superintendent Orlando Wilson, of his misdeeds. Simolke argued that allowing an officer of the law to own a slum absolved all other slumlords in Chicago. She politely informed Wilson of the SLCC's intention to "embarrass him publicly" by picketing Anderson's home and his precinct headquarters. The SLCC's dogged pursuit of Anderson led to threats from other Chicago police officers. One night, a man identified as "Captain Dier" confronted Simolke in the SLCC office and told her that she "could get into a lot of trouble by picketing Anderson" and that any SLCC protestor risked arrest. Undeterred by the threat, Simolke and the SLCC carried on with the demonstrating.¹³

The success of these non-violent strategies depended upon the SLCC making their neighborhood a more attractive place to remain, as proclaimed by their motto "a good place to work and play, a good place to live and stay!"¹⁴ In order to keep South Lynne's aging housing

¹² Housing and Zoning Committee Complaint, Sept. 1959, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 6, CHM

¹³ Housing and Zoning Committee Complaint, Sept. 1959, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 6, CHM; Letter to Superintendent O.W. Wilson, July 22, 1960, SLCC Records Box 15 Folder 6, CHM; *SLCC News*, August 1960, CHM; Untitled Irene Simolke testimony, SLCC Records Box 15 Folder 6, CHM.

stock healthy, the SLCC sponsored an annual home improvement contest, which awarded money to the homeowners who made the most drastic upgrades to their property. The council sponsored baseball, softball, and bowling youth teams to provide children and adolescents an alternative to gang activity. The SLCC successfully lobbied for more police to safeguard its parks and streets. They even convinced Warner Brothers to keep the Ogden Theatre, one of the jewels of the 63rd Street commercial strip, open. Simolke launched an aggressive campaign to shut down coin-operated laundromats in South Lynne, which she described as fire traps and magnets for criminals due to poor wiring and a lack of employee supervision. SLCC pressure encouraged the city council to pass an ordinance that forbade such laundromats operating overnight without an attendant on staff.¹⁵

Encouraging residents to "live and stay" also meant convincing its members that life in South Lynne was superior to suburban Chicago. From 1950 to 1960, the city suffered the first population loss in its history, as nearly 400,000 white residents left for newer housing and larger lawns in the suburbs.¹⁶ The SLCC could not deflect blockbusting forever if too many existing residents desired to leave in the first place. SLCC leaders admitted that the suburbs featured impressive homes, but this single advantage did not compensate for the drawbacks. They claimed that former members who moved to the suburbs informed the organization that they felt

¹⁴*SLCC News*, January 1960, CHM.

¹⁵ *SLCC News*, January 1959, CHM; *SLCC News*, August 1960, CHM; *SLCC News*, August 1961, CHM; *SLCC News*, October 1962, CHM; Executive Meeting Minutes, July 13, 1961, SLCC Records, Box 2 Folder 2, CHM.

¹⁶ "Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1951," United States Census Bureau, <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/statcomp/documents/1951-02.pdf>; "Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1961," United States Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/library/publications/1961/compendia/statab/82ed.html>; Walter Nugent, "Demography," in *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, eds. Reiff et. al (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), accessed February 5, 2017, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/962.html>.

miserable and regretted their choice. The basic infrastructure of the suburbs paled in comparison to the city: a lack of water, drainage, transportation, and garbage collection. Worse, the suburbs suffered from their own "blight" and crime due to understaffed and inexperienced law enforcement agencies. Suburban living also meant a greater fiscal burden for the homeowner, necessitated by paying for two cars instead of one and "heavy taxes and assessments on the poison-ivy covered cottage."¹⁷ Urban neighborhoods such as South Lynne, on the other hand, offered the sophistication of a world-class city and better catered to the subjectivities of working-class life. SLCC officers boasted that 63rd Street featured restaurants as "suave as any on Rush or Randolph or at the Old Triangle" yet provided an environment where "one-bath, one car, one television families don't have to put out the toddler in full dress. Mom can wear a babushka to go shopping."¹⁸ Moving to the suburbs meant trading away all these benefits in exchange for a longer commute and a financial headache.¹⁹

These tactics worked during the council's first five years. While nearly every neighborhood east of Ashland Avenue transitioned from white to black, South Lynne defied this trend. Yet SLCC leadership would not keep every white resident in—or every black person out—forever. In March 1962, a Tuskegee-educated, Department-of-Agriculture-certified, black veterinarian from Hyde Park, Dr. George P. Harris, purchased a recently vacated animal hospital at 6636 S. Ashland Avenue for \$25,000 after its white owner died. While Dr. Harris and his wife preferred to continue living in their Hyde Park apartment and had no intention of kicking out the

¹⁷ *SLCC News*, June 1959, CHM.

¹⁸ *SLCC News*, May 1960, CHM.

¹⁹ *SLCC News*, October 1962, CHM.

white tenants living in the apartments above their newly acquired business, their purchase of the hospital made them the first black property owners in South Lynne. The SLCC reported Dr. Harris' presence to the Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR) and requested that the Chicago Police Department monitor the building in case violence broke out. Fortunately, this transaction did not spark an immediate racial incident; in fact, nearby businesses sent Dr. Harris flowers and a cake after he opened. Dr. Harris also proved to be a more responsible owner than the previous veterinarian. The SLCC executive secretary and editor of its newsletter, William Gleeson, observed a cleaner facility with modern equipment, and he praised Dr. Harris for no longer allowing dogs to "run loose around the yard, which was a complaint leveled against the former vet there."²⁰

The arrival of Harris presented an important litmus test for the SLCC. Having never officially supported integration nor segregation, its executive committee now decided whether or not the organization's stated purpose in the by-laws ("to encourage neighbors of different backgrounds to live and work together") included black residents. The executive committee passed a motion to "accept the Harris family" in a closed meeting on April 12, but it refused to immediately publicize the decision until it drafted a press release to prevent any panic among homeowners or physical harm against Harris.²¹ Gleeson and Simolke authored the "statement of

²⁰ Untitled memo from Donna Scheid, SLCC Records, Box 19 Folder 5, CHM; Dr. George P. Harris, Jr., SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 6, CHM. *SLCC News*, May 1962, CHM;

²¹ Note on structure of SLCC: Under the initial by-laws, the Council was divided into an executive committee, steering committee, and general membership. The executive committee met in closed meetings and set the agenda for the monthly steering meetings, which were open to all. Members of the steering committee, elected annually by the general membership, voted whether or not take action on an item raised by the executive committee agenda. Three meetings a year were designated as "general meetings" that allowed any SLCC member to introduce resolutions from the floor. At the May general meeting, membership elected officers to head the executive committee (chairman, three co-chairmen, treasurer, corresponding secretary, and recording secretary). Chairs of committees created by the Council, such as Youth or Housing and Zoning, also served on the executive committee,

principle" issued in the May newsletter, which defended the executive committee's decision but stopped short of endorsing integration. They admitted that a black man purchased property within the SLCC territory. They also professed the SLCC's commitment to law and order: "The Council recognizes the legally inherent right of any person to sell or buy property wherever he so desires. The Council further recognizes the correlative duty of every other person to respect that right." Still, the words "integration" or "segregation," let alone a firm position on either, never appeared in the statement. Instead, it offered non-committal claims such as "The Council is not 'for' or 'against' anything or anybody except as to how the principles apply to that person or thing."²²

The ambiguity of the "statement of principle" showed that the leaders of the SLCC remained committed to non-violence yet unwilling to leave their middle ground between integration and segregation. This soon changed. Under the guidance of its third chairman, the Rev. Ronald Graham, the pastor of Thoburn Methodist Church (64th Street and Paulina), the SLCC took definitive steps towards openly backing integration and civil rights. Born and raised on the Northwest Side of Chicago and educated at Boston University, the new chair did not live in South Lynne until 1959, when his church reassigned him from a post in south suburban Harvey. As Thoburn was one of the eight churches supporting the SLCC, Graham became a member by default, but he distinguished himself through the energy he dedicated to the organization. Within a year, he joined the executive committee as treasurer. Once this term

but these were appointed by the chairmen and approved by the steering committee. The SLCC changed in 1962, abolishing the steering committee in favor of making all monthly meetings "general" sessions.

²² Executive Meeting Minutes, April 12, 1962, SLCC Records, Box 2 Folder 3, CHM; Executive Meeting Minutes, May 2, 1962, SLCC Records, Box 2 Folder 2, CHM; *South Lynne Community Council News*, May 1962, CHM; Steering Committee Minutes, September 18, 1962, SLCC Records, Box 19 Folder 3, CHM.

expired in 1962, he successfully ran for chairman of the SLCC that May. The SLCC constitution facilitated the swift rise of this racially progressive outsider. Because it forbade any person from serving more than one two-year term in the same office, many of the moderate—or unsure—founding members no longer held major leadership positions. The frequent cycling of leadership enabled a shift in the ideology of the SLCC that benefited Dr. Harris. With Graham's encouragement, the SLCC accepted the new veterinarian's application to join the organization as a business member in July.²³

Graham also was a member of several metropolitan and national civil rights groups: the Church Federation of Greater Chicago, Interreligious Council on Urban Affairs, and the Interracial Council of Methodists. His connection and commitment to the civil rights movement, however, went far deeper than most SLCC members knew. Graham credited his mother and a Norwegian pastor at the Methodist church of his youth for imparting a message of racial tolerance that he remembered the rest of his life. Contrary to many other families in the neighborhood where he grew up, his mother taught him to treat other racial and ethnic groups respectfully. He suggested that his mother's involvement with activities at Hull House gave her open-minded views uncommon in her day. Although his mother died while he was an adolescent, he noted that he continued to receive a similar message through the mentorship of his pastor. These role models motivated Graham to become a minister, and he enrolled at Boston University in 1954 to get a Masters of Divinity degree.²⁴

²³ Chicago Commission on Human Relations commendation for Rev. Ronald R. Graham, SLCC Records, Box 18 Folder 3, CHM. No specific date, but the commendation indicates it was issued sometime between 1964 and 1965. Executive meeting minutes, Sept. 12, 1962, SLCC Records, Box 2 Folder 2, CHM.

While the Methodist Church still divided episcopal areas by race when Graham started his graduate education, Boston University earned a reputation for being the most liberal Methodist seminary under the leadership of Dean Walter Mueller. The progressive dean proactively recruited black students across the country to come to Boston for degrees, giving it an unusual level of diversity. Graham quickly befriended one such student. Observing that their university divided their seminary dormitory by race, Graham and his new friend resolved to integrate theology student housing. They successfully applied for the same suite of rooms. They noted that their rooms evolved into a makeshift salon for other black Ph.D. students at the university, who often dropped in for “bull sessions” to discuss civil rights issues. One of the frequent visitors was an advanced doctoral candidate and one-time seminar classmate of Graham’s finishing his dissertation, Martin Luther King, Jr. Sharing the same homiletics professor who assigned Gandhi’s autobiography, Graham recalled how King and the other black students who came to his room often debated the merits of non-violence in addressing racial segregation in America. King’s devotion in the affirmative became well-known across the nation, and eventually the world, soon after his graduation.²⁵

Graham returned closer to home after completing his degree. The Methodist Church assigned him to a church in the working-class Chicago suburb of Harvey, Illinois. There Graham worked in his own way to advance civil rights. One of his African-American classmates from Boston, Harvey Washington, also landed in Harvey to lead the black Methodist congregation.

²⁴ Interview with Ronald Graham, April 27, 2015, in author’s possession (hereafter Graham interview); Chicago Commission on Human Relations commendation for Rev. Ronald R. Graham, SLCC Records, Box 18 Folder 3, CHM.

²⁵ Graham interview.

Recognizing the absurdity of ministering separately from his colleague and friend on the basis of race, Washington and Graham unofficially mixed their congregations through social activities and other initiatives. In accordance with the Methodist Church's administrative practices, however, Graham only spent a few years in Harvey before reassignment. He heard that a struggling church in a white working-class Chicago neighborhood similar to the one where he grew up had trouble attracting qualified pastors. Graham immediately put his name forward, excited by the challenge to reverse the decline of Thoburn Methodist Church. While Graham had no trouble fitting in with his new congregation given their comparable backgrounds, he admitted that the high level of racial anxiety in South Lynne caught him off guard. As nearby Englewood was in the final stages of its transition from completely white to black at the time of his arrival, many in his church feared similar problems awaited them. Graham soon threw himself into council activities to help win the "stability" white families in the neighborhood clamored for. Nonetheless, he noted that his definition of "stability" differed from many others: his principles dictated that "stabilizing meant there were going to be blacks in the community."²⁶

Graham addressed concerns about potential for white flight following the admittance of Dr. Harris. He penned a lengthy column in the August newsletter explaining to SLCC members how blockbusters operated and earned tremendous profits from panic peddling. Graham emphasized that the realtor was the true villain in blockbusting, as this exploitative real estate practice harmed both black and white homeowners. He also obtained and distributed CCHR pamphlets on how to safely manage racial integration, such as "Buying Real Estate in a Racially

²⁶ Graham interview.

Changing Neighborhood."²⁷

Graham did not stand alone. Many other leading officers in the SLCC's executive board backed his position: Treasurer Peter Pantarotto, newspaper editor William Gleeson, and the recording secretary, Jean Buckley. Unlike their chairman, all were Roman Catholic. Their devotion to the SLCC also greatly eclipsed that of their ambivalent parish priest. Pantarotto credited the church's endorsement of liberal racial views during the Second Vatican Council for encouraging progressive Catholic residents such as himself to find an outlet to express their faith through social activism. Fostering stable integration in South Lynne through their affiliate parish in the council became their way of fulfilling the church's broader mission.²⁸ Buckley, a capable writer and devout in her faith, publicized her rationale in an article in *New City* magazine. She stated that "if Negroes begin to move more freely throughout Chicago and its suburbs, leaving fewer and fewer 'safe' all-white neighborhoods, it is possible South Lynne may avert panic, financial loss, and blight. It may very well develop into a stable community for all God's people."²⁹

Although Graham noted many other families in South Lynne supported the SLCC, he never divulged the extent of his ties to the civil rights movement while chairman. Afraid of inciting alarm against the council, he kept his past acquaintance with King and other black pastors from Boston University to himself. Graham offered his house as a waystation for his

²⁷ "Buying Real Estate in a Racially Changing Neighborhood," Chicago Commission on Human Relations, CHM.

²⁸ McGreevy, 152. Pantarotto noted that he and other Catholics in the Council drew inspiration from "Vatican II" and Archdiocesan leadership more than their local parish, as their priest at the time suffered from notable mental health issues which hindered his ability to do his job, let alone contribute to the council. See Interview with Peter Pantarotto, July 23, 2015, in author's possession (hereafter Pantarotto interview).

²⁹ Jean Hart Buckley, "A Community Organization Faces Racial Change," *New City* (May 1, 1964), 13.

black colleagues in the Methodist Church who needed to stock up heavily on supplies before visiting the South, given the lack of hotels willing to accept non-white guests. Upon their insistence, they asked Graham to draw the curtains over the windows while laying over lest their presence draw the attention of violent bigots. For similar reasons, Graham did not publicize a trip he made two years later to Montgomery, Alabama, to hear the speech given by King at the conclusion of his famous march from Selma.³⁰

While Graham succeeded in obscuring his full affiliation with civil rights causes, efforts by council leadership to educate South Lynne residents about the underlying causes of neighborhood decay had limited effectiveness. Many members remained skeptical, and even hostile, to Dr. Harris and the integration of the council. While Graham prepared against external threats such as realtors, the real danger to his chairmanship existed within the SLCC itself. The members chiefly responsible for interacting between the executive committee and South Lynne homeowners, the block captains, saw him as detrimental to the neighborhood's future. They feared Graham intended to use the SLCC as a device to integrate South Lynne, which went beyond the Council's constitutional purpose and against the wishes of most of its homeowners. Because the block captains distributed the SLCC newsletter and recruited new members, their leader, Al Burnette, possessed considerable influence. With the encouragement of Burnette and his ally on the executive committee, SLCC co-chairman Bernard Bredar, the block captains enrolled new members after Graham's election by promising that the organization in fact supported segregation.³¹

³⁰ Graham interview.

³¹ Executive committee meeting minutes, September 12, 1962, SLCC Records, Box 2 Folder 2, CHM; *SLCC News*, October 1962, CHM.

Graham and his allies also suffered from far more insidious threats than these parliamentary maneuvers after their acceptance of Dr. Harris. Graham and his wife received phone calls in the middle of the night, hearing nothing but heavy breathing on the other line. The calls did not cease until he offered to pray with the taciturn caller. Jean Buckley's household received even more intense harassment, as their furtive agitators called fire trucks and other emergency vehicles to their address. Worse, another threatened her nine-year old daughter over the phone, saying "We're gonna get your kids on their way home from school. Watch it."³² Although this bullying failed to cower Graham and Buckley, they realized the fault line within their organization went deeper than they ever imagined.

The first major intra-council conflict flared up at a monthly meeting in September that had twice the usual attendance. A member of the audience accused Graham of making Dr. Harris a "special case" in order to streamline his entry into the SLCC over the objections of everyone else. Graham denied this accusation. The agitated audience member continued to press the attack, suggesting that Graham would next invite Dr. Harris to the end-of-the-year dinner dance to socialize with white South Lynne wives and mothers. Another officer then informed Graham that he heard that eighty percent of block captains in the SLCC now sold memberships "on a keep-out basis," a figure which elicited incredulity from the chairman. One of Graham's supporters, the Rev. Harold Bolm, pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church, then motioned to censure the block captains for selling memberships this way "and thus misrepresenting the Constitution of the Council." Shockingly, this motion failed to pass by a twenty-four to twelve vote.³³

³² As recounted by Buckley's granddaughter, Simone Alexander, in an undergraduate sociology paper she wrote at Hampshire University, 2001. The paper included interviews with many former SLCC officers who no longer are alive. I received a copy of this paper from Ronald Graham.

The Council then held a vote to elect a new executive secretary, a position of critical importance to the Council's operation as it handled press duties and took the lead in defusing any racial tensions that arose in SLCC boundaries. Graham announced that the only two people considered by the executive committee for the job were Irene Simolke and Maurice O'Connell, an office steward for the Local 505 Classified Municipal Employees Union, AFL-CIO, and the secretary-treasurer of the Catholic publication, *Today*. At this point Bredar interrupted the proceedings, and demanded that Graham accept a third name, Walter Jorgensen. An elderly, retired property owner who supported Bredar and segregation, Jorgensen never indicated interest in any council positions prior to this meeting. Of thirty-seven eligible voters, sixteen voted for Jorgensen and sixteen voted for O'Connell. Graham possessed the tiebreaking vote and chose O'Connell. He defeated the first challenge to his authority and defended his vision for the SLCC by the slimmest of margins.³⁴

Burnette, Bredar, and their supporters remained defiant after this initial setback. Prior to the October meeting, they made crude leaflets and cards to stir up segregationist support. One such card read, "STOP INTEGRATION NOW! YOU CAN ON OCT. 18TH..YOUR VOTE IS IMPORTANT." Another read "SAVE THE COUNCIL. GIVE IT BACK TO THE PEOPLE. VOTE FOR JORGENSON FOR EXECUTIVE SECRETARY." They did not affix other names to these materials, instead signing it as "Property Owners of South Lynne." On the night of October 18, the dissidents brought their fury to bear at Thoburn Church. Around three hundred people crammed its hall to intimidate Graham and his supporters. When Graham started the

³³ Steering committee minutes, September 18, 1962, SLCC Records Box 2 Folder 3, CHM.

³⁴ *SLCC News*, October 1962, CHM.

proceedings by congratulating O'Connell on his selection as executive secretary, an audience member interjected and demanded that the council let everyone present "vote on Mr. O'Connell's hiring." A fierce hour-long debate resulted, but the dissidents withdrew this motion, instead mandating that the council terminate O'Connell's contract. When one member asked why so many present wished to remove O'Connell, Bredar accused him of being "an outsider who also 'took half an hour' to answer a question concerning integration at an earlier Council meeting." Immediately after this statement, another attendee requested that Graham clarify the SLCC's position on the anti-integration business cards circulating throughout the neighborhood.³⁵

Graham replied that the cards did not represent the council's agenda for the meeting; only the official newsletter served in that capacity. The cards "represented a trick played upon the residents who had come to jam the hall expecting a fight 'to stop integration.'"³⁶ Graham stated that while the council should listen to all viewpoints, an overt stance against integration violated the SLCC by-laws. He also admonished those in attendance for bringing such embarrassing "literature" into his church. Graham's commentary ended the raucous atmosphere, but it hardly constituted a triumph. The *South Lynne Community Council News* reported that "a considerable number of the gathering" walked out of the building. After the malcontents left, Graham promised the remaining audience that his actions regarding Dr. Harris presented the best way to prevent blockbusting. "It is for our Council to keep informed, to keep cool. We did not retract our boundaries when Dr. Harris moved into our area...we are able to say 'we are backing away from

³⁵ October 1962 general meeting minutes, SLCC Records, Box 2 Folder 1, CHM.

³⁶ *SLCC News*, November 1962, CHM; Executive Meeting Minutes, October 29, 1962 SLCC Records, Box 19 Folder 3, CHM.

nothing."³⁷

SLCC officers and members sympathetic to Graham rallied around the embattled chairman. One housewife who wrote to the *News* denounced the dissidents and stated that they undermined "neighborliness" in the SLCC. Gleeson defended Graham and racial integration in an editorial that appeared in the newsletter. He reminded readers that "a house divided against itself will fall. The real estate speculator knows this, and he takes advantage of factions in organizations like our Council which are meant to keep a neighborhood healthy and attractive regardless of the mixture of politics, religion, race, economic level, or other differences that exist in...the neighbors living here."³⁸

These assurances did not resolve the major rupture within the SLCC over integration. If Graham and his supporters initially doubted the degree to which block captains distributed memberships on the basis of racial exclusion, they took such reports seriously by the end of 1962. The by-laws also forced Graham to accept the dissident presence and their resolutions, as the SLCC lacked an official protocol for expulsion. Consequently, at an executive committee meeting following the wild October 18th affair, Graham realized he had no means to overturn O'Connell's firing. O'Connell resigned, but not before apologizing for the bitterness caused by his initial hiring and lack of clarity about integration. O'Connell claimed that "he was vague about 'integration'...because the terms 'integration' and 'segregation' are vague in themselves; that he does not himself fully understand what they mean."³⁹ Graham also responded to the criticism

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *SLCC News*, December 1962, CHM.

that the Council lacked sufficient democracy. Over the winter of 1962-1963, Graham fostered several new amendments to make the SLCC more egalitarian and undermine his opposition. The amendments abolished the elected steering committee that decided the organization's monthly actions—such decisions now fell to the vote of the general membership. He also made personnel concessions. When the block captain chairman, Al Burnette, resigned that January, Graham accepted his handpicked replacement, Margaret Strain, an employee of Marquette National Bank and husband to a Chicago police officer.⁴⁰

These allowances failed to placate the segregationists, whose ambitions expanded along with the escalating racial tensions in the area during the spring of 1963. The city's largest housing riot in two years erupted at a duplex one block south of the SLCC's borders at 6757-6759 Marshfield Avenue in the Murray Park neighborhood on April 17. Similar to South Lynne, Murray Park was a white ethnic, mostly working-class residential neighborhood; unlike South Lynne, its leading organization, the Murray Park Civic Association (MPCA), publicly avowed an "anti-Negro policy." MPCA leaders told their members to use violence to enforce the Ashland Avenue racial line.⁴¹ Murray Park residents mistakenly identified two black furniture movers as the building's new tenants and formed a mob of over 1,500 people, predominantly teenage boys, to deny them entry. Pledging "to give our new neighbors a welcome," the mob threw rocks at the movers and ransacked the property for two days. The city needed a rain storm, more than one hundred cops, and thirteen police dogs to restore the peace.⁴²

⁴⁰ *SLCC News*, December 1962, CHM; *SLCC News*, April 1963, CHM; Executive meeting minutes, January 24, 1963, SLCC Records, Box 2 Folder 2, CHM; Executive meeting minutes, March 14, 1963, SLCC Records, Box 2 Folder 3, CHM; Report on Block Captain Activity, 1963, SLCC Records, Box 3 Folder 2, CHM.

⁴¹ "Priest Rebukes Biased Southwest Group For Fostering Integration," *Chicago Daily Defender*, March 14, 1963.

The concerted efforts by the dissidents to segregate South Lynne led Graham and his allies to fear such chaos might breach their territory. The MPCA also accused the SLCC of attempting to integrate the duplex, a claim which gave Graham's opponents more ammunition. Gleeson responded by denouncing both the MPCA and the violence it encouraged in an editorial that appeared in both the organization's newsletter and *Southtown Economist*. Gleeson pointed out both the Chicago Commission on Human Relations and the Archdiocese of Chicago "rebuked" the MPCA for its racist and inflammatory rhetoric months before the riot broke out. He blamed the MPCA for sowing discord within South Lynne by disrupting SLCC meetings and distributing racist literature. He discouraged any South Lynne residents from imitating the MPCA by concluding that violence never deterred, but in fact facilitated, panic.⁴³

A similar outbreak never occurred South Lynne. Gleeson's stand against the MPCA, however, made him the next target of segregationist wrath. During the general membership meeting in May, which doubled as the annual election for SLCC officers, the dissidents seized control of every co-chairmanship within the council. As co-chairmen were second only to Graham on the organization's hierarchy, the dissidents now possessed greater control over the executive committee. The upcoming election made two of these positions available, and one dissident leader, Bernard Bredar, already controlled the third. Strain submitted a letter of resignation to the Council as block captain chairman prior to the meeting in order to run for one co-chairmanship under the pretense that "she felt the Council did not represent 'the opinion and views of the residents of the community.'" Another vocal dissident, Stephen Muffitt, joined Strain

⁴² "Big Mob Defies Police, Stones Chicago Home," *Chicago Daily Defender*, April 20, 1963;

⁴³ Edward Marciniak, "We are Fed Up' Too," *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 20, 1963; *SLCC News*, May 1963, CHM; William Gleeson, "A Victory for Violence?" *Southtown Economist*, April 17, 1963.

to take the other co-chair slot. Strain made a motion to hold elections at the onset of the meeting, and both dissident candidates won easily. After the announcement of the results, Strain immediately made a motion to call for the resignation of Gleeson as editor of the newsletter. The motion "was seconded by three different persons, indicating the tenor of a large part of the assembly." Strain blasted Gleeson for issuing such a "controversial" piece without the permission of the executive committee as grounds for his dismissal. Bredar agreed and added that Gleeson always printed editorials without the leadership's authorization.⁴⁴

Graham disagreed and stated that a member of the executive committee reviewed and approved every article in the newsletter. He received timely support when other members stepped in to defend both Gleeson and himself. Buckley stated that Strain could not possibly know whether or not Gleeson defied the council's leadership, given that she had only been an officer for a matter of minutes. She also maintained that forcing Gleeson to resign risked depriving the council of a professional, skilled editor whose work allowed the newsletter to reach a circulation of 4,500 by 1963 and earn a \$350 profit. Buckley then offered a biting assessment of the dissident faction: "You are the losers...you degrade yourselves, your community organization and your neighborhood by rejecting him for his reporting of the truth."⁴⁵

Another speaker from the floor simply wished to know if Gleeson, and by extension, the SLCC, supported integration. Simolke, at this point the head of the youth committee, replied that "Because integration has a complicated meaning, I can't say what Mr. Gleeson is for...but the truth was told. The article says we are against violence." Her answer infuriated the coach of the

⁴⁴ Handwritten Card to Publicize Meeting against Graham and allies, May 1963, SLCC Records, Box 14 Folder 5, CHM; *SLCC News*, June 1963, CHM.

⁴⁵ *SLCC News*, June 1963, CHM.

local youth bowling team who retorted that she once expressed support for segregation. Simolke denied the allegation, proclaiming "I have never been against the colored...in a sense, I feel the same as many of you. I do not like my son being one of three white children in a classroom of Negro children. I would not want to be one person with 49 Negroes on my block. But I would not throw rocks at them." When Simolke served as the first SLCC chairman from 1958-1960, she never made a public statement about integration. Even in closed executive committee meetings, she offered only cagey remarks about race. Whatever her beliefs then, the Council's original founder finally gave a concrete, albeit qualified, endorsement of racial integration.⁴⁶

The fact that both the original and current chairmen opposed the segregationists did not deter Strain from seeking Gleeson's resignation. She then claimed executive approval of his article did not matter, because the editorial featured numerous inaccuracies. Ironically, Strain cited an article about the riot from *Jet*, the nation's leading African-American magazine, as proof of Gleeson's incompetence.⁴⁷ For the final speaker on the motion, this last claim went too far. Martin Gleeson, William's father, confronted Strain and the other dissidents in defense of his son. The elder Gleeson stated that he had deep roots in South Lynne, having owned his home for nearly four decades. He, his wife, and all ten of their children were dedicated parishioners at St. Theodore's. He always enjoyed living in South Lynne, until the rift that now put his son's job and reputation within the community on the line. He defended the decision to include Dr. Harris, arguing that a college-educated professional benefitted the neighborhood regardless of their race. He praised the council's efforts to improve South Lynne, even if he disagreed with some of their

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

decisions. He concluded that "the agitators are dangerous...and I'm giving out a warning...If these agitators get into executive power in the Council, then heaven help South Lynne." Following Martin Gleeson's emotional appeal, the SLCC finally voted on the motion. By a count of 38-19, the younger Gleeson remained editor of the newsletter.⁴⁸

The failure to remove the newsletter editor represented the first major defeat for the SLCC dissidents. Nevertheless, they still held every co-chairmanship. At the next membership meeting in June, Strain, Muffitt, and Bredar attempted to strip Graham of his powers and office. When Graham attempted to rule them out of order, Bredar demanded the floor and "shouted at Rev. Graham to resign, which was taken up by part of the crowd."⁴⁹ While Bredar's motion signified the boldest attack on Graham yet, it lacked any basis in the council's by-laws. Graham dismissed Bredar's motion by ruling him out of order, but he allowed for Strain's vote on the appointments. Although the split ballots meant each vote was close, all of Graham's choices made it through. The dissidents made one final push to censor the paper and requested that the executive committee forbid Gleeson from referring to "integration, segregation, or other civic organizations." Strain also called for the executive committee to have final editorial review over the newsletter since Gleeson "got Dr. Harris' membership and he does not give the views of most of the people here." Graham and Pantarotto dismissed these motions as impossible due to the by-laws, which also required the newsletter to be accurate and informative.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *SLCC News*, July 1963, CHM.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* The by-laws empowered Graham to appoint the chairs of every SLCC committee. Muffitt argued that this process was undemocratic. He instead demanded that the chairman, treasurer, and co-chairmen make three committee chair appointments each, which effectively would allow the segregationists to control a majority of the organization's operations. Pantarotto informed Muffitt that only an amendment to the by-laws made during the annual meeting could make this possible, and that he would have to wait eleven months. Strain countered that the

While the next two meetings proceeded without incident, the dissidents planned one final gambit to usurp the council: the elimination of its religious members. During the August meeting, Graham called for a vote on yet another committee chair appointment, a Catholic priest and counselor from St. Rita High School, located a block west of the SLCC's western border. Strain spoke on behalf of the dissidents against the appointment, stating "we have always believed in the division of religion and government. The church has no business in a civic organization." Simolke countered that numerous churches belonged to the SLCC since 1957, and that the SLCC, in spite of its state charter, "is not 'government'...it is a group of neighbors trying to live together for the betterment of the community." Rose Wolske, Strain's replacement as block captain chairman and a fellow dissident known for vowing to physically assault any black family that moved into South Lynne, concurred. She argued that all clergy in the SLCC should be relegated to advisory roles with no voting powers. Reminding Graham of his status as an outsider, Wolske also declared that the council above all owed service to the homeowners who had a financial stake in the community. Graham promised Wolske that the priest possessed sound character, which did not satisfy her. She asked, "He may be a good man, but he cannot go against the teachings of the Church?" When Graham suggested that all Catholics followed the Church's teachings, Wolske replied "Regardless of our religion, this does not mean we have to follow the Church's teachings to the letter."⁵¹

The dissident desire to untangle neighborhood activism from religious identity reflected the way the civil rights movement in the urban North altered the relationship between the

appointments still had to be approved by the voting members in attendance, and she motioned for a vote on each of Graham's choices separately.

⁵¹ *South Lynne Community Council News*, September 1963, CHM.

Catholic Church and its parishioners during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Historians note that after World War II, the racially progressive leaders in the Church viewed individual parishes as an ineffective unit for handling the complexities of racial change, especially given the fact that many parishioners held negative views about African Americans. The Archdiocese of Chicago believed that its Catholic neighborhoods would survive the pressures of blockbusting if they organized across parish lines to unite with other religions, ethnicities, and races. Prominent Catholic leaders in Chicago, such as Monsignor John J. Egan, head of the archdiocese's conservation program and later the Office of Urban Affairs, and its new archbishop, Albert Meyer, suggested that community organizations created along the Alinsky tradition provided the best chance to meet the Church's interreligious and interracial goals. Although Alinsky himself expressed skepticism at the ability of his organizations to broker racial cooperation, he assisted the archdiocese in its project to create an interfaith, pro-integration umbrella organization in predominantly white middle-class neighborhoods on the South Side of Chicago, the Organization of Southwest Communities (OSC), in 1959. Alinsky also received funding from the Archdiocese to create the Woodlawn Organization in 1960, his first to serve the needs of a predominantly black neighborhood. The alliance between Alinsky and the Catholic Church marked what one journalist called "The Golden Age" of community organizing in Chicago.⁵²

Although not a pure "Alinsky-ite" organization due to its amateur origins, the SLCC embodied these trends. The organization featured strong Protestant and Catholic representation and affirmed the principle of non-violence and racial tolerance. Even prior to the acceptance of

⁵² John T. McGreevy, 111-123; Antero Pietila, *Not in my Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010).

Dr. Harris, Msgr. Egan proclaimed the SLCC a model for the rest of the Southwest Side of Chicago, where residents "maintain your community way of life, but also change it as you wish it to be changed instead of seeing it changed willy-nilly."⁵³ The cordial relationship the SLCC fostered with religious leaders looking for peaceful ways to facilitate integration, however, offended the dissidents on the council. If the SLCC became a beacon of hope to men such as Egan, opponents viewed the council as the puppet of overbearing institutions insensitive to the needs, fears, and goals of the individual homeowner. Since their own churches turned against them, they sought to purge the clergy from the SLCC.

Bredar made a motion to vote on the Catholic priest's appointment through a secret ballot to safeguard the identity of other dissident members at the August meeting, and his faction won the vote by a count of 28-16. Continuing the anti-clerical push, Muffitt and Strain made another motion calling for Graham's resignation. When Graham ruled this out of order without demonstrable cause for removal, Muffitt backpedaled. Muffitt stated he only "wanted to show if Rev. Graham had a vote of confidence." At that meeting, he did not. The failed appointment and "vote of confidence" provided sufficient embarrassment for Graham and his supporters. Gleeson chastised other SLCC members in the newsletter as "uncommitted about the direction of the Council and the methods to preserve the community" and lambasted their failure to take a stand against the dissidents. Jean Buckley wrote her own lengthy rebuttal to the dissidents following the August meeting, arguing that the principle of separation of church and state did not apply to "civic affairs." Moreover, she asserted that "civic action has a religious base" and that the SLCC could not function without the involvement of South Lynne's churches. She also pointed out that

⁵³ Rev. John Egan speech transcript, May 1959, SLCC Records, Box 18 Folder 2, CHM.

in other neighborhoods suffering from white flight, the homeowners who supposedly held a "stake" in their communities left first, not the churches. She linked the SLCC's purpose with that of the Catholic Church, declaring "civic action will be more fruitful...if all citizens openly and explicitly proclaim the religious basis of justice and love."⁵⁴

Behind Gleeson's and Buckley's exhortations, the progressive side of the council reasserted control at the next meeting in September. The loyalists expelled the dissidents from the SLCC by making their existence illegal. Buckley introduced a resolution that forced members to reaffirm their support of the council's purpose. The resolution also called "to end division within our own organization through needless bickering and lack of communication of a calm nature among us, and to unite our members of good standing behind our state-chartered purposes in line with the Constitution of the state of Illinois, of the United States of America, and of the principles of universal justice and charity as they are put forward by the leadership of our churches and our government." Graham noted that this resolution, passed in accordance with by-laws sanctioned by the state and federal government, meant that "anyone who joins the Council without agreeing to these purposes is morally wrong and violating the law of the state which protects our charter." Although Bredar argued against the resolution, the dissident co-chairmen soon realized they lacked the votes to oppose its passage. Bredar, Moffitt, Strain, and Wolske all quit the SLCC. The eleven-month rebellion within the organization ended, although not without a parting shot. Muffitt accused the SLCC of harboring "a communistic element" in his letter of resignation.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ General Meeting Minutes, August 20, 1963, SLCC Records, Box 2 Folder 3, CHM; *SLCC News*, September 1963, CHM.

The dissidents, failing to remake the SLCC from within, created a rival group, We the Home Owners (WHO). WHO claimed the same boundaries as the SLCC. They also immediately allied itself with the MPCA, which offered office space and resources. The SLCC mocked the ties to the MPCA, remarking that an anti-constitutional group could not officially speak for the people. Through the *News*, they mocked WHO for its inability to “have any effective impact upon the community...at best it can make statements and it can for other organizations only too glad to take advantage of such bands of people. WHO is such a group.”⁵⁶

Yet SLCC leaders quickly learned to take WHO seriously. Although the SLCC claimed that only twenty-five to thirty people supported the dissidents, their membership fell from 1,500 paying members to 910 by 1964.⁵⁷ WHO vowed to restore the "voice" of homeowners in the community without "being called out of order." WHO listed three primary goals: preventing black students from attending white schools, securing lower taxes, and resisting the open occupancy ordinance recently passed by the Chicago City Council.⁵⁸

Deliberations on open occupancy (also known as fair housing or open housing) reverberated throughout state and national politics during the early 1960s. Open occupancy laws prohibited racial discrimination in the selling, renting, or financing of housing. Northern civil rights organizations did not have to confront a monolith of *de jure* segregation like their counterparts in the South; they instead prioritized equal housing opportunities for black residents

⁵⁵ Letter of Resignation from Margaret Strain, Box 8 Folder 2, SLCC Records, CHM; *SLCC News*, October 1963, CHM.

⁵⁶ *SLCC News*, November 1963, CHM.

⁵⁷ *SLCC News*, February 1964, CHM.

⁵⁸ WHO flyer, SLCC Records, Box 14 Folder 5, CHM; WHO Flyer signed by Jorgensen and Wolske, SLCC Records, Box 17 Folder 5, CHM.

crammed into narrow ghettos by discriminatory Federal Housing Authority mortgages, unsympathetic local politicians, and communal white violence. A Housing and Urban Development(HUD)-sponsored study of Chicago indicated that only 1.5 percent of blacks in the metropolitan area lived in census tracts that were less than 10 percent African American.⁵⁹ This constrained the available housing supply for qualified black homebuyers and forced them to overpay for whatever they purchased. Open housing advocates lobbied for laws to create a “colorblind” real estate market that guaranteed whites and blacks paid the same amount for the same property.⁶⁰

Until the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, however, individual developers, neighborhoods, cities, and states took responsibility for encouraging—or preventing—open housing. Morris Milgram created planned interracial suburbs for young black and white liberals in Philadelphia during the 1950s. Such developments made integration a marketable lifestyle choice which allowed liberals a chance to “live their beliefs.”⁶¹ Still, the individualistic approach featured flaws. Planned interracial neighborhoods catered to a niche market, and Milgram’s suburbs struggled to find enough white liberal families. Other neighborhoods and suburbs trying to create similar communities often resorted to their own discriminatory policies to ensure black families remained a permanent minority population, fearful of a perceived “tipping point” that would cause whites to move out. Certain states, on the other hand, simply prohibited open

⁵⁹ The leader of the study, the geographer Brian Berry, published his findings in *The Open Housing Question: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1966-1976* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1979), 3-4.

⁶⁰ Thomas Sugrue, “Concord Park, Open Housing, and the Lost Promise of Civil Rights in the North,” *Pennsylvania Legacies* (November 2010) Vol. 10 No. 2, 18-19.

⁶¹ Saltman, 314.

housing entirely. Californian voters, with the backing of the state real estate board, passed Proposition 14 in 1964, an amendment to the state constitution which overturned a fair housing law.⁶²

The primary support for such a law in Illinois came from an alliance of civil rights organizations that included the AFL-CIO, the Catholic Interracial Council, the Chicago Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai Brith known as United Citizens Committee for Freedom of Residence in Illinois. An initial effort floundered on the floor of the Illinois House of Representatives in 1962, but open occupancy advocates and sympathetic lawmakers presented another bill the following year. Optimism for House Bill 755 ran high among Illinois civil rights activists given the favorable political atmosphere that year. Democratic Governor Otto Kerner voiced his full backing for it after a meeting with the United Citizens Committee.⁶³

The Chicago City Council offered a resolution in support of open occupancy in principle in May. Even Richard J. Daley, who erected numerous barriers to integration through the Chicago Housing Authority and urban renewal programs, eloquently endorsed it as "must legislation." Even Daley would not hinder—at least not publicly—the type of civil rights legislation

⁶² Sugrue, "Concord Park," 20-24; Maly, 15-17; Luke Ritter, "The Discriminating Priority of Integration: Open Housing Activism in St. Louis County, 1968-1977," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1998) Vol. 106, No. 2, 224-228. Brian Berry concurs that open housing laws rarely created integrated communities, even after the passage of the national Fair Housing Act in 1968. He concedes that such laws proved effective in exposing discriminatory practices. See Berry, 499. Robert Self suggests that California proved even otherwise moderate and liberal voters by and large rejected open housing, passing Proposition 14 the same year the state overwhelmingly voted for President Lyndon Johnson. See Self, 260-264.

⁶³ *Chicago Tribune*, June 15, 1963; *About Fair Housing*, United Citizens Committee for Freedom of Residence in Illinois, 1963, SLCC Records, Box 18 Folder 1, CHM. Kerner developed a record for tackling discrimination in state agencies as well, although not from purely altruistic means. Anti-discrimination measures made the state more competitive for lucrative federal projects, such as the Department of Energy's Fermilab. See Bill Barnhart and Gene Schlickman, *Kerner: The Conflict of Intangible Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 177-181.

pursued by the Kennedy administration and his party's national platform.⁶⁴ Unfortunately for the United Citizens Committee, House Bill 755 also failed, but its growing influence among Chicago politicians convinced Fifth Ward Alderman Leon M. Despres, to introduce a city-wide open occupancy ordinance on July 28. As an opponent to the machine and one of the few outspoken critics of the Daley administration, the City Council typically ignored or quashed anything proposed by Despres. His attempt to introduce a similar ordinance three years earlier never advanced out of committee; but the mayor never went on record in favor of open occupancy statewide in 1960.⁶⁵ The machine aldermen waited for over a month until Daley gave the order on September 11: vote yes.⁶⁶

South Lynne did not escape the great open occupancy debate. The MPCA, which already spent considerable time and resources against House Bill 755, joined WHO in fighting the city's ordinance. Nor did these two organizations stand alone. Both belonged to a broader alliance of one hundred and seventy-five improvement associations, chambers of commerce, and community organizations spread across the city and the suburbs known as the Property Owners Coordinating Committee (POCC). The POCC received considerable aid from the Chicago Real Estate Board (CREB), whose members stood to lose out on the vast profits the discriminatory housing market provided.⁶⁷ More than 4,000 homeowners, primarily housewives and their children, marched on City Hall the day of the ordinance vote to convince Daley and his aldermen

⁶⁴ "Daley Backs Open Housing Legislation," *Chicago Tribune*, June 20, 1963.

⁶⁵ "Hearing Set Today on Open Housing Bill," *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 1963.

⁶⁶ *Chicago Tribune*, September 12, 1963.

⁶⁷ *Chicagoland Real Estate Advertiser*, February 7, 1964, SLCC Records, Box 14 Folder 5, CHM.

to change their minds. Marching and singing in carefully arranged lines "I'll pick my own neighbors/And sell to whom I choose/The politicians didn't buy my home/We know you're to blame/Ain't you ashamed?/Dick Daley, won't you please get lost?" The POCC promised that the open occupancy question was far from settled.⁶⁸

The SLCC initially took no formal position on the city's ordinance until the membership could vote on a resolution. Gleeson, however, stated that it best served the interests of the organization and the neighborhood. He noted that the ordinance targeted real estate agents who engaged in racial discrimination, not homeowners directly. The ordinance also provided a useful defense against blockbusting, since it empowered the CCHR to investigate any suspicious transactions, hold hearings, and then recommend to the mayor to suspend or revoke the city license of any guilty broker. Additionally, open occupancy enabled black homeowners to purchase property all over the city and "take pressure off our eastern boundary," ensuring South Lynne's stability for years to come.⁶⁹ With the segregationist faction gone, the SLCC adopted a resolution in support in November.⁷⁰

The emergence of the POCC and its constituent groups demonstrated that racially tolerant and open-minded community organizations such as the SLCC did not possess a monopoly on non-violent tactics or rhetoric. Conscious of the fact that many homeowners and improvement associations all too often resisted integration through force alone, the POCC marchers at City

⁶⁸ Handwritten Flyer, unknown author, calling for 30,000 to march at City Hall on September 11, 1963, SLCC Records, Box 18 Folder 1, CHM; *Chicago Tribune*, September 12, 1963

⁶⁹ *SLCC News*, November 1963, CHM.

⁷⁰ *SLCC News*, December 1963, CHM; "South Lynne Group Backs Housing Law," *Chicago Tribune*, December 8, 1963.

Hall stayed disciplined and orderly, imitating the non-violent demonstrations commonly used by civil rights activists throughout the South and the North. Paradoxically, the POCC also borrowed from the lexicon of the civil rights movement to justify their opposition in terms of individual rights and the Constitution. Solicitation envelopes from the CREB and POCC stated that each donation "represents an investment in protecting private property rights." The POCC also rebranded open occupancy as "forced housing legislation." The CREB even drafted a "Property Owners' Bill of Rights" which enumerated ten principles that protected "personal liberty." These principles included "the right of privacy, the right to choose his own friends, the right to own and operate property according to his dictates, the right to equal rights of all in the enjoyment of property without interference by any laws giving special privilege to any group or groups," and even "the right to enjoy the freedom to embrace, reject, deal or not deal with others." Even the openly racist and violent MPCA adopted this discourse when their president, Henry Coppolillo, argued that open occupancy represented the oppression of the majority by the minority.⁷¹

The CREB and POCC further claimed that the due process clause in the Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed all the vaunted property rights that they purported to champion. More incredibly, the CREB redefined slavery when it declared open occupancy unconstitutional on the grounds of the Thirteenth Amendment as well. If fair housing laws forced a real estate broker to act against the desires of his employer, then the city's ordinance was "a law which forces a

⁷¹ "Property Owners' Bill of Rights," Chicago Real Estate Board, SLCC Records, Box 14 Folder 5, CHM. The rhetoric of the POCC mirrors the "color-blind" conservative discourse of the white Southern middle-class. See Kruse, *White Flight* and Lassiter, *Sunbelt Majority*. David Freund, however, notes that this discourse prevailed across the suburban North, too, as older racial ideologies centering around "mythic racism" gave way to a "race neutral discourse" steeped in legalistic terminology. Freund also argues that this new paradigm encouraged collusion between the federal government and home construction industry. See Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1-15; 184-204.

person to perform a service which is clearly a matter of personal contract is a law creating servitude."⁷² Claiming to be non-partisan, the POCC also presented a list of suggestions to both the Democratic and Republican platform committees prior to the 1964 election cycle. In addition to the repeal of "forced housing," they requested both parties endorse segregated schools, restrict eminent domain laws, and require homeowner plebiscites to approve public housing sites and tax increases in the affected communities.⁷³

As the POCC platform indicated, opposition to open housing advanced a more cerebral, less visceral form of white supremacy. The POCC hosted a "Greater Chicago Conference on Open Occupancy" rally that attracted 3,200 people to the International Amphitheatre and launched a screed against the perceived growth of "collectivism" in American society. The keynote speaker, an attorney from New York, preached that true Americans only believed in individual rights and property. He denigrated civil rights laws as "part of the collectivist movement that is bent on stripping America of her freedom." He also blamed the clergy, educational institutions, and the media for enabling it.⁷⁴ The rally also attracted supporters of arguably the most famous segregationist in the nation, Alabama Governor George Wallace, who handed out literature to boost his write-in campaign for the Illinois presidential primary. The Wallace campaign materials assured attendees at the rally that "A vote for Governor Wallace is a vote against the Civil Rights

⁷² *Murray Park Community News*, December 1963, SLCC Records, Box 17 Folder 5, CHM; *Murray Park Community News*, October 1963, SLCC Records, Box 17 Folder 5, CHM. As bizarre as the invocation of the Thirteenth Amendment in the matter of open housing seemed, Robert Self remarks that Southern slaveholders routinely defended their racist institution in the name of property rights. See Self, 267.

⁷³ "Presented to the Democratic and Republican Platform Committees," Property Owners Coordinating Committee, SLCC Records, Box 14 Folder 5, CHM. The writers and editors at the *Chicago Defender* found such arguments wanting. See Ted Coleman, "Racist Open Housing Foes Plan to March," *Chicago Defender*, September 10, 1963.

⁷⁴ "Open Housing Group to Seek Vote Support," *Chicago Tribune*, March 9, 1964; "Rights Foe Backs Housing Vote," *Chicago Tribune*, April 13, 1964.

Bill." The MPCA and WHO brought Wallace's propaganda back to the Southwest Side to distribute throughout South Lynne.⁷⁵

POCC and CREB leaders recognized that the city would not voluntarily repeal the ordinance. In response, they started a petition drive to make open occupancy a statewide referendum vote in the November 1964 general election. The referendum asked whether the government should "force owners of real estate property or their agents, to sell, lease, or rent any property to anyone not of their choosing" and regulate the real estate industry⁷⁶ POCC representatives had no trouble obtaining the signatures: more than 200,000 were collected from Chicago alone. But the documents "mysteriously disappeared" from the CREB office one month prior to the filing deadline.⁷⁷

The SLCC challenged WHO, the MPCA, and the POCC by encouraging its members and all residents to ignore the petitions. Gleeson acknowledged that the POCC operatives in South Lynne were "well-organized," but he noted that alone did not justify their cause. He pointed out that the drive had no moral sanction; in fact, the Interreligious Council on Urban Affairs, which spoke on behalf of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leaders alike, condemned the campaign. Other SLCC leaders characterized POCC supporters such as WHO as "well-meaning property owners like ourselves...misled by the powers of the CREB." Graham, in his last month as chairman of the SLCC, questioned the referendum's legality, stating that "people cannot vote to

⁷⁵ *SLCC News*, May 1964, CHM.

⁷⁶ "Realtors Seek 510,000 Signers For Petitions," *Chicago Tribune*, October 31, 1963; James M. Gavin, "Home Owners Seek Open Housing Vote," *Chicago Tribune*, February 11, 1964.

⁷⁷ "Housing Vote Opponents Hunt Petitions," *Chicago Tribune*, July 23, 1964; "Opens Fight on Open Occupancy," *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1964.

take away the rights of a minority that are already guaranteed by Our Constitution." His successor, Pantarotto, said open occupancy afforded South Lynne a special opportunity: the first community west of Ashland that could become neither fully white nor fully black, but a combination of both.⁷⁸ After becoming chairman in May 1964, Pantarotto further resolved that "We will not countenance a repetition of the disgraceful racial violence that occurred last year at 68th and Marshfield...intolerance will not be tolerated...we stand on the side of decency, fairness, justice and charity."⁷⁹

Despite the entrenched opposition, the SLCC's views gained adherents in other parts of the Southwest Side. Hundreds of homeowners in nearby Chicago Lawn created the Southwest Committee on Peaceful Equality (SCOPE) in the fall of 1963. SCOPE formed to ensure that "the constitutional rights of all individuals be honored in Chicago" and to defeat the POCC referendum. In its initial policy statement, SCOPE undercut the POCC claims of preserving the Constitution, arguing that "all aspects of the Constitution are focused on one overriding consideration—that all persons have equal opportunity." SCOPE further argued that open occupancy finally granted freedom of movement, something white immigrants and their descendants long enjoyed, to African Americans. SCOPE also called for equal educational opportunities for black Americans and other disadvantaged groups and vigorous housing and zoning codes to keep property values high in every neighborhood. Still, the progressive SCOPE agenda featured an element of paternalistic racism. For example, SCOPE called white flight evil because "fleeing to the suburbs would be like turning the Congo over to the Natives...the city

⁷⁸ *SLCC News*, March 1964, CHM; *SLCC News*, April 1964, CHM.

⁷⁹ *SLCC News*, June 1964, CHM.

would be left in control of the people who are the least educated and able to run it.”⁸⁰

In the end, the Illinois Electoral Board made the amount of support for or against the referendum in neighborhoods such as South Lynne irrelevant. The board, chaired by Governor Otto Kerner, ruled the petitions "legally defective on the ground that two unrelated questions would be submitted as one proposition" two months prior to the 1964 gubernatorial and national elections.⁸¹ POCC and CREB leaders cried foul and filed an appeal, but open occupancy never became a statewide referendum. The open occupancy ordinance in Chicago thus survived. The POCC lingered for several years after the failed campaign, albeit with greatly diminished support as many of its member organizations withdrew or collapsed. WHO met the latter fate, dissolving in 1965.

Even after losing hundreds of members to bitter discord, the SLCC had reasons for optimism in 1965. Despite being on the edge of Chicago's racial border for almost a decade, the neighborhood showed no signs of blockbusting or panic. Further evidence for the success of the SLCC's methods rested upon the fact that no major racial disorders occurred within its boundaries, unlike Murray Park. The *Chicago Daily-News* cited the SLCC as one of the few community organizations capable of putting an end to the debilitating pattern of block-by-block turnover, praise echoed by the CCHR and numerous churches across Chicago. Even the Daley machine took notice. Meeting with the SLCC for the first time on December 30, 1964, at an

⁸⁰ SCOPE Flyer, 1963, SLCC Records, Box 18 Folder 3, CHM; "Smoothing Way to Integration is S.C.O.P.E. Aim," September 3, 1964; *Chicago Tribune*, *SLCC News*, June 1964, CHM; "SCOPE Policy," SLCC Records, Box 14 Folder 5, CHM; "S.C.O.P.E. Sets Discussion on Hauser Items," *Chicago Tribune*, November 8, 1964; *SLCC News*, June 1964. A columnist at Chicago's leading black newspaper expressed shock that a group such as SCOPE existed on the Southwest Side, remarking "SCOPE sounds like a good, good group." See Lillian S. Calhoun, "CONFETTI," *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 18, 1964.

⁸¹ Robert Howard, "Board Bars Vote on Open Occupancy," *Chicago Tribune*, September 4, 1964; "A Question of Rights," *Chicago Daily-News*

organizational party, Daley praised the council and called for the creation of more organizations like it to halt the exodus of white families to the suburbs. Daley further exclaimed that "it is people like you who help make Chicago the great city it is."⁸²

Some concerns existed. The 63rd and Ashland commercial district struggled to attract retail tenants. The disproportionate number of black students in South Lynne schools, even as the surrounding neighborhood remained all-white, concerned many residents as well.⁸³ The SLCC addressed these two issues with initially encouraging results. Council lobbying convinced the city to funnel significant funds from a federal transportation grant to construct a new, five million dollar Chicago Transit Authority 'L'-train terminal at 63rd and Ashland.⁸⁴ Superintendent of Chicago Public Schools Dr. Benjamin Willis also guaranteed that he would not allow Lindblom High School to become completely black.⁸⁵ With these assurances, Pantarotto foresaw future success and declared 1966 "A Year of Promise." He stated that "South Lynne will be remembered as being part of the new city—the city in which decay and population exodus was stemmed."⁸⁶

Fifty years later, Panatrotto admitted that he harbored serious doubts—even while delineating such an optimistic dream—that the SLCC could achieve stable racial integration in South Lynne. Unfortunately, he was correct, and South Lynne met a sad fate. The organization

⁸² *SLCC News*, January 1965, CHM.

⁸³ *SLCC News*, April 1965, CHM; Frank Starr, "Seek to Fill Empty Stores," *Chicago Tribune*, February 13, 1964; "South Lynne Seeks Housing Crackdown," *Chicago Tribune*, September 19, 1965.

⁸⁴ *SLCC News*, October 1965, CHM; "'L' Annex to Pep Up Business," *Chicago Tribune*, October 10, 1965. Anne Getz, "63rd 'L' Extension Expected," *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1966; *SLCC News*, October 1965.

⁸⁵ *SLCC News*, May 1965, CHM; Frank Daily, "Council Asks Racial Hearing," *Chicago Tribune*, April 11, 1965; "Community Group Asks Hearing on School Plan," *Chicago Tribune*, April 25, 1965; "Willis, S. Lynne to Huddle," *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 1965.

⁸⁶ *SLCC News*, June 1965, CHM.

never fully recovered from the schism in the middle of the 1960s over open housing, with hundreds of paying members throwing their support behind segregationist improvement associations and block clubs even after the POCC coalition faltered. Remarkably, the neighborhood's white population remained high for two more years until two shocks overwhelmed the council's dwindling resources in 1968: the riots after Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination and the disastrous, albeit well-intentioned, consequences of federal housing policy. Although the riots in Chicago hit the West Side the hardest, Pantarotto noted that many of the remaining businesses on 63rd Street suffered damage and permanently closed shop soon after.⁸⁷ He also observed that white homeowners, while largely unaffected by the rioting directly, lost all confidence in the neighborhood's future.⁸⁸

That same year, the ravenous blockbusters who waited for years to crack South Lynne now owned new weapons to facilitate the exodus of nervous whites after the passage of the Fair Housing Act and the Housing and Urban Development Act. The Fair Housing Act stipulated that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) must advance open housing policies across the country. To achieve this goal, HUD attempted to rectify decades of discriminatory lending practices previously encouraged by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), an agency nominally under HUD's direction since 1965. The Housing and Urban Development Act made several amendments to the National Housing Act of 1934—the law which created the FHA

⁸⁷ Pantarotto's memory of damage to 63rd Street is found in contemporary accounts, too. See *SLCC News*, April 1968.

⁸⁸ Interview with Erin McCann, April 29, 2015, in author's possession (hereafter McCann interview). The SLCC started recording property transactions, real estate solicitations and owner opinions about the state of their neighborhood on blocks closest to Ashland Avenue. A common complaint from homeowners was that it was now too "dangerous" to send their kids to public schools due to overcrowding and racial tensions. See 1969 SLCC Survey of Hermitage Avenue, SLCC Records, Box 18 Folder 5

—to encourage lenders to offer mortgage loans to neighborhoods previously redlined through subsidy payments and an insurance fund. This meant properties in older, working-class white neighborhoods bordering black communities once stigmatized as ‘at risk’ now met the underwriting standards of the FHA. Interested black families could buy properties through real estate brokers operating in South Lynne at inflated prices with a minimal down payment, and the government assumed most of the risk.⁸⁹

Sadly, this initiative proved ripe for abuse. Realtors scared white homeowners into selling cheap by informing everyone on the block that black Chicagoans now possessed easy, federally-backed credit to move into South Lynne. Worse, because the FHA relied heavily upon many of these same local realtors to serve as its appraisers, they conveniently found a simple coat of paint as grounds for doubling a property’s assessed value. They then sold the home at an inflated price to black families who lacked the financial flexibility to cover all the repairs needed to keep their lemon of a house inhabitable. The new black homeowner inevitably fell behind on their mortgage payments and faced foreclosure. One realtor admitted that he secured nearly 1,500 FHA loans for unqualified black buyers in Chicago during late 1960s and early 1970s; he estimated only ten percent to be worthy. He also bailed thirty buyers out of jail to attend their closings. Other real estate agents illegally paid the minimum down payment on behalf of their client.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ “Abandoned Homes Scar South Lynne Community,” *Southwest News-Herald*, December 20, 1973; Kevin Fox Gotham, “Separate and Unequal: The Housing Act of 1968 and the Section 235 Program,” *Sociological Forum* Vol. 15 No. 1 (2000): 17-26; Neil S. Mayer, “HUD’s First 30 Years: Big Steps Down a Longer Road,” *Cityscape* Vol. 1. No. 3 (September 1995): 9-11.

⁹⁰ “Annual Report of 1981, Illinois Legislative Investigating Commission,” Illinois Digital Archives, 28-29, accessed December 9th, 2015, <http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/isl/id/38486/rec/12>.

The bureaucratic complexities of HUD hindered its ability to halt this fraud. While HUD leadership, most notably Secretary George Romney, held genuine concern for the plight of the inner city and a commitment to dismantling segregation, the FHA remained immune from such liberal outlooks. Romney's attempts to integrate FHA operations within his direct chain of command failed, rendering it impervious to meaningful reform. One of the first genuine efforts by the federal government to end the legalized disinvestment which promoted block-by-block racial turnover for decades marked the end of South Lynne due to a lack of effective regulatory oversight.⁹¹

Following the usual pattern of blockbusting in Chicago, realtors first flipped the blocks in South Lynne closest to the Ashland Avenue border in 1968. Realtors harassed homeowners to sell through phone calls late in the night and filled their mailboxes with solicitation letters. SLCC members extensively documented these tactics and the dozens of properties bought by realty firms and banks from white owners, only to be re-sold to new black residents at double the price. Beverly Bank, for example, purchased a six room brick bungalow at 6427 S. Marshfield Avenue for \$11,300 through a Lamplighter Realty broker in June 1968; four months later the bank sold the property to a black family for \$20,000. Another SLCC survey revealed that Exchange National Bank purchased five properties on Marshfield the same year and then let them fall into 'slum conditions' until black buyers could be found. Although SLCC members exposed and

⁹¹ For more background on the Housing and Urban Development Act, see Brian Boyer, *Cities Destroyed for Cash* (Ann Arbor, MI: Follett Press, 1973), 1-14. The Housing and Urban Development Act served as a companion for the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which barred racial discrimination in all realty transactions. Romney also lacked crucial support from his boss, President Nixon, as his agency fell into crisis. See Chris Bonastia, "Hedging His Bets: Why Nixon Killed HUD's Desegregation Efforts," *Social Science History* Vol. 28 No. 1 (Spring 2004): 19-52 and Roger Biles, "Mormon in Babylon: George Romney as Secretary of HUD, 1969-1973," *Michigan Historical Review* Vol. 38 No. 2 (Fall 2002): 63-89.

picketed the offending firms, they lacked the means to keep up the fight for long. One by one, white homeowners in South Lynne surrendered, sold, and moved out. The South Side's racial borderline shifted from Ashland Avenue to the railroad tracks between Hamilton Avenue and Bell Avenue, the boundary separating South Lynne from Chicago Lawn.⁹²

The majority of residents in South Lynne were black by 1971, and this demographic change altered the makeup of the SLCC in its final years. Many of the first black residents who moved into South Lynne joined the council and became leaders, such as Harold Southern and Richard Parker. Both men served as the final two chairmen of the SLCC and made a last ditch effort to revive the group. They emphasized South Lynne's notable, albeit fleeting, racial mix of white and black homeowners as a point of distinction compared to other neighborhoods and suburbs. They hosted two "Variety of South Lynne" shows featuring a wide range of white and black musicians performing rock, folk, soul, and gospel standards to highlight the exciting benefits of living in a diverse community.⁹³ These programs, while creative, failed to retain old white residents or attract new ones. Worse, most of the black homeowners who moved in after 1970 disregarded the South Lynne name—and the organization representing it—entirely. They preferred to call their new environs by its traditional name, West Englewood. The new residents formed their own organizations with no ties to the old white residents who they felt rejected them. Indeed, most of the council's monthly meetings in its final years had paltry attendance numbers, and on one occasion black audience members asked the remaining white officers to

⁹² Note of sale at 6247 S. Marshfield Avenue, SLCC Records, Box 18 Folder 4, CHM; List of properties owned by Exchange National Bank on Marshfield, SLCC Records, Box 18 Folder 4, CHM; 1969 SLCC Survey of Hermitage Avenue, SLCC Records, Box 18, Folder 5, CHM; *SLCC News*, August 1968.

⁹³ Variety of South Lynne Programs, 1970-1971, SLCC Records, Box 19 Folder 6, CHM; *SLCC News*, June 1970; *SLCC News*, October 1971.

resign. New pastors at South Lynne churches also withdrew crucial financial support from the SLCC after 1970, preferring instead to fund the black-created West Englewood Community Organization.⁹⁴ Essentially a paper organization in the end, the final SLCC officers declined to renew their state charter in 1974 and dissolved the council.⁹⁵

Many former SLCC officers, however, resolved to keep their organization's mission alive. They vowed find a way to peacefully integrate the rest of the Southwest Side by learning from the painful lessons of the final years. Peter Pantarotto noted that neighborhoods featuring strong, professionally-run organizations such as Back of the Yards withstood blockbusting better than South Lynne. Not surprisingly, Pantarotto, Parker, and many others committed the SLCC to a new effort in the late 1960s to unite every neighborhood on the Southwest Side under a large, Alinsky-style community organization. A single group could not prevent blockbusting, no matter how principled; one hundred in unison might.⁹⁶

Graham also continued to advocate for racial equality after the Methodist Church transferred him to suburban Maywood in 1966. Like South Lynne, this working-class suburb underwent racial change in the late 1960s, sparking brawls at Proviso East High School. Needing a forum to put a stop to the fights, a recent graduate of the school and leader of the youth council

⁹⁴ The West Englewood Community Organization later earned a reputation for its militant advocacy for black homeowners on the Southwest Side. See "CUL Joins Racial Battle," *Chicago Defender*, March 25, 1975 and "Group Maps Strategy for Racially-Torn Marquette Park Area," *Chicago Defender*, November 1, 1975.

⁹⁵ "How South Lynne Died after 15 Years," *Chicago Tribune*, February 28, 1974. The *Tribune* had it wrong: the SLCC was founded in 1957 and lasted 17 years. "S. Lynne Council Now is History," *SWNH*, January 25, 1974; Letter from Harold Southern to Phlomena Pakel, January 21, 1974. Pakel was president of a local savings and loan; Southern wrote several letters to nearby lending institutions to announce the dissolution of the SLCC. Interestingly, his letter also mentions that he and other final officers consulted with past SLCC leaders (Pantarotto, Gleeson, and Bukcley) who already moved out of the neighborhood before making the decision to formally end the organization.

⁹⁶ Pantarotto interview. The professional community organization in question, the Southwest Community Congress, is the focus of Chapters 3 and 4.

of the West Suburban Branch of the NAACP asked Graham for permission to use his church. The reverend assented, starting a partnership and friendship with Fred Hampton. Hampton soon became the chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party, the foremost black nationalist organization in the country. Their relationship lasted until Hampton's assassination by the Chicago Police Department in 1969. Graham's career, unique among white activists, straddled the civil rights transition from a consensus-oriented, cross-racial movement to one which stressed black self-reliance and militancy.⁹⁷

The SLCC technically failed in its primary mission to create an integrated neighborhood, but Peter Pantarotto took pride in the fact South Lynne gracefully transitioned from white to black compared to the other parts of the South Side. Even in its decline, the SLCC managed to defuse most hostilities against the black families who moved in. In his study of the effectiveness of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, the geographer Brian J.L. Berry commended the SLCC for its ability to prevent violence; although this only funneled black families desperate to avoid beatings and bombings into South Lynne instead of the notorious Murray Park.⁹⁸ Graham, however, believed the SLCC had a chance to become a prosperous, racially-mixed neighborhood. He later expressed disappointment that it never received the required help from the government, churches, and other civic groups on the Southwest Side. He remained grateful for the hundreds who remained on his side of the council only to see their community disintegrate within a handful of years, adding that "they're the ones society betrayed,

⁹⁷ Graham interview.

⁹⁸ Brian J.L. Berry, *The Open Housing Question* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1979), 190-191; "Bare Hate Blitz in Tension Area," *Chicago Defender*, September 14, 1971; Robert McClory, "Mob Fails to Rout Black Family of Four," *Chicago Defender*, October 14, 1972.

because they were the ones who wanted to create it. The stable, diverse community.”⁹⁹

Graham’s assessment about the lack of outside support has merit. The decline of the 63rd and Ashland commercial strip continued in spite of the new CTA terminal. The city did provide substantial money, yet municipal planners disregarded the council’s feedback on design.

Pantarotto and other leaders unsuccessfully lobbied for the CTA to shorten the “trail tracks” which ran beyond the terminus, citing fears that the longer track disrupted storefront businesses. Indeed, business closures accelerated after the station opened. Superintendent Willis also never kept his promise to alleviate school overcrowding in South Lynne, refusing to transfer black students to other white neighborhoods to the west.¹⁰⁰ With teachers struggling to manage more than fifty students per class, the quality of instruction fell and gave homeowners another reason to leave. White civic associations on other parts of the Southwest Side showed no solidarity with the SLCC, either. The council was the only Southwest Side organization to endorse the 1963 fair housing ordinance, and one of a meager three to support bussing. The others included SCOPE and the Hearst Community Organization, which represented tenants in the LeClaire Courts public housing project, the only black residents living west of Ashland Avenue until the late 1960s.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Graham interview.

¹⁰⁰ Graham even led a delegation of forty-seven Methodist ministers across the city who demanded the Board of Education fire Superintendent Willis in 1965 as a show of support to the CCCO, to no avail. See “Methodists Seek Willis Fired,” *Chicago Defender*, July 20, 1965.

¹⁰¹ “Lynne Council Ready to Back Bus-Elevated Terminal Plan,” *SWNH*, February 17, 1966; *SLCC News*, June 1968. The SLCC estimated that 57% of commercial buildings near 63rd and Ashland were wholly “substandard” only a few years after the CTA broke ground on the terminal. See *SLCC News*, April 1969-June 1969. The *Southwest News-Herald* reported that twenty-one other Southwest Side civic associations voted to oppose bussing. See “School Board Drops Bussing Plans with Vote on 3 Motions,” *SWNH*, February 29, 1968; Sheryl M. Butler, “On Changing Southwest Side: School Overcrowding Grows,” *Chicago Defender*, September 30, 1970.

Ron Graham later confessed that for many years, “I felt like we were a failure. I was a failure.” He acknowledged, however, that recent reflection provided a more encouraging self-assessment. He felt that “Just taking a stand, exposing things, and speaking out, or organizing in some way, is a positive.”¹⁰² The name South Lynne, as well as the people who bravely charted a different course than their contemporaries, are almost completely and undeservedly forgotten today. Yet ignoring the history of the South Lynne Community Council overlooks an important chapter of the civil rights struggle in Chicago. Whereas white working-class neighborhoods such as South Lynne typically served as foils to the movement’s advancement in Chicago, the work of the SLCC demonstrates that notable, albeit contested, support for open housing and other civil rights measures existed. Moreover, the trials of the SLCC overlapped, and in some cases predated, the protests against segregation in Chicago Public Schools which serve as the commonly held turning point for the city’s civil rights movement.¹⁰³

Part of what made the South Lynne Community Council special might be chalked up to fortune—after all, how many other neighborhood organizations counted a former classmate of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in their leadership? Yet this alone does not explain why the SLCC rejected segregationist violence. Graham and the views he defended enjoyed enough support among other SLCC officers and hundreds of paying members who did not join WHO. Both Buckley and Pantarotto cited their faith as reasons for accepting the civil rights movement, but plenty of other Catholics ignored the church’s mandates for tolerance in the Murray Park Civic Association and We The Homeowners.

¹⁰² Graham interview.

¹⁰³ Ralph, 9-18.

Religion alone cannot explain the SLCC; real evidence that violence no longer worked, however, does. While massive resistance often netted a white neighborhood a short-term reprieve from integration and sometimes even enhanced their political power vis-à-vis Chicago's Democratic machine, it usually failed to prevent African-Americans from moving in. Other South Side neighborhoods which suffered from housing riots, such as Englewood and Park Manor, lost almost all of their white population by the time the South Lynne Community Council hit its stride in the early 1960s. Only neighborhoods far away from the Black Belt, such as West Lawn and South Deering, remained white in the same period. The violence exhibited in these neighborhoods during the 1940s and 1950s stemmed from a fear of both a racialized other and the financial loss incurred through a hasty home sale. The SLCC understood how such uncertainty enabled realtors to pillage black and white South Side neighborhoods alike time and time again, and the council's policies assuaged such worries. The support of the civil rights movement thus reflected both the personal convictions of SLCC leaders and the experiential limits of force displayed in other parts of the city.

CHAPTER THREE

A BUNGALOW DIVIDED CANNOT STAND

On July 31, 1966, five hundred non-violent marchers from the Chicago Freedom Movement, an alliance between civil rights advocates in Chicago and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) led by Dr. Martin Luther King, faced a brutal assault from over four thousand white residents after holding a prayer vigil for open housing at a Methodist church in Chicago Lawn, an all-white, working-class residential community on the Southwest Side of Chicago. When they returned to their cars at pristine Marquette Park, the civic jewel of the neighborhood, the demonstrators found dozens of their vehicles overturned or burnt. Some especially overzealous residents even toppled three cars into the park's famous lagoon. Lacking a quick means of escape, the activists struggled to safely leave as the surging mob, composed primarily of local young men, serenaded them with racial epithets and bricks. They huddled behind a meager police escort as they slowly walked eastward on 71st Street, toward the safe haven of New Friendship Baptist Church, located two and a half miles away in the predominantly black Englewood neighborhood. The ordeal left twenty-three people injured, and the Chicago Police Department arrested seventeen perpetrators of the violence. All but four called Chicago Lawn home.¹

¹ Donald Mosby, "Gage Park's Whites Stone Marchers: Cars Burnt, Windows Broken; Housing Protest Will Go On," *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 1, 1966; 9 Arrested, Several Hurt in Gage Park," *Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 1966; "Cite Costly Toll of Sunday's March," *Southwest News-Herald*, August 4, 1966; Edmund J. Rooney, "Joint Statement Issued," *Chicago Daily-News*, August 1, 1966; Mary Lou Finley, "The Open Housing Marches: Chicago, Summer '66," in David J. Garrow, editor, *Chicago 1966: Open Housing Marches, Summit Negotiations, and Operation Breadbasket* (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1989), 22.

Several days later, Edward Vondrak, the editor of the *Southwest News-Herald*, a leading weekly newspaper in the area, printed a rare front-page editorial that expressed deep sorrow for the viciousness displayed by many of his neighbors. He remarked that “Sunday was the blackest day in the history of the Southwest community. It was sickening to see local residents...blinded by seething hatred, engage in senseless violence.” While he acknowledged that many families in Chicago Lawn saw themselves as hard working descendants of immigrants and “money under the mattress types” worried about the value of their homes, that only meant “you can understand and justify their feelings...we cannot condone their actions of Sunday night. Though these people may be law-abiding and self-respecting persons themselves, they failed to get through to their teen-age children that violence and lawlessness is not the answer.” Noting that it was “a week of soul-searching for all of us,” Vondrak requested that residents honor the law, remember the lessons of their churches, and express their displeasure for civil rights with a non-violent professionalism similar to that of the Chicago Freedom Movement.²

Unfortunately, Vondrak’s plea went unheeded after King announced that he would personally lead the next march through Chicago Lawn on August 5. King’s involvement drew the nation’s eye to the Southwest Side; it also attracted an even larger, more savage mob. Five thousand irate residents confronted King and eight hundred of his followers to make their feelings on open housing—and racial integration in general—even more obvious. They delivered an avalanche of racial slurs at King and the marchers, along with shouts of “White power,” “niggers go home,” “Up with the KKK,” and “Scum Get Out.” Others demonstrated their sympathy for the Deep South by unfurling Confederate flags and holding “Wallace for

² “A Time for Soul-Searching,” *Southwest News-Herald*, August 4, 1966.

President” signs. Dozens of youth used the trees in the park to launch eggs and firecrackers at the marchers. Marauding bands fanned out across the neighborhood’s streets to vandalize cars they suspected belonged to civil rights activists. Many of the violent youth called for King directly, shouting “Kill him!” At least one person attempted to execute the command: a large rock hurled from the crowd hit the venerable civil rights leader on the back of his head, causing him to fall to one knee until his supporters helped him back onto his feet. The city this time dispatched one thousand uniformed cops to the park, but the legion of officers struggled to keep the mob in check. Many Southwest Siders participating in the violence showed little hesitancy in attacking policemen protecting the marchers. Miraculously, this larger outburst of violence left no one dead or seriously hurt, although twenty-one people required medical attention. The police arrested forty-one rioters.³

King expected a hostile reception, particularly after the July 31 demonstration. But the seemingly inexhaustible hatred displayed by Southwest Siders nevertheless shocked him. “I’ve been in many demonstrations all across the South, but I can say that I have never seen—even in Mississippi and Alabama—mobs as hostile and hate-filled as I’ve seen in Chicago,” he remarked, “I think the people from Mississippi ought to come to Chicago to learn how to hate.”⁴ Shortly following a ballyhooed “Summit Agreement” with Mayor Richard J. Daley at the end of August, King left the city.

³ Edmund J. Rooney, “King Leading New March on S.W. Side,” *Chicago Daily-News*, August 5, 1966; “I’ll Lead March Again: King,” *Chicago Daily-News*, August 6, 1966; Edmund J. Rooney and Jack Lavin, “Stoned By Jeering Whites,” *Chicago Daily-News*, August 6, 1966; Edmund J. Rooney, “How Cops Endured Whites’ Abuse,” *Chicago Daily-News*, August 6, 1966; Burleigh Hines, “Rocks Won’t Stop Us,” *Chicago Daily-News*, August 6, 1966; “Dr. King Is Felled by Rock,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 6, 1966; “Urges Public: Keep Cool in Race March,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 7, 1966.

⁴ Whet Moser, “What Martin Luther King Jr. Wanted For Chicago in 1966,” *Chicago Magazine*, January 19, 2015.

The violence in Marquette Park closed an important chapter in Dr. King's career and the Chicago Freedom Movement, but it only signaled the beginning of the Southwest Side's troubles. The mob that appeared at the heart of their community and the lack of representation at the Summit Agreement indicated the area's irrelevance to Chicago's political elite underscored their powerlessness and irrelevance.⁵ No total consensus about civil rights and integration existed the Southwest Side; all agreed, however, upon the need for a strong community organization to amplify their voice and power. Vondrak concurred, noting that "the question before us is, what do the long, silent people think...what were 95,000 other Southwest Siders who were not there thinking or doing? It is easy enough for Dr. Martin Luther King to say—and the downtown papers to report—that this community is filled with hatred, but it is it true?"⁶ A somber cartoon accompanying the editorial, showed a young couple in the future, dressed in black, walking by Marquette Park. Now a graveyard, the man lamented, "here's where grandpappy fought in the civil rights battle of 1966." The caption asked, "Is this the heritage we plan to leave for future generations?" The inability of Southwest Side neighborhoods to speak for themselves meant that the violence in the park and the extremists it attracted risked staining the

A multitude of new organizations sprung up as civil rights activists marched in Marquette Park, and long-standing civic and improvement associations—vocal opponents of racial integration dating back to the Airport Homes Riot in 1946—saw a spike in attendance. Five hundred people flooded the August meeting of a small homeowners association, far above its usual draw of thirty or less. A young business manager at nearby Fox College announced the

⁵ "White Groups Protest Open Housing Pact," *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 1966.

⁶ Editorial, *SWNH*, August 11, 1966.

creation of a “White Hat Brigade” that promised to find a way to repeal the Civil Rights Act and extend the franchise to eighteen-year-old teenagers.⁷ The Gage Park Civic Association claimed to have netted one hundred block captains in an emergency membership drive. Other groups rose from the dead. Illinois State Representative Walter “Babe” McAvoy, a conservative Republican, sponsored the resurrection of the Chicago Southwest Property and Homeowners Protective Association, which also vowed to resist civil rights through every legal means available. Over seven hundred Southwest Siders attended a joint-meeting of the Chicago Lawn Civic Organization and the Murray Park Civic Association to denounce the Chicago Freedom Movement for alleged communist ties.⁸

Yet traditional civic associations failed to convert this new energy into long-term gains. In spite of its reputation as a tight-knit “bunker community” that locked shields to fight civil rights at every step, the push for empowerment widened fissures first revealed in South Lynne earlier in the decade, ultimately leaving the Southwest Side painfully divided. Racially conservative residents struggled to create a singular organization that represented multiple neighborhoods across the Southwest Side, even though a majority of homeowners rejected integration. The values espoused by segregationist residents, namely the sanctity of individual homeowner rights, limited government, and anti-clericalism, made them leery of collective

⁷ Fox College advertisement, *SWNH*, August 11, 1966. At the time, Fox College was located at 79th Street and Halsted in the racially transitioning neighborhood of Auburn-Gresham. It eventually relocated to suburban Bedford Park, IL and today bills itself as a “career college” offering associate degrees.

⁸ “Charge Reds Behind Negro Marches: Civic Group Asks Daley to Act Now,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 9, 1966. McAvoy (1905-1990) represented one of the last links to the old Chicago Republican machine of Mayor Big Bill Thompson. He was first elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1950 and served thirteen consecutive terms until 1978. His career ended when he was convicted for participating in the time-honored Illinois tradition of accepting bribes in exchange for a political favor. See Peter Kendall, “Ex-Illinois Rep. Walter McAvoy,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 6, 1990.

organizing. They feared an Alinsky-style approach provided a potential “backdoor” to integration. Progressive Southwest Siders, on the other hand, saw a professionally-run community organization as a pragmatic and moral imperative. The problems the Southwest Side faced, including its homegrown bigotry and the looming specter of blockbusting realtors seeking to exploit the heightened racial tensions, required significant resources and immediate attention. This outnumbered minority, with the assistance of numerous churches and businesses, formed the first large organization for the Southwest Side as a whole in 1969—and then only after an acrimonious eighteen month struggle. The shared desire for a powerful, united Southwest Side created opposing coalitions that drew lines in the sand for their homes, schools, and places of worship. Within three years, the question of integration pitted neighbor against neighbor, and the “battle for Marquette Park” morphed into a contest on who, and what, defined a working-class, white ethnic neighborhood in civil rights America.⁹

Letters written by Southwest Side residents to the *News-Herald* revealed a broad spectrum of emotions: fear, anger, shame, and hope. Many believed they played no part in the violence that broke out over the summer, nor in the dire housing conditions the Chicago Freedom Movement protested. One demanded to know “by what right does anyone invade” their streets. Another woman argued that all the violence would cease the moment King and his supporters went home and concentrated on racial uplift. “The Negroes make the slums, so why don’t they go to work and clean and paint up the places? Let them do something for their relief checks, just like my husband did when he worked for a WPA check years ago,” she argued, “Gage Park is a good community and if the Negroes get in there, they will make slums of it, just as they did in

⁹ Ralph, 115-130.

Lawndale.”¹⁰ A former Lawndale resident promised to remain defiant, writing that his family tried to stay when that neighborhood integrated only to suffer beatings from the new black denizens.¹¹

Others despaired that the marches and resulting chaos heralded the beginning of the end for Chicago Lawn and Gage Park, a fate similar to what occurred in other white working-class neighborhoods across the South Side since the end of World War II. A “Proud Resident of Gage,” who previously lived in Englewood, admitted feeling saddened by the prospect of moving out again and argued that the demonstrators earned their punishment for inciting a riot.¹² Another woman explained the violence as a last-ditch effort to preserve individual property rights against an encroaching civil rights movement, stating that “you cannot threaten a man’s home without retaliative action. Civil rights are not only guaranteed to the Negro. You and your family have a right to your property.”¹³

While the majority of the letters to the *News-Herald* in the immediate weeks—and even months and years—after the Marquette Park riots iterated these viewpoints, some residents expressed outright support for the marchers, integration, and civil rights. One man reminded his neighbors that although the country based its government “on the principle that ‘all men are created equal’ ...for years it was tacitly understood that these principles were qualified for the word ‘White.’” To him, the riots demonstrated that America had lost its moral authority against

¹⁰ Letter from Ellen Nielsen, *SWNH*, August 11, 1966; Letter from “Mrs. V.B.,” *SWNH*, August 4, 1966. The *News-Herald* often printed letters submitted under pseudonyms.

¹¹ Letter from “J.J.J.,” *SWNH*, August 4, 1966.

¹² Letter from “Proud Resident of Gage,” *SWNH*, August 11, 1966.

¹³ Letter from Mrs. Joanne Casolaci, *SWNH*, August 11, 1966.

its rivals, specifically the communists.¹⁴ Others pointed out that the true threat of the riots went beyond material concerns such as property values, blockbusting, and disinvestment. The chairman of a local, pro-integration organization observed that “We do not live in a physical slum, but it would seem that we do live in a spiritual and cultural slum.” One housewife added that beautiful Marquette Park went from a “lovely, green oasis” to a “red, bloody, festering sore, oozing with the yellow pus of the Nazi and Ku Klux Klan” and proclaimed that African Americans earned a chance to live out the American Dream just as she had.¹⁵ A Gage Park high school student admitted that while living in an all-white neighborhood made him prejudiced, he would overcome bigotry in the name of Christ.¹⁶ A Jewish homeowner encouraged other residents to use the controversy as an opportunity to create newer, stronger neighborhoods that had the courage to “face the issues involved. We can rebuild and preserve our Southwest community; neither Negro ghetto nor white segregated, with decent white families and decent Negro families.”¹⁷

Donna Scheid, chairman of the housing and zoning committee of the South Lynne Community Council (SLCC), the oldest and largest integrationist community organization on the Southwest Side, pointed out that the city frequently overlooked their neighborhoods when it came to issues of housing, education, and transportation “because there is no powerful organization representing communities from Ashland Avenue to the city limits on the west” and

¹⁴ Letter from Charles J. Miller, *SWNH*, August 11, 1966.

¹⁵ Letter from Mrs. Harriet Kulgman, *SWNH*, September 1, 1966.

¹⁶ Letter from “High School Student From Gage Park,” *SWNH*, August 11, 1966.

¹⁷ Letter from Howard Packer, *SWNH*, August 25, 1966.

that traditional civic associations struggled to attract new members.¹⁸ An anti-civil rights resident echoed Scheid's concerns and demanded the creation of stronger neighborhood organizations, threatening "Help me to help you, or else, I too, will 'Run to the Suburbs.'"¹⁹

The Freedom Movement's turbulent sojourn through Marquette Park capped a frustrating year for King's efforts in Chicago. The SCLC first came to the city at the invitation of Al Raby, a black teacher and the leader of the city's foremost civil rights group, the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO). Raby hoped the SCLC would rejuvenate a flagging local movement. King accepted, as he believed that the SCLC needed new goals to maintain the momentum provided by the triumphs of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. The growing number of riots in black urban neighborhoods across the country also concerned King, but he thought these solvable with a non-violent solution.²⁰ King, Raby, and other SCLC leaders initially focused upon eliminating the slums that plagued so many black communities. King moved into a blighted apartment building in the North Lawndale neighborhood on the West Side to draw attention to the dire living conditions many impoverished black families faced. Unfortunately, this initial strategy struggled to unite the city's large and diverse black population behind the Movement. More conservative African Americans in Chicago, particularly the political and religious power brokers with close ties to Daley's political machine, derided King as an outside troublemaker. Radical and militant activists viewed King's methods as outdated. The Movement also had trouble finding a clear-cut villain to rally

¹⁸ Letter from Donna Scheid, *SWNH*, December 15, 1966.

¹⁹ Letter from "Run to the Suburbs," *SWNH*, August 4, 1966.

²⁰ "Freedom Movement a Riot Remedy," *Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 1966.

potential supporters. Daley and other major white political figures adroitly sidestepped the role of a northern George Wallace or Bull Connor. Moreover, the Gordian knot of urban poverty seemed too complex to solve in a short-term campaign.²¹

King and his brain trust narrowed their focus to housing discrimination during the spring of 1966. They hoped to expose the unfair practices of the Chicago Real Estate Board in propping up the “dual-housing market” against black Chicagoans that facilitated blockbusting, panic peddling, white flight, economic disinvestment, and racially segregated slums. The Movement chose all-white Southwest Side neighborhoods as a testing area for two reasons: first, these working-class, yet well-kept neighborhoods remained within the financial reach of many black families; second, many white residents previously demonstrated resistance to the municipal fair housing ordinance and school integration in recent years. They hoped to provoke similar reactions and draw the attention of a capricious news media.²²

In this sense, the marches through Marquette Park proved wildly successful. Local and national media provided extensive print and television coverage of the August 5 violence. None of the attention flattered the Southwest Side. A *Los Angeles Times* editorial noted that “King...has discovered that Chicago race hatred is a very special and very vicious brand” and stated that “the American Dream exploded.”²³ Virtually overnight, Chicago Lawn streets, homes, parks, and youth became new symbols of racism in the United States. The *New York Times*

²¹ Ralph, 9-12; David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 475-526.

²² Ralph, 92-115.

²³ Roy Wilkins, “Stoning of Dr. King Raises Question of the ‘Best Means,’” *Los Angeles Times*, August 15, 1966; D.J.R. Bruckner, “Why the American Dream Exploded,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1966.

remarked that King definitely proved “that there is a ‘white noose’ around the center of that Midwest City, just as there is in New York and most other metropolitan neighborhoods” and called for an end to the marching only if it led to a substantial implementation of open housing policies nationally.²⁴

The July 31 and August 5 marches were the high watermark of the Chicago Freedom Movement. The controversy generated by the Southwest Side’s violent response to the open housing campaign also gave the Movement leverage with Daley. Seeking an end to the disturbances that left an ugly mark on his administration, the mayor agreed to numerous weak concessions at the Summit Agreement that allowed King to declare victory. More importantly from Daley’s point of view, an exhausted King left Chicago. King reoriented his activism toward antiwar and antipoverty causes. Daley’s administration never seriously enforced the Summit Agreement, and it fell to black Chicago civil rights leaders such as Raby and the Reverend Jesse Jackson to continue the struggle as the SCLC winded down its Chicago operation over the following year.²⁵

The marches also drew the attention of right-wing extremists, who soon flooded the neighborhood in a bid to gain new supporters. George Lincoln Rockwell, leader of the American Nazi Party in Arlington, Virginia, agreed with King that Southerners could learn something from Chicago. Nine days later he staged his own rally in Marquette Park to an enthusiastic audience of hundreds of young men brandishing American flags alongside swastika-adorned signs that read

²⁴ “Time Out for Action,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1966.

²⁵ The most notable concession was the creation of the Metropolitan Leadership Council for Open Communities. “The Settlement,” *Chicago Daily-Defender*, August 30, 1966; “Daley’s Aim: Resolve Rights Issue,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 10, 1966; Donna Gill, “Housing Plan Goes to Committee Today,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 26, 1966; “Leaders Hail Peace, Praise Negotiators,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 27, 1966; Ralph, 226.

“The Symbol of White Power.” One of Rockwell’s uniformed subordinates exhorted residents to “get yourself a gun and learn how to use it. The whites must do this because the politicians have sold us out.” Although lacking firearms, after the rally’s conclusion the incited white youth moved to intercept a civil rights march that actually took place elsewhere—without major incident—miles away on Pulaski Road, between Bogan High School and Ford City Mall.²⁶ The disappointed mob instead settled for assaulting a black woman and two of her children driving through the park, set another black-owned vehicle on fire, and attacked the police supervising them. A menagerie of right-wing extremists rode the neo-Nazis’ coattails. A Patrick Henry Brigade salesman advertised his organization’s literature by a sign saying “Communism is treason! Fight it with common sense! Buy it here!” Reverend Connie Lynch, “America’s No. 1 Racist,” announced the creation of a Southwest Side branch of the National States Rights Party at the Darius-Giernas Memorial in the northeastern corner of the park.²⁷

The arrival of these hatemongers only further damaged the Southwest Side’s reputation to the nation. Noting the warm reception the Nazis seemingly received compared to King, Donald Johnson, a reporter for the *New York Times*, proclaimed that “White Power Has Ugly Side, Too.”²⁸ The major Chicago metropolitan dailies offered little sympathy as well. The *Chicago Daily-News* stated that white rioters proved to be no better than the black Americans they

²⁶ *SWNH*, August 18, 1966; “Plan Housing Bias Protest in Bogan Area,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 8, 1966; “Southside Picked for Nazis’ March,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 18, 1966; “Nazis, KKK Stage Riot Here; Dr. King in Southside March,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 22, 1966; Arnold Rosenzweig, “Don’t Push Nazis’ Pall Tells Negroes,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 22, 1966.

²⁷ “Police Blame Nazi Rally for Park Violence,” *Southwest News-Herald*, August 18, 1966; “States Rights Chief Fined \$250 for Rally,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 31, 1966. The Darius-Giernas Memorial commemorated the ill-fated transatlantic flight of two Lithuanian-American pilots, Steopnas Darius and Stasys Giernas. It long served as a point of civic pride for the many Lithuanian Americans who lived near Marquette Park in Chicago Lawn.

²⁸ Donald Johnson, “White Power Has An Ugly Side, Too,” *New York Times* August 21, 1966.

despised, referring to an uprising on the city's West Side earlier in 1966.²⁹ Even the conservative editors at the *Chicago Tribune* said the city seemed fated to suffer from "daily brawls" and had reverted to a "frontier town," although they assigned some blame to King and his supporters for stirring up white "animosities."³⁰ The most damning critique, however, came from Chicago's most popular columnist, Mike Royko, who blamed the endemic racial violence in the city on the white working-class household. He opined that "mommy and daddy will probably be proud" of any teenage son arrested."³¹

These criticisms resonated with racially conservative residents, who detested their stigmatization almost as much as integration, and shaped their resistance to civil rights in Chicago. On September 2, 1966, shortly following the agreement between Daley and King, more than 1,000 residents flooded Manor Hall in a "property owners 'summit meeting'" sponsored by a handful of civic associations to vent their frustration at being "sold out" by the mayor. The president of the Chicago Lawn Civic Association read a petition signed by 6,400 residents asking for a grand jury investigation of the deal between the city and the Freedom Movement. The new chairman of the Property Owners' Coordinating Committee (POCC), Thomas Sutton, praised the Southwest Side as a neighborhood that "stood up and fought" King. He received the loudest cheers when proposing the disenfranchisement of anyone receiving welfare. When another civic association president announced the creation of a "power group" to pressure elected officials,

²⁹ "Why Must We Put Up With Daily Brawls?" *Chicago Tribune*, August 9, 1966; "Preventing Riots," *Chicago Tribune*, August 10, 1966; "Rioting as a Way of Life," *Chicago Tribune*, August 2, 1966; Editorial, *Chicago Daily-News* August 7, 1966.

³⁰ "Patience At An End," *Chicago Tribune*, August 5, 1966.

³¹ Mike Royko, "The Saga of Cragin: T-Shirted Punks Slay a Dragon," *Chicago Daily-News*, August 8, 1966.

one eager audience member interjected by shouting “white power!” He was immediately corrected by the speaker, who replied “No, not white power—but lever and pen power.” Several civic association presidents formed a “Taxpayers’ Council” to defeat civil rights supporters in city and state government. Local Republican politicians, such as State Senator John Lanigan, reminded audiences of their staunch anti-civil rights track record. Another civic association leader encouraged audience members to jeer the Archbishop of Chicago, John Cody, a well-known proponent of integration. He then encouraged a boycott of Sunday collections and any other donations to local Catholic churches until the archdiocese came to its senses.³²

The meeting at Manor Hall summarized the next three years of conservative thinking on the Southwest Side, mirroring an ideology typically expressed in middle-class suburbs or the Sunbelt.³³ For these civic leaders, residents, and their political champions, the individual rights of the homeowner—who on the Southwest Side overcame humble immigrant origins to become taxpayers—superseded the civil rights of black Americans. They depicted black Chicagoans in particular as societal leeches unable or unwilling to earn their keep. They imagined themselves as the victims of heavy-handed “social experimentation” from civil rights activists, the Catholic Church, the local, state, and federal government, all of which infringed upon their “right” to voluntarily segregate themselves to an all-white community. Their justification for segregation rested upon their self-identity as model citizens, and they rejected extremist rhetoric to avoid

³² “Crowd Hall to Vow Fight on Open Housing,” *SWNH*, September 29, 1966; Tom Jachimiec, “Local ‘Summit’ Asks Mayor to Investigate Rights Group,” *SWNH*, September 8, 1966.

³³ See Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

affiliation with groups such as the neo-Nazis or Ku Klux Klan. These “respectable” homeowners substituted the slogan of “white power” for “property” and “neighborhood schools.”

Many Southwest Side residents argued that they earned the right to live in prosperous white neighborhoods. Black Americans, in their opinion, needed to prove their worthiness to do the same. One homeowner, identified as “Willing But Worried,” noted that their neighbors personally (or descended from someone who) faced severe oppression in Europe but overcome this handicap through sheer skill and willpower to become employable, church-going, American citizens. “Willing But Worried” then admonished King for making Christian appeals for interracial brotherhood, concluding “You can’t legislate Christian charity—it must be earned.”³⁴ Black Chicagoans failed to achieve the same level of prosperity for themselves due to a degraded culture and sought to use the government to give themselves an advantage at the expense of whites. Another resident, rhetorically addressing Raby, remarked “We have worked and slaved for what we got, Mr. Raby. We are not parasites, we are not on A.D.C. [Aid for Dependent Children] Our children know who their father is and most of them respect him.”³⁵ One woman stated that the dire slums the Chicago Freedom Movement sought to eliminate resulted not from real estate discrimination and disinvestment but members of “their own race...holding them back, not the white race.” She finished her letter by advising civil rights leaders to give their followers “constructive” direction.³⁶

³⁴ Letter from “Worried But Willing,” *SWNH*, August 11, 1966.

³⁵ Letter from James Sullivan, *SWNH*, October 27, 1966.

³⁶ Letter from Sue Amore, *SWNH*, November 10, 1966. Amore views did not to change: a year and a half later, she wrote another letter to the *SWNH* requesting that black Chicagoans “would all get together and clean up their own homes and neighborhoods.” See Letter from Sue Amore, April 25, 1968.

This mindset fostered the construction of a “positive” black stereotype that justified segregation: the “respectable negro.” Illiberal residents, civic, and homeowners associations frequently argued that “good, law-abiding” black Chicagoans had no more desire to integrate than they did. Similar to working-class white Southwest Siders, “respectable Negroes” demonstrated self-reliance. One Polish-American woman commented that, “the decent hardworking and educated Negro is not in the trouble-making parades.” She implied that the “educated Negro,” like the Polish, wanted to “earn” his home, but the unnecessary agitation of Dr. King and the civil rights movement put the future of both races at risk.³⁷ The White Hat Brigade paid for a full-page ad in the *News-Herald* alleging that “Respectable Negroes Do Not Follow Dr. King” due to the low number of marchers compared to the city’s overall black population.³⁸ Other residents maintained that “average Negroes” had no plans to move into white communities; only the nefarious tricks of King and the Chicago Freedom Movement fooled them into supporting integration. Southwest Side conservatism conceded that successful, stable black neighborhoods existed, but only because they remained racially homogenous. Some even acknowledged remorse for the hostility expressed toward the open housing marchers. One anonymous counter-demonstrator confided to the *News-Herald* that they felt enough shame to throw his sign down for all the “innocent colored people” who suffered from the disorder brought on by King. Their pangs of guilt did not turn them into civil rights activists. They promised to continue fighting civil rights but redirect their energies to more deserving foes,

³⁷ Letter from “Name Withheld,” August 11, 1966.

³⁸ White Hat Brigade Ad, *SWNH*, August 25, 1966.

vowing that “my opposition will be directed at the Vice Lords and the trash that comes with them.”³⁹

The best ammunition for the respectability stereotype came from a pair of African-American ministers, the Rev. Henry Mitchell and the Rev. Robert Turner, whose frequent denunciations of King at Southwest Side civic association meetings delighted audiences. While both maintained support for civil rights in principle, they believed such gains required the consent of the white majority. Mitchell assured them that 250,000 African Americans on the West Side rejected King. They desired open housing but refused to use “force.” Over five hundred people listened to Turner boast that he was “one of the Negroes who made the proclamation the other day to Dr. Martin Luther King to keep out of Chicago.” He admitted that while King “had done a lot of good work” it caused African Americans across the country to “get power happy and we lose our order.” Like Mitchell, Turner voiced support for fair housing legislation with white approval. Mitchell later established a hotline with Sutton and several civic associations to prevent future civil rights marches on the Southwest Side. The collaboration between the ministers and the civic associations allowed both parties to claim a moral high ground as interracial peace advocates while doing all in their power to keep the Southwest Side segregated.⁴⁰

The limited polling data available and electoral results confirm that a large majority of Southwest Siders showed no intention of offering the assent required by Mitchell and Turner. A

³⁹ Letter from “Common Sense,” *SWNH*, September 8, 1966; Letter from “Counter-Marcher from Scottsdale,” *SWNH*, September 1, 1966.

⁴⁰ “500 Crescent Fans Hear Negro Minister,” *SWNH*, June 8, 1967; “White, Negro Groups Set Up ‘Hot Line’ For Marches,” *SWNH*, June 22, 1967; Mary Ullrich, “Calls Open housing Peril to Society,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 11, 1967.

1968 Friendship House survey of homeowners near Bogan High School, a hotly contested bussing site, suggested that 77 percent of residents “were unfavorable toward Negroes’ cause of civil rights.”⁴¹ Democratic politicians who supported fair housing laws faced heavy retribution from the angry majority in the 1966 elections. Congressman John Kluczynski fended off a Republican challenger, but his margin of victory was 22,000 votes smaller than in 1964, a drop he attributed to a general “backlash” against his party.⁴² Not all Democrats were so fortunate. Senator Paul Douglas, one of the leading liberals in Congress, saw his political career end with a defeat to Republican Charles Percy, partially due to his failure to secure enough support in white ethnic urban neighborhoods.⁴³

One established Daley machine candidate sensed the shifting winds and quitted politics entirely. Alderman James Murray announced his retirement after unsuccessfully running for Circuit Court judge in the November 1966 election. Murray cited his support for civil rights as the reason for his unpopularity: he drafted Chicago’s Fair Housing Ordinance in 1963. Nonetheless, he expressed no regret for following his conscience, nor for other statements he made in favor of civil rights. He explained, “how can I sing of the home of the free and the land of the brave; how can I boast of a Declaration of Independence or a Constitution; how can I send cards wishing peace on earth to men of good will if in the legislative branch of our city or federal government I did nothing to correct the abuse of my fellow Americans?” Several months later,

⁴¹ “Conduct Survey on Civil Rights,” *SWNH*, August 29, 1968. Some other figures provided, although only anecdotal, were even more astonishing. One Republican State Representative, Carl Klein, claimed a private survey he conducted in his district suggested no more than eight of his constituents supported the civil rights movement.

⁴² *SWNH*, November 10, 1966.

⁴³ See Perlstein, “Thunder on the Right.”

his farewell address to the 18th Ward stressed the duty of elected officials to buck the will of the majority if it “does not have the support in morality or economics.” Vondrak bemoaned the retirement of the veteran alderman, noting “the difficulty of the public officeholder in trying to stand for his own principles while acceding to the will of the majority of his constituents.”⁴⁴ Few other political aspirants on the Southwest Side took Murray’s advice to heart in the 1967 municipal election. Although forty-one candidates ran for alderman across five Southwest Side wards, only two dared to voice support for integration. The winners all made their stance against open housing laws crystal clear.⁴⁵

While the “backlash” cited by Kluczynski derailed some political careers, it demonstrated limited organizational potential. Vondrak admired the renewed interest in neighborhood groups following the open housing marches, but he doubted that the buzz would continue if it derived solely from fear and hatred.⁴⁶ His assessment proved prophetic. Leaders in conservative civic and homeowners associations failed to coalesce their individual groups into a more potent entity, although some tried. Several civic associations launched a “political action organization” with Thomas Sutton known as “Operation Crescent” (a play on the SCLC’s famed “Operation Breadbasket” initiatives in the South and Chicago). Crescent aimed to unite white homeowners across the city’s outer neighborhoods and suburbs who encircled the black inner city, abolish the Illinois Commission on Human Relations, repeal the Armstrong Law on School Boundaries, blunt the effectiveness of civil rights legislation, and promote its own candidates for elected

⁴⁴ “Another Door to Open For Ald. Murray?” *SWNH*, January 5, 1967; “Murray Takes a Bow,” *SWNH*, January 5, 1967; “Murray Gives Views on Elected Official’s Duty,” *SWNH*, March 16, 1967.

⁴⁵ See *SWNH*, January 12, 1967; *SWNH*, March 2, 1967.

⁴⁶ “Our Emotional Summit,” *SWNH*, September 15, 1967.

office.⁴⁷ Sutton, an attorney by trade, became Crescent's leader and used it to launch his own political career on the Southwest Side—even though he actually resided over one hundred miles away in rural Princeton, IL. Under his direction, Crescent turned into a far-right extremist group.

Crescent claimed to represent ninety organizations and over 100,000 homeowners across metropolitan Chicago; in truth, its membership failed to grow beyond Sutton and a small contingent of core supporters. Crescent closed many of its meetings off to the general public, but *News-Herald* reporters estimated that only a few dozen ever showed. Sutton usually issued vague threats of violence against civil rights supporters in local newspapers, such as the amassing of “battle kits” in anticipation of marches that never occurred. Sutton never revealed the contents of the “battle kits” nor gave proof of their existence, but the mere hint of violence convinced numerous progressive and conservative residents that the Crescent leader callously utilized apocalyptic rhetoric for personal gain.⁴⁸ Indeed, Sutton launched a bid for governor in the spring of 1968 as a Republican. He campaigned on a platform which legalized residential and educational segregation in Illinois. Even with this generous carrot, he netted less than 11 percent of the vote in Southwest Side wards during the primary against the party favorite, Richard Ogilvie, largely due to his toxic reputation. After returning to Princeton, Sutton gained further notoriety for leading a white supremacist, paramilitary group known as the Legion of Justice in attacks against leftist groups across northern Illinois during the early 1970s.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ “Form Political Action Group to Strike Civil Rights Law,” *SWNH*, December 1, 1966; “Hollow Crescent,” *SWNH*, December 8, 1966.

⁴⁸ “Crescent Board and Negro Leaders in ‘Confrontation,’” *SWNH*, March 23, 1967.

⁴⁹ “Republicans’ Key Race is on Governor” *Chicago Tribune*, June 9, 1968; “Sutton Gets 11% of Vote in Local Wards,” *SWNH*, June 13, 1968. After Sutton's death in 1974, Legion of Justice members admitted to passing along raided documents from leftist groups to the Chicago Police Department. See Sean Shesgreen, “Right Wing Terrorism,” *The New York Review of Books*, June 4, 1970; Pierre Guilmant, “Push Jury Probe of Racist Group,”

Sutton's outsider status contributed to his failure on the Southwest Side. As one civil rights advocate pointed out, "He is using us by telling us to injure or murder other people, thus causing us to break the moral law and one of the proudest laws of a democracy. Who is Thomas R. Sutton of Princeton, Ill.?"⁵⁰ Another resident commented that the ability of an outsider such as Sutton to further their "political ambitions under the guise of civic interest" provided further proof of the area's organizational impotency. Even residents who desired segregation did not respect Sutton's pretension to leadership, with one anti-bussing advocate disavowing him in the press. Segregationist residents did not become apathetic. They instead rallied around two powerful personalities from within the Southwest Side, Mary Cvack and the Rev. Francis X. Lawlor, instead of the singular framework constructed by someone outside it.⁵¹

"Polish" Mary Cvack, a middle-aged widow, the education chairman of the Ashburn Civic Association and a member of the Bogan High School Parent-Teachers Association (PTA), described herself as a "typical Polish housewife" and the "quietest lady in Bogan." She professed to only volunteer when not preoccupied by cooking or baking and never involved herself in political causes; at least until the Chicago Board of Education designed a school bussing plan to alleviate overcrowding in African American schools. Although the 1963 permissive transfer plan only proposed bussing gifted black students to white schools such as Bogan High, Cvack and other mothers in the PTA perceived it as the first step in a larger plot to integrate the Southwest

Chicago Daily Defender, April 30, 1970; Bob Cromie, "Legal Definitions," *Chicago Tribune*, April 30, 1970; "S.T. Sutton dies, Foe of Open Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, June 10, 1974; Rudolph Unger, "Tells How Police Got Stolen Papers," *Chicago Tribune*, July 23, 1975.

⁵⁰ Letter from Yvonne O'Rayn, *SWNH*, March 9, 1967.

⁵¹ "Hits Sutton-Meek Plan for Area School Boards," *SWNH*, October 24, 1968.

Side. Over 2,500 Bogan-area parents squeezed into the school's auditorium to protest bussing on September 10, 1963, the first salvo in a sixteen-year fight to keep their high school completely white. Cvack and several other women active in the PTA quickly became the face of the anti-bussing resistance, gaining renown for their resolute harassment of Board of Education meetings. Their confrontational tactics caused at least one to infuriated board member to castigate them as a bunch of ignorant "Bogan Broads," an epithet that Cvack gleefully sported.⁵²

The Bogan Broads' popularity also resulted from the compelling anti-statist narrative they crafted against school integration. They justified all their agitation in defense of the humble "neighborhood school," giving their activism a folksy appeal. Cvack attached a three-foot miniature red schoolhouse atop of her car during motorcade protests.⁵³ They claimed that the neighborhood school which only enrolled students from the immediate area strengthened their community's cohesion. They contended that "liberal" forces, led by Mayor Daley, the Board of Education, and the federal government, all wished to dismantle this time-honored institution in favor of socially engineering a "federal school race proposal" that used their children as lab rats. One woman testified at a Board of Education meeting that "our children are not meant for experimentation. They are, God-given treasures...meant for us to educate...in our homes and neighborhood schools."⁵⁴ Cvack also co-opted the language of the civil rights movement to paint Southwest Siders as victims, arguing that forcing white children to go to a black school was

⁵² "Group Fights Plan to Move Bogan Pupils," *Chicago Tribune*, November 2, 1965; Peter Negronida, "School Watching in Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, October 18, 1970; "Bogan: A White Symbol Becomes a Mixed Blessing," *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 1985; *SWNH*, October 17, 1968.

⁵³ "Integration Plan Can Begin Now, Supt. Redmond Says," *SWNH*, August 31, 1967.

⁵⁴ Similar sentiment appears in Letter to Editor from Mrs. Arthur Radkte, *Southtown Economist*, April 17, 1968.

“brazen racism,” more discriminatory than segregated schools. She also rejected claims by the Board, pedagogical experts, and civil rights supporters that a multiracial, multicultural education had any value, preferring an orthodox curriculum for her traditional school. Black and white students alike, she maintained, did not need to see each other to have “a good basic education in the 3Rs.” Cvack and the Bogan Broads believed that only abolishing the Board of Education and giving PTAs full “local control” would save white education on the Southwest Side. Failing that, they encouraged their neighbors to oppose any bond issues for public schools, viewing the acceptance of such funds as acquiescence to bussing.⁵⁵

The fact that Cvack, a longtime Southwest Sider, fought integration prior to King’s arrival gave her a credibility Sutton lacked. When both Crescent and Cvack held separate rallies to protest the Redmond Plan—at that point the most ambitious bussing proposal in the city’s history—seventy people showed up at Sutton’s event. This was a paltry sum compared to the 2,000 who listened to Cvack speak at a Ford City Mall.⁵⁶ James F. Redmond, the Superintendent of Chicago Public Schools, crafted an ambitious master plan in the summer of 1967 that called for the creation of magnet schools, vocational schools, and “educational parks on lakefront peninsulas” with a capacity of 20,000 students. He intended for these new schools to entice residents in outlying neighborhoods and the suburbs to participate in a massive student exchange program with racial quotas to alleviate overcrowding and bring the city into compliance with civil rights mandates.⁵⁷ The fight against the Redmond Plan showed that unlike Sutton, the

⁵⁵ “School Board Drops Bussing Plan with Vote on 3 Motions,” *SWNH*, February 29, 1968.

⁵⁶ “Accuse Supt. Redmond of Plot Against Neighborhood Schools,” *SWNH*, September 14, 1967.

⁵⁷ *SWNH*, August 24, 1967.

Bogan Broads got results. They worked tirelessly throughout the 1967-1968 school year to defeat the superintendent, making their voices clearly heard at numerous Board of Education meetings and large protests across the Southwest Side. Their massive outcry cowed the board, who voted nine-to-one to order eliminate bussing from Redmond's plan, the linchpin of his metropolitan vision.⁵⁸ All that remained was a weak permissive transfer plan, which sent a handful of black pupils to white high schools within the city limits. Even then, Bogan remained an exception, the last all-white high school in the city until 1979.⁵⁹

Despite the large following she commanded and her importance in maintaining Chicago's color line, Cvack never made a bid for political office nor the presidency of the Ashburn Civic Association. The reasons for this remain unclear: she possibly did not want to jeopardize the maternal authority she commanded as a "Polish housewife" by entering a traditionally male arena. She may have seen a move into politics as futile. Up to this point in Chicago's history, no woman won a city council election. She witnessed this firsthand when one of her associates in the Bogan PTA unsuccessfully ran for alderman on a low taxation, neighborhood schools platform.⁶⁰ Cvack and the other Bogan Broads instead threw their support behind another demagogue-in-waiting, one who relied heavily upon their support in igniting his own political career.

⁵⁸ School Board Drops Bussing Plan with Vote on 3 Motions," *SWNH*, February 29, 1968; Casey Banas, "Busing Foes Picket City Hall, Cardinal" *Chicago Tribune*, January 31, 1968.

⁵⁹ David Gottlieb, "Bogan Parents Vow to Oppose School Plan," *Southtown Economist*, July 19, 1978.

⁶⁰ *SWNH*, January 12, 1967. Peck was one of only eight women to even run for alderman that year. Women would have to wait until 1971 to win a seat on the City Council.

The Rev. Francis X. Lawlor reveled in politics. A Catholic priest at St. Mary of Mount Carmel parish in Murray Park and a biology teacher at St. Rita High School in Chicago Lawn, Lawlor claimed that he long worried about the possibility of racial integration on the Southwest Side during his twenty-two years as an instructor. Like many other residents, however, he only saw the need for decisive action after the 1966 riots.⁶¹ He initially spearheaded the creation of a “Better Communities Council,” which modeled its charter after the United Nations, Bill of Rights, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms in September 1966. He initially promoted it as a religious, cultural, and recreational enrichment organization that aimed to “make the community so strong in spirit that no one will want to move out of it,” but little record of this group’s activities or achievements exists.⁶² At some point in 1967, Lawlor became convinced his council provided an inadequate safeguard against blockbusting. He then started to openly defend racial segregation. Lawlor voted against the Association of Chicago Priests’ endorsement of fair housing practices, eerily foreshadowing that it would “split the church in half.” He then encouraged Southwest Side civic associations and parishioners to defy the Church through a letter writing campaign to convince Archbishop John Cody to reverse his stance.⁶³ By the end of the year, Lawlor replaced his inactive council with block clubs of homeowners, which he organized in and around the South Lynne neighborhood. The block clubs became the instruments

⁶¹ William Dendy, “Father Lawlor, SLCC Battle Mars Unity on South Side,” *The New World*, February 9, 1968.

⁶² “Priest Outlines Plan for New Area Council,” *SWNH*, September 22, 1966; “Group’s Aim Is Better Community,” *SWNH*, November 17, 1966.

⁶³ “Two Hundred Protest Housing Bills at Meetings,” *SWNH*, May 11, 1967.

of his “stay put” strategy for keeping the Southwest Side white. Lawlor also called for making Ashland Avenue a permanent dividing line between the white and black South Side.⁶⁴

Lawlor promoted white ethnic racial innocence. Whereas the media and civil rights activists placed the blame for the violence against King on Southwest Side residents, Lawlor absolved his supporters of their sins. He told a Lithuanian homeowners’ association, “You and I are called bigots. This is not true. We don’t hate the Negro. We want to see him with a good home, education, and job. But we don’t want him to take ours.” While this provided a more sophisticated rejection of integration than extremists such as Sutton or the neo-Nazis, Lawlor often defended his “stay put” philosophy with thinly veiled racist judgments. He maintained that integration would never work, since black Americans failed to meet the “morality and high standard of civilization” embodied by white ethnic Chicagoans, “which dates back 10,000 years to the dawn of recorded civilization.” Lawlor viewed integration as a zero-sum game and said that Southwest Side residents served on the front “in a war for the survival of the American way of life...for the heritage of our parents.”⁶⁵ Because the members of his newly formed Southwest Associated Block Clubs (SABC) possessed a “high standard of civilization,” he promised that his supporters never would resort to violence should integration occur. Yet he cautioned that unless the entire Southwest Side agreed to hold the line at Ashland, they all faced certain doom.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ “Charge Priest Divides Lynne Residents,” *SWNH*, January 11, 1968; McGreevy, 231-234; Seligman, *Chicago’s Block Clubs*, 46-50.

⁶⁵ Ellen Skerrett, “Rev. Lawlor Tells Views to Liths,” *Southtown Economist*, May 29, 1968, clipping in SLCC Records, Box 14 Folder 6, CHM; “The Fugitive Priest,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 24, 1968.

⁶⁶ “Father Lawlor Answers Critics,” *SWNH*, January 18, 1968; Doris E. Saunders, “CONFETTI,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 5, 1968; “Lawlor Tells Plan to Form Block Clubs,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 25, 1968; “Racial Change Disintegrates Area,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 5, 1968.

Lawlor's ability to crystallize the fears and desires of segregationist homeowners and civic associations, as well as provide them a sense of spiritual sanction for their opposition to the civil rights movement, made him extremely popular. As a priest defying the chain of command, Lawlor embodied their anti-clerical Catholicism. Many members of the mobs in 1966 targeted nuns and priests marching alongside the Chicago Freedom Movement. One deacon in a Gage Park parish observed that "it was terrifying to see the hierarchy of hatred. First it seemed directed against 'the nigger,' then against Archbishop Cody, then the Catholic clergy, the Protestant clergy, then the Commies and finally the Jew."⁶⁷ The vitriol expressed by the mob toward their Church resulted from a belief that their religious leaders betrayed them. Their church not only sided with the enemy, it scolded them for their actions. The editors of *The New World*, a major Catholic newspaper in Chicago, denounced the Southwest Side as full of ignorant "know-nothings."⁶⁸ Residents at an Operation Crescent meeting claimed that the Church lost its way due to a new generation of priests who "haven't studied any theology or scripture; they studied law books and even these they misrepresent."⁶⁹ Another homeowner sympathetic toward the mob stated that "it is disgusting that the ministers, priests, and nuns of this community should interfere in any way."⁷⁰

The logic of anti-clericalism on the Southwest Side caused racially conservative residents to demand greater input and control over the archdiocese's affairs. They questioned Cody's

⁶⁷ Frank Maier, "SW Side Priests to Urge Peace," *Chicago Daily-News*, August 1, 1966; "Big Irishman Saves Negro Priest from White Mob," *Chicago Daily-Defender*, August 9, 1966.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Pat Johnson, "Speech Blasts Clergymen at Crescent Meet," *SWNH*, February 16, 1967.

⁷⁰ Letter from "Kilpatrick Ave. Resident" to the editor, *SWNH*, August 25, 1966.

authority, noting they never elected him to his post. They demanded that their parishes adhere to the “separation of church and state,” focus exclusively on the spiritual needs of its members, and divest itself from social justice causes. Parents—even those who enrolled their children in public schools—demanded the right to censor the curriculum in parochial schools after the archdiocese included readings comparing King favorably to Jesus Christ.⁷¹ Ultimately, they ostracized the clergy and argued that they never truly belonged in their white community in the first place. Priests, they noted, did not have to work to purchase their own homes. As one resident explained, “when priests need money, all they have to do is stick out their hand and immediately it is filled with money...our sentiments on this matter agree with Patrick Henry’s, but we substitute the word ‘segregation’ for the word liberty.”⁷² The only man of the cloth worthy of living on their blocks was the one who rebelled.

Lawlor made popular overtures to the Southwest Side’s working-class residents. As one *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist remarked, Lawlor drew a large amount of support from “the ones George Wallace, and Richard Nixon, too, spoke of last year as the ‘forgotten Americans.’ They are the printers, truck drivers, factory foremen who pay the taxes, hang service flags in the window, and remember how it was their fathers came here.”⁷³ Lawlor sometimes donned a hard hat while leading protests, a controversial symbol of white ethnic, working-class masculinity and conservatism in the late 1960s.⁷⁴ Lawlor also showered a group of construction workers with

⁷¹ Letter to Editor from Mary Cvack, *SWNH*, March 16, 1967.

⁷² Letter to Editor from William McLaughlin, *SWNH*, March 23, 1967.

⁷³ Dorothy Storck, “Ashland in Between 2 Fuming Worlds,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, March 7, 1969.

⁷⁴ Patrick Joyce and Barry Krozel, “2500 Cheer Lawlor Pledge to Block O’Toole School,” *Southtown Economist*, October 21, 1970.

praise after they physically confronted a band of “Yippies” in downtown Chicago. He explained “it was good that those hard-muscled working men, who helped to build something as solid as the John Hancock building” could intimidate the “bearded, strangely-dressed youth” into common sense.⁷⁵

Lawlor also had a way with the ladies and became equally—if not more—popular with conservative women on the Southwest Side. His Ashland boundary applied to schools as well, which earned him the loyalty of the Bogan Broads and their sizeable following. Women volunteers staffed the SABC on Lawlor’s behalf, and no member of the press could interview him without the permission of Lucille Savickas, a mother of five who doubled as his personal press secretary.⁷⁶ Cvack extolled his virtues. She seconded a Polish Homeowners Association request to rename Ashland Avenue to Rev. Francis X. Lawlor Drive and remarked, “I think this man should have that tribute made to him while he is still alive.”⁷⁷ She and Lawlor coordinated protests. In one notable instance, they formed a delegation with seven other Southwest Side women that met with officials in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in Washington D.C. to promote school segregation. The Washington trip helped Cvack and Lawlor obtain a five minute audience with Mayor Daley, although they failed to convince him to “use his influence to retain neighborhood schools.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Roy Lawson, “Father Lawlor: I’m No Politician,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 28, 1969.

⁷⁶ Strock.

⁷⁷ *SWNH*, September 19, 1968.

⁷⁸ “Washington Corps Gets Five Minutes with the Mayor,” *SWNH*, June 6, 1968; “7 Meet with Congressmen, HEW Officials,” *Southtown Economist*, May 16, 1968.

Lawlor's meteoric rise on the Southwest Side did not endear him to his immediate superiors in the Archdiocese of Chicago, namely Archbishop Cody. Cody and his chief lieutenant in racial affairs, Monsignor Egan, expected difficulty in convincing rank-and-file parishioners to support the church's position on integration and civil rights, but they did not anticipate a rogue priest undermining their authority. Lawlor's defense of segregation encouraged many local Catholics to continue ignoring their church's teachings on race. Cody ordered Lawlor to stop creating block clubs; Lawlor unheeded the mandate. Seeing no other option, the archbishop exiled Lawlor by reassigning him to a teaching post at a Catholic high school in Tulsa, Oklahoma.⁷⁹ The power play backfired spectacularly. Upon hearing of Lawlor's abrupt dismissal, the SABC and numerous other civic associations rallied for Lawlor's reinstatement. More than 1,000 Lawlor fans carrying "Cody Must Go" signs poured into a Gage Park field house demanding "due process" for Lawlor. The devotion Lawlor inspired was on full display, with one attendee proclaiming, "I love this man. I've got to help him get a hearing—just a hearing."⁸⁰ After the meeting, the Gage Park Civic Association amassed over 10,000 signatures for a petition requesting Lawlor's reinstatement.

Convinced that they could persuade the Apostolic delegation in Washington D.C. to override Cody, Lawlor's supporters put on an impressive display of piety in subsequent weeks. The SABC held a "pray-in" at St. Mary of Mount Carmel.⁸¹ SABC members placed mourning

⁷⁹ Louise Ryan, "Rev. Lawlor Transferred to New Post in Tulsa," February 11, 1968; *Southtown Economist*, "SW Groups Organize Support For Priest Ousted by Cardinal," *SWNH*, February 8, 1968; "Southwest Groups Back Ousted Priest," *Chicago Tribune*, February 4, 1968.

⁸⁰ *Southtown Economist*, February 11, 1968; *Southtown Economist*, February 17, 1968; "500 Assail Cardinal for Firing Priest," *Chicago Tribune*, February 9, 1968.

⁸¹ "Religious Vow vs. Law Issue in Father Lawlor Case," *SWNH*, February 22, 1968.

bunting and “Pray for Lawlor” signs in the windows of their homes after the transfer.⁸² The protest did not change Cody’s mind nor secure the help of the Apostolic delegate, but it encouraged Lawlor to defy the Church once more. He announced his return to Chicago at a press conference held in a residential basement with a SABC housewife at his side and several television cameras in front of him. Lawlor declared himself a “fugitive from Tulsa” and pledged not to leave Chicago until “someone takes over and handles the situation on the periphery area.”⁸³

Cody retaliated by stripping Lawlor of his power to hold mass or minister the sacraments, which amounted to nothing more than a mild inconvenience for his unruly subordinate. Southwest Side civic associations opened a savings account on Lawlor’s behalf, and numerous families in the SABC took turns hosting Lawlor in their homes. With their generous support, Lawlor became the leading voice of conservatism on the Southwest Side. In addition to their usual advocacy for segregation, Lawlor, Cvack, the SABC, and their supporters held a three-hundred-strong person parade praising Mayor Daley and the Chicago Police Department for their rough treatment of anti-war protestors during the bloody 1968 Democratic National Convention.⁸⁴ Although he initially promised to not run for public office, he accepted a nomination for delegate to the 1970 Illinois Constitutional Convention and defeated his opponent in a massive landslide. Eventually assessing himself as the most capable leader on racial matters

⁸² “Father Lawlor Block Clubs Still Grow,” *Southtown Economist*, March 20, 1968.

⁸³ Bonnie Vinaccia and Louise Ryan, “‘I am a Fugitive’—Father Lawlor,” *Southtown Economist*, March 27, 1968; John Neenan, “Father Lawlor Asks Help for Threatened Neighborhoods,” *SWNH*, March 28, 1968; Patricia Krizmis, “Priest Back Here Despite Cody Faces a Suspension in Tulsa,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 27, 1968.

⁸⁴ “300 March Here to Support Mayor, Strong Police Action,” *SWNH*, September 5, 1968.

in the Southwest Side, he successfully ran for Chicago City Council in 1971. Lawlor became the first, and only, Catholic priest to serve as a Chicago alderman.⁸⁵

The rise of Lawlor, the success of the Bogan Broads, and the wide support for segregation did not go uncontested on the Southwest Side. Some white residents defied the will of the majority, directly advocating for the racial integration of the Southwest Side's residences and neighborhood schools. In contrast to their conservative counterparts, they defined community in more expansive terms than the white ethnic property owner. To them, the Southwest Side included their priests and pastors, the places where they worked and shopped, and any who could afford to live there, regardless of their racial background. They believed that unless they united all elements of their community, the Southwest Side would remain disempowered and an unjust place to live. Whereas conservative residents increasingly balked at the idea of unifying disparate neighborhood groups, viewing the autonomy of their individual civic associations as proof of the homeowner's inviolable freedom, progressive residents aggressively pushed for the creation of an Alinsky-style community organization modeled after the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council.

One smaller organization already existed that supported integration: the South Lynne Community Council (SLCC). The SLCC's position, however, did not extend beyond their boundaries and put them at odds with the vast majority of civic associations to their west. The council endured a bitter coup within its ranks between 1962 and 1963. The SLCC survived the challenge from within, but the council lost hundreds of paying members, considerably

⁸⁵ "Strip Lawlor of His Status as a Priest," *Chicago Tribune*, August 14, 1968; "Father Lawlor Suspended For Not Obeying Order," *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 14, 1968.

weakening its financial position. While South Lynne remained one of the few stable white communities between Western and Ashland avenues at the time of the Chicago Freedom Movement's marches, the SLCC's diminished resources made staving decline difficult. Although the SLCC successfully warded off blockbusters near Ashland Avenue for a decade, an internal survey of their main commercial strip at 63rd Street and Ashland Avenue revealed a vacancy rate of 60 percent. The economic disinvestment of South Lynne proceeded without white flight. Attracting new businesses became difficult as the SLCC fought the perception that the city wrote their neighborhood off as a future all-black ghetto. The SLCC pointed to several examples of this troubling trend. The organization compiled a six-year backlog of zoning and building code violations the city failed to address. While other Southwest Siders lauded Superintendent Redmond's predecessor, Dr. Benjamin Willis, as a champion of the neighborhood school for agreeing not to integrate Bogan High in 1963, this forced schools on the racial borderline such as South Lynne to receive black pupils instead. The Chicago Police Department also moved South Lynne from an all-white Chicago Lawn district to the high crime, majority black Englewood District in 1965, a decision the SLCC feared for the potential "psychological" ramifications. As one SLCC officer explained, "the boundary change is worth a million dollars in publicity value to the speculator who will play up to the hilt upon its racial significance" and "will be interpreted by these residents as one more enforcement of their fears."⁸⁶

⁸⁶ "S. Lynne Taking Zoning Complaints to City Hall," *SWNH*, March 17, 1966; SLCC Executive Board Minutes, SLCC Records, Box 2 Folder 3, CHM; William J. Gleeson, "Hassle Looms Over Lindblom," *South Lynne Community Council News*, April 1965, CHM; "Dr. Willis: Quality Education, Racial Balance for Lindblom," *SLCC News*, May 1965, CHM; "New Commander of Englewood Police District," *SLCC News*, October 1965, CHM; "Englewood Police Boundary Shifted to Hamilton Ave.," *SLCC News*, May 1964, CHM

The SLCC's remedy for their many ailments significantly differed from the prescription offered by civic associations: enforce civil rights laws to enable the integration of the entire city and suburbs. SLCC officials reaffirmed their its endorsement of Chicago's fair housing ordinance in 1965 and 1966.⁸⁷ They explained their support for integration as a practical necessity, borne out of the unique problems faced by a "fringe" community facing the greatest risk of rapid racial turnover.⁸⁸ If black homeowners with the means lacked the opportunity to buy property in every white neighborhood in the city and the suburbs, then blockbusting remained a profitable enterprise. SLCC leaders warned that it could not keep crooked realtors at bay forever, particularly with dwindling support from city government. Their only hope resided in a fair, equitable housing market for all Chicagoans to take the "pressure" off their residential blocks near Ashland Avenue. They further elaborated that "there wouldn't be an influx of Negroes into a single neighborhood; there wouldn't be a dual housing market, which creates excessive costs for both the white seller and Negro buyer."⁸⁹ Likewise, the SLCC issued a press statement in support of King's open housing marches in Marquette Park, declaring "We urge all citizens of the Southwest Side to work toward positive, constructive solutions of housing and other problems which are the basis for the demonstrations."⁹⁰ The SLCC also encouraged the dismantlement of the neighborhood school model for similar reasons. They effusively praised Superintendent Redmond's transfer plan, proclaiming "Your proposal is one of the first officially

⁸⁷ *SLCC News*, April 1965, CHM.

⁸⁸ *SWNH*, May 16, 1968.

⁸⁹ "Lynne Council Members Back Open Housing," *SWNH*, September 1, 1966.

⁹⁰ *SWNH*, August 11, 1968;

to be made that would have integration at a school before it came to the state where it needed such exhumation” and “Whites gain! Negroes gains! America gains! Our, small, small planet gains!”⁹¹

The SLCC did not stand alone. The only other Southwest Side group to support the Redmond Plan was the Southwest Committee on Peaceful Equality (SCOPE), a collection of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish residents and clergy.⁹² Created as a joint project between the Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Urban Affairs, Church Federation of Chicago, and Chicago Board of Rabbis, SCOPE delineated a moral argument for supporting racial integration, claiming that “fundamental principles” such as equality did not require majority approval. They believed supporting civil rights fulfilled a Christian obligation to the rest of humanity, and SCOPE members argued for the greater involvement of local churches in resolving racial tensions, noting they must remain “relevant and meet the needs of the world” by “involving themselves in the real problems that exist not only in their community, but the city, the nation, and the world.”⁹³ They decried the anti-clerical attitudes of many Southwest Side residents, with one officer remarking “I must have missed some of the necessary indoctrination about the meaning of membership in the Church. We were not aware that to be a member of the Catholic faith was no more than a private club arrangement in which we withheld donations if we didn’t like what the priest, pastor, or bishop had to say about our moral obligations.”⁹⁴

⁹¹ “South Lynne Lauds Redmond For Transfer Plan View,” *SWNH*, March 2, 1967; SLCC Newsletter, June 1968, CHM; “South Lynne Lauds Racial Quota System,” *SWNH*, August 31, 1967; “South Lynne Council for Redmond Plan,” *SWNH*, September 21, 1967.

⁹² *SWNH*, February 29, 1968.

⁹³ Letter from Mary Sawallisch, *SWNH*, March 10, 1966.

⁹⁴ Letter from Mrs. Jessie Rzeszutko, *SWNH*, February 26, 1967.

SCOPE believed that segregationist residents failed to see the decaying moral neighborhood they built around themselves through their racial hatred. One SCOPE member, alarmed at the support Governor George Wallace garnered in Chicago, described himself as “appalled at the racism and hate expressed by my friends and neighbors...those who are supporting Wallace were among the first to throw rocks, bottles, and anything else that was handy at marchers in Marquette Park.”⁹⁵ John McManus, the Chairman of SCOPE, stated “I realize that we are not physically impoverished...but we are spiritually impoverished” and that “I see SCOPE as an alternative voice in our community, a community of which I feel an integral part.”⁹⁶ Consequently, SCOPE endeavored to educate the “white ghetto” and make “love the true force in our community.”⁹⁷ They held frequent lectures that featured black and white guest speakers from the civil rights movement, including representatives from the American Friends Service Committee, the SCLC, and the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. Speakers at these panels encouraged SCOPE to get their neighbors “to know the Negro,” reduce their fears, and allow integration to “naturally occur.” As one black homeowner from the middle-class Chatham neighborhood explained to the audience at a SCOPE “bi-racial panel,” she did not require integration but simply wanted the legal right to move to wherever she could afford.⁹⁸

The willingness of the SLCC and SCOPE to integrate made them pariahs to conservative residents. They soon found their neighbors undermining their efforts. Julius van Beveren, a

⁹⁵ Letter from Dennis J. Schreiber, *SWNH*, October 3, 1968.

⁹⁶ *SWNH*, June 27, 1968.

⁹⁷ *SWNH*, May 2, 1968.

⁹⁸ *SWNH*, September 9, 1965; *SWNH*, February 10, 1966; *SWNH*, March 17, 1966; *SWNH*, February 23, 1967. DeAngelis

member of the Southwest Realty Board, denounced South Lynne as a decrepit “social vacuum” devoid of any allure for white homeowners. He predicted massive white flight across the Southwest Side within five years. Detractors crashed the SLCC’s ten-year anniversary review, claiming that the organization did not “represent South Lynne” and would ruin the entire area.⁹⁹ SCOPE members suffered numerous insults in the *News-Herald*, described as “a small minority of white people who are sick,” “brainwashed communists,” and “rhetorical halitosis” by critics.¹⁰⁰ Hecklers frequently invaded SCOPE meetings, especially when they planned to vote on resolutions regarding fair housing or bussing. The seven dissenting votes on a SCOPE decision to support the Redmond Plan all came from non-members who showed up to disrupt the proceedings. SCOPE, true to their tolerant reputation, asked their opponents to vote alongside them.¹⁰¹

The biggest threat came from Father Lawlor. The priest sowed further division in South Lynne when he attempted to supplant the SLCC with the SABC. Lawlor organized numerous block clubs within the SLCC’s boundaries, comprised of former members who left the organization after failing to take it over in 1963. Lawlor and Cvack confronted the SLCC personally about the incursion. He refused to stop creating block clubs in South Lynne, arguing that his supporters who felt disenfranchised by the council gave him the authority to do so. He accused the SLCC of destroying its own community with its pro-integration policies. He only

⁹⁹ *SWNH*, November 30, 1967; Kathy Moyzis, “Real Estate Man Predicts Move Out,” *SWNH* December 7, 1967; Letter from William J. Gleeson, *SWNH*, December 14, 1967.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Frank Martino, *SWNH*, October 10, 1968; Letter from “A Concerned American,” *SWNH*, October 17, 1968; Pat Johnson, “Speech Blasts Clergymen at Crescent Meet,” *SWNH*, February 16, 1967; Letter from Jessie Rzeszutko, *SWNH*, February 23, 1967; Pat Johnson, “100 Applaud As Speakers Attack Cody,” *SWNH*, March 2, 1967.

¹⁰¹ “SCOPE Votes To Support Bussing,” *SWNH*, February 22, 1968.

offered to ally with the SLCC if they agreed to make Ashland Avenue a “No Man’s Land until we stabilize our community” and rescind their support of bussing.¹⁰² The SLCC resisted Lawlor’s imperial tactics, issuing a lengthy press statement in both the *News-Herald* and *Southtown Economist* that accused the priest of creating the block clubs for selfish reasons at the expense of an existing, successful organization. SLCC leaders invited Lawlor and his block club followers to change South Lynne alongside them by participating in their meetings and nominating officers, but they emphasized that his current meddling only exacerbated strife.¹⁰³ Another SLCC member accused Lawlor of misleading his block club members with a facile answer to a profoundly complex question, noting that “racism, no matter how sweet, simple, or palatable it may be presented, is still racism and words like those lead to further misunderstanding and future violence.”¹⁰⁴

Lawlor’s supporters from within and outside South Lynne ignored these protestations and cheered his challenge of the SLCC’s authority. A member of the Murray Park Civic Association pointed to SLCC’s failure to retain businesses as proof of its obsolescence. They further argued that “if people within their community were one-hundred percent in favor of their stands...no one could shake its stability or foundation.”¹⁰⁵ Another South Lynne resident believed the SLCC to be in terminal decline, but Lawlor finally gave them hope.¹⁰⁶ Others rejected SLCC claims

¹⁰² Handwritten Note of January 12, 1968 SLCC Executive Board Meeting, SLCC Records, Box 14 Folder 2, CHM; “Priest Tells South Lynne Goals,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 21, 1968.

¹⁰³ Example of this statement appeared in the *SWNH*, January 11, 1968.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Mrs. Thomas Jelderks, *SWNH*, February 22, 1968.

¹⁰⁵ Letter to *Southtown Economist* from Mrs. Felice Wolf, January 10, 1968, in SLCC Records, Box 14 Folder 2, CHM;

¹⁰⁶ Letter to SLCC from Lorraine Kempel, February 9, 1968, in SLCC Records, Box 14 Folder 2, CHM.

that Lawlor enticed potential members away with impossible promises, telling the chairman of the council that “we are not little children being led around by the hand. The majority of us are people who have a few years behind us and we know what we want.”¹⁰⁷

Multiple civic associations joined Lawlor and the SABC in their fight against the SLCC, lobbying the city to rescind millions of dollars of urban renewal funds earmarked for 63rd Street and Ashland Avenue. The SLCC saw this money as the last chance to guarantee South Lynne’s future viability. The SLCC spent years pressuring the city to modernize their stretch of 63rd Street and remake its moribund shopping strip into a more automobile-friendly corridor competitive against the new shopping plazas of the suburbs. Although the Chicago Transit Authority already started building the centerpiece of the renewal project, a modern park-and-ride ‘L’ terminal at 63rd and Ashland in 1966, Lawlor’s supporters inundated the SLCC’s small storefront office during a routine monthly meeting in 1968 to demand that the alderman halt to its construction. Both Lawlor and his supporters, who for years ignored the SLCC’s urban renewal initiatives, now claimed the extension would attract too many African Americans to the Southwest Side and spark white flight. More than 2,000 homeowners signed a petition asking for the cancellation of the Ashland terminal, even though the Department of Urban Planning insisted that the time to voice opposition to the project long passed.¹⁰⁸

The challenge issued by Lawlor and the poor implementation of the Housing of Urban Development Act destroyed South Lynne’s stability. Blockbusters succeeded in flipping all-

¹⁰⁷ Letter to Chairman Joseph Radich from Mrs. Lorraine Kempel, Mrs. Walter Konic, and Christine Schedin, January 26, 1968, in SLCC Records, Box 14 Folder 2, CHM;

¹⁰⁸ “It’s Too Late, Opponents of ‘L’ Are Told,” *SWNH*, January 25, 1968; “State Board Drops Bussing Plans with Vote on 3 Motions,” *SWNH*, February 29, 1968; John Neenan, “Father Lawlor Asks Help for ‘Threatened Neighborhoods,’” *SWNH* March 28, 1968.

white blocks in South Lynne to black homeowners in the summer of 1968, only several months after the SABC formed. The SLCC swiftly acted to prevent any violence against the newcomers and invited them into the organization through several “meet and greet” events.” Nonetheless, their leadership realized that they required a stronger, better financed organization than what their individual group provided to thwart the real estate companies pilfering South Lynne’s eastern blocks and the hostile civic associations to the west. They warned that ignoring their plight and obstructing their work only meant that the problems of South Lynne would become those of the entire Southwest Side in the future. Joseph Radich, then chairman of the SLCC, and Lois Anne Rosen, the executive secretary, issued a joint statement calling for united action across all Southwest Side neighborhoods. “No longer can each little area of our city regard itself as an independent fiefdom bent on securing favors for itself at the expense of its neighbors, for today’s short-range privilege may prove tomorrow’s tragedy,” they claimed, “We can and must solve the problems of our communities today if we want to leave a city worth living in to our children tomorrow.”¹⁰⁹

The plight of the SLCC dovetailed with a new initiative conceived by more than twenty Protestant and Catholic churches to create a large, professional community organization. Recognizing the same void in grassroots strength that many others perceived following the 1966 riots, these churches collectively raised \$60,000 to form a broad-based “umbrella group” that would bring places of worship, businesses, homeowners associations, and other civic organizations together. Much of this money went to hiring a paid organizer. They immediately

¹⁰⁹ “Leaders Urge United Action on Problems,” *SWNH*, December 14, 1967.

selected a young, but experienced activist, John Daley, to build the United Southwest Community Organization (USCO).¹¹⁰

Daley (no relation to the city's ruling political dynasty) was a native of West Town on Chicago's Northwest Side and a thirty-three-year-old father of seven with a degree in engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). After college, he briefly worked in sales at Ryerson Steel. Alarmed by the spread of blight in his home neighborhood, Daley started volunteering for the Northwest Community Organization (NCO), which similar to the proposed umbrella group on the Southwest Side, received startup funds from a large number of churches. Founded by Tom Gaudette, one of Saul Alinsky's top disciples, the NCO used confrontational protesting to bulldoze nearly five hundred slum buildings, to obtain a new high school, and to successfully fight an urban renewal plan unpopular with residents. Astounded by these successes, Daley quit his job at Ryerson to become a full-time community organizer. His accomplishments with the NCO made him a prime candidate to design a similar organization on the Southwest Side.¹¹¹

Daley stated that outside of the command to create an umbrella group, the money he received from the churches came with no strings attached. Knowing that many residents detested civil rights, he promised that the churches did not compel him to make the umbrella organization integrationist. Such a weighty question would be resolved by a majority vote from participating members. Daley stated that his only purpose was to put the organization in place and incorporate as many civic groups as possible—residents decided the rest. Nonetheless, he explained that

¹¹⁰ "Begin Effort to Unite Community Groups," *Chicago Tribune*, April 30, 1967.

¹¹¹ "Organize to 'Brighten' Northwest Community," *Chicago Tribune*, January 30, 1966; Anne Getz, "Plan Less Razing in City Renewal," *Chicago Tribune*, March 5, 1967.

allowing these same civic groups to operate independently no longer worked, as they “are limited in power and limited in terms of what they can accomplish,” which left them without major clout.¹¹²

Given that most residents affiliated with conservative civic associations or Lawlor’s SABC, they easily could have dictated the direction and policy of USCO by merely joining. Instead, they unanimously rejected it. Within a week of his commission, Daley suffered his first defeat when he pitched USCO to the Gage Park Civic Association. Members of the association called him a “tool of Cody” and accused him of supporting integration because of USCO’s ties to local Catholic churches.¹¹³ One homeowners association informed Daley that they refused to sacrifice their autonomy to a larger organization. A skeptic belonging to the Chicago Lawn Civic Association dismissed Daley for his similarity to Alinsky—who they called a socialist—and stated “that is enough for me to fear him.”¹¹⁴ The Southwest Property and Homeowners Association banned USCO representatives at their meetings for all the aforementioned reasons and argued that like Martin Luther King, Daley only “manufactured issues” instead of solving them. In another incident, fifty members of several civic associations interrupted a USCO meeting to demand that Daley permanently leave the Southwest Side. Daley also found little traction with Southwest Side machine politicians, such as Alderman John Krska, who blustered about how his ward office handled all of his constituents’ problems.¹¹⁵

¹¹² “Propose New Federation of Southwest Side Organizations,” *SWNH*, April 20, 1967.

¹¹³ “Gage Board to Meet Community Organizer,” *SWNH*, April 27, 1967.

¹¹⁴ John Neenan, “Priest Urges Appeal to Cody on Issue of Open Housing,” *SWNH*, May 18, 1967; Letter from “Campbell Ave. Resident,” *SWNH*, June 15, 1967.

¹¹⁵ “Property Group, USCO Tangle Over Issues,” *SWNH*, June 22, 1967; Alex Smith, “Hecklers Heckle, and Problems Remain,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1967; “Need No Help,” *SWNH*, May 11, 1967.

After the creation of USCO, racially conservative residents and leaders insisted that the Southwest Side had sufficient organization all along, rendering further efforts superfluous and outright dangerous to the white community. They viewed Daley as an outside mercenary from the Northwest Side paid to do the churches' bidding until his two-year contract ended, someone who lacked a meaningful commitment to the area's future. One resident doubted that the churches gave away so much money without expecting full control over USCO and told Daley to "take your Umbrella Plan, open it, and fly away like Mary Poppins."¹¹⁶ Daley also erred when he chose to reside in suburban Bridgeview, which prompted hostile critics to sarcastically ask him to clean up the suburbs instead. Traditional civic associations insisted that because their reliance on unpaid volunteers proved only they truly kept the interests of the white homeowner at heart. Lawlor, knowing his base, did his part to discredit USCO. When a USCO supporter asked the renegade priest whether or not the Southwest Side required "professional help" at a SABC meeting, he replied "no more than you need in your own house." Lawlor also expressed pride in the fact the SABC used volunteers who lived on the Southwest Side instead of a "ivory tower bureaucratic dictatorship made up of professional civil rights theorists, liberal clergymen, real estate operators, lending agencies, businessmen, social agitators, and revolutionaries." The USCO supporter then insinuated that Lawlor paid his staff with "bunco money," but this only caused the audience to drown him out with shouts of "Saul Alinsky!"¹¹⁷

Daley recoiled against the poor reception, informing the antipathetic civic associations that his group existed to help residents "twenty-four hours a day" and to "replace fear of our

¹¹⁶ Letter from Joseph J. Lodato, *SWNH*, October 24, 1968.

¹¹⁷ "Father Lawlor Re-Elected," *Chicago Tribune*, November 17, 1968; Joette Getse, "U.S.C.O. Draws Fire from 20 Groups in Area," *Chicago Tribune*, November 3, 1968.

community's future with confidence and unity."¹¹⁸ Lacking any other option, Daley organized the people already challenging the status quo: racially progressive Southwest Siders. Both SCOPE and the SLCC overwhelmingly approved of USCO. Other residents who shared their views, but lacked representation in existing civic associations, formed their own with the intent to join USCO. For example, progressive homeowners in Chicago Lawn supplemented SCOPE by forming the Council of Lawn Neighbors and Marquette Manor Neighbors in 1968. Members in both "Neighbors" saw USCO as an opportunity to attack the root causes of racial violence on the Southwest Side by replacing organizations that for too long prioritized "reaction" over "positive action." They also viewed the heavy involvement of the churches in USCO as an asset and promoted the umbrella organization as a vehicle to practice their faith. As Phyllis Kinnerk, a devout Catholic, thirty-three year-old working mother of seven children, part-time college student, and a Lawn Neighbors officer illuminated, "I assume our Lord would expect us to enter into civic affairs armed with His principles as set forth by His Church. Separation of church and state evades me here because I like to think I carry my Christianity with me wherever I go, and I do not believe Our Lord expects me to leave it at home when I attend civic meetings." They also asked critics of USCO to consider the alternative. If local church leaders removed themselves from the Southwest Side's social problems, fatal apathy would spread throughout the entire parish.¹¹⁹

Daley hoped to win over moderate Southwest Siders unsure about USCO by demonstrating the power of a professional community organization. Although lacking support

¹¹⁸ William Currie, "Daley Answers U.S.C.O. Critics, but Struggle for Unity Remains," *Chicago Tribune*, November 10, 1968.

¹¹⁹ Letter from Phyllis Kinnerk, *SWNH*, November 21, 1968.

from a majority of residents, USCO and its progressive core scored several impressive victories during its incubation period. Within a month of its inception, USCO successfully forced the city to demolish an abandoned gas station at 63rd Street and Mozart in Chicago Lawn. USCO forced an absentee landlord living on the North Side to clean up his dilapidated apartment building after driving to his home and showing him pictures of the distressed property. The most notable feat occurred when USCO outmaneuvered numerous civic associations to secure a separate campus for Bogan College. The eight-year-old junior college initially held classes in Bogan High School for the first eight years of its existence, severely limiting the number of classes available to students. Civic associations opposed the permanent campus out of fears its presence might entice African Americans to move into the Southwest Side. They instead asked for the campus to be placed near the Stevenson Expressway by the LeClaire Courts project. Daley admitted the costs to secure the campus and overcome the local opposition ran high—a lobbying trip to Washington D.C. cost \$3,000 alone—but the resources at USCO’s disposal made it bearable. The result spoke for itself: \$25 million of funding to erect numerous facilities on twenty-five acres adjacent to Ford City Mall at 7500 South Pulaski Road. Bogan’s liberal faculty and student body expressed their gratitude by enthusiastically joining USCO.¹²⁰

By the end of 1968, the successes of USCO—comprised mainly of integrationist churches, businesses, and organizations—made it a viable alternative to the SABC and existing civic associations. Unable to stop it, some USCO opponents resorted to crude intimidation, as the drive to unite the community caused hateful residents to unleash the malevolence once reserved

¹²⁰ Tom Jachimiec, “Bogan Collegians Petition for 79th-Western Campus Site,” *SWNH*, November 24, 1966; “Drop 79th and Western Site for Bogan College Campus,” *SWNH*, June 15, 1967; “Dean Still Prefers Ford City Campus,” *SWNH*, July 18, 1968; Interview with Judy Jager, June 19, 2015, in author’s possession (hereafter referred to as Jager interview).

for black civil rights activists against their white neighbors. One interloper at a private Marquette Manor Neighbors meeting became so disruptive that the organization called the police to remove him from the scene. At the same time, one-hundred and twenty-five angry residents gathered outside the Presbyterian church hosting the meeting in protest. After it concluded, one USCO officer found the hood and fenders of his 1968 Oldsmobile Toronado dented, the antenna broken off, and the air released from his tires.¹²¹ Another Marquette Manor Neighbor committee member felt so threatened that she and her husband quit the group entirely.

The other members, I have to admit, are a little stronger. They stayed on. We did not. We had to quit because we could no longer take what was happening around us. We were the subject of nasty, cruel remarks, such as ‘nigger loving,’ ‘communists,’ ‘integrationists.’ Also, rumors spread and came back to us, such as bomb threats to our home, or obscene phone calls, or that we were holding secret meetings in our home. Then came the rumor that broke the camel’s back. The neighbors were signing petitions to remove us from the neighborhood...we live in fear that someone may carry through with one of these threats. We live in fear that harassment or harm may come to one of our five children. We are frustrated. We are sincerely confused as to what is happening in our community and to the people that live here...I see a disease creeping through the people. A disease of fear. A fear that is in all of us, but to some it has grown, like a malignant cancer.¹²² Yet these cowardly acts of violence failed to deter USCO.

USCO invited over two hundred organizations, including its most ardent disparagers, to a “unity caucus” on November 20, 1968. Only ninety-nine agreed to attend, mostly groups already sympathetic to the cause. Vondrak made a last-ditch appeal to convince more conservative residents to join with USCO after overhearing one Lawlor supporter declare “we’re getting together to fight unity.” Although he once expressed admiration for the bevy of options Southwest Siders had for community empowerment after 1966, Vondrak said USCO represented the best opportunity to bring the Southwest Side together. He agreed with USCO critics that the

¹²¹ John Neenan, “Tempers Flare Over ‘Invitation Only’ Meet,” *SWNH*, May 9, 1968.

¹²² Letter from Mrs. Gilbert Clark, *SWNH*, May 23, 1968.

umbrella group failed to represent the entire community; he also pointed out the same held true for civic associations, PTAs, and block clubs. “Frankly, we think that no single group can lay claim to be truly representative of the people of any community,” Vondrak explained, “it takes many groups, with many different purposes, many types of members, with many varied opinions, to truly represent the people.” Vondrak requested USCO opponents agree give the caucus one chance and resolve their differences through democratic compromise.¹²³

Five hundred Southwest Siders met inside of St. Nicholas of Tolentine church on the day of the caucus and passed a resolution to hold a constitutional convention making USCO into a permanent community organization. Peter Pantarotto, a former SLCC chairman, praised the resolution, stating “None of us alone can solve the whole problem of the urban city...working together, we can do something.” Four hundred other Southwest Siders disregarded Vondrak’s advice and Pantarotto’s approval. They picketed the proceedings outside of the church. Many hosted displayed signs or cut holes into their umbrellas asking “Is this for Us or USCO?” The farcical display rattled Vondrak. “If you can visualize almost 500 delegates to a unity caucus inside St. Nicholas of Tolentine school hall discussing the need for community organization, and some 400 pickets outside protesting the form and the means of the proposed organization,” Vondrak lamented, “you can see the deep division in points of view on the Southwest Side and throughout the country as well.”¹²⁴

Southwest Siders made no moves to bridge the divisions between them in subsequent months. While a committee elected at the unity caucus drew up the by-laws of USCO’s

¹²³ “A Plea for Unity,” *SWNH*, November 14, 1968.

¹²⁴ “Two Sides of Unity,” *SWNH*, November 28, 1968; “Civic Groups Oppose Umbrella Organization,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 8, 1968.

successor, the Southwest Community Congress (SCC), their familiar opponents announced the formation of the Common Counsel, an alliance of over twenty civic associations and the SABC.¹²⁵ Although an umbrella group in its own right, the Common Counsel refused to acknowledge any organization as the singular voice of the Southwest Side or hire staff. Lawlor denigrated SCC members as selfish, lazy opportunists.¹²⁶ Kinnerk, nominated for an executive position in the SCC as recording secretary, shot back at Lawlor. She rhetorically asked him if her full-time job and ample history of volunteering “were the makings of an opportunist.” She found the insult ironic given its source, asking if the SABC “have been allowed...to discuss the option of joining with others in the Southwest Community Congress—or was their decision made for them?”¹²⁷

Fittingly, Southwest Siders witnessed two separate conventions to unite them on February 23, 1969. At Lourdes High School in West Lawn, five hundred delegates from the ninety-nine organizations at the unity caucus ratified the constitution of the SCC and elected its first officers. They passed a series of resolutions pledging to reduce crime, improve education, and stabilize South Lynne against blockbusting. Less than a mile away at Inn Motion Hall, five hundred other residents attended a Common Counsel rally where a series of speakers took turns bashing the SCC. The chairman of the Taxpayers’ Council delivered the keynote address, declaring “If you are a liberal in favor of bussing, if you are a liberal in favor of open housing, then people, you’re at the wrong meeting—they’re meeting at Lourdes now. As long as we’re

¹²⁵ Joette Getse, “Group Declines to Join Southwest Unity Council,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 19, 1969; William Currie, “Umbrella Group Slates Candidates, Sets Convention,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 16, 1969.

¹²⁶ “Block Clubs Reject Role in SW Convention,” *SWNH*, February 13, 1969;

¹²⁷ Letter from Phyllis Kinnerk to editor, *SWNH*, February 20, 1969.

around, no Saul Alinsky or Saul Alinsky type will take over our organizations.” Lawlor agreed, encouraging the audience to stay loyal to their existing civic associations. Mary Cvack also participated and promoted the cause of neighborhood schools once more.¹²⁸

The marches of the Chicago Freedom Movement sparked fears of massive racial change, a dreadful vision that failed to materialize almost three years later. Outside of a few blocks in South Lynne, no black homeowners moved into the rest of Southwest Side. Nonetheless, the 1966 riots and subsequent scramble for organization and empowerment altered the Southwest Side in more profound ways. The dueling conventions on February 23, 1969, revealed the traditional social fabric of its neighborhoods in tatters as residents shunned each other in their desperate fight to reaffirm or reject the role their race, faith, and ideology played in defining “the community.” If the King riot forced Southwest Siders to ask difficult questions about their place in civil rights America and their future legacy, the drive for unity provided no satisfactory answers.

The conventions represented the aspirations of progressive residents who wanted to accommodate change and the anxieties of racially conservative residents who hoped to blunt it. They mirrored the widening gulfs in American society, as many urban white ethnics across the nation sought to contain the perceived overreaches of the civil rights movement. The divided neighborhood reflected a split nation. The resentful skepticism of liberalism which made Richard Nixon the President of the United States encouraged Southwest Side civic associations to back

¹²⁸ John Neenan, “Delegates Set New Program, Elect Officers,” *SWNH*, February 27, 1969; “‘Counsel’ Meet Stresses Roll of Civic Groups,” *SWNH*, February 27, 1969; Ann McFeatters, “Common Counsel Holds Meeting, Gives Father Lawlor Ovation,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 2, 1969.

figures such as Lawlor and Cvack. Consequently, SCC leaders and supporters would have to pursue their future agenda for neighborhood stability from a desperately contested position.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL LIBERALISM ON THE SOUTHWEST SIDE

On October 3, 1970, Judith Jager, the chairman of the Southwest Community Congress' important housing committee, and more than three dozen members of her organization held a boisterous demonstration outside the office of Damen Realty. Tasked by the SCC to develop strategies to halt panic peddling and white flight in the racially changing South Lynne neighborhood, Jager pressured realtors into signing anti-solicitation agreements with the SCC and colorfully picketed those who did not comply. Her committee also referred any transgressors to the Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR). Damen became a major target for Jager's committee after it hired a realtor, Michael Cummings, found guilty of violating the city's fair housing ordinance. Hoisting signs which stated "How Does It Feel to Have Our Signs Outside Your Door" and "A Man's Home is His Castle, So Keep Your Signs Away From My Moat," the SCC made their displeasure with the firm clear. Damen's co-owner, Steve Hynes, angrily rejected the charge, claiming that "I had never even heard of a man named Michael Cummings." The other Damen owner, Dan Hynes, then agreed to meet with ten of the SCC members to discuss their grievances. Ivan Smith, a pastor from St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church in Chicago Lawn and another housing committee member, immediately demanded that Dan Hynes produce his license and asked if he planned to "leave all those nice fixtures [in the office] when you ship out of neighborhood." Offended, Hynes again denied any wrongdoing.

Jager asked Hynes to sign a written pledge to not seek customers on any part of the Southwest Side through flyers, mailings, phone calls, or physical visitation. The SCC also required the firm to no longer display “for sale” or “sold” signs. Hynes refused and proclaimed “I will not sign, and I am not a blockbuster.” Rev. Smith retorted, “Then, you are a blockbuster...I think you ought to be put out of business. I think you ought to be picketed every day.” SCC members then left the office shouting “Blockbuster! Blockbuster!”¹

The SCC did not make good on Smith’s threat to disrupt Damen’s business every day, but Jager and other SCC protestors returned the following Saturday, this time marching to the beat of a fourteen year-old musician playing songs such as “We Shall Overcome” and the “William Tell Overture” on his Kazoo. One woman passing by approved of the display, telling a reporter from the *Southwest News-Herald* that “This should have started eight years ago on Ashland [Avenue].” After the two hour performance, Jager and the committee traveled to the home of Steve Hynes to get his signature on their anti-solicitation covenant. Although the manager continued to profess ignorance of Cummings and solicitation entirely, the pressure eventually worked. Damen’s owners soon vowed not to affiliate with the realtor in question and took down all of their “for sale” and “sold” signs. As for the SCC, their reputation as a thorn in the side of unethical realtors grew.²

The fight with Damen represented only a small battle in the much larger struggle to combat the numerous institutional forces propelling rapid racial turnover across Chicago’s South

¹ Pat Murphy, “Congress Pickets Realty Firm,” *SWNH*, October 8, 1970.

² “SCC, Damen Realty Agree to Negotiate,” *SWNH*, October 15, 1970; John Neenan, “SCC Plans to Expand Anti-Solicitation Drive,” *SWNH*, October 29, 1970; Program of the 1971 SCC Convention, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 9, CHM; Joe Sjostrom, “Group Backs Opposition to Block Buster Loans,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 7, 1971

Side: blockbusting realty firms, negligent local financial institutions, greedy mortgage bankers, and poorly run federal housing programs. For the past twenty-five years, a meager number of white neighborhoods in Chicago solved these issues. Even fewer did so without resorting to base racial discrimination and violence. Lacking a powerful bulwark on the Southwest Side like that of the University of Chicago in Hyde Park and mindful of the terrible display against Dr. Martin Luther King in Marquette Park only several years earlier, few offered rosy forecasts for the area's ability to cope with racial change. Even Democratic Congressman John C. Klucynzski (5th) grimly described his Southwest Side district as "the backlash capital of the world."³

The SCC, however, defied the assessments offered by pundits and local politicians. The SCC instead collaborated with the first black families who moved into Chicago Lawn during the 1970s, successfully lobbied for legislation to curtail real estate abuses, and rallied private capital for commercial development by partnering with an innovative development corporation created by one of its members. Although seemingly mundane compared to the fury conjured by groups such as the Nazis and their supporters, the work of these neighborhood activists provided a greater impact on the long-term development of the Southwest Side than the shocking outbursts of violence detailed repeatedly in the press. How the SCC enabled their community to adapt to integration demonstrates that even the supposed "backlash capital" possessed a capacity for change.

Transformation, however, did not come easy. SCC members struggled to define the spatial, social, and ideological limits of integration in their racially homogeneous neighborhoods. While the progressive-minded residents and organizations which united under the SCC

³ Francis Ward, "Racial Cauldron Simmers in Chicago," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 1976.

supported integration in principle, they questioned the extent of their role as agents of change and resisted governmental efforts to bring black homeowners into their communities.

Conservative white homeowners and civic associations failed to appreciate the SCC's nuanced position on race and continued to view its members as dangerous radicals determined to destroy the Southwest Side; instead, they continued to support leaders who vowed to keep black residents from moving into the neighborhood. Both factions also contended with the very small, but extremely dangerous, neo-Nazi party which made rioting in Chicago Lawn an almost annual summer ritual. The Nazis promoted an ideology of violent white masculinity which appealed to disaffected youth eager to keep their most prized social and civic spaces, such as Marquette Park, white. Sizeable outbursts of violent activity, Nazi-instigated and otherwise, undermined efforts by the SCC to reduce the area's racial tensions. Honoring its Alinsky origins, the organization's stated purpose in its first constitution promised "to provide a unified structure through which all elements in this area may define and act upon common problems and promote the stability and positive growth of community and business life." In the long run, however, it failed to overcome the fault lines dissecting the Southwest Side and never developed a permanent consensus. Major victories, funding, and popular support for the SCC steadily diminished over the course of the 1970s, hampering their effectiveness over the last three decades of its life.⁴

The SCC became an imperfect vessel for civil rights issues at a time when the movement splintered racially and the electorate became more conservative. Scholars often cite the assassination of Dr. King, black power ideology, and growing working-class white resentment as

⁴ 1969 SCC Constitution, Lois Anne Rosen Papers Box 9 Folder 1, CHM. The SCC technically lasted until 2003, although it lost a considerable amount of power by 1980.

key factors in the collapse of the “integrationist ideal” which underpinned all of the great legislative triumphs of the 1960s civil rights movement. In contrast, feelings of alienation and resentment characterized the movement of the 1970s: younger black activists pushed for self-reliance independent of assistance from sympathetic whites, and many working-class whites railed against judicial desegregation mandates, particularly in education. The SCC was a curious exception, a body which included both white and black members and fostered a measure—however limited—of integration in a neighborhood infamous for its racial hostilities. Although some recent studies challenge the thesis of progressive declination following the election of Richard Nixon by highlighting the pockets of liberalism which persisted in some parts of American cities, these focus on black communities or upper middle-class white neighborhoods. The Southwest Side certainly did not fit either category, and to say that it was an undiscovered haven for diversity and liberal thought would be grossly inaccurate. The men and women of the SCC represented a minority viewpoint in their community, and the fact that no Southwest Side politicians ever advocated for racial inclusivity to preserve their electoral chances indicates just how narrow popular support for the SCC was. SCC members swam upstream for their principles, making their achievements all the more remarkable.⁵

The complicated relationship SCC members had with integration became evident by the organization’s first anniversary. On March 15, 1970, Thomas Panush, the chairman of the faltering South Lynne Community Council (SLCC) and a delegate to the second annual

⁵ Bruce Schulmann, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 2-3; 54-64; Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010); Guian McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1-17; Abigail Perkiss, *Making Good Neighbors: Civil Rights, Liberalism, and Integration in Postwar Philadelphia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

convention of the SCC, introduced a housing resolution designed to shake the nascent umbrella organization to its core. It read: “Be it resolved that this organization encourage and assist white residents to remain along the racial borderlines and aggressively recruit other white families to move in as vacancies occur. To encourage and assist black families who desire to move into this community to locate to the west away from the racial border.”⁶ Over the previous two years, black families crossed the “border” in question, Ashland Avenue, into the South Lynne neighborhood. In accordance with their values and past practices, the SLCC peacefully received the newcomers, but Panush and other SLCC officers recognized that discriminatory blockbusting practices long proven to devastate communities across Chicago facilitated the racial change in the South Lynne neighborhood.⁷ SLCC leaders and members voted to join the SCC for aid in this desperate hour, hoping that unification with other Southwest Side communities much further west of Ashland would provide them with resources to prevent South Lynne’s terminal decline. Incorporating a racially changing neighborhood made the SCC an integrated organization, but Panush now wanted everyone else in the SCC to actively encourage integration across the rest of its territory (all the way from Western Avenue to Cicero Avenue) to relieve the weight on South Lynne.

Much to his consternation, Panush did not receive full support. Another delegate motioned to table his resolution “due to the lateness of the hour.” Panush fired back that the SCC resolutions committee, turning its back on a promise made the previous year, tried to snuff out

⁶ Program Resolutions Adopted by the 2nd Annual Southwest Community Congress, p. 14, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 5, CHM; John Neenan, “Controversial Housing Plank Among 23 Passed by SCC,” *SWNH*, March 19, 1970.

⁷ 1968 Housing Surveys of Paulina Avenue and Marshfield Avenue, SLCC Records, Box, CHM.

his proposal. This left him with no choice but to introduce it on the floor of the convention. He then yelled, "I'm disgusted with the lily white groups in this lily white organization."⁸ His passionate appeal worked—in part because many members who otherwise opposed the resolution already left for home. The remaining quorum voted to include the resolution with twenty-two others that dealt with a variety of issues relevant to the community, from health to transportation to air pollution. The SCC, bound by its constitution, now had to deliberately cultivate means for black families to move throughout the entire Southwest Side in 1970, but only if they could avoid tearing themselves apart first. The recently elected president of the SCC, Thomas Powers, immediately threatened to resign, stating, "I feel that this community does not need another organization attempting to solve the race problem, but one to build a community desirable for all." Representatives from other neighborhood organizations in the SCC expressed displeasure with its passage and debated whether or not to remain with the umbrella group. Nonetheless, Panush received support from other prominent SCC members. A representative of the Southwest Committee on Peaceful Equality (SCOPE) declared that "we should face reality and consider open housing throughout the Southwest Side." Ivan Smith contended that "we'll just have to learn to live with it. Its moral principle is inherently right but what is questionable is its necessity as a resolution for a community organization working to build a better community."⁹

Panush's resolution capped off a difficult first year for the Southwest Community Congress. While they boasted of meeting at least two-thirds of its 1969 mandates in education, health, housing, and recreation, other notable planks, such as their support for the Crosstown

⁸ Neenan, *SWNH*, March 19, 1970.

⁹ "President Threatens to Resign in SCC Dispute," *SWNH*, March 19, 1970; "New S.C.C. Chief Threatens to Resign," *Chicago Tribune*, March 26, 1970.

Expressway, failed to win over the many Southwest Side homeowners who faced displacement. The SCC fell well short of its ambitious fundraising goal of \$250,000.¹⁰ Several officers resigned or moved out of the community. The professional organizer who guided its creation, John Daley, left within several months after initially accepting a job as its full-time executive director. The departure of Daley and other early officers delighted the civic association members who fought the SCC's formation: they argued they now had proof that meddling outsiders who had no real stake in the Southwest Side's future comprised the congress. The public dispute over the integration resolution offered them more ammunition, with many SCC critics citing the umbrella group's apparent dysfunction as evidence of their unfitness to represent the area. The publicly chairman of the Common Counsel commented, "we have maintained all along that this resolution was the basis of the SCC's formation. Financial backers are determining their philosophy." He also called SCC supporters "naïve and used."¹¹

The remaining leaders of the SCC faced a two-fold challenge. They needed to prove that their organization was still united and effective. They also required clarification for their position on integration that did not violate their personal ethics nor give credence to the common criticism that they sought the obliteration of the Southwest Side through social engineering. As Phyllis Kinnerk lamented to the *News-Herald*, SCC members now suffered the "seemingly

¹⁰ "Cite Quick Achievement of 65% of SCC's Goals," *SWNH*, October 16, 1969. The SCC Finance Committee intended to obtain \$250,000 a year from local businesses, major corporations, and churches; however, they fell far short of this goal. Their budget in these early years was a far more modest (and realistic) \$30,000 a year. A third of this budget came from local Protestant and Catholic churches. See SCC Senate Minutes, March 1969, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 2, CHM and SCC Senate Minutes, August 1970, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 7, CHM.

¹¹ "Daley Resigns as SCC Director," *SWNH*, October 16, 1969; John Neenan, "Daley Reviews 2 Years Work in Community," *SWNH*, October 23, 1969; Letter to the Editor from ten civic association representatives "Where Are All the Stable Leaders?" *SWNH* November 13, 1969; "Counsel Hits SCC Actions on Housing, College Name," *SWNH*, March 26, 1970. SCC Senate Minutes, April 1969, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 2, CHM.

diverse descriptions of ‘nigger-loving integrationist’ and ‘lily-white bigot.’ She did, however, take pride in the fact that “if it looks as if we’re sitting on the fence, at least we’re out there in the light catching all that is hurled at us.”¹² The SCC executive board held a lengthy, contentious meeting over the resolution immediately after the convention. Although the executive meetings were typically closed to the public, the handwritten notes of one longtime SCC officer, Lois Anne Rosen, offer a candid portrait of an organization at an early crossroads.¹³

Powers opened the proceedings by iterating his earlier threat to resign and vowed to “work against the SCC as hard as he worked for it if it took a position on integration.” He argued that many of the organizations that comprised the SCC would vote to leave if they did not find a way to rescind the resolution. Other officers echoed Powers’ sentiments, with one junior vice-president suggesting that the preservation of the SCC took precedence over any ideological stances. The recording secretary, Emily Thomas, concurred, noting that their top goal was to stabilize the Southwest Side and not take drastic stances that risked panicking the community. The pastor of Chicago Lawn Presbyterian Church and SCC vice-president, Reverend Saunders, admired Panush’s noble intention of ending the dual housing market but bemoaned that “an army couldn’t move blacks into this community.” Another junior vice-president admitted that the resolution was morally correct but jeopardized the entire organization. Other officers defended the controversy generated by the housing resolution as an opportunity to generate interest in their work and to recruit new members. One suggested the SCC take out a full-page advertisement in local papers stating, “Yes, we are for racial justice.” Kinnerk admitted that while she heard some

¹² Phyllis Kinnerk letter to the editor, *SWNH*, April 2, 1970.

¹³ The SCC executive board comprised of all the organization’s officers: the president, vice-president, recording and corresponding secretaries, and then the fifteen junior vice-presidents.

organizations deliberated leaving the SCC, the executive board should reaffirm and support the position of the South Lynne delegation.¹⁴

After determining that burying the resolution violated their constitution, the executive board agreed upon a compromise proposed by Monsignor James Hardiman, the pastor of St. Nicholas of Tolentine Catholic Church. An open racial liberal, Hardiman acknowledged that the resolution put the SCC in a difficult spot, as the majority of residents on the Southwest Side made their feelings on integration clear through their “election choices.”¹⁵ Nonetheless, he concluded that the SCC could not “sidestep” the issue of race as Powers desired. If the SCC refused to address the core problems of the area head-on, then there was no point in preserving the organization. He called for the board to affirm a position that defused panic while honoring human rights, moral causes, and the laws of the United States. Hardiman suggested that the SCC hold a special congress to amend the resolution’s phrasing. He advised keeping some of Panush’s ideas intact, particularly the part to “assist and encourage” any black families who moved into the Southwest Side. He did recommend, however, that the SCC back away from actively recruiting black families. This compromise allowed SCC members to affirm their genuine belief in open housing laws while deflecting the more hysterical integration accusations. Any black families who moved into SCC territory on their own accord would receive the organization’s full support, but the SCC would not intentionally seek them out.¹⁶

¹⁴ Lois Anne Rosen’s handwritten notes of the March 19, 1970 SCC Executive Board Meeting, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 6, CHM.

¹⁵ Ibid; Interview with Judy Jager, June 19, 2015, in author’s possession (hereafter referred to as Jager interview); Interview with Jim Keck, August 26, 2016, in author’s possession (hereafter referred to as Keck interview).

¹⁶ Lois Anne Rosen’s handwritten notes of the March 19, 1970 SCC Executive Board Meeting, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 6, CHM.

The SCC senate affirmed Hardiman's compromise several weeks later. The amended resolution indeed maintained the SCC's willingness to "encourage and assist black families who desire to move into this community to locate to the west of the racial border," yet it now also stated that "we do not mean forced integration and this organization will not go out and deliberately procure black people to move into this area."¹⁷ Even Powers voiced support for the amendment, preventing the embarrassing resignation from another key officer, and he argued it showcased the SCC's commitment to homeowner's rights. This proved to be a shrewd political move, allowing the SCC to subvert the longstanding claim of racially conservative organizations as champions of the individual property holder. Nonetheless, it also showed the real limits of racial liberalism on the Southwest Side, as the SCC came out against any form or instrument of "forced integration" as clearly as the Rev. Francis Lawlor or Mary Cvack.

The SCC publicly avowed a passive acceptance of racial change, but they could not account for the actions of federal judges nor the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). In the *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority* decision (February 1969), Judge Richard B. Austin ordered the CHA to build three dwelling units of public housing in white neighborhoods for each unit built in black neighborhoods. This command followed a successful lawsuit filed by a team of American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) attorneys led by Alexander Polikoff on behalf of six black CHA residents.¹⁸ Austin further directed the CHA to build its next 700 units in white neighborhoods with at least one project per white aldermanic ward by September 20, 1970.

¹⁷ Jorune Jonikas, "SCC Senate 'Clarifies' Housing Resolution Plank," *SWNH*, April 9, 1970; *Chicago Tribune*, "Housing 'Clarification' Satisfies S.C.C. Chief," *Chicago Tribune*, April 16, 1970;

¹⁸ *Gautreaux v. CHA*, 296 F. Supp. 907 (N.D. Ill 1969); Thomas Buck, "Public Housing Faces Slowup, Daley Fears," *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1969; "Judge Austin's Order on Discrimination," *Chicago Tribune*, February 13, 1969.

Conscious of the well-known troubles of the CHA's hyper-segregated high rise projects such as the Robert Taylor Homes, Austin also mandated capping these units at three stories and that public housing would constitute only 15 percent of all housing in any given census tract. Austin allowed that a third of the units could be constructed in suburban municipalities with their consent, although overtures by the city on this matter were flatly rejected. The CHA delayed Austin's ruling through appeal, but by the spring of 1971 they ran out of time. The United States Court of Appeals sided with Austin, and the CHA disclosed 275 sites encompassing 1,746 units throughout Chicago's white neighborhoods. The CHA designated fifty-five sites, predominantly vacant lots, for low-rise public housing on the Southwest Side.¹⁹

The scattered site proposal represented the first major attempt to integrate white neighborhoods west of Western Avenue since the SCLC marches in 1966. It also signified the first new public housing in these communities since the LeClaire Courts project in 1950.²⁰ Austin's order and the CHA's attempt to comply incited considerable outrage across the Southwest Side. Every local alderman announced their opposition and pledged to resist by any means necessary. One Democratic State Senator, Frank Savickas, even attempted to rush a bill through the Illinois General Assembly to subject the construction of all public housing to a ward-

¹⁹ Polikoff's suit alleged that the CHA intentionally promoted segregation on the basis of race, and the CHA countered that location, cost, and the City Council dictated where the agency placed its units. Austin found Polikoff's argument more convincing. "CHA Site Delays Censured," *Chicago Tribune*, February 27, 1971; John Neenan, "Planners Get Word to Cancel Building," *SWNH*, January 28, 1971; Robert Enstad, "The Controversy Over Chicago's Public Housing," March 14, 1971; Cornelia Honchar, "CHA Calls Proposed Housing Sites Tentative," *Chicago Tribune*, March 18, 1971.

²⁰ The LeClaire Courts Homes were located north of Midway Airport between 43rd Street, 45th Street, Cicero Avenue and Lavergne Avenue. They were designated as low-rise units with a racially integrated population, although they quickly became exclusively African-American. Until the middle of the 1970s, nearly every black resident on the Southwest Side of Chicago who lived west of Western Avenue lived in this project. The project was demolished as part of the Plan for Transformation in 2013 and the land is currently vacant. See Lolly Bowean, "The Wait to Return," *Chicago Tribune*, September 18, 2013.

wide referendum. Hundreds of residents packed civic association meetings to discuss ways to deny the sites and once more assailed the SCC's reputation. They cited Austin's order as more proof that the SCC intended to bring "forced integration," socialism, and the annihilation of "white backlash civic groups" in the *Southwest News-Herald*.²¹

The CHA immediately became the top issue of concern for the SCC and its freshly elected president, Judith Jager. An internal survey revealed that 90 percent of the SCC opposed scattered site housing, and the same percentage called for any new public housing to be built in the suburbs. A similar majority affirmed that the CHA required the permission of the SCC for any building projects in their territory. On behalf of her members, Jager sent a telegram to Mayor Richard J. Daley demanding that all new public housing be built in suburban Cook County. She called for an emergency SCC convention in June to vote on a resolution officially condemning the plan. After it passed easily, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Jager acknowledged that the SCC's position "could be interpreted as a 'racist' stand. But she said the area must not 'commit suicide' for the sake of avoiding the appearance of racism."²² Most outside observers took little notice of Jager's standpoint, as they expected a predominantly white organization and its leaders to oppose CHA housing. Yet while Jager's public comments against the CHA appeared hypocritical or calloused, she was not a bigot; on the contrary, her personal background and

²¹ John Converse, "SW Alderman Oppose CHA Sites," *SWNH*, March 11, 1971; Savickas Bill Requires Vote on CHA Sites," *SWNH*, March 18, 1971; "500 Pack Meet to Oppose CHA," *SWNH*, March 18, 1971; John Converse, "Hurley Owners Question Candidates About CHA," *SWNH*, March 18, 1971; Letter from Louis Dokas to the Editor, *SWNH*, March 11, 1971.

²² Program for the Third Annual Congress of the SCC, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 9, CHM; *Southtown Economist*, June 6, 1971; *Chicago Tribune*, June 17, 1971.

experience as a part of the civil rights movement contoured both her opposition to the CHA and her leadership of the SCC.

Jager was born on the Near West Side of Chicago in 1940. She has a vivid recollection of the various urban renewal projects (primarily the construction of the University of Illinois at Chicago campus and Eisenhower Expressway) that destroyed numerous neighborhoods, including her childhood home. Jager cited her personal encounter with slum clearance as early motivation for her later career in community organizing. She also admired three young, liberal ministers associated with the Presbyterian Church who strived to serve the spiritual needs of the many different ethnic and racial groups of the Near West Side with equal conviction. She taught French at a predominantly African-American high school after graduating from college. Her brief tenure as a teacher in a severely underfunded, overcrowded black school impelled her to join the city's civil rights movement. She left her first profession behind in 1966 to become an office assistant for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in East Garfield Park. She joined King with hundreds of other SCLC members in Marquette Park on August 5, 1966, and had the misfortune of seeing rioters burn her car and shove it into the lagoon.²³

Although the mob destroyed her personal transportation and threatened her life during that fateful open housing march, Jager saw more than a bloodthirsty crowd. She saw people in need. Viewing community organizing as a way to help such people, she enrolled at the University of Chicago to earn a master's degree in social work. Her time in the social work program allowed her to take community organizing classes which familiarized her with the methods of Saul Alinsky. After graduating in 1968, she briefly considered resuming her work in

²³ Jager interview.

black neighborhoods, but the civil rights landscape drastically changed during the previous two years. The rising Black Power movement and the assassination of King discouraged cross-racial organizing, and she stated that at that point many white activists who wanted to combat racism did so in white communities. Remembering Marquette Park, Jager looked for any jobs or social agencies that had positions on the Southwest Side of Chicago and eventually found a match with the Young Women Christian's Association (YWCA). The head of the Metropolitan YWCA, Doris Wilson, wanted a candidate interested in working on issues of racism to lead the Southwest Side branch. Jager's time with the SCLC made her a perfect candidate. Wilson—the Metropolitan YWCA's first black director and civil rights veteran herself—recognized that “white people had problems too” and hoped that the YWCA would do its part to reduce racial tensions in the area. At twenty-eight, Jager became the youngest executive director of a Chicago YWCA branch in the organization's history. She also became a member of the Chicago delegation to the Twenty-Fifth National YWCA Convention at Houston in 1970, where she voted for a resolution to “thrust our collective power toward the elimination of racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary” in order to achieve a “just society.”²⁴

Additionally, Jager's firsthand experience with blockbusting in South Lynne caused her to justify the opposition to the CHA in two ways: first, lack of collaboration with the Southwest community; second, a failure to address the major motor forces of racial turnover. In calling for a special congress to formally reject the CHA's scattered site plan, she explained that their neighbors, white and black alike, did not threaten the community. The Chicago Real Estate

²⁴ Ibid; *YWCA News*, Summer 1970, Records of the Metropolitan YWCA, Accession 73-65 Box 4 Folder 1, Richard J. Daley Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL.

Board, city council, planning commissioners and any others who “seek to plan for our lives” represented their real enemies. She also argued that forcibly moving black families into white neighborhoods by fiat kept the dual housing market intact and made it easier for real estate brokers to bust their blocks. The SCC even consulted an academic expert on public housing to shape their resistance to the plan, Dr. James Fuerst of Loyola University Chicago. Fuerst testified that the current CHA leadership lacked competence and had a “misunderstanding of the nature of public housing.”²⁵ Jager believed that the SCC had an opportunity to measure the level of opposition to the CHA on the Southwest Side and then use that information to develop a counter-proposal with city authorities to develop low-income housing across the metropolitan area.²⁶

Not every organization or individual in the SCC accepted nor opposed scattered site public housing. A Bogan College instructor argued that the SCC should openly support the CHA, noting “the fact that we are in the end dealing with human lives and human aspirations should take precedence over property value.” The first African-American junior vice-president in the SCC, Pauline Carr, offered an amended resolution on behalf of the SLCC that endorsed one and two-family public housing units for families of all races. A former CHA high-rise tenant herself, Carr possessed a unique perspective on the issue virtually every other SCC officer lacked. She moved into South Lynne in the late 1960s and became one of the first black officers of the SLCC. While campaigning for a junior vice-presidency in the SCC, she explained that she saw the organization as a potential bridge between black and white people on the South Side. She attempted to persuade the rest of the SCC that low-rise housing posed no threat to the Southwest

²⁵ “Southwest Congress Demands CHA Build in 311 Units Suburbs,” *Southtown Economist*, June 13, 1971.

²⁶ Lois Anne Rosen’s handwritten notes for the June 1971 SCC Senate Meeting, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 10, CHM; “Southwest Congress Calls Meeting to Discuss CHA Sites,” *Southtown Economist*, June 6, 1971.

Side's stability and that the CHA proposal represented an opportunity to improve relations between white and black families in Chicago. Her amendment garnered little support—only delegates from the SLCC, SCOPE, and Bogan College voiced their approval—and quickly was defeated by majority vote.²⁷ Charles Swibel, the Chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority, declined to meet with the SCC entirely, sending an underling in his place. When the lesser CHA official insisted that a few hundred units would have no deleterious effects on the Southwest Side and implored SCC members to be conscientious, Jager replied that “[the CHA] has forgotten the blockbusters, banks which won't give out loans, left out the Chicago Commission on Human Relations which won't prosecute, the state which won't investigate, and the high profit sales. So don't tell us about consciences.”²⁸

The CHA ultimately rejected the SCC's offer to develop a metropolitan public housing plan, although Jager later claimed that at least fifty sites were dropped thanks to her group's obstinacy. The SCC faced serious consequences for its resistance. Committed integrationists within its ranks, particularly members of the SLCC or SCOPE, accused their own leaders of racism. Although they remained in the umbrella group, such declarations tarnished the SCC's image.²⁹ Unspecified “potential contributors” fearful of supporting a “racist” group now withheld crucial funding. The SCC nearly went insolvent during Jager's two-year presidency as a result. Racially conservative homeowners and civic associations also continued to oppose the SCC for

²⁷ *Southtown Economist*, April 8, 1971; Nominating Committee Report, Program of the 1971 Southwest Community Congress Convention; “Southwest Congress Demands CHA Build in 311 Units Suburbs,” *Southtown Economist*, June 13, 1971.

²⁸ John Neenan, “SCC Convention Hits CHA Proposal Here,” *SWNH*, June 10, 1971.

²⁹ Jager interview.

its “too liberal” Alinskyism, preferring their own organizations to fight public housing. The confrontation with the CHA increased the SCC’s profile, but it also left the organization isolated in its quest to expose and dismantle blockbusting, discrimination, and disinvestment on the Southwest Side.³⁰

The tragic fate of the South Lynne neighborhood best illustrates the limits of the SCC’s power in its early years. The first officers of the SCC made stabilizing the South Lynne neighborhood a top priority, but they found halting white flight there nearly impossible. The South Lynne Community Council—one of the SCC’s founding agencies—successfully fended off blockbusting on its own in the first decade of its existence. An internal schism considerably weakened the organization, and the SLCC lost hundreds of paying members to Father Francis Lawlor’s Southwest Associated Block Clubs or civic associations affiliated with the Common Counsel. The continual decline of the 63rd and Ashland commercial district and the extreme overcrowding of South Lynne public schools caused by a massive influx of black pupils (most of whom initially lived outside of South Lynne) destroyed white homeowner’s confidence in the neighborhood’s future. Moreover, efforts by the federal government in 1968 to redress racist Federal Housing Administration (FHA) policies of the past through the Fair Housing Act and Housing and Urban Development Act inadvertently renewed the aggression of exploitative real estate firms upon South Lynne.

³⁰ “SCC Convention—Carpenter’s Meeting?” *Southtown Economist*, May 2, 1973; Lois Anne Rosen’s handwritten notes of Judy Jager’s State of the Community Address, April 29, 1973, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 12, CHM. The civic associations, as part of the Common Counsel, pooled resources to file a lawsuit against the Austin order in 1972 under the banner of the “No-CHA” coalition. After numerous failed trials and appeals, No-CHA disbanded in 1977.

The SLCC had evidence of at least eight real estate firms responsible for blockbusting in their neighborhood, but the belligerent methods of one company, Gem Realty, stood out. In the first week of September 1969, several homeowners along Marshfield Avenue and Hermitage Avenue filed complaints with the SLCC Housing and Zoning Committee against a particularly new, zealous blockbuster affiliated with Gem, Michael Cummings. Cummings, a thirty-five year old recent DePaul University graduate with a degree in psychology and a real estate broker for all of one day, personally confronted these homeowners on their porches to pressure them into selling. Cummings insisted he could offer them the best price now—otherwise they would lose out on thousands of dollars a few months later when black families moved in to drive down their property values. He also offered to cover the \$35 FHA appraisal if they agreed to sell immediately. When pressed on why black families now would so easily move into South Lynne after a decade of no racial turnover, Cummings bragged about how “when a nigger comes into the office and asks us if we have a place to rent, we sit him down and ask him if he has \$300 cash. If he says ‘no,’ we ask him if he can get \$50 from relatives or friends here and there. He comes back a week later with the money.”³¹

Cummings’ brashness, as well as the witness testimonies he provided, encouraged SLCC and SCC leaders to make an example out of Gem Realty. The city’s 1963 fair housing ordinance made blockbusting illegal and empowered the mayor to suspend or revoke city brokerage

³¹ SLCC Meeting on Panic Peddling, October 9, 1969, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3, CHM; Myra Carlson Chicago Human Relations Commission Complaint against Michael Cummings, Nat Weisman, and Gem Realty, September 19, 1969, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3, CHM; Mary Kelly Chicago Human Relations Commission Complaint against Michael Cummings, Nat Weisman, and Gem Realty; South Lynne Community Council Housing and Zoning Complaints against Gem Realty, September 5, 1969, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3, CHM; “Hold Lynne Conference on Panic Peddling Tonight,” *SWNH*, September 18, 1969.

licenses upon the recommendation of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations.³² The president of Gem, Nat Weisman, insisted that he never busted a block. He fired Cummings for violating Gem's "code" and signed an anti-solicitation agreement covering an area between Ashland Avenue and Western Avenue, from 55th Street to 74th Street, at a SLCC meeting. SCC and SLCC officers present found his protestations unconvincing, however, and announced their intention to forward South Lynne homeowners' complaints to the CCHR. In addition to doubting Weisman's sincerity, they hoped that a suspension of Gem's license would send an obvious message to other panic peddling firms meddling in South Lynne.³³ They faced an uphill battle. The CCHR never recommended the suspension or revocation of a license in the six-year existence of the fair housing ordinance, typically settling for non-binding promises by the offending realtors to "do no business" in vulnerable neighborhoods.³⁴

Yet the early proceedings against Gem suggested that this case might end differently. The CCHR offered severe terms to Gem at the conciliatory meeting. Gem had to cease operating in South Lynne and all white-blocks within one mile of a "predominate nonwhite" neighborhood across Chicago for at least three years. The CCHR also demanded that Cummings agree to

³² Specifically, Paragraph 3, Section F of Chapter 198.7-B of the Municipal Code of Chicago.

³³ Transcript of a Telephone Conversation with Nat Weisman, September 9, 1969, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3, CHM; Minutes of September 1969 SLCC Monthly Meeting, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3, CHM; September 18, 1969 Anti-Solicitation Agreement between Gem Real Estate, the Southwest Community Congress, and South Lynne Community Council, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3, CHM; "File Charges Of Panic Peddling," *SWNH*, September 25, 1969.

³⁴ Notes on September 22, 1969 Meeting with Attorney Daniel Horvath, Community Legal Counsel, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3. The CCHR procedure for settling complaints over blockbusting typically started with a "conciliation hearing" between the complainants and the accused. If the conciliation hearing failed to resolve the matter, the CCHR then held a public hearing before a CCHR "Hearing Official" who weighed the evidence presented by both parties. The Hearing Official then made a recommendation on whether to exonerate or punish the accused party to a panel of three CCHR Commissioners. The CCHR Commissioners had the authority to pass a final judgment independent of the Hearing Official's recommendation. If they found the accused party in the wrong, they could recommend that the Mayor of Chicago suspend or revoke their city brokerage license(s).

refrain from any real estate transactions south of Madison Avenue, effectively cutting him off from the city's entire South Side. Unsurprisingly, both Gem and Cummings rejected the CCHR proposal in favor of a public hearing in front of an appointed examiner. They preferred to risk their licenses over the right to ply their trade in a racially changing neighborhood.³⁵

The attorney for Gem and Cummings attempted to dismiss the complaints by stating that Weisman bore no responsibility for Cummings activities. The attorney further maintained that the complainants entrapped Cummings into solicitation. Cummings testified that he never made racially inflammatory remarks, claiming that the homeowners bringing the case before the CCHR hurled a string of epithets on their own volition. His attempt to transfer the burden of proof onto the South Lynne homeowners, however, did more to undermine both his and Gem's defense. He revealed that Weisman in fact only suspended—not fired—him “until the case cleared up,” and that the Gem owner encouraged him to look for properties on the streets closest to Englewood. His allegations of racism on the part of the complainants also defied credibility. All of them consistently testified that Cummings raised the issue of race first, even though they met with him individually and at separate instances.³⁶

The public hearings concluded by March 1970, and the SCC initially feared they scored a pyrrhic victory. The hearing examiner suggested dismissing Weisman and Gem Realty from the hearings entirely and leave Cummings as the only respondent. Cummings might lose his license, but Gem would escape unscathed. While this did not preclude the CCHR from recommending

³⁵ “Call Hearing on Solicitation in South Lynne,” *SWNH*, November 13, 1969; Terms of Settlement for Complaints Nos. 69 FHO 135-793; 69 FHO 142-800; 69 FHO 143-801, CCHR, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3.

³⁶ Handwritten Notes of CCHR Public Hearing, February 19, 1970, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3; Letter to the Chicago Commission on Human Relations from Lois Anne Rosen, March 9, 1970, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3,

the suspension of Gem's license, the assistant corporate counsel of the city who represented the complainants cautioned that "the Commission has never before overruled a hearing officer's recommendations."³⁷ Much to the elation of SCC and SLCC leaders, as well as homeowners across South Lynne, their case proved to be the first exception. While the examiner noted that Cummings' testimony did not constitute hard proof that he acted under the direction of Weisman, a three-member CCHR panel decided that the Gem president and his company held the ultimate responsibility for their employee's actions. The panel reasoned that Gem knew Cummings had a deficit of experience and training and made no effort to ensure that he knew to adhere to the city's fair housing regulations. Furthermore, absolving real estate companies from the actions of their wayward employees essentially rendered the ordinance ineffective. The CCHR found Cummings, Weisman, and Gem all guilty of panic peddling in March 1970. The commission further recommended that Mayor Richard J. Daley suspend their licenses for three months—the first time it called for such a penalty in its history.³⁸

All Southwest Side residents had to do now was to wait for the mayor to execute the suspension, a decision they expected in a matter of days. Much to their bewilderment, Daley instead did nothing, meaning Cummings and other Gem agents remained free to solicit. SLCC members wrote impassioned letters to the mayor and asked him to act upon the CCHR recommendations with haste. One woman living on Hermitage Avenue implored, "Mr. Mayor, I

³⁷ Record of Phone Conversation with Asst. Corp. Counsel Jordan, February 20, 1970, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3.

³⁸ Report and Recommendations of Chicago Commission on Human Relations in the Matters of Anton Statkus, Myra Carlson, and Mary Kelly and Michael Cummings, Nathan Weisman, and Gem Real Estate and Management Company, March 1970, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3, CHM; "Reject Not Guilty Plea in 'Panic Peddling' Case," *SWNH*, March 19, 1970; "Recommend Suspension of Realty Firm's License," *SWNH*, April 2, 1970; "Ruling Expected on 'Panic Peddling' Rehearing Request," *Chicago Tribune*, April 19, 1970.

like my home, the people that live here are fine people, black and white alike...but back to Gem Realty...they have broken a law and I am sure you will see to it that the right thing is done. I have told many people out South here, 'At least our Mayor listens to the little people.'"³⁹ The SLCC and SCC waited five agonizing months for Daley to finally suspend Gem's license in August 1970—almost an entire year after Cummings accosted local homeowners. On behalf of the SLCC and SCC, Thomas Panush congratulated Daley for making a “landmark” decision, however belated, which finally proved that the city enforced its panic-peddling laws.⁴⁰ Sadly, this victory proved all too fleeting and bittersweet. Gem won a stay of their suspension a mere week later when their attorney filed suit against the CCHR, claiming that the commission acted against them with prejudice. This claim had some merit, as one of the three CCHR panelists who overruled the hearing examiner lived on the Southwest Side. The panelist publicly declared at the 1970 SCC Convention that “Gem is really mercenary and I'm out after them...that should put them out of business.”⁴¹ The appeal process dragged on until February 1971, when a Circuit Court judge sided with Gem and countermanded the suspension permanently. The SCC expended considerable resources, time, and energy to fight Gem through the proper channels. They ended up with nothing to show for it.

The SCC also struggled to address the Southwest Side's racial tensions. Although the SCC made their stance against violence abundantly clear, groups and individuals outside of their

³⁹ Letter from Ann Cory to Mayor Richard J. Daley, April 1, 1970, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3, CHM; Joseph Sjostrom, “Group Wants City Action Against Panic Peddling,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 12, 1970.

⁴⁰ Letter from Thomas Panush to Mayor Richard J. Daley, August 5, 1970, SLCC Records, Box 15 Folder 3, CHM.

⁴¹ “Court Stays Suspension of Gem License,” South Lynne Newsletter, September 1970; “Reject Not Guilty Plea in ‘Panic Peddling’ Case,” *SWNH*, March 19, 1970

influence caused sporadic bloodshed. The re-emergence of the neo-Nazis on the Southwest Side served as the most troublesome source of violence. The American Nazi Party suffered a schism after the assassination of its founder, George Lincoln Rockwell, in 1967. Matt Koehl initially succeeded Rockwell and continued to run the group from Virginia, but he soon clashed with Frank Collin, a twenty-four year old director of the party in the Midwest. Unable to reconcile, Collin created his own party, the National Socialist Party of America. He intended to spread his own brand of hateful dogma from one of the most notorious civil rights battlefields of the northern United States: Marquette Park.⁴²

Collin possessed no ties to the American Nazi Party's southern roots. He grew up in Olympia Fields, IL, a middle-class southern suburb of Chicago. Unlike most neo-Nazis, Collin was of Jewish descent, a fact he vehemently denied whenever mentioned in the press. His father, Max Cohn, fled Germany after Hitler's rise to power in 1938, although not before spending three months at the Dachau concentration camp. After arriving in Chicago, Cohn owned and operated a fairly prosperous drapery firm on the South Side. The reasons Collin embraced American Nazism in spite of his father's ordeal remain speculative. His father professed confusion, although other relatives suggested that he had a strained relationship with his son growing up, interpreting Collin's extremism as an expression of youthful rebellion gone too far.⁴³

Collin and his supporters purchased a two-story building at 2519 W. 71st Street in April 1970 to serve as their headquarters. Nazi members, Collin included, lived on the second floor

⁴² "Nullifying the Nazis," *SWNH*, October 2, 1969;

⁴³ Pat Murphy, "Raid Nazi Office, Seize 15 Guns," *SWNH*, April 23, 1970; "Nazi Leader's Father is Jew; Was in Dachau," *Chicago Tribune*, April 22, 1970. One *Tribune* columnist stated Collin's familial relationship more bluntly, writing, "His parents hate him." See Terri Schultz, "Our Town," *Chicago Tribune*, January 3, 1971; "Collin's Grandmother Confused by His Antics," *Chicago Tribune*, June 24, 1978.

and used the first floor as an office. Christened “Rockwell Hall” in honor of their assassinated founder, the building occupied an important strategic crossroads. Rockwell Hall was only three blocks from the new racial border between Chicago Lawn and West Englewood and five blocks from the southeastern section of Marquette Park, which Collin intended to use for rallies and marches. Intending to establish themselves as the foremost defenders of the white race in Chicago, the party painted a large message on the side of their building, “STOP THE NIGGERS!” Their two-flat also doubled as an armory. Following a “deluge of complaints,” Chicago police raided Rockwell Hall a week after the Nazis moved into the building and netted fifteen guns, 15,000 rounds of ammunition, knives, and sabres. The police also disarmed a grenade trap on the backdoor. While such a cache represented a major threat to public safety, Collin and other party members only faced minor legal charges and minimal jail time. The Nazis occupied what neighbors and businesses colloquially referred to as the “fortress next door” for the next ten years.⁴⁴

Collin initially had trouble organizing summer rallies in the park. The Chicago Park District repeatedly denied his party permits until the United States Court of Appeals ruled the agency violated their constitutional right to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.⁴⁵ Their first rally at the end of August 1972 attracted a crowd of three hundred people, mostly teen boys, who listened to Collin somewhat confusingly call upon the “white, Aryan people of this city to keep white ethnic neighborhoods like this one together” while flanked by seventeen of his uniformed followers atop a makeshift platform in Marquette Park. Exploiting the recent

⁴⁴ Pat Murphy, “Raid Nazi Office, Seize 15 Guns,” *SWNH*, April 23, 1970; *SWNH*, March 27, 1975.

⁴⁵ “Nazis Get Right to Hold Rallies,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 28, 1972; “Decision Permits SW Nazi Rallies,” *SWNH*, May 4, 1972.

discontent over scattered site housing, Collin blamed an Afro-Jewish conspiracy as responsible for the CHA's intrusion upon Southwest Side neighborhoods. While this first rally did not result in any violence nor arrests, the frenzied responses to Collin's call for "white power" by the youth in attendance portended the trouble to come.⁴⁶

Collin believed that "white youth and white factory workers," a demographic well represented on the Southwest Side, served as the future core of his party, and he inherited an ideology from Rockwell tailored for white male teenagers. During his brief visit to Marquette Park in 1966, Rockwell called for a "White Guard" of Chicago boys to physically beat up, and if necessary, kill any black or Jewish person(s) trying to integrate the Southwest Side. The Nazis also drew and distributed comics that indulged adolescent male power fantasies, such as "Whiteman," who transformed from his mild milkman alter ego into a muscular superhero by merely uttering "sieg heil" backwards. Rockwell delineated a vision of America that exalted white men above all others. His presidential "platform" called for the exportation of black Americans and "non-loyal" Jews from the United States and promised to give the "common white man" cheap health care. Rockwell also denounced feminism, pledging to "eliminate from our civilization the disruptive doctrine of false equality (of women)...which is masculinizing and frustrating millions of our good women." Collin made similar appeals. He exhorted young white men to follow him against the "black revolution" and keep African-Americans out of their neighborhoods. When queried on the role of women in his party, he replied that "Revolution is a man's business" and explained that women should be "beautiful" and "not involved." While

⁴⁶ Frederic Soll, "300 in Park Hail Nazis, Slight Jews," *Chicago Tribune*, August 28, 1972; John Converse, "Some Cheers, Jeers Greet Nazis' First Park Rally," *SWNH*, August 31, 1972.

groups such as the SLCC and SCC rejected the brutality which provided the foundation for racial separatism in Chicago, Collin and his Nazis reaffirmed the tenets of patriarchal violence for a new generation. The Nazis of Chicago served as a vehicle by which some of the young men on the Southwest Side empowered themselves, defined their masculinity, and rejected both civil rights and feminism—two social movements which directly impugned doctrines of white male supremacy.⁴⁷

Collin's party rarely exceeded more than twenty permanent members, but large numbers of sympathetic young men from across the Southwest Side, the Chicago metropolitan area, and the rest of the country flocked to subsequent rallies in Marquette Park throughout the 1970s, donning white t-shirts emblazoned with “white power” and swastikas. Few ever officially joined, but plenty became Nazis for a day. These mobs showcased a remarkable capacity for destruction: one Marquette Park riot alone in June 1976 cost the city hundreds of thousands of dollars in public property damages and the need to pay for a heavy police presence. Over a dozen individuals sustained serious injuries, with black men and women who had the misfortune to be in or near the park suffering the worst abuse. Chicago police arrested thirty-four people for the disorder.⁴⁸

The park itself proved to be an ideal recruiting ground for these outbursts of fury.

Throughout the decade, community leaders and residents alarmed at Marquette Park's shabby

⁴⁷ Chester Higgins, “Rights Marches in Lily-White Areas Trigger Hate, Violence,” *Jet*, August 25, 1966, 14-23; Higgins, “How Nazi Party Spurs Hate in Chicago,” *Jet*, Sept. 22, 1966, 14-25. On the centrality of masculinity to neo-Nazism and white supremacist discourse at large, see Alice Ferber, *White Man Falling: Race, Gender, and White Supremacy* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 1-24; 58-63; 70-78. John George and Laird Wilcox identify the “advocacy of double standards” as a core tenet of extremist thought. See John George and Laird Wilcox, *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen, and Others on the Fringe* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1992), 56-57. *SWNH*, May 6, 1971;

⁴⁸ Alex Harbuziuk, “34 Arrested, 16 Injured in Park Racial Unrest,” *SWNH*, June 10, 1976.

condition attributed the decline to a growing number of idle, delinquent youth congregating within its verdant confines. Civic associations organized several “clean up” drives to remove beer and soda cans from the park’s lagoons. A police sweep in the spring of 1976 led to an arrest of seventy-five people, including a Southwest Side high school teacher, for public drinking and drug possession.⁴⁹ At least one resident discerned a connection between the pollution and the youthful audiences Collin attracted. They noted “it is the same people who do all the littering who are the big instigators” and that all the cans, glass, dope, alcohol, motorcycles, and other refuse suggested whites already ruined the park before black residents had their chance.⁵⁰

Disaffected youth occupied the park throughout the year with or without the Nazis’ encouragement. A reporter from a short-lived, left-leaning youth magazine profiled many of these teenagers and their efforts to demarcate the park as their own following the first Collin-led rally in 1972. Many of the teens who hung out in the park expressed feelings of pessimism and boredom due to a lack of well-paying jobs, the dictatorial values of a working-class, Catholic home, and a paucity of strong youth institutions. Many young men flocked to a lagoon crossing in the heart of the park they dubbed “the Freak Bridge.” They vandalized the bridge in graffiti that spelled out “The Office”; lacking steady jobs, they turned instead to the business of drinking, drug use, and shouting lewd comments at young women passing by. Their embrace of drugs and other superficial trappings of the counterculture—such as their identity as “freaks”—mediated their social and economic discontent, but they had little use for its values of love, peace, and equality. As the author concluded, the teens occupying Marquette Park continued to

⁴⁹ Alex Harbuziuk, “Police Crack Down on Drugs, Drinking in Park,” *SWNH*, April 1, 1976.

⁵⁰ Letter from Jill M. Jatzak to the editor, *SWNH*, August 5, 1976.

“hate blacks for their blackness, treat most women as sex objects and couldn’t care less about what happens in the world so long as it doesn’t affect their highs.”⁵¹

Although this depiction of Southwest Side youth as nihilistic, prejudiced hedonists certainly did not apply to all who came of age in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it helps explain the transient nature of the Nazis’ success. Collin aroused their frustrations and bigotry against an accepted racial enemy, and a hate rally spiced up an otherwise monotonous routine. As Rick Soll, a *Tribune* columnist, opined about Collin’s rapport with young men in Marquette Park, “if it were not for the pimples and the hairless upper lip, the small man who belongs to the shrill voice could be Hitler. But for those who missed out the first time around, it must be fascinating.”⁵² They eagerly donned crude swastika t-shirts for an afternoon of mayhem, but not because they wished to follow Collin permanently; the rallies simply provided another way for some teenaged boys on the Southwest Side to flex their spatial claims over its largest park.

Lacking jurisdiction and funds, the SCC had limited success in addressing youth troubles in Marquette Park. The SCC tried to create alternative social spaces for area youth by opening an adolescent-focused coffee shop. While popular, the coffee shop was short-lived. After failing a city inspection, the SCC closed it permanently as it lacked the money to bring it up to code. The SCC sponsored an essay contest at Gage Park High School asking for student solutions to reduce racial tensions. Judged by an interracial panel of community representatives, the SCC awarded

⁵¹ Kevin Barry, “To Be Young in Marquette Park,” *Chicago 606* Vol. 1 No. 1 Sept. 18-Oct. 1 1972. The editorial board of *Chicago 606* included Abe Peck, the legendary editor of Chicago’s foremost underground paper, *The Chicago Seed*. *606* openly embraced the important leftist issues of the early 1970s: the first issue alone excoriated Cook County State’s Attorney Edward Hanrahan for his role in the assassination of Fred Hampton and ran an advertisement for an abortion defense fund. Subsequent issues gave out an award for “new drug of the year” and profiled the city’s gay liberation movement.

⁵² Rick Soll, “Specter of Nazism Rises at Marquette Park Rally,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 31, 1972.

three twenty-five dollar savings bonds to the winners, which included black and white students. It took no other direct action. The conservative Gage Park PTA and Gage Park Civic Association openly expressed disdain for the SCC and refused to cooperate with the umbrella organization over the high school.⁵³

The intransigence of segregationist civic associations or the threat posed by neo-Nazis, however, did not completely prevent racial integration of the Southwest Side during the 1970s. The SCC noted that white residents in a narrow three block strip known as the Bell-Oakley-Claremont area—from the Hamilton Avenue railroad tracks to Western Avenue—started to sell their homes due to the inability to obtain adequate, affordable insurance policies and a lack of conventional financing for home improvement. By the end of 1974, many white families began to move, replaced by black families who obtained the properties with FHA-insured mortgages. The arrival of black families triggered a two-part response from the SCC: first, they welcomed the new residents into their organization to help combat violence and discrimination; second, a shift in strategy to combat blockbusting. Alarmed by the lack of financing available to white residents on the eastern edge of Chicago Lawn, and understanding the difficulty in targeting individual real estate firms, the SCC focused its energies upon local savings and loans and the federal government.⁵⁴

The first black families brave enough to move into Chicago Lawn faced severe intimidation. Fortunate victims only suffered from petty vandalism: swastikas painted on the walls of their house, broken windows, and slashed tires. Yet many attacks had far more

⁵³ “Know One Another, Essays Plead,” *SWNH*, July 2, 1970; “Essay Winners Named in School Contest,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 5, 1970.

⁵⁴ Letter to the Editor from Joe and Carole Bronec, *SWNH*, March 28, 1974. The Bronecs were SCC members.

dangerous, and at times murderous, intent. The thirteen-year-old daughter of the Kelly family suffered a broken wrist after being attacked by ten white students. The Turnipseed family barely settled into their new home when hostile whites set their garage on fire. Several days later, Dexter Brisco saw several tear gas bombs thrown through his kitchen window. The Baldwin family narrowly missed the five bullets fired into their living room.⁵⁵ The Chicago Urban League monitored the escalating tensions in Bell-Oakley-Claremont closely and identified at least sixty acts of violence against black residents between 1974 and 1976. Police apathy in responding to calls about these attacks—in some cases the response times rated as high as two hours—compounded the vulnerability of Chicago Lawn’s first African-American families. At times, police even arrested the residents instead of their assailants. In one case, a mob of fifty white men encroached upon the property of the Haley family, and the police did not respond to their pleas for help. Taking his family’s defense into his own hands, Mr. Haley fired two shots in the air to scare the crowd away. The police then arrived to arrest him and no one else.⁵⁶

The arrival of black families into the Bell-Oakley-Claremont area placed many of them within two blocks of Marquette Park, which predictably became the scene for a new wave of protests, rallies, and riots between 1975 and 1978. A Nazi-led “white power march” against the “black invasion of the Southwest Side” attracted 350 particularly rowdy, vicious youths who

⁵⁵ “Black Families Harassed by Garage Fire, Tear Gas,” *SWNH*, January 9, 1975. Peter Negronida, “Nazis Blamed in Chicago Lawn Tension,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 19, 1975.

⁵⁶ Chicago Urban League Research and Planning Department, *Marquette Park: A History of Efforts to Peacefully Resolve Racial Conflict* (Chicago: The Urban League, 1977); Gregory Gordon, “Firebombs Welcome Black Family to Home,” UPI Article, Exact Date Unknown, but after August 23, 1975. This article was found as part of the Chicago Lawn microfiche in the Municipal Collections at the Harold Washington Public Library, Chicago. The Turnipseeds in particular suffered deeper tragedy in Bell-Oakley-Claremont: carbon monoxide poisoning killed the father, L.B., and a son. The rest of the family opted to move back into high-rise public housing soon thereafter. *Chicago Defender*,

clashed with police equipped in riot gear. One black photographer sent to the park to take pictures of its facilities for a *Chicago Reporter* piece, Stephen Garnett, endured a savage beating from seven lawless whites led by a taxi driver. His attackers first struck him with a bottle, and his efforts to flee in his car faltered when they broke open the driver's window, dragged him out, and pummeled him near the intersection of 69th Street and California Avenue. Although thirty onlookers witnessed the attack, no one intervened nor hailed the police.⁵⁷

Garnett was determined to expose the injustice he suffered. He permitted the press to take pictures of his battered body while he convalesced at a nearby hospital. The editor of the *Reporter* wrote a scathing letter to Police Superintendent Rochford, blasting the department for not allowing the press the freedom to do its job and for failing to guarantee the rights of black citizens to "use Marquette Park without fear." A similarly brutal attack occurred nine months later at nearby Holy Cross Hospital. Robert Ellington, a thirty-five-year-old African-American man waiting in his parked car to pick up his wife, attracted a band of white aggressors who dragged him out of his vehicle and repeatedly stabbed him. They reminded him that "blacks were not allowed in the area." Lacking immediate aid, Ellington dragged himself to the Holy Cross, leaving a trail of blood from the curb to the emergency room.⁵⁸

The growing violence and lack of police concern attracted a newly formed, interracial, and leftist civil rights group to the Southwest Side the following summer: the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Movement. Formed to honor the tenth anniversary of King's campaign on the Southwest Side and claiming to act on behalf of Chicago Lawn's first black residents—even though none of

⁵⁷ "Nab Cab Driver in Park Beating," *SWNH*, September 11, 1975

⁵⁸ "Investigate Beating of Black Reporter in Park," *SWNH*, August 28, 1975; Alex Harbuziuk, "Police Hunt 3 in Stabbing of Black Man," *SWNH*, May 20, 1976; "Start Fund for Victim of Stabbing," *SWNH*, May 27, 1976.

their members actually resided in the Bell-Oakley-Claremont area—the King Movement announced its own series of marches through Marquette Park. Their first planned march never fully materialized on June 6, 1976. This did not prohibit a mob of white youth, encouraged by uniformed Nazis, from erecting numerous skull and crossbones signs that read “NIGGERS BEWARE” on traffic lights around the park’s perimeter.⁵⁹ The Movement successfully marched six weeks later, deliberately passing by Rockwell Hall as Collin passively looked onward; the large white mob outside of the park, however, assaulted the marchers with rocks, bricks, bottles, and fireworks. Unlike its namesake, Movement members did not turn the other cheek and threw the projectiles back at their accosters.⁶⁰

The Movement’s marches precipitated violence and grabbed headlines, which caused numerous white organizations on the Southwest Side, including the SCC, to denounce their tactics as counterproductive troublemaking. The Movement also failed to win the support of established civil rights organizations in Chicago or the blessing of the black residents on whose behalf they marched. James Compton, executive director of the Chicago Urban League, rejected the Movement, arguing that it failed to make enough concrete demands to justify multiple demonstrations in a high-tension neighborhood. A PUSH spokesman also chastised the group for aimlessly stirring up conflict. The Rev. Jesse Jackson refused to march alongside them. Black residents in Bell-Oakley-Claremont, while resolute in their refusal to submit to violent intimidation, also asked for the Movement to leave the Southwest Side. They pointed out that

⁵⁹ Harbuziuk, *SWNH*, June 10, 1976. The Urban League disputes some of the details of the press accounts, stating that the King Movement and white mob briefly clashed before the police prevented the former from entering the park.

⁶⁰ *SWNH*, July 22, 1976.

while Movement members might face violence for a couple hours during a march before going home, they lived with it every day and night. Each foray into the park caused angered whites to take their frustrations out on black residents in close proximity who had nowhere else to run. Black residents instead sought to solidify their position in Chicago Lawn on their own terms—not those of the Movement, the Nazis, or white mobs. They announced their own initiative, Operation STOP, to halt further Movement protests.⁶¹

Noticing a sharp decline in city services in Bell-Oakley-Claremont, the Southwest Community Congress extended their support to the black homeowners. SCC officers honored the pledge made several years earlier to support black families who voluntarily moved into the Southwest Side independent of the CHA or any other government mandate. Working in tandem with Marlene Cater, an African-American secretary at the University of Illinois at Chicago, the SCC helped black homeowners and remaining whites to form their own group, the Bell-Oakley-Claremont Community Organization, in 1977. The SCC also secured an \$8,000 grant from the Wieboldt Foundation to hire a YWCA member as a fulltime liaison between black and white residents across Western Avenue. The SCC also joined with the Urban League, PUSH, and other civil rights groups to form an oversight committee dedicated to reducing violence toward blacks in Chicago Lawn.⁶²

⁶¹ “Marches That Make Things Worse,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 20, 1976; “Judge Refuses to Halt Marquette Park March,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 15, 1976; Carol Oppenheim, “Settle Marquette Park Rift, Black, White Leaders Urged,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 4, 1976.

⁶² Southwest Community Congress Highlights of Accomplishments, January-June 1977, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 13, CHM; Progress Report of the Southwest Community Congress, June 1977-January 1978, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 14, CHM; Ed McManus, “Marquette Park Accentuating Positive,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 21, 1977; Chicago Urban League Research and Planning Department; Letter from Leonard M. Judickas to Robert M. Johnson, December 30, 1977, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 14, CHM. Judickas was the president of the SCC from 1976-1978, and Robert M. Johnson was head of the Wieboldt Foundation. The SCC held a community forum to address the violence. For the earliest origin of the BOCCO, see “Police Meet to Ease

The co-operation between the black newcomers, the Urban League, and the Southwest Community Congress benefitted all parties. By the spring of 1977, Mary Ceil McManus observed a “quantum jump” in race relations in the Bell-Oakley-Claremont area as remaining white residents shifted from a “keep ‘em out attitude to ‘we’re willing to try living with blacks.” One of the black residents qualified her enthusiasm, stating that the white residents who opted to stay “are beautiful,” but these attitudes had yet to spread to the other side of Western Avenue.⁶³ Black residents in the newly formed Bell-Oakley-Claremont Community Organization became members of the SCC, and Marlene Carter became a SCC vice-president. The close ties the SCC developed with Carter proved especially useful several years later after she started her political career. Mayor Harold Washington backed her bid to become alderman in the 15th ward in 1986 following a court-ordered remapping and special election to rectify racially discriminatory gerrymandering by the city’s white Democratic establishment. Her victory, along with that of Luis Gutierrez, provided the “25th vote” needed for Washington to break the deadlocked city council which hindered his first term. Carter served as a conduit between the SCC and the city’s first black mayor, who saw the organization as an ally in otherwise antipathetic political territory.⁶⁴

The new members of the SCC also supported their organization’s bid to mitigate abuses of FHA-insured mortgages in the late 1970s. All too conscious of the swift decline of South

Race Tension,” *SWNH*, June 17, 1976 and Alex Harbuziuk, “100 Talk with Police to Ease Racial Tension in Area,” *SWNH*, June 24, 1976.

⁶³ McManus letter to the editor, *Chicago Tribune*, April 21, 1977.

⁶⁴ Jack Houston, “15th Ward Alderman Sworn In,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 4, 1986; David K. Fremon, *Chicago Politics Ward-by-Ward* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), 112-113.

Lynne, as well as the fact that many black homeowners relied almost exclusively upon FHA and Veterans Administration-backed mortgages to move into the Bell-Oakley-Claremont area, the SCC endeavored to avoid a repeat of the recent past by obtaining more conventional financing for the eastern half of Chicago Lawn. A statement to the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Subcommittee of the United States Senate by SCC spokeswoman Pat Kinnerk (no relation to Phyllis Kinnerk) summarized the deleterious effects FHA lending had on black and white residents alike on the Southwest Side. Pat Kinnerk noted that while the 1968 housing acts technically ended redlining, many financial institutions refused to provide conventional mortgages at fair terms, if at all. By 1973, the FHA insured 94 percent of all home loans east of Western Avenue but only five percent west of Western. A similar Urban League study in 1977 largely corroborated the SCC's figures. The organization also conducted tests of local real estate brokers and savings and loans. The president of Loomis Savings and Loan claimed that a home in a "peripheral area" required a 40 percent down payment for a traditional mortgage when a SCC staff member inquired about the property's availability. Local realtors maintained no conventional loans existed for potential white homeowners interested in moving to the Bell-Oakley-Claremont area.⁶⁵

While the SCC noted that the alleged lack of funds for such areas pressured whites to sell their homes, the organization emphasized that the exploitation of the FHA also harmed the black residents who moved to the Southwest Side. The SCC pointed out that the FHA provided no

⁶⁵ Statement of the Southwest Community Congress to the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Subcommittee, March 30, 1973, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 12, CHM; Comprehensive Plan for Southwest Community Conservation, July 29, 1976, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 13, CHM; Chicago Urban League Research and Planning Department, *Marquette Park: A History of Efforts to Peacefully Resolve Racial Conflict* (Chicago: The League, 1977).

counselling for new homeowners who relied upon their insured loans, nor did they maintain adequate reserves for repairs. Consequently, many of the homes in the former South Lynne neighborhood quickly deteriorated and fell into foreclosure. John Waner, the director of HUD in Illinois, agreed with the SCC's conclusions and empathized with their quandary. Unfortunately, he also claimed to be powerless in stopping the plague of vacant foreclosures across South Lynne. He stated that HUD only gained title of an abandoned home eighteen months after a savings and loan foreclosed on a property. He also blamed his boss, Secretary Patricia Harris, for cutting his staff and preventing his office from addressing violations. Waner later acknowledged that HUD became the "biggest slumlord in Chicago" by the middle of the 1970s.⁶⁶ The dysfunction of HUD forced the SCC to wait several years before the large federal agency agreed to implement a special "pre-purchase counseling" pilot program designed to restore the balance between conventional and FHA-insured loans in Chicago Lawn.

The program began in May 1977 and covered all of the SCC's territory to Western Avenue. HUD required any potential buyers seeking to finance a home purchase through a FHA-insured loan to undergo a mandatory, two-hour counseling session. HUD counsellors offered information about available housing in the entire Chicago market, background information about local schools and community services, alternative types of mortgage financing, fair housing laws, the responsibilities of home ownership, and an estimate of the "maximum mortgage amount to be supported by the purchaser." The FHA refused to insure any loans in the pilot area if the potential buyer opted out of counseling. The SCC boasted that the pre-purchase counseling

⁶⁶ "Abandoned Homes Scar South Lynne Community," *SWNH* December 20, 1973; "Waner to Provide CAP Data on Repossessions," *SWNH*, March 28, 1974.

program was the first—and only—one of its kind in the United States. The program had positive returns in its first six months, netting a 40 percent increase in investment from local savings and loans.⁶⁷

Many outside of the SCC, however, raised legitimate questions about the pre-purchase counseling program's potential for racial discrimination. Real estate brokers largely stopped trying to obtain FHA-insured financing instead of directing potential clients to HUD counseling, curtailing the pool of prospective black buyers in Chicago Lawn. While this deterred wanton realtors from busting blocks through fear tactics, it also discouraged honest ones from showing properties to many black families. Furthermore, a city-wide effort between community organizations to reform FHA-insured loans in Chicago faltered five years earlier when black and Latino participants decried such measures as racist. While black and Latino organizations agreed that the FHA caused the "re-segregation of our cities," government-insured loans represented the only type of home financing reliably available for racial minorities.⁶⁸ Indeed, several black civil rights organizations denounced the pilot program as racist, and Jim Fuerst expressed doubt that many on the Southwest Side would accept "all who qualify" at a publicity meeting for the program in the fall of 1977. SCC officers countered that their program helped white residents disassociate black neighbors with "boarded-up homes" by offering stable financing less likely to produce foreclosures. The organization also pointed out that African Americans started to buy

⁶⁷ Ten Year Report of the Southwest Community Congress, 1979, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 4, CHM; SCC Senate Meeting Notes, November 28, 1977, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 13, CHM; Interview with Jim Capraro, August 7, 2016, in author's possession (hereafter referred to as Capraro interview).

⁶⁸ John Neenan, "FHA, Realty Practices Hit in SCC Report," *SWNH*, March 30, 1972; "Waner Charges Brokers Cheat on FHA Defaults," *SWNH*, September 19, 1974; "Federation Labels FHA Self-Probe a 'Wanergate,'" *SWNH*, May 29, 1975.

homes west of Western Avenue; however, they now generally did so through conventional mortgages. HUD officials ultimately concurred with the SCC's assessment and renewed the program after its first annual review in 1978.⁶⁹

The pressure the SCC put on HUD for the pilot program reflected the growing mistrust of government from white residents across the Southwest Side. Their lack of faith was not entirely unfounded. HUD, by Waner's own admittance, appeared incompetent and unresponsive. Local and national political scandals also undermined residents' confidence in the political process. Watergate, United States President Richard Nixon's resignation, and a wave of indictments against Southwest Side politicians from both major political parties suggested that venality buttressed the forces threatening their community.⁷⁰ Former Democratic 12th Ward alderman and State Senator Donald T. Swinarski (25th District) faced multiple investigations for corruption in 1974 and served as the most egregious example. A federal grand jury found that Swinarski and his wife accepted nearly \$74,000 from a suburban real estate developer, Anthony Ross, after the state senator appointed Ross to the Illinois Savings and Loan board. Swinarski vacated his seat in the Illinois General Assembly after pleading guilty to a single count indictment for filing a false

⁶⁹ Notes for SCC Planning Meeting, September 11, 1977, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 13, CHM; Letter from R.M. Johnson to Leonard Judickas, February 7, 1978, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 14, CHM; SCC Newsletter, August 1978, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 14, CHM. From May-December 1977, the SCC claimed that of twenty-two prospective buyers seeking a FHA-insured loan, eight were approved. See SCC Newsletter, December 1977, Lois Anne Rosen Papers Box 12 Folder 8, CHM.

⁷⁰ 23rd Ward Alderman Joseph Potempa, a Republican, served a one-year, one-day sentence for extortion, tax evasion, and mail fraud in 1974. The incumbent and Democratic Committeeman Potempa defeated to was convicted of bribery the same year. Longtime Republican State Representative Babe McAvoy served a five year prison term after extorting money from government agencies between 1978-1983. See "Try Kuta Monday on New Counts," *SWNH*, April 11, 1974;

income tax return and agreeing to cooperate with United States Attorney (and future Governor of Illinois) James Thompson “in a variety of other investigations.”⁷¹

SCC leaders concluded they needed to rely upon themselves to reduce racial tensions and ward off potential blight. Their experience with the Bell-Oakley-Claremont area, however, taught them the limits of typical confrontational tactics when fighting disinvestment. As early as 1971, several years before the first black families moved into Chicago Lawn, Emily Thomas learned that Southwest Side savings and loans redlined her block the hard way. Chicago Savings and Loan—the place where she had successfully paid off a thirty a year mortgage on her home—refused to offer a mortgage to her recently married daughter, even with Thomas’ willingness to co-sign. Bank officials candidly admitted they no longer provided mortgages for homes between Western Avenue and the railroad tracks. Under the direction of their new twenty-one-year-old executive director, Jim Capraro, the SCC polled other savings and loans to see if they all redlined eastern Chicago Lawn. All kept silent, except for Talman Savings and Loan, the largest on the Southwest Side. Capraro recalls that Talman officials agreed to a meeting with him and other SCC leaders and confessed that every financial institution in the area now denied mortgages. Talman officials acknowledged the immorality of the practice and the need to rectify it; yet they insisted that they would only change their policy provided every other savings and loan follow suit in order to share the risk. The SCC sued another major savings and loan, Republic, in a bid to put more neighborhood residents on its board of directors and make local financial institutions more responsible to the needs of the Southwest Side. While the failed suit and occupation of the

⁷¹ Two Grand Juries to Probe Swinarski, S&L Board Deals,” *SWNH*, May 9, 1974; “Claim Swinarski Got \$74,000 Pay,” *SWNH*, July 18, 1974; John Converse, “Rule Swinarski Out of Senate Seat,” *SWNH*, March 20, 1975. Swinarski was sentenced to a year and a day in prison, although he was paroled after four months.

Republic lobby drew public attention to the issue, Capraro believed these kind of pressure tactics—a hallmark of Alinsky organizing—would not eliminate redlining. In his estimation, the SCC became proficient at “beating the shit out of the bad guys...but stopping bad things isn’t the same as producing good things.”⁷²

Determined to better understand how to draw and retain neighborhood investment, Capraro hired two graduate students from the Northwestern Center for Urban Affairs to teach the SCC leaders about appraisals and modern retail trends. Capraro also made peace with the organization’s savings and loan enemies, inviting them to join the SCC, businesses, and major employers on the Southwest Side, such as Nabisco and Tootsie Roll, in the provisional “Southwest Potential Committee.” The Potential Committee attempted to solve the risk dilemma posed by Talman and find innovative ways for all the area’s financial institutions to marshal private enterprise on the Southwest Side. With the encouragement of Edward Vondrak, owner and editor of the *Southwest News-Herald*, the Potential Committee evolved into the Greater Southwest Development Corporation (GSDC) in 1974. The GSDC intended to demonstrate “how private business can maintain, preserve, and resurrect urban neighborhoods.” Fittingly, their first project called for the GSDC to rectify HUD’s mistakes by acquiring, renovating, and marketing federally-abandoned Southwest Side homes on a not-for-profit basis. The GSDC criticized HUD for selling abandoned homes through bulk auctions, which it claimed favored speculators who quickly resold them with minimal updates. The GSDC also purchased dilapidated commercial

⁷² Capraro interview.

buildings at 63rd Street and Western Avenue and rented them out to new tenants, helping retain consumer spending that otherwise might go to a suburban shopping mall.⁷³

GSDC officials also shared the interracial ethos of managed integration practiced by the SCC, as evidenced by the choice of its board of directors to hire Capraro as executive director in 1976. Like many Chicago Lawn youth, the riot against Dr. Martin Luther King in 1966 served as a formative moment for Capraro; unlike some of his peers, however, Capraro did not throw rocks. The violent scene horrified him and destroyed his assumptions in the neighborhood, community, city, and nation. Capraro credited his parents—factory workers—and his education at St. Rita Grammar School for instilling him with the moral foundation to refrain from attacking the civil rights marchers that summer day. His parents often brought black and Hispanic co-workers home, and he played with children of different races at company picnics while growing up. These interactions with other racial groups gave him a distinct viewpoint compared to most other children growing up near Marquette Park.⁷⁴

Capraro’s strong sense of justice continued as he finished high school at Brother Rice and started his post-secondary education at the most liberal institution on the Southwest Side, Bogan College, where he became the president of the student council. Under the guidance of Lester Hunt, a Bogan professor and one of Saul Alinsky’s top protégés, Capraro earned his first organizing victory over racist civic associations fearful of the college’s potential as an integration magnet. The civic associations near Bogan lobbied the local alderman to erect a gated

⁷³ “GSDDC Reveals Plan to Stabilize Southwest Side,” *SWNH*, July 1, 1976; “Urge ‘Private’ Community Renewal,” *SWNH*, September 16, 1976; need footnote for GSDC in 1974 and allusions to potential committee in the press.

⁷⁴ Capraro interview, August 7, 2016. Capraro also recounted the 1966 open housing march in 1990 with Studs Terkel. See Terkel, *Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel about the Great American Obsession* (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), 126-132.

barricade around the junior college to make it harder for students to reach the campus. Capraro and other students successfully bested them through a grand demonstration, rally, and telephone calls to pressure the mayor's office to unlock the gate. He participated in the Chicago antiwar movement with black student activists and joined the protests at Grant Park during the 1968 Democratic National Convention, which convinced him to pursue a career in community organizing. Nonetheless, he hesitated returning to the Southwest Side given the hatred he witnessed firsthand. He ultimately adopted Stokely Carmichael's charge for white civil rights supporters to fight racism in their own neighborhoods.⁷⁵ Encouraged by Hunt to become a professional organizer, Capraro dropped out of college and became a CTA bus driver while volunteering for the SCC. Within six months he became the paid executive director of the SCC, but he only held this post for a year before leaving. Desiring more experience with veteran organizers, Capraro left the SCC in 1972 to work with Gail Cincotta at the National Training and Information Center, where he helped secure the passage of the Home Mortgage and Disclosure Act (which in turn provided the research data to secure the landmark Community Reinvestment Act in 1977).⁷⁶

Capraro noted that his mission in the early years of the GSDC was to reduce racial tensions by proving that economics, not race, caused neighborhood decline. Rehabilitating the main commercial thoroughfare of the Southwest Side, attracting new enterprise, and retaining jobs made the area appear viable to existing white residents and welcoming of newer minority homeowners. As he wrote in 2004, "We sought to build and maintain a 'mixed income

⁷⁵ Capraro interview; August 7, 2016.

⁷⁶ James Capraro, "Community Organizing + Community Development = Community Transformation," *Journal of Urban Affairs* Vol. 26 No. 2 (2004), 154; *SWNH*, May 6, 1971.

community’ a full two decades before the phrase became politically popular.”⁷⁷ To do so, Capraro believed the Southwest Side needed a way to bridge the gap between traditional community organizing and development. He argued that while an Alinsky group successfully organized people, it struggled to “organize money”; a development corporation, however, could garner more investment into a neighborhood. Therefore, a partnership between the GSDC and the SCC allowed each group to shore up the other’s weaknesses. Nonetheless, Capraro admitted that many other Alinsky-trained organizers disapproved of him for taking on “impure” development work, and homeowners distrustful of the SCC and GSDC viewed him as a mere flunky for local financial institutions. Although the GSDC’s first accomplishments—refurbishing individual buildings—seemed modest, these small achievements built the fledgling organization’s credibility. By the 1990s the GSDC regularly brought new major retail tenants to the Southwest Side and even persuaded corporations such as Nabisco to keep its 72nd Street bakery—and more than 2,000 unionized jobs—in Chicago Lawn. By the time Capraro stepped down as executive director of the GSDC in 2014, the organization reeled in more than half a billion dollars of investment for the Southwest Side.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Capraro, 152.

⁷⁸ Capraro, 154-161; “Who We Are,” Greater Southwest Development Corporation, accessed June 1, 2015, <http://greatersouthwest.org/who-we-are/>; John McCarron, “Dealin’ in the Hood: Southwest Side Dump Development Turns Out to Be Vintage Jim Capraro,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 26, 2000. In 2016, however, the jobs at the Nabisco plant were in jeopardy after its corporate parent, Mondelez International, announced the elimination of half the positions in favor of moving more production to Salinas, Mexico. This announcement briefly gained national significance when President Donald Trump cited Mondelez as an example of the ills of globalization and shouted “No more Oreos!” at one of his rallies in the spring of 2016. Democratic presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton also denounced the move. The high profile criticism did not stop Mondelez from proceeding with the layoffs. See Nick Blumberg, “Nabisco Layoffs and Chicago’s Manufacturing Future,” *Chicago Tonight*, <http://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2016/03/21/nabisco-layoffs-and-chicagos-manufacturing-future>; Maudlyne Ihejirika, “Workers: Nabisco Layoffs More than Campaign Trail Sound Bites,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 2, 2016; Aamer Madhani, “Oreo Maker Ignores Trump, Clinton Criticism, Begins Layoffs in Chicago,” *USA Today*, March 23, 2016.

The acceptance of African-Americans by the SCC and the creation of the GSDC demonstrated the strides made in race relations and positive community empowerment on the Southwest Side over the course of the 1970s. Still, there were notable boundaries to this progress. Mob violence continued to stain the area's reputation and obscured these encouraging developments. As so often was the case since their arrival onto the Southwest Side in 1971, Frank Collin's Nazi party remained at the heart of the turmoil. The city mandated that the party post a \$250,000 insurance bond before holding any other events in a city park following his damaging rallies in 1975 and 1976. While this requirement gave the Southwest Side a brief respite from Nazi activity, it inadvertently turned Collin into a nationally despised celebrity. Barred from his "home" territory in Chicago Lawn, Collin announced his intention to instead hold uniformed marches in Skokie, a suburb in northern Cook County with a large Jewish population. This sparked a firestorm which garnered unprecedented media attention for the fuhrer from Olympia Fields. Skokie officials attempted to bar the Nazis through a similar insurance requirement and an ordinance banning "demonstrations by members of political parties wearing military-type uniforms." This prompted Collin, with the help of the ACLU, to sue for the right to demonstrate in full regalia. The case eventually reached the United States Supreme Court, which ruled in the Nazis' favor. The Chicago Park District then interceded before Collin actually held a march through the streets of Skokie, granting him permission to assemble in the city to stave off a destructive conflict in the suburbs. Marquette Park became a racial battleground once more.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ *Nationalist Socialist Party of America v. Village of Skokie* 432 US 43 (1977); "Skokie Seeks Injunction to Halt Nazi Party March," *Chicago Tribune*, April 28, 1977; "Skokie Police Turn Back Nazis Heading for Protest," *Chicago Tribune*, May 1, 1977; Charles Mount and William Crawford Jr., "Skokie, Court Thwart Nazis' July 4 March," *Chicago Tribune*, June 29, 1977; William Currie, "Nazis Postpone March Pending Court Decision,"

The resulting rally on July 9, 1978, represented the apex of Nazism on the Southwest Side. Collin's national profile drew several thousand people into the park. The youth who opted to bathe in the hatred radiating from Collin were augmented by sympathizers from as far away as New York state. This time, however, the Nazis did not hold the park uncontested. Thousands of counter-demonstrators from black, religious, and Jewish civil rights groups faced the fifteen uniformed members and their interim supporters, leading to a large, albeit short, clash. The constant shouting drowned Collin out entirely, and one thousand cops struggled to keep order. Police arrested sixty-six people by the end of the fifty minute rally, and fortunately only six people, including three officers, were injured. Collin's notoriety following his showdown with Skokie drew media outlets from across the country, and for one more day Marquette Park became the center of racism in the United States.⁸⁰

The SCC denounced the local, metropolitan, and national press for the extensive coverage as counterproductive to their efforts to stabilize the area and reduce racial tensions. A spokesperson for the SCC noted that the media offered scant attention to their accomplishments or those of the GSDC, only coming to the Southwest Side for riots and extremist bigots such as Collin. They argued that the myopia of the press contributed to the misconception that all white working-class, white ethnic homeowners tolerated or welcomed the Nazis. The SCC made its presence known by distributing thousands of leaflets that read "NAZIS BEWARE" with a

Chicago Tribune, July 3, 1977; "Court Revises Ban on Skokie March," *Chicago Tribune*, July 13, 1977; "Nazis Win Round for Park Rally: Court Voids City's Limit on Marches," *Chicago Tribune*, July 23, 1977; "A 'Deal' From the Nazis," *Chicago Tribune*, May 25, 1978; "Nazis Issued Rally Permit," *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1978.

⁸⁰ William Griffin and Michael Sneed, "Police Arrest 66 as Crowd Upstages Rally by neo-Nazis," *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1978; "A Situation Well in Hand," *Chicago Tribune*, July 12, 1978; Vernon Jarrett, "Blacks Face Worse Foes than Nazis," *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1978.

crossed-out swastika, but their denunciations largely went unheard. Although Collin would no longer menace the Southwest Side following his arrest and imprisonment in 1980, when party members repelled by his Jewish heritage leaked evidence of his molestation of boys in Rockwell Hall to police, his poisonous influence lingered for years to come. National perceptions of the Southwest Side remained one-dimensional.⁸¹

While opinions of the Southwest Side refused to change, the Southwest Community Congress proudly celebrated its evolution during its tenth anniversary in 1979. The organization's revised constitution made their stance on integration far more explicit than the original declaration of working for community "preservation and conservation." Now the SCC pledged to "eliminate prejudice and discrimination; defend human and civil rights secured by law" and named "racial relations" as one of its top priorities. Lois Anne Rosen took a shot at the organization's opponents, noting that "in contrast to other area groups, we have not changed our boundaries and continue to serve and to include in our membership racially changing blocks." Yet as its philosophy crystallized, popular support from Southwest Side residents dwindled. Many of the Catholic parishes which initially provided financial backing for the SCC's creation withdrew by the end of the decade. Far from an abandonment of community organizing, these parishes instead joined a rival Alinsky organization meant to mobilize politically moderate and conservative homeowners frightened by hardline segregationists but distrustful of the increasingly open liberalism of the SCC. Although many Protestant churches and neighborhood institutions still affiliated with the SCC, allowing it to survive into the early twenty-first century,

⁸¹ Nazis Beware Flyer, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 14, CHM.

it spent the next two decades playing second fiddle to the upstart Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation.⁸²

The rise and decline of the SCC illuminated the difficulties of building a powerful, sustainable grassroots force in a community divided by ideology and demographics. The Alinsky model required an organization to secure majority backing to succeed, and the SCC ultimately failed to develop a unifying concept which could achieve a consensus amidst the social fragmentation of the Southwest Side. While the SCC and groups affiliated with it supported racial integration, counteracted blockbusters, and corrected irresponsible governmental agencies, others on the Southwest Side empowered themselves in way which directly contradicted their mission. Hence teens, occasionally adopting Nazi insignias, loitered and rioted in the park. Civic associations sued the CHA on their own and tried to keep black students from learning side-by-side with their children. Likewise, the achievements of the SCC in its early history did not leave an impression on the thousands of Southwest Side voters who elected the Rev. Francis Lawlor to fifteenth ward alderman in 1971 nor the frighteningly sizeable minority who backed Frank Collin in his failed bid for the same seat four years later. In this context, the SCC was a poor agent for stabilizing the Southwest Side: it did not save South Lynne from the blockbusters nor stop bigots and malevolent thugs from sowing discord in their parks and streets.⁸³

While this assessment may appear dismal, the efforts of the men and women of the Southwest Community Congress were not meaningless. Chicago Lawn became more racially

⁸² "Southwest Community Congress, 1969-1979," Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 4, CHM.

⁸³ Collin's opponent, Kenneth Jasky, won 8,586 votes (68.7 percent) to Collin's 2,068 (16.4 percent). A black candidate, Willie Curtis, garnered 1,873 votes (14.9%). See "Lipinski Wins Seat Over 7 Opponents," *SWNH*, February 27, 1975.

diverse by 1980 in spite of all the notorious violence to keep it a “closed” neighborhood, and the SCC proved willing to help the first minority homeowners brave enough to move into the Bell-Oakley-Claremont area. Chip Berlet notes that the SCC continually defended these homeowners against the Nazis and other extremists well into the middle of the 1980s. A researcher and journalist with the Public Eye network, Berlet and his family moved to Chicago Lawn in 1976 to document hate crimes. No mere observer, he joined the SCC to actively combat groups such as the neo-Nazis. Despite its diminished numbers by the time he joined, Berlet suggested the SCC successfully worked with the alderman, other civil rights groups, and the GSDC to diminish the potential influence of hate organizations. He and other SCC members broke down stereotypes about people of color and promoted an open, respectful public discourse about racial integration.⁸⁴

The SCC offered invaluable experience to young, progressive activists such as Jim Capraro and Judith Jager. Both activists applied the lessons learned there to more successful ventures in the future. The GSDC eventually became a magnet for investment dollars to the Southwest Side, enabling it to direct neighborhood rejuvenation projects the SCC lacked the clout to oversee. Jager and her husband moved to the suburb of Evanston shortly before the birth of their first child in 1978, just as the SCC’s fortunes declined. She admits by this point she became disillusioned about the probability of the Southwest Side becoming racially integrated. She concluded that only neighborhoods or municipalities with the presence and financial resources of a large anchor institution, such as a university, possessed the ability to prevent white

⁸⁴ Chip Berlet, “Hate Groups, Racial Tensions, and Ethnoviolence in an Integrating Chicago Neighborhood, 1976-1988,” in Betty A. Dobraz, Lisa K. Walder, and Timothy Buzzell, eds., *Research in Political Sociology Volume 9: The Politics of Social Inequality*, 118-120; 152-154.

homeowners from fleeing whenever black residents moved next door. Home to the elite Northwestern University, which Jager determined allowed for Evanston to become the Hyde Park of the North Shore, she marshalled her hard-earned expertise from the Southwest Side after becoming the suburb's fair housing director. By 2000, 20 percent of Evanston residents were African-American with most of the remaining majority white, one of the few integrated suburbs or city neighborhoods in the entire metropolitan area. The SCC might have failed to realize its broader objectives during the 1970s, but it planted smaller progressive seeds which came into full bloom after two decades. Branches such as the GSDC established its legacy, becoming relevant and useful agencies to the growing numbers of black, Latino, and Arab residents who made the Southwest Side their home in the 1980s and 1990s.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ 1980 United States Census data in *Estimated 1980 Census Undercount for Northeastern Illinois* (Chicago: Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, 1989); Jager interview; Steve Kerch, "Housing Advocates Attack Plan," *Chicago Tribune*, May 30, 1986; Laurie Cohen, "Protest Group Wins Lending Concessions from Evanston Bank," *Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 1987.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOUTHWEST WOMEN WORKING TOGETHER

During a humid afternoon on June 26, 1978, Jeff Lyon, a *Chicago Tribune* reporter, drove to the 63rd Street Chicago Lawn office of Southwest Women Working Together (SWWT), a working-class women's organization. Lyon asked SWWT members why Southwest Side residents tolerated a neo-Nazi group which inhabited its community for more than seven years. The interview occurred two weeks before an anticipated Nazi rally following their controversial efforts to march in Skokie, IL, a northern suburb with a large Jewish population. Lyon intended to contrast the vigorous resistance to the Nazi presence in Skokie with the apparent acquiescence of the hate group in a part of the city still best-known for its hostile treatment of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights activists. One SWWT officer, Dorothy White, challenged Lyon. "Everything you read in the papers is to the effect that we're going to welcome Collin [the neo-Nazi leader] when he marches in the park on July 9," argued White, "That's a lie." Phyllis Kinnerk, the executive director of SWWT and a longtime officer in the Southwest Community Congress (SCC), noted that media coverage of the Southwest Side overlooked the positive accomplishments her organizations made in race relations. She recounted how people she met on a recent camping vacation in Wyoming forced her into a "racial discussion" after learning she lived near Marquette Park. Having only heard of the Southwest Side through national news reports which described its homeowners as "supportive" of the Nazis, she explained

that the media gave her community a terrible reputation as a bastion of racism which prevailed even over a thousand miles away from her home. “People hear that and think it must be true because,” Kinnerk remarked, “Walter Cronkite is God.”¹

Lyon previously described Marquette Park as the “festering wound” of racism in Chicago. Newspaper columnists nationwide shared his negative opinion. Charles T. Powers of the *Los Angeles Times* reported Chicago Lawn residents happily “coexist” with the neo-Nazis. Douglas E. Kneeland of the *New York Times* identified the park and neighborhood around it as a “symbol of racial unrest” for over a decade and a half, and Brandt Ayers of the *Washington Post* argued that Marquette Park symbolized a special kind of “death” for the dreams of the civil rights movement. These portrayals, although slanted, contained some truths. Reporters had little difficulty finding residents to interview who expressed antipathy toward black Chicagoans, some of whom also voiced support for the neo-Nazis.²

Talking to Lyon allowed the women in the SCC and SWWT to confront one of the Southwest Side’s harshest critics and contest the popular narratives that shaped the national reputation of their community throughout the 1970s. Many prominent SCC officers and members were working-class, white ethnic women whose activities in the organization encouraged them to test the traditional social boundaries of the Catholic family through their exploration, if not wholehearted support, of the women’s rights movement. These organizations thus provided a springboard into other forms of social activism, particularly working-class

¹ Jeff Lyon, “Marquette Park—it isn’t Skokie, but it’s not a Land of Nazis, either,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 27, 1978.

² Lyon, “Marquette Park—‘Little’ Men Make Big Trouble,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1976; Douglas E. Kneeland, “Chicago Area, a Scene of Racial Tensions, Tries to Explain its Fears,” *New York Times*, August 7, 1977; Brandt Ayers, “Two Kinds of Death,” *Washington Post*, March 8, 1977; Charles T. Powers, “Chicago Neighbors Co-Exist with Nazis,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 1978.

women's political, cultural, and economic issues, and became vital assets for a community that became increasingly diverse in the 1980s and 1990s.

The close interrelationship between the SWWT and SCC also challenges popular narratives which depict working-class, white ethnic women as blinkered feminists at best—and even then only in the context of labor unions—and segregationist zealots at worst. Women such as Kinnerk, who served as a leader in both the SWWT and SCC, advocated for the betterment of mothers, wives, and daughters in the former. She worked to protect her community against racial violence, economic disinvestment, and decline through the latter. Certain studies of working-class feminism suggest most blue-collar women proved uncomfortable with the movement's critiques of the family and sexuality yet supported an "increased public role for women." The SWWT demonstrates that neighborhood stabilization efforts meshed well with this dynamic.³ The SWWT also reveals how working-class women who created safe spaces for women, counseled against sexual abuse, and improved women's health were not somehow part of a distinct, less-activist oriented movement; they never withdrew from the problems facing their community nor wider issues of social justice. They combated predatory realtors, racial discrimination, built links with minority feminist groups, and supported the Equal Rights Amendment concurrently. Accounting for the history of the SWWT and its contributions to the SCC also underscores how the ability of "traditional" women's organizations such as the YWCA (from which the SWWT originated) to expand the feminist and civil rights movements varied

³ Nancy Naples, "Women's Community Activism and Feminist Activist Research," *Community Activism and Feminist Politics*, ed. Nancy Naples (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1-30.

considerably from region to region. The SWWT tested interpretations that suggest these kind of women's organizations failed to connect with working-class women completely.⁴

Kinnerk, Judith Jager, and many other women initially affiliated with the Southwest YWCA became eager participants in the meetings and conventions that formed the SCC. Jager recalled that while men initially claimed the formal officer positions within the group, YWCA women such as Kinnerk exerted considerable influence behind the scenes. Given the SCC's defined constitution and legislative qualities, the knowledge of parliamentary procedure that many local women had through their experience in parent teacher associations, the YWCA, and other voluntary associations made them invaluable resources in the organization's formative years. Jager remembered Kinnerk essentially "ran the show" during the meetings to draw up the organization's constitution, and thought "oh boy if you want to be in this organization, you got to deal with her!" She also recalls how one male staffer frequently complained about the "pregnant redheads" who "bossed him around."⁵ The women of the Southwest YWCA and SCC soon converted their influence into more public roles. Kinnerk's intelligence, drive, and sharp wit led

⁴ Dennis Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses: Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 1-9; Susan Hartmann, *The Other Feminists: Activists in the Liberal Establishment* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 49; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1-11; 180-205; Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 243-287; Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Boston: Da Capo, 2002), 171-176; Melissa Estes Blair, "A Dynamic Force in Our Community: Women's Club and Second-Wave Feminism at the Grassroots, 2009," *Frontiers* Vol. 30 No 3. (2009): 41-45. Other notable studies on how the YWCA became a conduit for women's activism include Judith Weisenfeld, *African-American Women and Christian Activism: New York's Black YWCA, 1905-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Michelle Busby, "The Price of Integration: The Story of the Charlotte YWCA in the 1960s," in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and YWCA in the City*, eds. Nina Mijagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Douglass Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Elizabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1-9).

⁵ Jager interview.

to her appointment as publicity chairman, and she frequently defended the organization from attacks in the editorial and letters pages of local newspapers. Lois Anne Rosen, a former stalwart of the South Lynne Community Council, served as an officer and unofficial chronicler of the organization every year until her death in 1995. Emily Thomas, a co-founder of the Southwest Committee on Peaceful Equality (SCOPE) and member of the Harper High School PTA, helped define the SCC's education agenda.

The importance of the Southwest YWCA to the SCC as a source of members and leaders also gave the umbrella group indirect ties to the women's movement. The Chicago Metropolitan YWCA became an outspoken proponent of civil rights and women's liberation during the late 1960s under the leadership of its new executive director, Doris Wilson. Many of the women who worked within the SCC to find peaceful, just solutions to the Southwest Side's racial tensions also worked to empower working-class women. The Metropolitan YWCA enjoyed a reputation as one of the few true interracial organizations in Chicago after desegregating its facilities and programs in 1936 and lobbying for the national board to issue an official interracial charter ten years later. Their commitment to justice for the oppressed, however, intensified after Wilson became in charge.⁶ Wilson, the first African-American woman to hold the position in Chicago and a civil rights veteran, baptized the nearly one-hundred-year old institution in the lexicon of the New Left and defined the modern YWCA as a movement, not an organization.⁷ Under her guidance, the YWCA recast its history, highlighting feminist achievements at the expense of its Protestant roots. She cited decades of YWCA initiatives to find employment opportunities and a

⁶ Virginia Boynton, "Fighting Racism at the YWCA," *Chicago History* 29 (Summer 2000): 35-39.

⁷ *Chicago Defender*, February 24, 1970.

nationwide agenda to vanquish racism as evidence that “the whole history of the YWCA has been the liberation of women.”⁸

Wilson’s age and race did not match the popular stereotype of a radical feminist as an unmarried, white woman in college, but her commitment to the cause transformed the Metropolitan YWCA. She took measures to reduce its hierarchical nature, eliminating the formal membership requirement for participating in YWCA programs. New brochures boasted of “rap sessions” and “be ins” hosted every Wednesday at the flagship facility, the Loop Center in downtown Chicago. Monthly newsletters informed Chicago women about the importance and progress of the Equal Rights Amendment. The embrace of women’s liberation by the Metropolitan YWCA leadership proved popular: in 1973 the Loop Center alone attracted nearly 170,000 visitors.⁹ No other Chicago’s women’s organization boasted such numbers. No wonder then that Carol Kleiman, a feminist journalist employed by the *Chicago Tribune*, declared that “The Y is fem-land.”¹⁰

Yet becoming “fem-land” had negative consequences. While the Metropolitan YWCA became an important champion of feminism under Wilson’s direction, Chicago women empowered themselves in different ways depending on their social, economic, and racial backgrounds. The women of the Southwest YWCA branch showed more ambivalence to the feminist mission forwarded by Metropolitan YWCA leaders and visitors to the Loop Center.

⁸ *Chicago Tribune*, July 12, 1970.

⁹ *Chicago Tribune*, December 29, 1974; *Chicago Tribune*, January 1, 1974. Although there are no consistent numbers due to the lack of records, the YWCA of Chicago claimed to reach nearly a quarter million people through all nine of its metropolitan branches in 1969. See YWCA Pamphlet, 1970, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 73-65, Box 4 Folder 4.

¹⁰ Carol Kleiman, *Chicago Tribune*, January 1, 1974.

Wilson's desire for a modernized, movement-oriented YWCA partially motivated her decision to appoint Jager, a young woman with experience in the Chicago civil rights movement, to lead the Southwest YWCA. Jager, however, primarily accepted the executive director post because it represented one of the few opportunities for her to become a community organizer in a white neighborhood. She noted that she found her work in the YWCA inseparable from that of the SCC. She practiced a form of social work that harkened back to Jane Addams, "where you work with a whole community and all of its problems."¹¹ In fact, the YWCA's affiliation with the women's movement was incidental and at times even detrimental on the Southwest Side. Most women who participated in the YWCA on the Southwest Side did not call themselves feminists, even if they did sympathize with some major feminist causes. Furthermore, while Wilson publicized the YWCA as a non-hierarchical movement, it was a "movement" with an operational budget in excess of a million dollars and comprised of numerous affiliate branches across the metropolitan area that resented any infringements upon their traditional autonomy. Two of these branches, the Woodlawn YWCA and Southwest YWCA, rebelled against Wilson's leadership. In the case of the Southwest YWCA, this ultimately resulted in total secession and re-incorporation as Southwest Women Working Together in 1975.

The Metropolitan YWCA's rising admiration for the women's liberation movement occurred at the end of a period of vigorous expansion guided by Wilson's predecessor, Marion G. Evans, who served as executive director from 1958-1969. Under Evans' tenure, the Chicago YWCA added three new branches (with a fourth under construction at the time of her retirement), including its first suburban outposts. She also oversaw the modernization of the

¹¹ *YWCA News*, Spring 1971, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 74-13, Box 63.

Loop Center facilities and delegated more authority to individual branches to design programs which fit the specific needs of local constituencies. With eight branches spread across the suburbs, downtown, and on the north, west, and south sides of the city by 1970, women of every race, class, and age in the entire metropolitan area participated in YWCA programming. A *Chicago Defender* editorial praised the YWCA for its diversity—close to fifty percent black—in a heavily segregated city.¹² Promotional literature by the YWCA demonstrated its faithfulness to serving Chicagoans of different racial backgrounds. The cover of the 1966 annual report depicted two young women, one white and one black, walking and conversing together in a park. Other available reports from this decade frequently depicted both black and white women of all ages enjoying the offerings of the YWCA. Long-standing branches on the West Side and South Side served the two largest concentrations of black neighborhoods in Chicago, and the YWCA devoted significant resources to providing quality services to poorer communities.¹³

The Metropolitan YWCA's mission and goals evolved alongside this infrastructural growth. Metropolitan YWCA leaders at the dawn of the 1960s affirmed their purpose through lens of postwar domesticity. The presidential address penned by Minnie Levinson in the 1959 annual report declared motherhood to be the ultimate feminine identity. She asserted that the YWCA functioned as a bulwark of stability against the disruptive forces of suburbanization and racial antagonism, so long as her organization fulfilled two tasks. First, the YWCA must “help directly with wise and skillful leadership as many girls as we can reach in all stages of growing

¹² *Women Today*, Fall 1969, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago, Accession 73-65, Box 4 Folder 3; *Chicago Defender*, November, 5, 1975.

¹³ *YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago: 1966 Annual Report*, Records of the YWCA, UIC, Accession 73-65, Box 4 Folder 5.

up: to learn the skills, both practical and emotional, of homemaking and motherhood.” Second, to remind the public “that the setting of standards and transmission of values is mainly women’s work; and that if we ever expect to solve the root of problems of our society, we had better start paying more attention to girls.”¹⁴ The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Albert MacLeod, echoed these conclusions in 1962, arguing the city needed the YWCA because “whether we like it or not, this is a man-oriented world and I feel that the women and girls get ‘shortchanged’...the family is an important part of our society and probably the most important member of the family is the mother.”¹⁵ Due to a scarcity of evidence from the middle of the 1960s in the remaining Metropolitan YWCA records, the exact rate or time at which these more traditional attitudes about gender faded by the time of Wilson’s directorship remains unclear. Nonetheless, the centrality of domesticity ended by the late 1960s.

Wilson was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She earned a Bachelor of the Arts degree from Tuskegee Institute and two Masters of the Arts degrees from Union Theological Seminary at Columbia University (Christian Education) and Case Western Reserve University (Social Work). She was a YWCA member since 1949 and an executive on the national board during the early 1960s. Wilson also served as the coordinator of the interfaith and interracial Wednesdays in Mississippi Project for the National Council of Negro Women prior to leading the Metropolitan YWCA of Chicago. Wednesdays in Mississippi brought middle-class

¹⁴ *YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago: 1959 Annual Report*, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library Special Collections, Accession 73-65, Box 4 Folder 5. Tellingly, Levinson referred to herself in public as “Mrs. David Levinson.” See “Mrs. Levinson Dies; Active in Civic Affairs,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 3, 1966.

¹⁵ *YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago: 1962 Annual Report*, Records of the YWCA, UIC, Accession 73-65, Box 4 Folder 5.

white and black women from the North to promote the civil rights movement in the Deep South. In 1964, a hundred of these women journeyed to Jackson, Mississippi, hosting interracial tea parties at the homes of sympathetic white and black southern women. Wednesdays in Mississippi utilized these displays of middle-class behavior to prove both races possessed refinement in equal capacity and could interact harmoniously. This aligned well with the Metropolitan YWCA's stated goal of solving major societal problems through domesticity in the early 1960s, and the organization hired Wilson to serve as its Director of Race Relations in 1965. She encouraged the Chicago YWCA to become an outspoken proponent for women's political rights and gender equality. Until Wilson, the terms "feminism," "women's liberation," or "movement" never appeared in the organization's published literature.¹⁶

Wilson insisted that full equality started with the Metropolitan YWCA itself. She explained to the *Chicago Defender* that "Titles, offices, and positions don't mean much as the work done...this position means I am better able to effect [sic] certain changes...there will be no group sitting downtown calling all the shots and having no real contact with the situations they are trying to handle." She further elaborated that she wished to avoid "organizational trappings" that hindered "progress." She noted that although the Metropolitan YWCA possessed property and buildings, the new organizational ideology transcended material value. The Chicago YWCA

¹⁶ An online public history project hosts numerous interviews, transcripts, and brief biographical information about Wednesdays in Mississippi and its participants: "Wednesdays in Mississippi: Civil Rights as Women's Work," University of Virginia, accessed December 5, 2010, <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/WIMS/> and <http://www.history.uh.edu/cph/WIMS/creation/sub-Leadership-DW.html>.

even abolished the membership requirement—and the dues accompanying it—to remove institutional barriers, allowing all interested women access to their events and programs.¹⁷

Wilson's vision did not make the Chicago YWCA an outlier. Both national and international leaders of the YWCA shared her commitment in turning the old organization into a powerful movement. The leaders of the YWCA concluded that people ignored institutions in times of great social turmoil, and they courted obsolescence if they failed to adapt. They argued that patriarchal forces prevented all institutions from changing. All institutions, including their own, possessed an inherent, masculine backwardness. A true feminist organization ditched any pretensions to hierarchy. The president of the World YWCA, Mrs. Tsouderos Athanassiou, rhetorically asked members, "Are we able and willing to question our foundations? Can we redesign a movement of people capable of continuous change?"¹⁸

Consequently, the Metropolitan YWCA drew inspiration from the most prominent social movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, such as antiwar protests, civil rights activism, and women's liberation. The Loop Center frequently referred to their programs as "talk-ins," "drop-ins," or "rap sessions." These meetings served to build consciousness among the women who attended, as well as provide information about important developments in the women's movement. The Loop Center's rap sessions covered a broad range of topics, ranging from an exploration of radical ideologies to dietary nutrition. On more politically contentious issues, the Loop Center YWCA allowed for debates between opposing viewpoints to foster active

¹⁷ *Chicago Defender*, February 24, 1970; *YWCA News*, February 1973, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 73-65, Box 4, Folder 2. A fiscal barrier did remain. While membership was no longer required, non-members had to pay a fee to participate in some programs.

¹⁸ *YWCA News*, October 1970, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 73-65, Box 4 Folder 1.

discussions. A February 1973 panel on abortion, for example, emphasized how *Roe v. Wade* freed a woman's body, but the moderators also reserved time for the Illinois Right to Life Commission to offer a rebuttal. Some of the talk-ins invited a legal consultant to inform working women on how to use the law to obtain equitable pay, a lecture from an Iranian feminist, and a performance by a British feminist comedian. Others discussed the dangers of nuclear energy, the potential for women in professional sports, and the need to remove sexism from children's literature. True to the spirit of transcending the traditional boundaries of a formal organization, the YWCA broadcasted talk-ins from the Loop Center over the radio on 91.5FM after securing a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council.¹⁹

Talk-ins also dissected popular culture, providing a feminist critique of famous movies and literature. In 1972, the Loop Center designated the month of November as "Women in Fiction," and each session deconstructed a text from the Western literary canon. One analyzed how "passion...operates to denigrate women" in *The Scarlet Letter*. Their interpretation of *Farewell to Arms* underscored how the novel used the theme of childbirth to "give passion its ultimate intensity." The month closed with a discussion of William Faulkner's *Light in August*, arguing that novel exhibited a "collage of woman's mammalian fertility, bitchery, and damnation."²⁰ A year later, the Loop Center applied a similar analysis to famous films from the 1940s starring Bette Davis and Katharine Hepburn. In all the films screened, male-controlled

¹⁹ *YWCA News*, February 1973, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago, Accession 73-65, Box 4 Folder 2; *Y Woman Newsletter*, Oct.-Nov. 1977, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago, Accession 83-30, Box 1 Folder 1; *Y Woman Newsletter*, December 1977; Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago, Accession 83-30, Box 1 Folder 1.

²⁰ *Y Woman Newsletter*, November 1972, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 83-30, Box 1 Folder 1.

society pushed women of considerable talent out of employment to a “happy” ending of marriage and children. As the writer of the *YWCA News* sardonically remarked about *Take a Letter Darling*, “You know how it ends: male triumph, love, and marriage supersede career every time.”²¹ Taking stock of sexism in media allowed for YWCA members to remind themselves of how certain societal norms subjugated them in the past—and might do so in the future.

The Loop Center YWCA courted other types of political and economic radicals to participate in their programs. One talk-in hosted Rava Dunaayevskaya, a former personal secretary to Leon Trotsky, who rejected his interpretation of communism in favor of the “humanist roots in Marxism” she discovered. A delegate from the controversial International Workers Party visited the Loop Center in March 1975. Not surprisingly, a talk-in three months later titled “Chicago Police Spy on the YWCA” featured an American Civil Liberties Union attorney who informed the audience about the measures taken by the police and Federal Bureau of Investigation to stymie “all those who work for change in society.”²² The YWCA showed other socialistic sympathies in its newsletter, which advertised a “Socialist/Feminist” convention held in Dayton, Ohio. At least three delegates from the Loop Center YWCA attended to learn more about the importance of socialist women to the feminist movement.²³

The provocative programming at the Loop Center YWCA and open association with the women’s liberation movement encouraged the Metropolitan YWCA to distance itself from a

²¹ *Y Woman Newsletter*, November 1973, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 83-30, Box 1 Folder 1.

²² *YWCA News*, April 1976, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 83-30, Box 1 Folder 1; *YWCA News*, March 1975, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 83-30, Box 1 Folder 1; *YWCA News*, June 1975, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 83-30, Box 1 Folder 1.

²³ *YWCA News*, October 1975, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 83-30, Box 1 Folder 1.

derogatory reputation as an organization full of “old ladies in tennis sneakers.”²⁴ A twenty-six week advertising campaign in the fall of 1969 which circulated through the city’s most widely-read newspapers exemplified this effort. The ad featured a confident young woman in a fashionable miniskirt looking intently off into the distance with the tag line, “Be slim, be smart, be in the swing.”²⁵ The caption highlighted the YWCA’s exercise facilities and “action-packed” summer programs. It boasted of group trips to exotic locations as distant as Europe and as close to home as the Chicago Playboy Club. The Loop Center YWCA promoted a more secular message as well. When Kleiman asked the director of the Loop Center, Dianne Smith, of the YWCA’s religious purpose, Smith replied: “Religion? None.”²⁶ Wilson and her predecessor also cultivated ties with the University of Chicago and University of Illinois at Chicago social work programs, recruiting younger, college-educated women to intern at the YWCA. Seeking to place talented young women in important positions, Wilson recruited Jager, a University of Chicago graduate student, to become executive director of an entire YWCA branch at the age of twenty-eight. Jager became the youngest woman to ever hold that position.²⁷

Yet while Wilson viewed Jager as a perfect fit for the YWCA, the organization’s embrace of the women’s movement was not what drew her to the Southwest YWCA branch. Desiring to do organizing work on the Southwest Side, she took the job as it was one of the only

²⁴ Carol Kleiman, ““Sisterhood Alive, Well in Loop” *Chicago Tribune*, January 29, 1974.

²⁵ *Women Today*, Fall 1969, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 73-65, Box 4 Folder 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Women Today*, Fall 1969, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 73-65, Box 4 Folder 3; *YWCA News*, June 1969, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 74-13, Box 55, Folder 1.

positions available. Although she did not object to the downtown YWCA's programming, she quickly realized a similar approach would doom her work to failure on the predominantly blue-collar, white-ethnic, Catholic Southwest Side of Chicago. She recalled that the "the quickest way to get those women to ignore what you were doing was to bring up feminism." She stated that the Southwest YWCA needed to develop a separate "agenda" from the more radical one promulgated by the downtown board to entice local women to join. For several years, at least, these differing agendas did not clash.²⁸

The unwillingness to directly associate with the feminist movement to the degree the Loop Center did, however, did not indicate hostility to all it represented. The programs offered by Jager and her successor as executive director, Phyllis Kinnerk, instead offered a modular, pragmatic approach to feminism which made the family central. They recognized that introducing elements of a movement that many working-class wives, mothers, and grandmothers associated with the lives and experiences of middle-to-upper-class college women required innovation and flexibility. As Kinnerk explained to the *Chicago Tribune*, "Our whole idea was just to give a woman a choice...we only wanted to introduce her to the outside world and leave it up to her. If she'd want to go to work and start thinking of herself as a feminist, fine. But if she still wanted to stay at home, that was ok with us, too."²⁹ Indeed, early attempts to organize women through rap sessions and consciousness raising fell flat, because such activities appeared "self-indulgent to women raised on the idea of postponing their own needs for the sake of their duties to other people."³⁰

²⁸ Interview with Judy Jager, June 19, 2015.

²⁹ Ron Grossman, "Choices: Goal for Blue-Collar Women," *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1985.

Conscious of the dynamics of a white working-class household and the perception many Southwest Side women had of feminism, the Southwest YWCA offered programs that gave consciousness raising a utilitarian edge. For example, it offered a “homemakers club” to bring women together to “sew, knit, and have plain good conversation.”³¹ Other programs, such as “A Short Course on Auto Mechanics,” offered vocational training. The Southwest YWCA hosted film sessions celebrating the heroic role working-class women played in labor unions. The YWCA also provided programs to help women in troubled and stressful marriages, such as “Good Marriage and Good Divorce,” and a monthly meeting group for the wives of police officers. The organization did not shy away from introducing social concepts radical to the tastes of a predominantly Roman Catholic community. A series of panels in 1971 at Ford City mall advertised topics such as “A New Look at Sex” and “A New Look at the Family,” which examined how non-traditional families in other cultures reversed their gender roles. The organization also hosted a discussion about Kate Millet’s famous *Sexual Politics*. The Southwest YWCA invited women’s liberation activists to speak at their meetings, and its main office on 63rd Street kept copies of *Ms.* magazine in its library.³²

³⁰ Ibid. No official membership roster of the Southwest YWCA exists today, but a surviving newsletter listed the occupations, if applicable, of the nineteen which constituted its administrative board. Twelve simply listed “mother.” Nonetheless, the remaining women were notable exceptions to this rule: three full-time college students, a reporter at the *Southwest News-Herald*, and an attorney. One of the students also identified herself as part of the Chicago Women Liberation Union’s Southwest Junior College chapter.

³¹ Southwest Women Working Together Newsletter, November 1975, Deering Special Collections, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.

³² “Southwest ‘Y’ to Sponsor Summer Forum,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 25, 1971; Southwest Women Working Together Newsletter, December 1976/January 1977, Deering Library Special Collections, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL; SWWT Newsletter, October 1979, Deering Library Special Collections; News for the Southwest Area YWCA, June 1975, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 83-30, Box 1 Folder 4; *SWNH*;

Certain core feminist issues—such as reproductive rights—precluded a wider embrace of the women’s movement. Even though the national YWCA endorsed *Roe v. Wade*, the Southwest YWCA refused to follow suit, citing the deep religious convictions of its members. The Southwest YWCA, however, did allow for both pro-life and pro-choice proponents to speak at their meetings before making that decision. Betty Gagne, a Catholic working-class mother of seven who initially threw herself into community activism through the Southwest YWCA and SCC after feeling ashamed by the violence she witnessed in Marquette Park, recalled that the feminist guest speakers who promoted pregnancy testing programs came off as disrespectful and arrogant.³³ Members of the Southwest YWCA also disdained detractors who linked them to well-known anti-feminists just for adhering to their faith. Kinnerk stated that their stance against *Roe v. Wade* elicited heavy criticism from feminist groups across Chicago, who accused them of being “no different from Phyllis Schlafly.”³⁴ Jager emphasized that not only did her group dismiss Schlafly as “crazy and stupid,” they endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment as necessary for the betterment of women and their families on the Southwest Side.³⁵

Gagne took notice of the minimal access Southwest Side women had to basic exams and screenings after a cancer scare. The Southwest YWCA strenuously worked to advance women’s health on the Southwest Side in other arenas, and health programs became their most popular services. Noting that many local women remained “terribly unaware of what went on with their bodies,” the health committee under Gagne focused on obtaining cheaper pelvic exams and pap

³³ Nancy Seifer, *No One Speaks for Me: Self-Portraits of American Working-Class Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 199.

³⁴ Jager interview.

³⁵ Ron Grossman, *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1985; Jager interview.

smears for area women. More than 240 women attended the Southwest YWCA's first health fair, and 600 placed themselves on a waiting list for bus trips to hospitals which conducted gynecological and breast exams inadequately provided by the Southwest Side's only hospital, the Catholic Holy Cross. While Gagne insisted that her committee had no radical bearing and saw texts such as *Our Bodies, Ourselves* as "just so divorced from the way I look at things," the YWCA's health programs served as one way to undercut traditional patriarchal authority on the Southwest Side. When a public relations man from Holy Cross ordered the health committee to disband after exposing the poor care its predominantly male staff offered women, the YWCA refused.³⁶

The fact that the Southwest YWCA empowered women, engaged with feminist ideas, and challenged certain socio-cultural mores of white ethnic, working-class life while reifying others, made its members an important source of leadership for the Southwest Community Congress. Women in the Southwest YWCA both redefined their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters and expanded the role of women in community organizing, undermining traditional assumptions that men served as the pre-eminent community leaders. This assumption dominated neighborhood activism throughout the postwar era, particularly in the civic associations which most vociferously fought against racial integration in the 1940s and 1950s. Women in these groups typically deferred presidencies and chairmanships to men while resigning themselves to secretarial posts, if they served as officers at all.

³⁶ Seifer, 205-211. The health programs proved one of the most popular services the Southwest YWCA offered in the early to mid 1970s. Most other programs drew in about twenty women in at a time, and the attendance at a spaghetti dinner suggests the YWCA at this period had about 150-200 regular members. See News for the Southwest Area YWCA, October 1974, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago,

Exceptions to this rule increased after 1960. Irene Simolke founded the South Lynne Community Council in 1957 to stabilize the West Englewood neighborhood. Florence Scala became the most visible opponent to urban renewal on the Near West Side of Chicago. Gail Cincotta led the fight against blockbusting in Austin throughout the late 1960s. Yet these initial outliers often took careful steps to honor the conventions of postwar domesticity. Simolke, for example, only served two years as chairman of the SLCC, and subsequent leaders of the council were all male. A press photo of Simolke also downplayed the possibility of her as a threat to male leadership, showing her smiling as she baked a cake in her kitchen.³⁷ Even Kinnerk, the woman who so impressed Jager with her command of the SCC's internal politics, admitted that for many years she and other women "might go door to door fund raising, and wherever there would be a social event, we were expected to do the cooking...but it was always left up to the men to solve the real problems."³⁸ Women in the YWCA—and by extension the SCC—held far more prominent, public roles than in many other earlier neighborhood organizations.

The women leaders of the SWWT and SCC offered a challenge to the traditionally male-dominated culture of Alinsky-organizing. As organizer Jim Capraro acknowledged, professional organizers often participated in a "macho" culture which often excluded women.³⁹ Although notable exceptions emerged from other Alinsky-style groups by 1970—such as Cincotta or Dolores Huerta—Jager's campaign for the presidency of the SCC demonstrated how the masculine bias in leadership persisted. Jager successfully ran for the position in 1971 promising

³⁷ Photo of Irene Simolke, SLCC Records, Box 19, CHM.

³⁸ Ron Grossman, *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1985.

³⁹ Capraro interview.

“Young, Fresh, Challenging Ideas.” This in part meant blending the Southwest YWCA’s initiatives for working-class women with the SCC’s larger goals of stabilizing the Southwest Side against decline. For example, in addition to raising fifty thousand dollars to replenish the community organization’s coffers and exposing unethical real estate practices, Jager promised to form coalitions with other city groups to “meet the needs of women, such as day care, health, and education—carried out with strong support from all segments of the community.” She noted that better child care and conditions for mothers benefitted all residents, not just women, giving young families a reason to stay on the Southwest Side instead of moving to the suburbs. Although victorious, she had to overcome some sexist rhetoric. Her opponent, the Rev. Ivan Smith, acknowledged the importance of women’s issues on the Southwest Side. He called for the SCC to support women’s liberation. He clarified, however, that this only could be done if the SCC elected a man as president to “balance” out all the qualified women participating in the organization. He even listed “male” as one of his primary qualifications for the office.⁴⁰

The mere existence of an organization that offered women “a choice” also threatened the traditional patriarchal order of an urban, white working-class family. One officer in SWWT told *Ms. Magazine* that her husband dismissed the organization as “Southwest Women Wasting Time.” Her husband, the author of the article implied, felt threatened by the fact that his wife now possessed enough confidence to leave the house without his permission. Another attended SWWT meetings in exercise leotards so her husband would not suspect that she participated in a woman’s group. Other members took more overt actions, raising their children to buck

⁴⁰ Horwitt, 521; SCC Senate Minutes, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 7, CHM; Smith flyer, 1971, Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 9, CHM; Jager and Hoy Flyer, 1971 Lois Anne Rosen Papers, Box 9 Folder 9, CHM.

traditional gender norms. The organization's treasurer, for example, taught each of her eight sons to cook, sew, and clean. She vowed that "no daughter-in-law of hers...will ever be a maid to one of her boys."⁴¹

Not every husband held such restrictive views on gender, however, and many SWWT members said their spouses offered support for their activism. Part of this stemmed from the necessity of working-class life: with both husband and wife often worked to make ends meet, many men assisted with domestic chores. As Jager explained, "out here, both the husband and his wife are much more the equal victim of circumstances...so in a strange kind of way, that democracy of powerlessness makes it easier for a woman to finally demand a say in the way her life is going to be led."⁴² Gagne admired how her husband took "initiative around the house" without prodding, and the two set a positive example for all their children, sons and daughters alike.⁴³ Kinnerk did not see her activities in the SCC/YWCA/SWWT as radically transgressive. She declared that her choice to work full time and return to school to obtain a college degree in her late forties did not prevent her from raising a "traditional family." She noted that her husband and children helped her the entire way and threw a "huge catered affair with an orchestra" upon her graduation.⁴⁴

YWCA members in the SCC pointed to their activities and open-mindedness when speaking out against what they perceived as unfair stereotyping of white ethnic, working-class

⁴¹ Helen Dudar, "Southwest Chicago Women Working Together: Low on Rhetoric and High on Programs of Their Own," *Ms.*, July 1980, 62-65.

⁴² Ron Grossman, *Chicago Tribune* November 21, 1985.

⁴³ Seifer, 194.

⁴⁴ "5.5% Chicagoans Expanding the Bonds of Family," *Chicago Tribune*, January 20, 1980.

communities in the media. Kinnerk and White, invited the *Tribune* reporter to dissuade him of his negative opinions about the Southwest Side. White acknowledged that the neighborhood housed some racists and malcontents, but she indicated that plenty of other neighborhoods and suburbs harbored equal, if not worse, prejudice. They argued that the existence of a group willing to learn about and debate feminist principles proved that the Southwest Side had more than ill-tempered thugs. Kinnerk noted that attempts to secure money from “liberal organizations” often failed because of her community’s negative image. Gagne recalled a wealthy white woman bluntly informing her that “because we were described as white ethnic, she said, ‘My kind of people wouldn’t touch you,’ you know. She was very, very honest with us. What she meant was, we’re the sinners, we’re the racists. And that stamp is on all of us now.”⁴⁵

The reputation of women on the Southwest Side took a further hit following their divorce from the YWCA in October 1975. The split stemmed from a conflict with Doris Wilson and the metropolitan board over diminishing resources, whose downsizing plans called for the elimination of representatives from the Southwest Side. The May 1975 issue of the *Southwest Area YWCA News* featured a cryptic statement about how separate gatherings of black and white women at the annual metropolitan YWCA meeting “coincided with one of the goals of this [local] board.” Citing Wilson and the metropolitan board’s fiscal irresponsibility, the women of the Southwest YWCA dissolved their chapter and re-formed as Southwest Women Working Together with Jager’s encouragement. Jager and other SWWT officers maintained they left to ensure that women on the Southwest Side had an organization which met requirements,

⁴⁵ Jeff Lyon, “Marquette Park—It Ain’t Skokie, But It Ain’t a Land of Nazis, Either,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 27, 1978; Seifer, 192.

something endangered by the YWCA's budget cuts. Wilson's supporters, on the other hand, believed the creation of SWWT represented as an ill-fated "power play" on their leader's job. A last-ditch meeting between the two sides allegedly devolved into a racist shouting match, although no minutes of this bitter event remain in the records of SWWT or the Metropolitan YWCA. SWWT rejected they used epithets or any other low-brow discourse. Wilson likewise refused to share any details, although she hinted that "elements of racism" shaped the dispute. In any case, the controversy further stained SWWT's image among feminist and other liberal groups.⁴⁶

The rift between Wilson and the women who formed SWWT was not the first time the metropolitan executive director failed to rein in an unruly neighborhood chapter. The Metropolitan YWCA reaffirmed its ideological commitment to racial equality in the late 1960s when it broke ground on the \$3.2 million Harris M. Center in 1969 (completed in 1970), a state of the art facility located in the declining black neighborhood of Woodlawn. The press kit for the building's unveiling proudly pointed out that the YWCA hired one black-owned firm and one white-owned firm to complete the project. This integrated labor force became "one of the first—if not the first—example of this type of agreement for general building contracting in Chicago."⁴⁷

Woodlawn residents expected Exie Watson Jones, the fifteen-year leader of the Woodlawn YWCA, to serve as director of the sparkling new Harris center. They respected the

⁴⁶ *Southwest Area YWCA News*, May 1975, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 83-30, Box 1 Folder 4; *Southwest Area YWCA News*, June 1975; Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 83-30, Box 1 Folder 4; *Chicago Tribune*, October 13, 1975; *Chicago Defender*, October 11, 1975; *Chicago Defender*, November 5, 1975; Interview with Judy Jager, June 19, 2015.

⁴⁷ Harriet M. Harris Dedication Ceremony Press Kit, issued February 22, 1971, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 74-13, Box 63; March 8 Press Release, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 74-13, Box 63.

“chic and comely” Jones for her history of social activism on the South Side through the YWCA. A reporter at the *Chicago Defender*, for instance, praised Jones for her leadership throughout the 1960s, pointing to her exertions to provide recreation for black youth and skills training for black workers struggling to find employment. Yet the *Defender* reporter hinted that tensions erupted between Jones and Wilson upon the latter’s appointment to the executive directorship in 1969. A *Defender* columnist writing under the pseudonym “Charlie Cherokee” claimed that Watson “is reported to be getting nervous. Her new boss and the first black woman to head a major social agency in Chicago is Doris Wilson.” Open conflict between the two, however, remained hidden for the next two years until the sudden dismissal of Jones on April 27, 1971, a month after the opening of the Harris Center. Wilson never informed the Woodlawn board of directors of her decision to fire Jones, let alone seek their consent. They immediately protested. The Woodlawn board argued that Jones’ fundraising secured the Harris Center, and Wilson’s grossly exceeded her power by removing Jones without first consulting Woodlawn YWCA members. Wilson fired back that Jones made the decision for her after a poor job performance review. A spokeswoman for the metropolitan board backed Wilson, arguing that a local board lacked the authority to hire or fire managers. While the Metropolitan board exonerated Wilson, Woodlawn residents held a rally on May 16, 1971, at the AME Baptist Church to protest the firing and assert the right to choose their YWCA director. Ultimately, the residents won. Wilson reinstated Jones on August 15, 1971, and even granted the Woodlawn board the right to veto any appointments by the Metropolitan YWCA.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *Chicago Defender*, September 23, 1969; *Chicago Defender*, May 1, 1971; *Chicago Defender*, May 17, 1971; Luci Horton, “Appointment of ‘Y’ Director Clouded by Reaction to Firing,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 23, 1971; “Harris YWCA Reinstates Fired Head for ‘Interim,’” *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 1971.

The conflict between Wilson and neighborhood branches indicated that the push to transform the Chicago YWCA into a “movement” did not apply to the organization’s established bureaucracy. In both Woodlawn and the Southwest Side, local women resisted efforts by the Metropolitan board to diminish their agency and independence. Wilson resented the challenges to her authority in both cases, expecting to retain complete oversight over staffing in every affiliate branch of the Chicago YWCA. The Woodlawn YWCA ultimately remained within the parent agency, if only due to Wilson’s capitulation to their demands, something which eluded the women in SWWT.

Furthermore, African-American women in the YWCA shared the skepticism of women’s liberation held by working-class white women on the Southwest Side, albeit for different reasons. For many black women, the fight for racial equality took precedence over gender equality. The *Defender* observed that “the much dramatized women’s liberation movement seems not to have made much of an impact on the masses of black women...most black women...remain insensitive to it.”⁴⁹ The presence of radical groups in Woodlawn, such as the Black Panthers, offered black women interested in social change an alternative to the YWCA. Indeed, women in the Black Panthers claimed they stood for women’s liberation without forsaking their race. As one Panther woman proclaimed to the *Defender*, “Pigs treat us just like they treat men!”⁵⁰ The refusal to subsume racial interest for gender existed within the Chicago YWCA, too. As Mahala Evans, YWCA member and director of training and development for the Chicago Committee on Urban-Opportunities and Model Cities remarked, “I’m all for equal

⁴⁹ *Chicago Defender*, October 10, 1970.

⁵⁰ *Chicago Defender*, January 24, 1970.

opportunity and equal pay, but as a black woman I have other concerns that take precedence over that one. But I'm glad there are other women taking up that fight."⁵¹

Ideological differences and leadership disputes permanently fractured the Metropolitan YWCA by 1975. Yet these fissures encouraged women on the Southwest Side to develop unique methods of self-empowerment which better meshed with their experiences and expectations than the programming of the Loop Center. Jager stated that SWWT represented "an absolutely unique concept...a community-based women's organization...they were a part of a specific community and based in other institutions and their family, and what we were doing was so tied to their place in the community."⁵² Still, Jager lamented that SWWT never exported its model for organizing working-class women to neighborhoods outside the Southwest Side before her departure in 1978. She suggested SWWT missed a window to reach more women alienated by conventional feminist practices. Yet like the Greater Southwest Development Corporation did for economic development, SWWT continued to matured into an influential organization that made a profound, positive impression upon the lives of thousands of women. SWWT continued to provide women's health services, and after 1980 offered aid and resources for domestic violence victims. Although they never branched out to other parts of Chicago, SWWT partnered with a leading Latina feminist organization, Los Mujeres en Accion, to create the first fully accessible domestic violence shelter in Chicago. By 2000, SWWT gave assistance to more than 165,000 Southwest Side women and children of all races and ethnicities.⁵³

⁵¹ *YWCA News*, Summer 1972, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 74-13, Box 55 Folder 1.

⁵² Jager Interview.

Other achievements of SWWT proved less quantifiable. Activism within SWWT transformed how its members viewed themselves. As Dolores Wolfram, explained, “For a whole lot of years I was Michael, Louise, Susan, and Stephen’s mother and Allan’s wife...there was nothing in my life that I could point to and say, ‘There, *that* is Dolores.’”⁵⁴ The women of the SWWT also became positive role models for their children. Andra Medea, Emily Thomas’ daughter, drew inspiration from her mother’s commitment to social justice through SCOPE, the SCC, and the SWWT. She fought for racial equality on the Southwest Side her own way as a teenager and vandalized the neo-Nazi’s headquarters on 71st Street with her friends. In 1972, she organized the first Midwestern conference against rape at the Loop Center YWCA and co-authored one of the first major popular texts on the subject, *Against Rape*, with Kathleen Thompson.⁵⁵ Another young woman, Eva Swinkowski, maintained that her experience in the Southwest YWCA made her conscious of “injustices all over the place.” Realizing she could not remedy society’s problems through a Catholic church which barred female ministers, Swinkowski organized a chapter of the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union at Bogan College. “I’m committed to its work, and the Southwest YWCA, and the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union,” Swinkowski explained, “I believe they’re all vital for the survival and advancement of

⁵³ Ibid. Details about the SWWT’s more recent accomplishments exist on its now-defunct web page, but an archived version remains accessible. See “About Us,” Southwest Women Working Together, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://web.archive.org/web/20050204052015/http://www.swwt.org/about.htm>; “SWWT is the Hidden Jewel,” Southwest Women Working Together, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://web.archive.org/web/20050307172325/http://www.swwt.org/pr01.htm>.

⁵⁴ Ron Grossman, *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1985.

⁵⁵ Joan Giangrassie Kates, “Emily D. Thomas, 84: Activist Fought Racism in Chicago,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 2002; Chicago Women’s History Council, “Documenting Women’s Activism and Leadership in Chicago, 1945-2000,” 2013, Chicago Area Women’s Council, Chicago, IL.

women and for all people.”⁵⁶ The sense of personal fulfillment women on the Southwest Side derived from community organizing, and the positive examples they set for another generation, represented the legacy of Southwest Women Working Together and the Southwest Community Congress.

⁵⁶ *YWCA News*, Fall 1973, Records of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, UIC, Accession 74-13, Box 63.

CHAPTER SIX

A CONTROVERSIAL MIDDLE GROUND: THE SOUTHWEST PARISH AND NEIGHBORHOOD FEDERATION

One night in late October 1974, Mrs. Mary Bertucci brought four signs to protest racial integration to Maria High, an all-girls' Catholic secondary school located directly across from the northeastern corner of Marquette Park at 67th Street and California Avenue. The membership chairman of the Hurley Homeowners Association and a delegate to the Common Counsel—the alliance of civic and homeowner associations which championed the cause of segregation—Bertucci hoped for a strong turnout to counteract the growing influence of the professional community organizations that had sprung up on the Southwest Side during the past five years.

Bertucci wanted the Common Counsel to demonstrate against the “greenlining” initiative of the three-year old Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation (SPNF). Greenlining called for parishioners from several of the Southwest Side’s largest churches to close their account at nearby financial institutions unless their savings and loans promised to reserve a certain amount of their assets for mortgages in their neighborhoods. Bertucci defiantly hoisted signs which declared: “Greenlining will not prevent neighborhood change”; “Take the \$30 million, open own institution”; “My savings and loan did not ask for my vote to join the federation”;

“The philosophy of the church is to actively integrate every community.” Unfortunately for Bertucci, she marched by herself as no one else from Hurley Homeowners or the Common Counsel came to support her. The *Southwest News-Herald* waited an entire month to recount the

pathetic display and relegated her plight to page twenty-six under the byline, “SW Side Woman Fights Lonely Segregation Battle.”¹

Bertucci bemoaned the fact that even though eight hundred homeowners belonged to Hurley and more than twenty other civic associations joined the Common Counsel, virtually no one attended the monthly meetings of either organization. She feared the Counsel might soon disband. For Bertucci and other strict racial conservatives, this sharp decline came as a shock following a triumphant 1971, the year they helped elect their most popular hero, the Rev. Francis X. Lawlor, to alderman of the Fifteenth Ward. Three years later, however, few people seemed interested in the Counsel and Lawlor’s term as alderman proved remarkably quiet—and even disappointing—to those hoping to keep the Southwest Side completely white.² Instead, Southwest Siders now gravitated to professionally-run community organizations which, in Bertucci’s eyes, all planned to integrate her blocks, schools, and parks.

The popularity of the SPNF left Bertucci and others like her dumbfounded. She explained to the *News-Herald*, “I do believe that the majority of the white followers do advocate separation of the races, and if that is the case, then they should drop out of the greenlining program.” Her confusion was understandable: why did residents from a neighborhood conservative enough to

¹ “SW Side Woman Fights Lonely Segregation Battle,” *SWNH*, November 28, 1974. The Common Counsel included over thirty affiliates at its height. Notable member organizations aside from Hurley included the Southwest Associated Block Clubs, Ashburn Civic Association, West Elsdon Civic Association, St. Louis-Central Park Improvement Association, Taxpayers’ Council, Gage Park Civic Association, Marquette Manor Citizens’ Forum, Clearing Civic League, Engle-Hill Civic Association, Marquette Park Terrace Homeowners, Mt. Greenwood Action Corps, North Beverly Civic Association, Operation Crescent, Wrightwood Improvement Association, Brainerd Civic Association, Damen Park Civic Association, Scottsdale Homeowners Association, Mothers for Neighborhood Schools American Style, Central West Council, Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers, and the Murray Park Civic Association.

² In 1972, some Common Counsel members even called for Lawlor to resign as alderman in favor of Henry Coppelillo, a noted advocate of using violence to keep black people out of the Southwest Side. See Letter to the Editor from W. Harold Kamar and Joseph Celig, *SWNH*, August 17, 1972.

elect someone like Lawlor and resist the creation of the Southwest Community Congress (SCC) now flock to yet another Alinsky-style organization backed by local Catholic parishes? She concluded that the SPNF organizers must have deceived her neighbors into supporting greenlining through relentless agitation. Bertucci, however, underestimated both the appeal of community organizing across the Southwest Side and the sentiments of her neighbors. Over the next decade, the federation grew from a two-parish alliance to a force in the city's electoral landscape by taking advantage of the ways extremists like her repelled more moderate homeowners and the debilitating weaknesses of its predecessor, the SCC.³

The origins of the federation, particularly contrasted to the Southwest Community Congress, are not well-documented. Few archival records exist from the first decade of the federation's existence and virtually nothing from the first five years. A self-published history to commemorate the organization's ten-year anniversary stated the impetus for its creation came from the "majority effectively denied a voice in public affairs" whose desire for "sensible action was invariably disregarded in favor of more radical and often outlandish proposals." Although not specific, this statement mirrored a frequent claim by the SPNF in the 1970s and 1980s that the liberal slant of the Southwest Community Congress estranged many homeowners. Yet the official organizational history also suggested members felt a similar disenchantment toward the "extremists and ultraconservatives" who frequently meddled in community affairs after the Chicago Freedom Movement's open housing marches in 1966.⁴

³ "SW Side Woman Fights Lonely Segregation Battle," *SWNH*, November 28, 1974.

⁴ *The Southwest Federation: The First Ten Years Remembered*, Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation, 1981, ii-iii, SPNF Records, Box, CHM. The author of this document is unknown.

The federation adhered to a brand of neighborhood preservation which fell in-between the liberalism of the SCC and the racial conservatism of the area's civic associations. The federation notably copied the congress' geographic boundaries with one important exception. Whereas the SCC extended its boundaries to Ashland Avenue to include black residents in West Englewood, the federation only included parishes west of Western Avenue, keeping its initial membership entirely white. Judy Jager noted that in the eyes of SCC members, the boundary change made the federation just "a shade over from Father Lawlor."⁵ Federation members always contested such associations, and they refused to take an official position for or against the integration of the Southwest Side. This ambiguity caused critics, from the SCC to civil rights organizations in Chicago, to interpret the federation's actions as implicitly racist. Federation leaders countered that their organization existed to aid homeowners who wanted to stay on the Southwest Side by putting an end to harassment from realtors, redlining, and storefront vacancies. These clear goals, the lack of a strong ideological position, and the avoidance of racialism made for a potent recipe. By the end of the 1970s, the federation surpassed both the SCC and the Common Counsel to become the most popular grassroots organization on the Southwest Side.

The early history of the SPNF mirrored the SCC. The SPNF first protested blockbusting realtors before re-orienting its focus to financial institutions and redevelopment by the middle of the 1970s. The SPNF also benefitted from the leadership of an Alinsky-trained civil rights activist in its early years, Jim Keck. Like Jager, Keck grew up on the West Side of Chicago, specifically in Our Lady of Angels parish, a predominantly Italian-American neighborhood just

⁵ Jager interview.

north of Garfield Park. After a brief stint with a street gang during his middle school years, Keck enrolled at Quigley Preparatory Seminary. By his sophomore year, black realtors, who Keck recalled belonged to the Dearborn Real Estate Board ran by Dempsey Travis, visited houses on his block and tried to scare all the homeowners, including his father, into quickly selling their homes. His parish began to racially change with alarming alacrity. Desperate to find a solution, Keck visited his Chicago Public Library branch. He walked up to the librarian and asked her, “my neighborhood is changing racially, is there something that can be done about it?” She fetched him an original edition of Saul Alinsky’s famous manual for community organizing, *Reveille for Radicals*. Thoroughly impressed and determined to meet the author—albeit unaware of Alinsky’s international renown—Keck called the office of the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council to arrange a meeting. The receptionist politely informed Keck that Alinsky was not available, but she put him in contact with one of Alinsky’s most capable subordinates, Tom Gaudette. Then working for the Northwest Community Organization (and later more famous for training Gail Cincotta in the Organization for a Better Austin), Gaudette gave Keck a three-hour crash course in the fundamentals of community organizing. He told Keck to have his pastor at Our Lady of the Angels raise five thousand dollars to hire a professional organizer.⁶

Unfortunately, Keck soon learned the pastor of Our Lady of the Angels lacked the same enthusiasm for community organizing. Keck failed to raise the five thousand dollars Gaudette required. Nonetheless, he serendipitously uncovered an alternative solution a year later. A track and field accident prevented Keck from working his usual summer job as a camp counselor in LaGrange Park; he instead did minor jobs at a Benedictine priory located near Central Park

⁶ Keck interview.

Avenue and Van Buren Street. One evening, while mopping the basement floor, he stumbled upon a meeting of the West Side Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). One of the Benedictine priests and a family friend served as the chapter secretary. There he saw blacks and whites discussing ways to stop panic peddling realtors. Remembering what Gaudette taught him, he noted that what CORE did was “classic Alinsky. Blacks and whites have got the same enemy. You know, it’s not about we’re going to kiss you, make love, no. We’re going to fight a common enemy.” Viewing CORE as the only group on the West Side willing to stop blockbusting, Keck joined the Chicago civil rights movement at the age of sixteen years old as a tenant union organizer.⁷

Keck quickly proved to be an enthusiastic member of CORE and became dazzled by the people he met and work he did. As he explained, “I was like freedom now! The movement! I mean I was gung ho. It was the greatest thing in the world...I’m hanging around with college students that are from Tuskegee and Howard. I mean it was so cool.”⁸ He helped fight lead paint on the West Side of Chicago, and he brought his passion back to school, starting the first human relations club at Quigley. He also voted in the decision to invite Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to Chicago, a move which took the Chicago civil rights campaign to the national stage. After King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) arrived to formally partner with their Chicago counterpart, the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO), James Bevel charged Keck and a black counterpart with organizing Catholic teens and college students. Through this work also Keck met his future wife, a black Catholic student, and they both helped

⁷ Keck interview.

⁸ Ibid.

the SCLC expose housing discrimination on the Southwest Side as real estate testers in the summer of 1966. Keck served as a parade marshal for the climatic open housing march on August 5, 1966. Expecting trouble, Keck opted to wear a hard hat to the park, a fashion choice which rankled some SCLC leaders for “theoretically provoking violence by anticipating violence.”⁹ Given that a “greaser” gang on motorcycles assailed a car he occupied with several other black marchers with tire chains as they drove down 67th Street, his sense of self-preservation proved wise.

The violence he faced in Marquette Park did not immediately deter Keck or his wife from staying with the movement, even after King’s departure from the city. They joined the Chicago chapter of Operation Breadbasket, uncovering racist hiring practices by numerous Chicago businesses and employers. His time in Operation Breadbasket proved less satisfying than his earlier work with CORE, as Keck and his wife chafed under the leadership of the Rev. Jesse Jackson. He stated that Jackson consistently undermined the picketing, testing, and other hard work done by rank-and-file Breadbasket members. As he recalled, “Every freaking time Jesse would sell out. He would sell short. And it would always be a donation to PUSH. In those days it was Breadbasket, and all of a sudden it was Jewel giving us \$8,000 a year and four jobs...he’s not getting anything for anybody! We’re not getting jobs for black people, we’re getting Operation PUSH independently funded.”¹⁰ The Kecks also noted that Jackson largely ignored the rest of the group when finalizing such deals, which caused them to leave and move to Rogers

⁹ Matt Simonette, “James Keck Reflects on Lifetime of Activism,” *Windy City Times*, July 27, 2016, at www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/James-Keck-reflects-on-lifetime-of-activism/55996.html, accessed December 1, 2016.

¹⁰ Keck interview.

Park on the far North Side of Chicago. There he briefly worked for the American Friends Service Committee as a draft counselor with Lew Silverstein, a guidance counselor at Highland Park High School, and worked the precinct for Eugene McCarthy's failed presidential campaign. Silverstein then encouraged the Kecks to enroll at a radical, new experimental college within the State University of New York system—Old Westbury.

Keck remembered that Old Westbury intentionally recruited “radical kids” and faculty from all over the country to populate its campus. Civil rights and anti-war activists such as Keck, especially those who were interracially married, possessed a special pizzazz. Reflecting the shifting tides of the movement, other students at the college belonged to groups which advocated for intra-racial self-empowerment, such as the Black Panthers and the Young Lords. He found the brasher activist climate of New York invigorating compared to Chicago. His time in New York influenced his future work on the Southwest Side. “I get immersed in this thing and it's like these people don't talk lovey-dovey, they're talking about how we going to change the city, how we going to stop poverty...and the white ethnic thing started to come into play where it was like there's nothing to be ashamed about, because you're a white ethnic. You know, they were tools of the systems, just like blacks.” Elements of Marxist thought gleaned from his time at Old Westbury and through his earlier interactions with radical college students in the Chicago civil rights campaign also shaped his views. He noted that he “thought in terms of class where it's the one percent against the ninety-nine...white ethnics are victims, just like black people are.”¹¹ He did not finish his degree, as his wife's homesickness and pregnancy led them back to Chicago.

¹¹ Ibid.

Having stayed in touch with Gaudette and in need of work, Keck interviewed for an organizing position with the Southwest Community Congress through Catholic Charities. He applied for to provide assistance for elderly parishioners in neighborhoods vulnerable to quick racial change. Although not eager to work on the Southwest Side after what happened in 1966, he met with Catholic Charities' director of community projects, The Rev. Roger Coughlin, who at first seemed impressed by his qualifications. Coughlin's assessment of Keck's fitness for the job immediately changed, however, when Keck mentioned his marital situation. Coughlin informed Keck people on the Southwest Side would not accept an organizer with a black wife. Keck's persistence broke down Coughlin's initial resistance, and he arranged for an interview with a senior Catholic Charities organizer in the basement of a West Englewood church.

The interview did not go well. After sitting in silence for nearly an hour, the interviewer answered a phone call and told Keck he could not have the job. The interviewer claimed that other "local leaders" believed the job endangered an interracial married man. Coughlin's claim left Keck in a state of disbelief. "I'm coming out of this radical, and it was like, what...don't tell me what I can do with my people, ok, because I'm coming from they're victims."¹²

Humiliated and angry, Keck called one of the leaders of the SCC, the pastor of St. Gall's church, the Rev. Philip Clark, to demand an explanation for why his private life disqualified him from the job. Clark expressed confusion at Keck's outburst. He informed Keck that Catholic Charities repeatedly told the SCC for six months that they had no candidates for the position. Clark then arranged for an impromptu interview for Keck in with seven other Southwest Side priests that same night. Once Keck passed muster, Clark called Coughlin to demand an

¹² Ibid.

explanation. Coughlin stated that he would approve of Keck's hire so long as "real people," or ordinary parishioners, voiced their approval to prove that the Southwest Side would accept a man in an interracial marriage. Keck recalled that the prospect of an organizer with a black wife excited other priests in the SCC with liberal leanings, most notably Monsignor James Hardiman. Hardiman handpicked the parishioners who met with Keck, women from Holy Name societies known to hold progressive views on race. Coughlin essentially had been outmaneuvered: the support of local priests and parishioners gave Keck an independent base of power. The full reason for Coughlin's initial opposition to Keck is not clear. Keck believed lay leaders in the SCC asked Catholic Charities to bar Keck; Judy Jager's recollection of Catholic Charities' involvement, however, suggested otherwise. Jager stated that Coughlin did not consult her or other leaders, and she believed that Catholic Charities (and Cardinal John Cody) ultimately wished to dismantle the SCC, not help it. Jager recounted several futile efforts by SCC members to confront Cody at the cardinal's residence and demand he order Catholic Charities to cease meddling in their affairs. Moreover, Hardiman's initial enthusiasm over Keck's hiring likely carried significant weight with other SCC leaders given his esteemed position in the organization.¹³

¹³ Ibid; Jager interview. Technically, Keck worked for a "joint committee" formed between St. Gall parish and St. Nicholas of Tolentine parish, both of which were at that time a part of the SCC. Somewhat ironically, Haridman served as a member of this committee, which was the core of the future SPNF. The chair of the joint committee, Judge John McGury, became one of the SPNF's earliest leaders. See "Assign Man to Aid Local Parish Groups," *SWNH*, October 21, 1971. Coughlin's history of Catholic Charities only indirectly mentioned the SCC and SPNF. He stated that he was in charge of an "area project" to with a mission to give parishioners in changing neighborhoods a "voice" in housing and political matters. He stated that some of the area projects grew too controversial for the comfort of Catholic Charities' donors, ending the program in 1978. See Coughlin, *Story of Charitable Care in the Archdiocese of Chicago* (Chicago: The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago, 2009), 26-28.

Regardless of Coughlin's intentions, Keck soon concluded on his own that he could not work with SCC for professional and personal reasons. Professionally, he felt the organization lost sight of its Alinsky philosophy in favor of bizarre ideological stances. He stated that meetings over topics as simple as traffic signs devolved into long, tiresome debates about international communism. He also believed some of the other organizers working with the SCC lacked the necessary training and focus to run its day-to-day operations efficiently. Keck cited a lack of willpower as another fatal flaw. The organizational leadership and members appeared easily demoralized when presented with roadblocks.¹⁴

Keck pointed to a difficult anti-solicitation drive in 1971 as proof of this lethargy and the catalyst for the creation of the Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation. The SCC asked members to gather homeowner signatures for a list (or index) of residents that realtors, by force of law, could not contact for business. The index then went to the Illinois Commission on Human Relations, and the state then notified the realtors which properties they must avoid. Yet even after all this work, the solicitations continued, as realtors claimed they never received the directory. At this point, Keck noted too many SCC officers resigned themselves to failure and prepared to abandon the anti-solicitation drive. This irritated both Keck and over one hundred parishioners from St. Gall and St. Nicholas of Tolentine, who decided to simply serve the realtors themselves. Heartened by this action and having "made good on the SCC's promise," they decided to forge ahead on their own path, with or without the help of the rest of the SCC.¹⁵

¹⁴ Keck interview.

¹⁵ Keck interview. The federation served notice to 330 real estate brokers in total. See "5,000 Homeowners Sign Realty Anti-Solicitation," *SWNH*, March 23, 1972. The drive likely started after a complaint filed by two SCC leaders, Phyllis and John Kinnerk, with the Illinois Commission on Human Relations against Travis and Travis Real Estate. The Commission determined that the Kinnerks provided sufficient evidence that a Travis employee persisted

Keck still thought there was a small chance for the SCC to recapture the confidence of local residents. The SCC could keep the same member organizations and leaders, but simply rebrand itself to wash away the baggage associated with the name. He believed the group's overt racial liberalism scared away large numbers of moderate and conservative homeowners on the Southwest Side. He observed that most Americans, including those he worked for on the Southwest Side were moderates. "They are not really racist in the sense of the word you got to be scared of them," Keck stated, "It's like, you know, they have prejudices, but I have lived with black people much of my life, and they have prejudices, too." Worse, he felt too many prominent SCC leaders, namely Hardiman and Mary Ceil McManus, prioritized maintaining their liberal reputations over results and expressed contempt for their neighbors they professed to serve over ideological differences on integration. Keck resolved "to give this community the best shot I can without being a frickin' racist, ok...but I'm done with you folks. You're the worst aspects of liberalism in the United States."¹⁶

Keck saw the SCC promoting integration for the sake of integration. Yet they failed to find enough common problems for whites in Chicago Lawn and the increasing number of black

in soliciting them even after they registered themselves on the index. The Illinois Commission on Human Relations, for the first time in state history, recommended the arrest of the employee to the state's attorney general, who authorized the Chicago Police Department to do so in August 1971. The realtor successfully filed an appeal that dragged the case to the Illinois Supreme Court. In *The People of the State of Illinois v. Tibbitts* (1973) The state supreme court ruled part of the state's anti-solicitation law unconstitutional—specifically the authority invested in the Commission on Human Relations to administer the law through the attorney general—and the Kinnerks lost the case. See *People v. Tibbitts* 56 Ill.2d 56 (Ill. 1973), accessed January 10, 2017, <https://casetext.com/case/people-v-tibbitts-2>; *People v. C. Betts Realtors Inc.* 66 Ill.2d 144 (Ill.1977), accessed January 10, 2017, <https://casetext.com/case/people-v-tibbitts-2/case/people-v-c-betts-realtors-inc#cited-link-1>; "First Real Estate Man Arrested on Antisolicitation Act," *Chicago Tribune*, August 5, 1971; Joe Sjoström, "Commission Asks for Prosecution in Home Solicitation," *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1972; John Neenan, "Court Bans Anti-Solicitation Law," *SWNH*, April 20, 1972.

¹⁶ Keck interview.

residents in West Englewood to solve together. He especially resented a suggestion by Hardiman to broadcast the fact that he had a black wife and an interracial child as proof of the SCC's progressivism. He likewise kept his own background in the radical left private, noting few others on the Southwest Side held such views. Nonetheless, his suggestion to rename the Southwest Community Congress accelerated the split which resulted in the Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation. He stated that some established SCC leaders resented the suggestion, and even threatened to tell parishioners at St. Gall and St. Nicholas that Keck had a mixed-race son and recently left his wife because he secretly harbored racist views.¹⁷ Keck remembered the threat to use his personal life against him as the final the straw. He formed the Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation with his initial band of supporters at St. Gall and St. Nicholas. Over the next several years, the SPNF incorporated more sub-groups from other Southwest Side churches—Holy Name Societies, Knights of Columbus, and Catholic women's councils—until the SPNF had seven parish affiliates.¹⁸

Keck and early SPNF leaders saw themselves as a stouter bulwark than the SCC against the right-wing figures menacing the Southwest Side in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Rev. Francis Lawlor's successful campaign as alderman in 1971, with the support of many conservative civic associations who frequently denounced the congress, underscored the SCC's vulnerabilities. The SCC became reputed for emphasizing the ideal of an interracial

¹⁷ At the time of the split with the SCC, Keck and his wife were in midst of a divorce which he said occurred following his wife's severe bout with post-partum depression. See Keck interview.

¹⁸ The next four parishes to join were St. Rita, St. Clare Montefalco, Queen of the Universe, and St. Mary Star of the Sea. A group of homeowners living in the southeastern corner of Chicago Lawn created the Marquette Park Community Association in 1973 to assist the SPNF in these early anti-blockbusting initiatives and became its only non parish-affiliate. See *The Southwest Federation*, vi; *SPNF News*, March 1981, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 9, CHM.

neighborhood over effective solutions for the community's immediate problems. This inadvertently gave extremist figures in the neighborhood such as Frank Collin, Lawlor, and Thomas Sutton a foil to mobilize racially conservative, or even some otherwise moderate, yet anxious homeowners afraid of having to sell their home at a loss, to their causes. In the case of Lawlor, a prominent SCC critic, this support boosted him to the city council.

The SPNF intended to rectify the SCC's failure to rally racially moderate residents disaffected by its perceived ineffectiveness and liberal rhetoric. The core identity of the SPNF as a church-based organization rejected the anti-clericalism embodied by prominent racial conservatives on the Southwest Side. In turn, the parishes offered financial support and a boost in morale, as local pastors frequently joined with the laity in demonstrations.¹⁹ At the same time, the SPNF never defined itself as integrationist or segregationist, preferring to frame its battles against individuals or institutions which stood to profit from blockbusting on the Southwest Side as a matter of self-preservation. Some who openly supported integration on the Southwest Side concurred with this philosophy, including a key officer of the SCC. The federation siphoned away Lorraine Pleshar from the SCC halfway through her term as SCC president in 1974, when she joined the federation and became an instrumental part of its leadership during the 1970s and 1980s. A St. Gall parishioner, Southwest YWCA participant, and a member of the pro-integration Southwest Committee on Peaceful Equality (SCOPE), Pleshar supported the federation's first anti-solicitation push while still an officer in the SCC. Federation successes—

¹⁹ For example, Rev. Albin Cicoria of St. Turibius joined his parishioners in picketing the homes of realtors who belonged to Sack Realty. The SPNF picketed Sack over the company's refusal to sign an anti-solicitation agreement. See "SW Federation Pickets Employees Homes," *SWNH*, October 12, 1972.

along with the friendship she struck up with Keck and a subordinate organizer, Bob Gannett—convinced her that the SPNF better represented the Southwest Side.²⁰

Moreover, the federation eventually exploited the overreach of hardline racist groups and their leaders. Residents distrustful of both the SCC and the Common Counsel found a viable middle path with the federation. The Common Counsel alienated many supporters when it started to screen films produced by the John Birch Society and invited an outspoken anti-Semitic homeowner as a guest speaker to one of its meetings. The editorial board of the *News-Herald* expressed dismay that the Counsel gave such crackpots the spotlight and chastised its members for failing to even question conspiratorial theories.²¹ Other Counsel members even blasted their greatest hero, Lawlor, for acting “too liberal” after cordially speaking with a black civil rights attorney and neighboring 16th Ward alderman, Anna Langford, following their election to city council in 1971. The massive enthusiasm which propelled Lawlor’s political career following his split with the church cooled by the end of his first—and only—uneventful aldermanic term. Unseating a machine candidate left him on the outside looking in at city hall, and his call for an official racial dividing line at Ashland Avenue never came to pass. He ran for Congress in 1975 as a Republican but won less than a quarter of the vote. This marked the end of his career as a politician and a renegade cleric. He reconciled with the Church shortly thereafter and resumed his priestly duties, ironically ending his career in an all-black parish in St. Louis.²²

²⁰ “Southwest Congress Demands Protection Against Blockbusters,” *Southtown Economist*, March 3, 1971; “Rev. Smith, Judy Jager Resign from SCC Board,” *SWNH*, February 7, 1974; “SCC Senate Picks Interim Officers,” June 13, 1974.

²¹ Editorial, *SWNH*, May 25, 1972.

²² Jeff Lyon, “Whatever Happened To: Crusader in a Collar,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 2, 1994.

The attractiveness of the SPNF approach became evident in its efforts to expose the disinvestment of its neighborhoods. Following the successful anti-solicitation campaign, the federation targeted the other tool of rapid racial turnover: redlining. Echoing the SCC's internal findings from 1971, the federation's official history alleged that realtors who signed anti-solicitation agreements insinuated that local savings and loan associations imposed stringent terms for conventional financing on residential and commercial properties in eastern Chicago Lawn. This left homeowners and businesses deprived of much needed-capital.²³

The federation launched an investigation of the eight largest savings and loans within its boundaries in 1974 and requested loan data from the previous four years. The federation hoped to use the information to confirm that their savings and loans offered enough mortgages for the Southwest Side. Not a single institution complied, claiming the information would be impossible to retrieve and that federation would better spend its time monitoring realtors. Incensed at this quick dismissal, the federation exerted major pressure through a "greenlining" campaign coordinated with the Citizen Actions' Program (CAP) in 1974.²⁴ The idea for greenlining, which meant the threat by homeowners to close thousands of accounts at local financial institutions in exchange for mortgage guarantees, came from the Rev. Albin Ciciora. A pastor at St. Gall and relatively dormant in neighborhood activism until the formation of the SPNF, the forty-seven-year-old Ciciora sought to make ordinary Southwest Side parishioners as powerful as the wealthier thrifts. "You must control large amounts of money," Ciciora explained, "then you can deal from strength." Banks might flout a single homeowner with modest savings, but thousands

²³ *The Southwest Federation*, vii.

²⁴ *Ibid*, viii; *SWNH*, August 22, 1974; *SWNH*, September 12, 1974; *SWNH*, September 26, 1974.

of residents who took “our greenbacks to other places that will do business with us” would not be ignored.²⁵

More than 10,000 homeowners in the federation signed pledges to withdraw their savings, totaling \$12 million of deposits, unless the savings and loans disclosed their lending habits. While Jager and other SCC leaders denounced the tactic as a “theatrical” plot hatched by CAP leaders who mostly lived on the North Side, the threat worked. Talman Savings and Loan, by far the largest and most prestigious financial institution on the Southwest Side, agreed to disclose its practices through quarterly reports verified by an independent certified public accountant. The fall of the largest domino convinced the other holdouts to do the same.²⁶ While the SPNF cited the greenlining campaign as a major victory which earned them a reputation as one of the most effective community organizations in the city, the compliant savings and loans might have only acquiesced as a token public relations concession. Within a year, Congress passed the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act which made all financial institutions legally obligated to answer inquiries such as the federation’s.

Indeed, the second phase of greenlining—forcing savings and loan associations to reserve a certain fraction of their assets exclusively for Southwest Side mortgages—failed. The SPNF claimed the provided statistics showed a clear history of “deplorable” lending practices, such as

²⁵ “CAP Chief Grasps the Art of Activist Infighting Fast,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 15, 1975. CAP already had a history on the Southwest Side as an environmentalist group, the Campaign Against Pollution, which successfully won concessions from several major industries in the early 1970s. It rebranded itself as the Citizens Action Program to broaden its geographical and topical scope, and its most notable victory occurred several years later when it thwarted the construction of the Crosstown Expressway, saving thousands of bungalow belt homes across the Northwest and Southwest Sides. Ciciora became president of CAP in 1975. SPNF never formally joined CAP in spite of this connection.

²⁶ *SWNH*, January 25, 1974; Jager Letter to Editor, *SWNH*, January 31, 1974; *SWNH*, May 9, 1974; *SWNH*, June 6, 1974; *The Southwest Federation*, ix; Lee Strober, “Talman to Give Loan Data to Community,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1974;.

the funneling of Southwest Side homeowners' savings to suburban and downtown projects at the expense of conventional mortgages for residents. To make up for this communal neglect, the federation requested that local savings and loans reserve \$28 million for neighborhood investment. As Talman held nearly two-thirds of residents' savings, the federation expected it to commit \$18 million for the fund. Talman officials refused to comply with this order. They argued that federation members misinterpreted the data. They further claimed that forfeiting even a modicum of their "lending policy" to a community organization violated the "fiduciary trust placed in it [Talman] by its savers and the fiduciary responsibilities of its charter."²⁷ Talman's executive vice-president contended that their heavy lending to downtown projects and the suburbs reflected simple market demand, not discrimination. Clearly rattled, the directors of the beleaguered savings and loan even took out a full-page ad in the *News-Herald* to explain why they rebuffed the federation, maintaining that not making loans in their own "backyard" constituted suicide.

The federation's redlining committee found this defense unconvincing. It condemned Talman for sinking upwards of \$100 million into the half-empty Harbor Point condominium development at Lake Shore Drive and Randolph Street while shirking on its "commitment" to the Southwest Side. Eighty federation members also crashed the grand opening of Talman's suburban office branch in the northern suburb of Skokie, Illinois, cutting their own red ribbon to symbolize the end of redlining. Unfortunately, only one report remains in the SPNF records and none of the savings and loans still exist, making verification of these figures difficult.²⁸

²⁷ "Talman Federal Rejects Revised Federation Pledge," *SWNH*, March 6, 1975.

²⁸ Talman offered to give \$2 million more than what the federation initially demanded (\$18 million), provided there was proof of demand. Talman reported offering \$14 million in mortgages to the Southwest Side in 1975. See

The discontent of federation members with Talman also stemmed from a belief that the Southwest Side's most prominent financial institution lost touch with its ethnic heritage. Benjamin Bohac, an immigrant from Bohemia, founded Talman in a small storefront office adjacent to his home at 51st Street and Talman Avenue in 1922. Utilizing "Bohemian Common-Sense economics," Bohac grew an initial investment of \$692.75 into more than a billion dollars of assets by his death in 1975, making Talman one of the ten largest savings and loan associations in the entire country.²⁹ Attuned to the sensibilities of the many different ethnic groups who moved to Gage Park and Chicago Lawn in the 1920s and 1930s—the minutes of Talman's board meetings in its first seven years were written in Slovak—Bohac earned high esteem from many Southwest Side homeowners for offering free mortgage counseling and a reticence to foreclose during the Great Depression. Bohac also refused to relocate his business to the Loop even as it became one of the most successful in the city. He instead brought downtown glamor to the heart of Gage Park when he hired the elite architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill to design a massive 170,000 square foot modernist office at 55th Street and Kedzie Avenue in 1955.³⁰

"Talman Federal Refuses to Sign Federation Pledge," *SWNH*, February 20, 1975," and "Talman Re-States Area Commitment," *SWNH*, June 17, 1976. "Federation Wants S&L's to Pledge \$28 Million," *SWNH*, January 9, 1975. Talman Advertisement, *SWNH*, March 13, 1975; "Talman Federal Avoids Harbor Point Answers," *SWNH*, February 19, 1976; Draft of "Federation Cuts Red Ribbon at Talman Skokie Branch," August-September 1975, SPNF Records, Box 29 Folder 25, CHM. The SPNF settled on the \$28 million figure by claiming it represented the "average of mortgage demands in the area for the past three years."

²⁹ "Ben F. Bohac, Talman Founder, Dies," *SWNH*, March 20, 1975.

³⁰ Lee Bey, "In Gage Park, a Midcentury Bank and Piece of Chicago History Vanish," *WBEZ 91.5 Chicago*, accessed December 16, 2015, <https://www.wbez.org/shows/wbez-news/in-gage-park-a-midcentury-bank-and-piece-of-chicago-history-vanish/17ebbead-d62c-43fa-8a36-d4a5a1634ce4>. The bank was located across the street from the spiritual center of Gage Park, St. Gall's parish, which shared a similar modernist aesthetic.

Federation officials claimed Talman's priorities changed dramatically following Bohac's retirement in 1963. Federation leaders alleged that his successors valued pure profit over traditional loyalties. In justifying its actions against Talman, they declared that the numerous ethnic groups living on the Southwest Side "made Talman what it is today...we can take back everything we have given Talman. Everything and more."³¹ Another member vented his frustration more succinctly, remarking "there are no more Bens at Talman." This angst reflected the raw emotions held by many federation members, who were nervous about the fate of aging, working-class white neighborhoods such as their own. Talman under Bohac's leadership mirrored the archetypal American immigrant success story of humble origins begetting greatness through hard work—a narrative many homeowners on the Southwest Side either personally experienced or believed in, albeit it on a much smaller scale. Likewise, the new leaders of Talman symbolized the wayward ethnic children of the second and third generations who held less direct ties to their national cultures and left the bungalow belt for trendier neighborhoods or the suburbs.

The apparent favoritism their own financial institutions showed toward downtown and suburban projects compelled the SPNF to shift their priorities once more. The deterioration of the 63rd Street and Western Avenue shopping strip made neighborhood redevelopment just as crucial to the federation's broad mission of stabilizing the Southwest Side as ending blockbusting and redlining. An internal survey of the strip revealed forty properties abandoned or in a severe state of disrepair, and external studies offered similarly somber assessments. *Crain's*

³¹ "Redevelopment, Not Violence," *SPNF News*, June 19, 1976 special edition; Letter to editor from Paul Adam, *SWNH*, April 3, 1976.

Chicago Business noted that while most of the city's eighteen largest retail centers experienced an increase in sales between 1972 and 1977, 63rd Street was only one of two to record a decline. Likewise, a consulting firm hired by the city projected that sales on 63rd Street would fall from \$65 million to \$40 million if no actions were taken to revitalize the corridor. SPNF leaders feared that the street's creeping blight would spread to the still well-maintained bungalows and deter younger families from making the Southwest Side their home.³²

The federation unveiled their first comprehensive redevelopment plan for 63rd Street and surrounding residential blocks in 1975, proposing the construction of an "ethnic village" with a Lithuanian theatre, Polish museum, and restaurants offering German, Bohemian, and Italian cuisine. Citing Prairie Shores, Lake Meadows, Carl Sandburg Village, and the University of Chicago as positive models, they called for the demolition of more than 1,200 single family homes between Western Avenue and Bell Avenue in Marquette Park—the only part of Chicago Lawn which housed black residents. The plan outlined the creation of an "economic buffer zone...to halt the creeping neighborhood change from extending its blight and destruction into the Southwest Side" comprised of middle-class townhouses, condominiums, and apartments "priced out of the range of lower-income people" to replace the razed housing.³³ Keck also said

³² *Crain's Chicago Business*, July 26, 1982, 17; Melaniphy and Associates, Inc., "Economic Analysis: 63rd-Western Business District, Chicago, IL," 10, SPNF Records, Box 29 Folder 4, CHM. Details of the SPNF survey found in Patrick Barry, "Back to Business," *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 2, 1983.

³³ "A Capsule Account of the Southwest Federation's Dramatic Redevelopment Program," ca. 1975-1976, SPNF Records, Box 29 Folder 25; Bernardo Esqueda and William Currie, "'We Helped Build Talman,' Neighbors Remind in Plea," *Chicago Tribune*, June 20, 1976; Fred Orehek, "S.W. Group Asks Redlining Aid," *Chicago Tribune*, June 18, 1976. The exact inspiration for the ethnic village plan is unclear due to the incomplete nature of SPNF records during the 1970s. Keck suggested that the ethnic village idea was first floated as a sarcastic remark by a Talman official, which the federation then decided to make into a reality, both to revitalize 63rd Street and as a way to mock Talman. The federation also likely were influenced by the renewed interest in ethnic neighborhoods and culture during the 1960s and 1970s, as Greektown and Andersonville became dining and shopping destinations. The Southwest Side already caught onto this trend prior to 1975, with the creation of the Balzekas Museum of

the SPNF saw their plan as a way to skewer liberal elitism. If wealthier enclaves such as Hyde Park and the Gold Coast erected buffer zones in the name of conservation, so too could Chicago Lawn. Still, few outside of the SPNF shared this sentiment. The 1975 ethnic village attracted major criticism from civil rights groups outside of the Southwest Side as racist and limited support from other organizations and community leaders living within. The national housing director of People United to Save Humanity (PUSH), William Thurston, called the project “an attempt to create an apartheid society on the Southwest Side.”³⁴ Ed Vondrak, editor of the *Southwest News-Herald*, although sidestepping the question of racism, rejected it on practical grounds. Vondrak argued that purchasing and levelling so many homes far exceeded the federation’s \$24 million projected budget.³⁵

The federation expected the eight savings and loans they targeted for greenlining, especially Talman, to pay for their redevelopment proposal. The federation argued in a press release that Talman and other institutions needed to spend more money on the Southwest Side to prove they had a stake in the area’s future. The federation foresaw a swift death for their neighborhoods unless Talman “abandons its policy of neighborhood disinvestment and makes a substantive commitment to neighborhood redevelopment.”³⁶ Federation leaders then announced the largest demonstration in their organization’s young history: Talman’s “D-Day” (Decision

Lithuanian Culture in 1966. See Keck interview; Jacobson, *Roots Too*; Mary Daniels, “Greektown: A Bit of the Past with a Great Deal of Repast,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 15, 1975; John R. Thomson, “An Offnight, Swedish Style,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 28, 1971; “Leif Ericson Day Parade Slated for Andersonville,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 30, 1971; Meg O’Connor, “Andersonville Finds a King Looks Just Like Any Man,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 19, 1976; “Balzekas Museum Will Feature Armor,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 5, 1966.

³⁴ Stanley Ziemba, “Marquette Plan is Racist: PUSH Aide,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 22, 1976; Interview with Jim Keck.

³⁵ “Unrealistic Proposals,” *Southwest News-Herald*, December 4, 1975.

³⁶ Untitled press release, 1976, SPNF Records Box 29 Folder 25, CHM.

Day), on June 19, 1976. That Saturday morning, over 2,000 homeowners in the federation carrying signs which said “We’re Here to Protect Our Homes” paraded in an orderly column from a school playground to Talman’s headquarters. They personally held the savings and loan officials accountable for the rejuvenation of the Southwest Side. Hubert Connolly, then the chairman of the SPNF and head of its redlining committee, boasted “we are also confident that with such an unprecedented demonstration of remarkable concern by local residents for future Southwest side stability and growth, Talman will choose to become an invaluable ally in pursuing implementation of this vital redevelopment program.”³⁷

The march also became a vehicle for the federation to challenge common portrayals of their white ethnic communities as bastions of ignorance, bigotry, and racial disorder. Following a spike of Nazi-instigated violence earlier that month, the federation gave their march an official theme: “Redevelopment, Not Violence.” The federation noted that its march proceeded peacefully and without incident, stating “no community organization in the country has ever staged such a disciplined, well-organized demonstration of pride and determination.” Yet its members drolly observed that the media only covered the destructive actions of a small band of Nazis instead of the thousands of residents who expressed their power through non-violent, democratic means.³⁸

“D-Day” represented an important moment in the federation’s growth as the leading community organization on the Southwest Side. Nevertheless, they failed to gain any support

³⁷ “Decision-Day for Talman, Saturday Morning, June 19th,” *SPNF News*, June 19, 1976 Special Edition; “8 Pastors Endorse Redevelopment Idea,” *SWNH*, June 3, 1976; Letter to Editor from Paul Adams, *SWNH*, June 3, 1976. Connolly even claimed the march signified the “largest group of Southwest Side representatives ever assembled in one meeting spot.” See “Expect Thousands to March on Talman Sat.,” *SWNH*, June 17, 1976.

³⁸ “Two Marches Compared: One Constructive, One Destructive,” *SPNF News*, July-August 1976.

from Talman and other savings and loan associations for redevelopment. Talman's president, Dimitry Wanda, did not show up to the office that day to prevent the marchers from winning concessions from him. Talman's vice-president of communication instead issued a statement after the march expressing support for the federation's broad goal of stability but denounced the ethnic village as unfeasible, illegal, and immoral. Talman officials also refuted claims of disinvestment by pointing to their contributions as a founding member of the Greater Southwest Development Corporation (GSDC), and they suggested that body handle all redevelopment issues on the Southwest Side. Jim Capraro, by this time the executive director of the GSDC, reflected upon his personal objections to the SPNF's plan. "Yeah, ok, good for you, you got a lot of people out. It doesn't mean you're right," Capraro said, "if you're going to get a lot of people out, then the people who are in the lead, including the staff, and the people who are upfront, you have a moral responsibility to actually be ethical."³⁹

Jean Mayer, at that time a co-chairman of the SPNF, excoriated such sentiments as a ploy to undercut homeowners' agency. Mayer emerged as one of the most promising "indigenous leaders" that Alinsky organizers such as Keck identified as the future heads of the groups they founded. Her increasing visibility proved timely: Keck left the federation shortly after the battle against Talman (although he returned as a special consultant in 1982). The leader of the Catholic women's council at St. Turibius, she participated in the federation's incipient anti-solicitation drive in 1971 after feeling disappointed with the SCC's efforts. Her friendship with the Rev. Albin Cicora, an activist priest at her parish, early SPNF leader, and the future president of the Citizens Action Program, also drew her into the federation. An art enthusiast, Mayer frequently

³⁹ Capraro interview.

involved herself in community theater and volunteered at several museums in Chicago. Her hobbies paid dividends. Keck immediately noted she possessed charisma and a gift for public speaking. Like Keck, Mayer rejected the notion that racism underwrote everything she or the federation did. As she explained in a 1993 interview with the *Chicago Sun-Times*, she never minded integration, “but people shouldn’t have other people telling them how to live.” She said her father, a Chicago Transit Authority streetcar and bus driver along the State Street route, befriended both blacks and whites, which made her “no really anti-anything.” She did not deny that racists lived on the Southwest Side, but she believed this was true of virtually every part of the United States. She also decried “liberals” for “putting blame on the neighborhoods” as an explanation for the city’s racial tensions.⁴⁰

Mayer found the position of Talman and the GSDC unconvincing. More importantly, the buffer zone plan drove a wedge between the federation and the development corporation. Other GSDC officials refused to back the federation’s plan for the same reasons given by two of its major backers, Talman and Vondrak, stating they preferred “results” to “headlines.”⁴¹ Likewise, the strategy of the GSDC in its early years under Capraro emphasized small-scale, easily achieved projects over complex enterprises.⁴² Although Capraro’s ideas bore considerable fruit in the long run, the federation interpreted this caution as proof that Talman and other savings and loans only created the GSDC to mask nefarious deeds. They also did not trust Capraro, viewing

⁴⁰ *Chicago Sun-Times*, “The Great Divide: A Special Report,” 1993, 11; Keck interview.

⁴¹ “SW Development Corporation Denies Federation Link,” *SWNH*, June 17, 1976.

⁴² Patricia Szymczak, “Talman Rejects Parish Federation’s Demands,” *SWNH*, June 24, 1976; “Urge Waner Meeting on FHA Proposal,” *SWNH*, February 5, 1976; “Federation Asks Support of Homes Plan,” *SWNH*, March 18, 1976; Stanley Ziemba, “Group Tells Plan to Stabilize Marquette Park,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 26, 1976.

him as a sellout for the neighborhood's financial interests and a lackey for Talman.⁴³ Mayer and other federation spokespersons claimed that the GSDC programs only paid lip service to stability and served as a "public admission by certain financial institutions that they have been systematically redlining our neighborhoods for years."⁴⁴ Moreover, the ties the GSDC possessed to the increasingly marginalized SCC—and the fact that one of their most extrusive critics, Vondrak, supported the creation of both—served as further proof to federation leaders that only they understood the true will of the residents. The question over who controlled development on the Southwest Side, the homeowners or financial institutions, caused the SPNF to view the GSDC as a chief opponent for years to come.⁴⁵

Finding political aid proved equally frustrating. Unable to secure the backing of Talman, the GSDC, and other financial institutions for redevelopment, the federation turned to the powerful Mayor Richard J. Daley for support. No enemy of urban renewal, Daley listened to federation leaders make a pitch for their buffer zone in August 1976. While the presentation sufficiently enchanted the mayor to make a vague promise to find the "ultimate solution" for the Southwest Side, his death four months later precluded any substantial help from city hall. Daley's successor, Michael Bilandic, vocally pledged support for the redevelopment of 63rd Street but failed to deliver even modest improvements: a mile-long street beautification program

⁴³ Keck interview. The federation's distrust of Capraro and the GSDC persisted well into the 1980s. See, SPNF Records,

⁴⁴ "Federation Raps GSDC's 9-point plan," *SWNH*, July 1, 1976.

⁴⁵ For more examples of ties between SCC and GSDC, see "SCC Reviews Efforts for First Half of '76," *SWNH*, November 4, 1976. Even as early as 1975 the federation wrote scathing letters to Vondrak about his coverage of the group's activities: "As has been your practice in past editorial onslaughts directed against the programs and integrity of the Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation, you have failed to determine our side of the story before going to press with your most recent disparaging commentary." See letter from Carol Smith on behalf of the Redevelopment Committee to Ed Vondrak, December 26, 1975, SPNF Records, Box 32 Folder 23, CHM.

only rehabilitated a single block before stopping without explanation. Machine inaction, combined with some instability among key federation staff members, killed the ethnic village in 1978.⁴⁶

The election of Chicago's first woman mayor, Jane Byrne, also did not offer much hope to the federation and Southwest Side homeowners. In spite of her machine ties as the former Daley-appointed head of the Department of Consumer Affairs, Byrne campaigned as a reformer who promised to devote greater resources to the city's outlying white and black neighborhoods. Unsurprisingly, her platform proved illusory, and she wasted little time in forging alliances with prominent Daley supporters. For example, Charles Swibel, one of Daley's top former advisers and the chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority known as "Flophouse Charlie" and "The Prince of Darkness" for his gross mismanagement of the agency and portfolio of slum properties, maintained a place of equal (if not greater) prominence under Byrne. She echoed past Chicago mayors by issuing generous no-bid contracts to major campaign donors.⁴⁷

Byrne also failed to provide the new, effective Department of Neighborhoods that one reporter called "the center of Mayor Byrne's grand design for revitalizing Chicago at the

⁴⁶ Barbara Reynolds and Elaine Markoutsas, "Daley Pledges Ultimate Marquette Park Solution," *Chicago Tribune*, August 3, 1976; Jean Mayer, "The Role of the City of Chicago," SPNF Records, Box 30 Folder 7, CHM; "Commercial Redevelopment: Reversing Neighborhood Decline Before It's Too Late," SPNF Records Box 30 Folder 7; "Bilandic Tells Plans for Redevelopment of Area," *SWNH*, March 24, 1977; Harry Golden Jr., "Plan Business Revival on 63rd, 12 other Areas," *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 1, 1977. The "instability" refers to the executive director of the federation in the late 1970s, Phil Mix, who irked many political and community figures and squandered grant money before leaving the SPNF to serve as Mayor Jane Byrne's "liaison" to community organizations. See Ray Hanania, "Mayor Ignored Mix Critics," *Southtown Economist*, May 11, 1980.

⁴⁷ Brian J. Kelly, "Swibel Takes His Lumps in Center of it All," *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 13, 1981. William Mullen, "Portrait of a Power Broker," *Chicago Tribune*, April 11, 1982. Mullen noted that Swibel became the *de facto* head of the Chicago Transit Authority and Chicago Public Library system under Byrne, in addition to his usual duties as chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority. Byrne's coziness with Swibel also compelled her campaign chief to resign from her administration in disgust.

community level.”⁴⁸ While she did create this department, it quickly became a major disappointment.⁴⁹ Two young, talented energetic leaders of the Department of Neighborhoods left their posts to perform jobs in other city agencies for Byrne, leaving her “grand design” in the hands of an obscure neophyte, Harry Sikorski. Sikorski’s previous jobs as a public relations director for a rug company and manager for Ford City Mall did not imbue him with the skills needed to run a major city department; he was, however, a close friend of Byrne’s husband. The department soon devolved into an expensive, redundant complaint line unable to address simple quality of life issues. Instead, Byrne’s administration poured nearly three quarters of all economic development money into downtown. The federation organized a slide show presentation in 1981 to recount all of Byrne’s failures in their neighborhoods, declaring “When Jane Byrne ran for election in 1979, she committed herself to revitalizing Chicago’s neighborhoods. Yet here, on the Southwest Side, when the city could easily be making vast improvements, we find ourselves faced with more problems than ever. What is the city doing for us?”⁵⁰

Unable to attract local private capital or any meaningful political help from the first two mayors to succeed Daley, the federation tackled the growing vacancy problem on 63rd Street through their own rehabilitation program they called the “Dirty Dozen Campaign.” The federation took the owners of the twelve most dilapidated, dangerous commercial properties to

⁴⁸ Peggy Constantine, “There Goes the Neighborhood,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 1, 1981.

⁴⁹ Thomas Burton, “Byrne Donor Reaps Business,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 24, 1982; Paul McGrath, “Who is Ray Hanania and why is Everybody Always Yelling at Him?” *Chicago Magazine* (November 1979).

⁵⁰ Rivlin, 46; 1981 Slideshow Script, SPNF Records, Box 4 Folder 22, CHM; 1982 Redevelopment Campaign Memorandum, SPNF Records, Box 4 Folder 5, CHM; Jacqueline Thomas, “‘Listening’ Looms as Top Role of Neighborhoods Dept.,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 31, 1979.

housing court and either saw the buildings improved or demolished by the city. Although fixing the “Dirty Dozen” improved the streetscape, federation leaders maintained it only underscored the need for more comprehensive redevelopment.⁵¹ Fortunately for them, a seismic shift in the city’s political landscape resurrected the ethnic village plan.

Byrne’s vengeful treatment of political opponents and her failure to connect with ordinary neighborhoods, black and white alike, left her vulnerable in the 1983 Democratic mayoral primary. Efforts by Byrne to squash the political ambitions of the son of the late mayor and the Cook County State’s Attorney, Richard M. Daley, turned him into a leading contestant to unseat her. The resulting factional split among white Democrats opened the door for the city’s first ever viable African-American mayoral candidate, Harold Washington, to win the primary. Minority voters, typically resigned to supporting the designated candidate of the white-led political machine, previously ignored Washington during his failed bid to unseat Bilandic in a 1977 special election. The lack of a white consensus in 1982, however, now gave black and Latino votes unprecedented influence. While early polls placed Washington at a distant third to Byrne and Richard M. Daley, his numbers improved dramatically as black voters with Latino support rallied around the chance to elect one of their own.⁵²

⁵¹ Memorandum on Redevelopment, 1983, SPNF Records, Box 4 Folder 5.

⁵² *Business Week*; Gary Rivlin, *Fire on the Prairie: Harold Washington, Chicago Politics, and the Roots of the Obama Presidency*, Revised Edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 50-82; Alton Miller, *Harold Washington: The Mayor, the Man* (Chicago: Bonus Books, 1989); Bill Granger, “Why Jane Byrne Jumped Back into the Race,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 21, 1983. Byrne’s broke promises to black neighborhoods as readily as to white ones, failing to appoint enough minorities into important administrative positions and often replacing ones which already existed with whites. Her loyalty to Swibel and several other political blunders led to a boycott of Chicagofest, the precursor to the Taste of Chicago, by many black leaders in the city and famous black musicians such as Stevie Wonder.

Understanding that Byrne now needed friends in areas she previously scorned, Mayer and other federation leaders made a vigorous push for concessions from city hall several months before the March 1983 primary. The federation demanded that Byrne provide city funds for the study of an ethnic village redevelopment plan by “a firm of national repute,” the removal of two “inappropriately chosen” scattered site CHA apartment buildings in Chicago Lawn, and a new library for the West Lawn neighborhood.⁵³ The city’s refusal to build any scattered site housing (and consequently virtually no new public housing at all) under Mayors Richard J. Daley and Michael Bilandic temporarily ended the outrageous protests of the racially conservative groups such as the Common Counsel and an anti-CHA legal fund they established in the 1970s. Yet Byrne’s CHA administrators inadvertently reignited the public housing controversy on the Southwest Side when they purchased two multi-family dwellings at Richmond Avenue and Rockwell Avenue in Chicago Lawn. No champion of public housing or its tenants, the primary motivation behind Byrne’s agreement to construct 454 scattered site units citywide was the promise of \$100 million from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)⁵⁴

Upon learning of the site acquisition, the federation immediately pressured the CHA to sell the sites to private developers, arguing that their location so close to the Western Avenue racial boundary gave ammunition to panic peddlers. Unlike the Common Counsel, however, the federation refused to frame its opposition as a fight against “forced integration” or the civil rights movement. Federation leaders instead claimed Judge Austin’s directives for implementing the

⁵³ “Byrne Pledges CHA Solution,” *SPNF News*, August 1982.

⁵⁴ “The Mayor and the CHA Dilemma,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 31, 1981; Stanley Ziemba, “Meeting Set to Spur Public Housing Plan,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 13, 1981.

Gautreaux decision now made Chicago Lawn exempt from scattered site housing. Austin instructed the CHA to not place any scattered site units within a mile of any “periphery” area to avoid triggering white flight—both the Richmond and Rockwell sites violated this stipulation. Nonetheless, Andrew Mooney, the executive director of the CHA, refused to take the sites off the new scattered site housing list. Even a picket of 150 federation members outside of Byrne’s home failed to sway the mayor and the CHA.⁵⁵

The lack of progress on scattered site housing by the early 1980s caused its foremost proponent to forsake certain elements of Austin’s initial decree in order to get any new units built. Alexander Polikoff, the lead American Civil Liberties (ACLU) attorney who won the *Gautreaux* decision and de facto overseer of the scattered site program given the profound ambivalence of Chicago’s mayors, permitted the CHA to select sites in “peripheral” areas initially excluded to make cooperation more palpable to Byrne and other key political figures. Allowing the acquisition of the Richmond and Rockwell sites spared eligible areas such as Hegewisch on the Southeast Side, home of the powerful 10th Ward Alderman Edward “Fast Eddie” Vrdolyak (often colloquially referred to as Byrne’s “co-mayor”) and Sauganash, Byrne’s home neighborhood. Federation supporters bitterly noted that their aldermen lacked this level of clout and castigated Polikoff as an elitist suburban lawyer trying to safeguard his legacy by sacrificing vulnerable communities in a bargain with a corrupt political establishment.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ March 24, 1982 SPNF Press Release, SPNF Records, Box 26 Folder 8, CHM; Chronology of Events in the C.H.A. Issue on the Southwest Side, SPNF Records, Box 26 Folder 8, CHM.

⁵⁶ Letter from Jim Keck to Vernon Jarrett, November 2, 1981, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 11, CHM; Jim Keck Guest Editorial, *Chicago Sun-Times*; Anti-Polikoff Flier, 1983, SPNF Records Box Folder, CHM. Polikoff had critics outside of the Southwest Side, too, most notably Loyola urban policy professor J.S. Fuerst. See Jim Fuerst, “Let’s Get Public Housing Going Again,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 5, 1979; Flora Johnson, *Chicago Lawyer Magazine*, July 1983, SPNF Records, Box 26 Folder 6.

The selection of the Richmond and Rockwell sites in part resulted from community organizations on the Southwest Side becoming victims of their own success. Polikoff cited the area's ability to organize and stabilize, pointing to the creation of the GSDC as the most promising example. He also indirectly credited the SCC for its work in the Bell-Oakley-Claremont area and the federation for its pressure tactics on realtors and savings and loans, arguing that no deterioration spread west of Western Avenue. Although the sites did lay within the old peripheral area, the lack of major racial change beyond that borderline proved to him that Chicago Lawn no longer needed special protection from CHA housing.⁵⁷ Keck, seeking greater press coverage for the compromise between Polikoff and Byrne, wrote a letter to the most well-known political columnist in the city, Mike Royko:

I don't need to tell you how much flak Polikoff has endured of the years from blacks and whites alike. But then, Alex knew better than anyone what was good for the city...as far as I'm concerned, he is a fraud, he is a self-righteous and vindictive autocrat as well. That guy has had it in for Marquette Park since the King marches of 1966. He is bound and determined to stick it to the severely troubled Marquette Park community, regardless of the fact that Marquette Park is not the same community it was seventeen years ago. Jesus, Mike, it's a changing neighborhood now hanging on for dear life! Like many others, I didn't dedicate my life's work to organizing blacks and whites of our city for justice and understanding, so that a jerk like Polikoff, or Byrne for that matter, could run roughshod over good, decent people just to satisfy their own cynical personal and political ends.⁵⁸

Unsurprisingly, the entrance of Richard M. Daley and Washington into the primary now made Byrne far more interested in the federation's concerns about the sites. The mayor called Mayer to set up a meeting with thirty delegates from the federation in September 1982 and promised to "resolve" the situation. The federation also forced the mayor to agree on a strategy

⁵⁷ Johnson, SPNF Records, Box 26 Folder 6.

⁵⁸ Letter from Jim Keck to Mike Royko, February 7, 1983, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 11, CHM. After several years away from the federation, Keck returned in the early 1980s to serve as a consultant. He also became another spokesperson for the organization at this time, a role he rarely took on during the 1970s.

for improving 63rd Street. Pleased by this development, although hardly charmed, one federation officer told the press that “we all know the political reality of election years and want to have everything settled as soon as possible.”⁵⁹ Byrne’s vague promises still failed to net results, so federation leaders announced a “Voter Education Drive” to teach Southwest Siders “exactly how little you [Byrne] are doing.” This threat proved more effective. On December 2, 1982, Byrne and several department heads made two pledges to the federation: first, the CHA would sell the two scattered housing sites back to the private market; second, the city would hire an urban planning firm to conduct a comprehensive study of 63rd Street and assess the feasibility of the ethnic village.⁶⁰

Byrne proved incapable of upholding these pledges. Within a month, Polikoff filed an injunction to prevent the CHA from selling the sites. The city did earmark money for a 63rd street study, inviting three firms to make bids for a contract. The federation made their preference clear to Byrne: the American City Corporation (ACC), a Maryland-based urban development group with a national reputation for creating “destination” centers in Milwaukee, Boston, and numerous other cities. The ACC informed the federation they required \$150,000 for their services, which the SPNF expected the city to provide. After all, the city already entered negotiations with the ACC for the redevelopment of Navy Pier into a commercial and tourist magnet, and the federation insisted that 63rd Street deserved the same elite professionalism as the lakefront. The Department of Economic Development, however, incensed federation members after announcing the award of a \$20,000 contract to Trkla, Pettigrew, Allen & Payne (TPAP), a business with

⁵⁹ “Byrne Pledges to Solve Local CHA Controversy,” *SWNH*, September 9, 1982.

⁶⁰ “Byrne Bows to Voter Ed Drive,” *SPNF News*, December 1982; “Will Mayor Byrne Make a Commitment to the Future of Our Community” Flier, SPNF Records, Box Folder, CHM.

close personal ties to Byrne.⁶¹ Mayer wrote a seething letter to the mayor, claiming Byrne's mismanaged CHA caused Polikoff's suit to block the sale of the Richmond and Rockwell sites. She further blamed Byrne for failing to defend the federation after a CHA board member claimed the removal of the two sites on the Southwest Side stemmed from residents' racism. Mayer also voiced her displeasure at the selection of TPAP, arguing that Byrne's pet firm lacked the ambition or ability to "develop innovative strategies for revitalization such as the Ethnic Village Concept." Mayer concluded her letter by reminding the mayor that Southwest Side residents "cannot be bought off with token gestures." The federation newspaper also printed cartoons of Byrne as a wooden puppet with a growing nose dubbed "Byrneocchio" for her deceptions.⁶²

The federation offered Byrne one final chance to redeem herself. They invited the mayor to a Democratic candidates' forum on January 30, 1983. Mayer explained that the event meant "the Southwest Side will not have to view the candidates through the usual campaign rhetoric and slick commercials. They will have to respond to the specific concerns of our community." A moderator would ask each candidate to explain their willingness to remove scattered site housing from Chicago Lawn, to hire the American City Corporation to redevelop 63rd Street, and to construct a new library in West Lawn. All three candidates initially agreed to appear; Byrne, however, reneged on her commitment only a few days before the forum. This proved to be the

⁶¹ Letter from Suhail al Chalabi, Commissioner of Economic Development, to Jean Mayer, December 17, 1982, SPNF Records, Box 30 Folder 4, CHM; Letter from Jean Mayer to Jane Byrne, December 17, 1982, SPNF Records, Box 30 Folder 4, CHM.

⁶² Letter from Jean Mayer to Jane Byrne, January 6, 1983, SPNF Records, Box 26 Folder 6, CHM; "63rd Street Plan Denied" and "Byrne Spoils Sale of Local CHA Sites," *SPNF News*, January 1983, CHM; "It's Time to Stand Up and Be Counted," *SPNF News*, January 1983, CHM.

last straw for the federation. The next issue of their newspaper summarized her tenure in office with a caption under her photograph that stated “She Leaves Behind Her a Trail of Broken Promises.”⁶³

More than 1,200 homeowners packed the hall of St. Gall church to hear the two challengers, Daley and Washington. The federation made it clear who the Southwest Side favored. Its newspaper reported that “Daley offered unequivocal support for the community’s positions on all three critical issues” to “sustained applause.” Washington, on the other hand, refused to involve himself in the CHA controversy and only promised to help 63rd Street through citywide development plans. He nonetheless received “cordial applause” in spite of “his openly negative remarks.”⁶⁴ The federation showed an unprecedented amount of interest in the outcome of this primary; previous mayoral contests never merited a “candidates’ forum” nor the editorializing which followed. Although officially non-partisan and apolitical, the effusive praise offered to Richard M. Daley in *SPNF News* editorials served as an endorsement in all but name. The paper’s editors praised the state’s attorney for his refusal to not “tell us what was right for our neighborhood, but to listen to and recognize our legitimate concerns.” The editors then accused Washington of racial divisiveness, suggesting he attended to merely “speak through the television cameras to another group of people in this city whom he thought would be impressed that he could go to ‘Marquette Park’ and tell people to ‘put down their swords.’”⁶⁵

⁶³ *SPNF News*, February 1983, CHM.

⁶⁴ “Daley Pledges Action; Washington Says ‘No,’; Byrne Afraid to Come,” *SPNF News*, February 1983.

⁶⁵ “Let the Record Speak When We Go to the Polls,” *SPNF News*, February 1983.

The federation's embrace of Daley and dismissal of Washington previewed the enormous racial gulfs which defined the 1983 election. Internal polling done by Vrdolyak—the effective campaign manager for Byrne—revealed Daley to be the leader only a month before the Democratic primary. Understanding that both a Daley or Washington victory heralded an end to the beneficial relationship and power he cultivated under the incumbent, Vrdolyak directed Byrne's campaign to make openly racist appeals to unite the white vote (a plurality in the city) behind his candidate.⁶⁶ Polish and Lithuanian-speaking precinct captains on the Northwest and Southwest sides told voters that “a vote for Daley is a vote for Washington.” Former governor Richard Ogilvie also wrote letters delivered to white wards on Byrne's behalf describing the election as a “racial thing” between the incumbent and Washington. These tactics allowed Washington to both denounce Byrne for race baiting, alienate white liberals even further from the two establishment candidates, and most importantly catalyze massive black voter turnout. In the end, Vrdolyak's shameful tactics only split the white vote as many residents in white ethnic neighborhoods remained loyal to Daley.⁶⁷

The refusal of the SPNF to listen to Vrdolyak's overtures partially accounted for the division in the white vote. Keck recalled that hundreds of federation members canvassed the street “putting Byrne down and building Daley up,” much to the consternation of the incumbent's campaign. Vrdolyak even called for a meeting to win the federation's support, only to be rebuffed once more. The lack of grassroots support on the Southwest Side proved costly. Washington won the February primary by a narrow margin over his two competitors. As Mayer

⁶⁶ Rivlin, 100.

⁶⁷ Bob Wiedrich, “Race-bating Gave Byrne the Hook,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 1, 1983; Raymond Hanania, “Madigan Gets Guards after Death Threats,” *Southtown Economist*, March 9, 1983

explained in a letter to federation members, “Thousands of Southwest Siders withstood the deceit, the racial scare tactics, and the personal intimidation and voted on the basis of the issues...Mayor Byrne and her ward committeemen have no one to blame for their defeat but themselves.”⁶⁸

Although Mayer proclaimed that the federation did not tolerate “race politics” and condemned Vrdolyak’s interference, the federation nonetheless supported the 10th Ward alderman’s emergency backup plan: the Republican challenger for mayor, Bernard Epton. The Democratic candidate typically crushed the Republican challenger in every mayoral election since the triumph of Anton Cermak in 1931, but Epton possessed a legitimate shot at bucking this trend thanks to the support of many machine politicians and white ethnic voters on the Northwest and Southwest Side. Epton’s campaign copied Byrne’s, making base racial appeals to consolidate the white vote split in the Democratic primary. An infamous ad exhorted voters to vote Epton “Before It’s Too Late,” implying a black mayor represented an apocalypse for the city.⁶⁹ The federation backed Epton in spite of his alliance with the same politicians they publicly rebuked. Epton secured ninety percent of the vote on the Southwest Side in the election, but this proved insufficient to overcome Washington’s commanding majorities of black, Latino, and liberal white voters. Washington became Chicago’s first black mayor, and the white members of his party who failed to defeat him in the election, led by Vrdolyak and Edward Burke, used their veto-proof majority in City Council to obstruct his agenda. Local and national media dubbed the

⁶⁸ Interview with Jim Keck, August 26, 2016; Letter from Jean Mayer to SPNF members, March 7, 1983, SPNF Records Box 28 Folder 7, CHM.

⁶⁹ Rivlin, 107-109; 115.

racially delineated stalemate as the “Council Wars,” a reference to the Manichean struggle depicted in a recent blockbuster movie trilogy, *Star Wars*.⁷⁰

The near-total opposition of Southwest Side residents to Washington caused local and national media to ferret out what motivated this resistance. Racism was the common explanation. National magazines such as *People* and *Newsweek* reported that crowds of white ethnic residents outside of St. Pascal’s Church in Portage Park on the Northwest Side “seethed with racial rage” when Washington made a campaign stop there. The actions of the federation—in particular their opposition to the CHA—attracted special attention after such a racially polarized election.⁷¹ The editorial board at the *Chicago Tribune* assigned some blame to the SPNF. The editors opined the federation only opposed the CHA sites because “race is at the heart of it, and everyone knows it” and dismissed their blockbusting fears as “absurd.” Ben Joravsky and Jorge Casuso, writing on behalf of the *Chicago Reporter*, made a similar point less forcefully a year after Washington’s election. They argued that the white ethnics they interviewed on the Southwest Side expressed near unanimous disapproval to Washington, yet most admitted they had no proof that the mayor actively undermined their neighborhoods. At least some of their disgruntlement came from the mayor’s skin color and nothing more. Assessments of racism also came from within the Southwest Side, particularly from representatives of the community organization now living in the federation’s shadow, the Southwest Community Congress. Mary Ceil McManus wrote a letter to the pastor of St. Clare’s, a SPNF affiliate, asking him to pressure the federation into supporting scattered site housing. McManus noted that “there is more than one reason to reject

⁷⁰ April 2, 1983 Press Release, SPNF Records, Box 28 Folder 2, CHM; Letter from Bernard Epton to Jean Mayer, March 30, 1983, SPNF Records, Box 28 Folder, 2 CHM.

⁷¹ Myron Kuropas, “City Ethnics Getting a Bum Rap,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 19, 1983.

CHA housing, but racism is certainly one of them.” She professed to know racism whenever she saw it, citing her own racism and prejudice against “all who are not of my religious, ethnic, and socio-economic background” as expertise. Nonetheless, she contrasted herself to the federation by pointing out that she at least engaged in “constant effort to overcome this.”⁷²

Federation leaders rejected these explanations and said legitimate apprehensions spurred their distaste for Washington. Kathleen Augustine, a vice-chairman in the SPMF, wrote a guest editorial in the *Tribune* to answer the charges of racism levied by the editorial board. She argued that the *Tribune* still viewed Chicago Lawn through the prism of 1966. The editors “chose the easy course by dismissing our concerns and just efforts as racist,” Augustine explained, “since the mid-‘60s, the media have hung on blindly to Marquette Park as a convenient symbol of white racism.” She reminded the editors that the federation did not imagine problems such as redlining, crime, and disinvestment.⁷³ A letter Augustine personally wrote to Washington also offers more insight into the federation’s opposition to the mayor. She argued that Washington’s willingness to advertise himself as the champion of blacks, Hispanics, and poor Appalachian whites made Southwest Siders feel excluded. She also alleged that Washington’s staff and allies, particularly the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Renault Robinson (a CHA board member), alarmed federation members with their acrimonious rhetoric. Augustine cited Jackson’s proclamation that Washington’s victory meant “it’s our turn” implied white ethnics had no place in the new administration. She concluded by stating that contrary to the opinion of his staff, the federation

⁷² “CHA and Marquette Park,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 13, 1983; Ben Joravsky and Jorge Casuso, *Chicago Reporter*, February 1984; Letter from Mary Ceil McManus to Rev. James Friedel, January 17, 1983, SPMF Records Box 4 Folder 5.

⁷³ Kathleen Augustine, “Marquette Park Needs Friends,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 10, 1983

in the past triumphed over “hatemongers” such as the Nazis and John Birch supporters by attacking the institutional forces of neighborhood decline, not African Americans.⁷⁴

Keck stated that Washington’s campaign staff harmed his chances of gaining any meaningful support on the Southwest Side through poor tactical decisions. He recalled that the candidates’ forum initially only invited Byrne and Daley, believing Washington to be a longshot choice. Washington’s campaign manager, Al Raby, contacted the federation and insisted his candidate get a place on the stage. The federation agreed but first asked for a meeting with Raby to brief him on the issues discussed and “hit Washington’s camp we’re against Byrne.” The meeting, however, went poorly. Raby intimidated the federation delegation and threatened to “come any way we want to.”⁷⁵ This frightened federation leadership, who had no idea what Washington planned to say. They even instructed the audience to not cheer or boo Washington no matter what he said. Raby apparently instructed Washington to be aggressive, and Keck remembered the mayor threatened to withdraw municipal resources from the Southwest Side. Keck believed Raby wanted the federation to denounce Washington on the spot. Such spectacle would garner press headlines and further galvanize the black vote.

Keck also penned several editorials for local and metropolitan newspapers in defense of the federation’s reputation. He acknowledged that many on the Southwest Side might be “terrified and resentful” of the poor of all races, but most residents were willing to stay so long as they felt the mayor listened to them without asking “to pass the customary racist litmus test before he hears them out. Though it may be the fashion among liberals, such preconditions are

⁷⁴ Letter from Kathy Augustine to Harold Washington, February 11, 1983, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 11, CHM.

⁷⁵ Keck interview.

not only exasperating, they are extremely insulting to most people.”⁷⁶ Keck found all the accusations of racism against the organization he helped create absurd given his civil rights background and his previous marriage to a black woman.

Personal correspondence between Keck and several prominent city journalists and religious leaders revealed that federation leaders held some—if not equal—reservations about an Epton victory. As Keck explained to the Rev. John Jack Egan, now at the University of Notre Dame, neither Epton nor Washington understood the “fear and hopelessness” gripping the homeowners of the Southwest Side. The fact so many Democratic precinct workers “miraculously” converted into Epton devotees just to secure future patronage left the federation cynical about their neighborhoods’ fortunes improving no matter who won the election. Keck also offered a more favorable assessment of Washington in private than the federation did publicly. He acknowledged that Washington had the potential to grow into a good leader for the city, provided he learn to communicate with white ethnic groups outside of his established base.⁷⁷ Keck admitted he long respected Washington and loathed the prospect of fighting him, given the mayor’s previous state legislative track record on poverty legislation. Nonetheless, Washington’s hostile disposition at the candidates’ forum left the federation with no choice but to resist.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Jim Keck, Bob Gannett, and Mike Smith, “Advice for Washington,” *Southtown Economist*, May 6, 1983.

⁷⁷ Letter from Jim Keck to Father John J. Egan, March 26, 1983, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 11, CHM; Letter from Jim Keck to Father John J. Egan, April 11, 1983, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 11, CHM; Letter from Jim Keck to the *Chicago Tribune*, May 4, 1983, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 11, CHM.

⁷⁸ Interview with Jim Keck, August 26, 2016.

The federation's level of involvement and impact in the 1983 election was a testament to a productive first twelve years. The federation's popularity with residents compared to the SCC and the irrelevance of racially conservative civic associations made it the most powerful grassroots organization on the Southwest Side. They viewed themselves as an example of what regular people could accomplish through peaceful, legal means, as evidenced by their anti-solicitation and greenlining campaigns. Adhering firmly to the fundamentals of the Alinsky tradition, especially confrontational tactics, yielded tangible results.

A controversial reputation nevertheless accompanied SPNF's success. Many observers in the media interpreted such a large force of assertive, white ethnic Catholics who almost unanimously rejected the city's first black mayor as a purely racist phenomenon.⁷⁹ While many white ethnic voters on the Southwest Side (and similar parts of the city, such as the Northwest Side) no doubt dismissed Washington outright due to his race, the federation resented seeing all homeowners painted in such broad strokes. Both Mayer and Keck acknowledged prejudice existed among area residents. Nonetheless, they stressed that characterizations from the media (or Washington's campaign staff) did not apply to all of them. Keck noted that Mayer and many other federation leaders "were Catholic...they were not racists." Most believed they were "all God's children." He admitted, however, "when they were confronted with Jesse Jackson...they didn't know what the hell to say."⁸⁰ The federation's initial accomplishments made them well-positioned to confront the issues facing their neighborhoods in the 1980s, such as economic

⁷⁹ Monroe Anderson, *Chicago Tribune*, April 27, 1984.

⁸⁰ Interview with Jim Keck, August 26, 2016.

redevelopment, disinvestment, and the omnipresent threat of real estate abuses. The power they accumulated, however, caused the rest of the city to eye them with suspicion.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ETHNIC REVOLT AND RECONCILIATION

On the evening of March 31, 1981, Jean Mayer led seventy-five of her fellow Southwest Side homeowners in a silent prayer for the health of the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan. Earlier that afternoon, Reagan narrowly survived an assassination attempt. Echoing a national trend, the recently elected Reagan enjoyed tremendous popularity among blue-collar, white ethnic voters in Chicago who forsook their traditional Democratic loyalties to elect him. Once the prayer finished, Mayer, now the leader of the Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation (SPNF), directed the assembled residents to the real business of the night: holding the local Democratic alderman accountable to the redevelopment of struggling 63rd Street, the chief commercial artery of their neighborhoods. Mayer led the delegation to the alderman's office to demand an audience. The alderman previously refused to discuss potential improvements to the street with the federation, remarking "I will never meet with the Southwest Federation, I don't give a damn what you say." Yet he had nowhere to hide when the SPNF showed up at his doorstep. After hiding for an hour while federation members sang patriotic songs, the cowed alderman met with the SPNF and swiftly agreed to a five-point program to combat vacancies and prevent important retailers from closing their stores.

Mayer declared the victory an “exasperating project” but concluded “the Alderman is working for the community now.”¹

The battle with the alderman, although successful, reflected yet another frustrating impediment to the federation’s efforts to revitalize 63rd Street. A lack of consistent (or ambivalent) leadership at city hall following the death of Mayor Richard J. Daley stymied earlier redevelopment initiatives in the 1970s. Mayer and other SPNF leaders feared the decline of their “main street” foreshadowed the destruction of their homes and community. The push for comprehensive commercial redevelopment in the Chicago Lawn neighborhood represented the most recent effort by this community organization to maintain their area’s prosperity. They charged the city’s political establishment and financial powers for diverting crucial economic resources away from neighborhoods such as theirs in favor of downtown and the suburbs. Taking their cue from the resolute Mayer, members of the federation were prepared to apply heavy pressure to any politician or institution that failed to remedy this inequity.

Although ostensibly non-ideological and non-partisan, SPNF increasingly professed to safeguard an urban ethnic “way of life” steadily eroded by decades of white flight, suburbanization, and demographic shifts after the election of Harold Washington. By 1980, many SPNF members personally experienced the trauma wrought by blockbusting and redlining in other South Side neighborhoods. Places such as Gage Park and Chicago Lawn represented one of the few remaining working-class, white ethnic neighborhoods in Chicago. Although the African-American population of Gage Park and Chicago Lawn experienced only minimal growth

¹ *Southwest Federation News (SPNF)*, May 1981, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 9, CHM; Ben Joravsky and Jorge Casuso, “City Ethnic Charge Neglect Despite Mayoral Charm,” *Chicago Reporter* (February 1984), 1-2.

in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Southwest Side attracted a large influx of Hispanic and Arab residents.² Younger white ethnic families increasingly opted out of the Southwest Side (and the city entirely) in favor of suburban homes and schools to raise their children, leaving their parents and grandparents behind. Numerous surveys conducted by SPNF organizers in member parishes indicated that while most homeowners still enjoyed living on the Southwest Side, they believed they had no place in its future. Consequently, the federation's remedies for the Southwest Side's various ills made the white ethnicity of its members central. Federation leaders argued their initiatives preserved a special ethnic-American culture that incubated in Chicago's residential neighborhoods over the course of the twentieth century, yet now teetered on the precipice of total collapse.

In 1983, these fears morphed into hysteria following the election of Chicago's first African-American mayor, Harold Washington. Viewing a black mayoral administration as a death knell for working-class white neighborhoods, the federation, with Mayer as the principal spokesperson, coordinated an ethnic revolt against the new mayor through an unprecedented alliance with similar communities on the Northwest Side of Chicago. In the spring of 1984, the SPNF united with the Northwest Neighborhood Federation to create the Save Our Neighborhoods, Save Our City Coalition (SONSOC). The SONSOC transcended traditional spatial and ethno-parish identities to make white ethnic grievances city—and not merely neighborhood—issues. SONSOC supporters boldly proclaimed a “white ethnic agenda”: a series of demands to the mayor and Chicago City Council which included commercial redevelopment,

² Chicago Commission on Human Relations, “1987 Statistics on Racial Incidents, January Through December,” in SPNF Records, Box 19 Folder 11, CHM. The statistics included census data for Chicago Lawn from 1970, 1980, and 1985 (estimate).

a home equity assurance plan to guarantee property values in racially-changing neighborhoods, improved schools, and a reduction in crime.

Contemporary press coverage of the SONSOC largely categorized its proponents as racist based on the results of the 1983 election and the troubled history of civil rights on the Southwest Side. The media viewed combative nature of the SPNF and its leaders as symptomatic of deeper racial hatreds. In a city already deadlocked in formal political channels by a bloc of white aldermen who refused to pass any ordinances or programs supported by Washington, the revolt of grassroots white ethnic groups suggested the city's racial polarization had no end in sight. Certain historiographical accounts in the study of urban ethnics affirm this narrative. Proponents of the "white ethnic revival" model posit the reassertion of ethnic identity as a cultural means to maintaining white racial innocence in a post-civil rights era and a reflection of a conservative turn away from the old allegiances to the Democratic Party.³ Nonetheless, there are limitations to this point of view. True, many white ethnic Southwest Side residents supported Reagan, resented the Democratic Party for creating government programs they perceived as unfairly benefitting minorities, and feared racial change. Still, a study of the SPNF's successes and failures lends credence to some of the wider critiques of whiteness studies as a whole: such as the inability to delineate concrete social relations, obscuring the agency of its subjects, and a focus on regressive provincialism.⁴

³ Two works that demonstrate the dominant white ethnic revival narrative include Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: The White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1-11; 19-22; 177-205 and David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 3-10; 27-34, 238-244.

⁴ For examples of these critiques, see Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *The Journal of American History* 89 (June 2002): 154-173; Eric Arnesen, "Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (Fall 2001): 3-32.

Although initially oppositional to Washington and coded in racialized language, the “white ethnic agenda” articulated by SPNF leaders also provided opportunities for interracial cooperation with both the mayor and the increasing number of black and Latino homeowners on the Southwest Side. Some SPNF organizers possessed ties to the Chicago Freedom Movement, and the federation modeled a few of its programs off of successfully integrated communities such as Oak Park, Illinois. Racial prejudice among moderate and conservative Southwest Side homeowners certainly informed some of the SPNF proposals in the 1980s; this same prejudice, however, did not serve as the central organizing principle as it did for the segregationist civic associations, block clubs, and anti-bussing parent teacher associations of the 1960s. As an Alinsky-style organization, pragmatism underwrote every dramatic protest. Unlike conservative avatars of yesteryear such as Thomas Sutton or the Rev. Francis Lawlor, the SPNF demonstrated a capacity to reach across racial lines instead of merely drawing them. As one newspaper columnist observed, Mayer and the federation proved to “ethnic Chicago” that “if they scorn City Hall, they should still deal with it.”⁵ Conciliation initially took a backseat to defiance in the immediate months following Washington’s victory over Republican challenger Bernard Epton. The defeat of Epton, a candidate who won 90 percent of the vote on the Southwest Side, left many residents dejected. Under Mayer’s leadership, the SPNF wanted to revive confidence in both the future of their neighborhoods and organization.

The federation hired several new staff members to survey the attitudes of Chicago Lawn homeowners following the election. The surveyors went door to door to on blocks close to Western Avenue, the boundary between black and white residents on Chicago’s South Side, and

⁵ David Roeder, “Home Equity Plan a Coup for Local Groups,” *Southtown Economist*, June 28, 1987.

the responses they logged revealed the intimate anxieties of a changing neighborhood. Most of the white ethnic families believed their neighborhood was a nice place to live; they also felt it only had about five to ten “good years” left before an inevitable decline. Curiously, although the divide between white and black Chicago became a dominant theme of the mayoral election, not every homeowner interviewed expressed fears about African-Americans moving into the neighborhood. Some showed more concern about the other minorities who settled in Chicago Lawn after 1980: Arabs and Hispanics. Yet even here residents did not express universally hostile attitudes toward these new ethnic groups. One seven-year resident expressed a common sentiment by admitting she got along with her Mexican neighbors, and the Mexican homeowners interviewed believed they enjoyed a good relationship with the white families living on their block.⁶

The homeowner surveys reveal how residents perceived the federation and its effectiveness. The federation claimed to represent more than 100,000 Southwest Siders based on the territory covered by affiliate parishes, and its newspaper had a circulation of 20,000 readers. Yet the interviews suggest many homeowners remained ignorant of federation efforts. Some expressed outright hostility, with one man going so far as to dismiss its leaders as “full of shit.”⁷ The federation in turn used the surveys to identify those who might become useful and active members in the future. The candidates here included both older white ethnics—including those who expressed regressive positions on race—and Mexicans. The main qualification came not

⁶ Interview with Helen Wagner, SPNF Records, Box 1 Folder 18, CHM; Interview with Petra Aranda, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 1; Interview with Sandra Gonzales, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 1, CHM.

⁷ Interview with anonymous, SPNF Records, Box 11 Folder 4, CHM. The interviewer said the man refused to give his name and described him only as a “65+ year-old white person.”

from ideology but from an ability to articulate neighborhood problems and a willingness for taking them head on. Hence surveyors identified both a thirty-seven-year resident who lamented the “Spanish” moving in and complained that “Arabs here aren’t clean,” and a young Mexican mother who only lived in the neighborhood for a year, as promising recruits based on their enthusiasm.⁸

One of the greatest sources of ambivalence toward the SPNF’s posturing as guardians of white ethnic interests emanated from the members of the Southwest Side’s most visible ethnic community. The federation acknowledged facing difficulty in reaching out to the 39,000 Lithuanians who lived in or near the southeastern corner of Chicago Lawn. Unlike most other Southwest Side ethnics, the Lithuanians were mostly first-generation immigrants who established a rich, if somewhat insular, enclave of cultural institutions centered upon a four block stretch of 69th Street from the eastern edge of Marquette Park to Western Avenue. Here residents and shopkeepers conversed with each other in Lithuanian, read one of the several Lithuanian newspapers or magazines published nearby, or listened to opera performances in their native tongue. A Lithuanian Catholic Church (Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary) and hospital (Holy Cross) comprised a campus at the western end of the strip which addressed the spiritual and physical well-being of nearby residents. Visitors often remarked how many Chicagoans could travel abroad by merely trekking to the “Lithuanian Plaza” on 69th Street, a true ethnic village reminiscent of the immigrant communities which constituted the fabric of many urban neighborhoods prior to World War II.⁹

⁸ See Interview with Jesse Nova, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 2, CHM; Interview with Mrs. Anne Uhler, SPNF Records, Box 1 Folder 18, CHM.

⁹ “Lithuanian Dream of Freedom,” *Southtown Economist*, September 16, 1979.

Although Lithuanians in Chicago Lawn shared a similar desire to prevent neighborhood decline with SPNF members, they showed considerably less enthusiasm in working with the federation. SPNF organizers bemoaned their inability to grow their support among the Lithuanians in their territory, noting they largely looked to their own organizations and leaders for guidance on local issues. Of these, the Lithuanian Homeowners Association and its controversial long-term president, Juozas Bacevicius, cast the longest shadow. A federation organizer tasked with studying the Lithuanian community noted that Bacevicius' forceful personality and charisma commanded the attention and loyalty of many Southwest Side Lithuanians. Viewing the federation as a threat to the influence of his civic association, Bacevicius routinely steered his members to vote against joining or coordinating activities with the SPNF. In turn, federation leaders kept a wary eye on Bacevicius, comparing him to a fox in the henhouse. They noted the fact that an owner of a realty firm served as the head of a homeowners' group represented a major conflict of interest.¹⁰ Indeed, over a decade earlier the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) identified his business as one of the firms to practice racial steering during its tests of the Southwest Side real estate market in 1966. He espoused more conservative views than federation leaders, vocally and financially supporting openly segregationist demagogues such as the Rev. Father Lawlor in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Bacevicius' views or practices did not change over time. Eyewitnesses at an Epton election party informed the SPNF that he distributed business cards to those in attendance after news of Washington's victory, stating "You'll need this."¹¹ The federation picketed Bacevicius

¹⁰ "Power in the Lithuanian Community," SPNF Records, Box 4 Folder 20, CHM.

into signing an anti-solicitation agreement after this incident, and Mayer exposed his fear mongering to the entire city during a televised interview. Although successful in publicizing Bacevicius' misdeeds, the federation apparently convinced few Lithuanians of his unfitness to lead them. The federation's homeowner surveys in 1983 suggested he still possessed a firm grip over his supporters. One elderly Lithuanian interviewed refused to join the SPNF after adamantly maintaining that the community organization engineered Washington's victory in order to replace all the white homeowners with minorities.¹²

Acknowledging the community's grim mood, and in the case of Lithuanians, distrust for the SPNF, Jim Keck intimated to the Rev. John J. Egan, former director of the Archdiocese of Chicago's Office of Urban Affairs, that the federation planned to stage a "tax revolt" following the mayoral election regardless of the outcome.¹³ Although this never materialized, after the election the federation coordinated activities with a similar white working-class, Alinsky community organization on the Northwest Side—the Northwest Neighborhood Federation—to present a united ethnic front to the mayor. The Northwest Neighborhood Federation, as the name suggests, drew inspiration from its Southwest Side counterpart. Also, many of the Northwest Federation's lead organizers originally worked for the SPNF. Noting that Washington hoped to "heal the wounds" of Chicago, both federations asked for the mayor to light a "Candle of

¹¹ "People, Power, and Possible Issues in the Lithuanian Neighborhood of the Southwest Federation"; Letter to Ruta, SPNF Records, Box 10 Folder 14, CHM. The Lithuanian Homeowners contributed \$1,000 to the Rev. Francis X. Lawlor's aldermanic campaign in 1971. See Letter from W. Harold Kamar to editor, *SWNH*, November 9, 1972.

¹² *SPNF News*, July 1983; Anti-Solicitation Flier against Bell Real Estate (Bacevicius' firm), SPNF Records, Box 3 Folder 5, CHM; Solicitation Cease and Desist Letter to Bacevicius, SPNF Records, Box 11 Folder 3, CHM. Press Release, SPNF Records, Box 11 Folder 6, CHM; Transcript of Jean Mayer interview with Walter Jacobsen, SPNF Records, Box 28 Folder 20, CHM.

¹³ Letter from Jim Keck to John J. Egan, April 11, 1983, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 11, CHM; Press Advisory, April 6, 1983, SPNF Records Box 30 Folder 3, CHM.

Understanding” with them to demonstrate empathy for their fears and as a sign of goodwill. Holding a vigil outside of Navy Pier on the day of Washington’s inauguration, both organizations became incensed when the mayor’s limousine sped past them. The outcome of the vigil realized the worst fears of SPNF leaders: the new mayor intended to “write-off” their neighborhoods. As Mayer explained, “Mayor Washington has pledged to be a mayor for ‘all the people of Chicago’ ... we are offering him the chance to do just that, by meeting with people from our community and demonstrating that he is truly concerned with the critical issues facing the people of the Southwest Side. He will ‘heal the wounds’ in this city with action, not rhetoric.” A second vigil held outside of Washington’s apartment also resulted in no candles lit.¹⁴

The vigils at least caught the mayor’s attention. Washington agreed to attend a forum in front of 1,500 members of the Northwest Federation and SPNF at the Foreman High School auditorium in the Belmont-Cragin neighborhood. Mayer, staring across the stage at Washington from her own podium, asked the mayor to pledge his support for the improvement of 63rd Street and to not build scattered site public housing in Chicago Lawn. His answers proved less than satisfactory. The mayor refused to award a contract for the construction of the long-sought ethnic village shopping district on 63rd Street to the SPNF’s preferred firm, the American City Corporation, insisting upon an open bid process. He maintained that only the courts had the authority to remove scattered site public housing in Chicago Lawn.¹⁵ SPNF leaders then circumvented city hall entirely, asking their local state representative, and the new Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives, Michael Madigan, for the funds to hire the ACC on their own.

¹⁴ Candle of Understanding Flier, SPNF Records, Box 3 Folder 5, CHM; Press Advisory, May 5, 1983, SPPNF Records, Box 30 Folder 3, CHM; Press Advisory, June 4, 1983, SPNF Records, Box 30 Folder 3, CHM.

¹⁵ This stems from the famous *Gautreaux v CHA* decision.

Madigan delivered \$150,000 in state money to the federation to hire their planner of choice for a preliminary ethnic village study. Mayer declared the grant a victory over an obstinate mayor and longtime critics of her organization's redevelopment proposals.¹⁶

The relationship between the mayor and federation continued to deteriorate into the following year. Remarks by Washington that Northwest and Southwest Siders' votes no longer mattered given their outmigration from Chicago and declining birthrates against a rising Black and Latino population precipitated the largest act of defiance yet. With Mayer accusing Washington of not caring about "the terrible emotional and financial loss that people like us suffer when we are forced to move" and "banking on white flight to enhance his re-election chances," Southwest and Northwest Federation leaders announced a merger into the Save Our Neighborhoods/Save Our City (SONSOC) coalition as a last stand.¹⁷ They announced an inaugural convention on April 29, 1984, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel to launch their "white ethnic agenda" to every corner of Chicago and beyond. Leaders from both federations issued a joint statement of principles for their revolution, "The Declaration of Neighborhood Independence," which presented a litany of grievances against Washington. They denounced him for using a "public veneer of Mayor as Charmer, Healer, and Reformer" to mask "cynical political opportunism, ready to exploit every racial fear." They resented Washington's willingness to invoke the specter of 1966 to force the media to overlook the "common decency and generosity of the spirit of white ethnics." The declaration also rejected the notions that white politicians

¹⁶ Report of Redevelopment Committee, June 7, 1983, SPNF Records, Box 3 Folder 4, CHM; *SPNF News*, July 1983; "Washington Meeting," Typed Notes, Undated although likely June 1983, SPNF Records, Box 1 Folder 14, CHM.

¹⁷ *Chicago Sun-Times*, March 9, 1984; "Set 'Ethnic' Agenda," *SONSOC News*, April, 1984; Bob Okon, "Neighbors Unite Against Mayor," *Southtown Economist*, February 5, 1984.

obstructing Washington in city council ever spoke for them, or that their socioeconomic success came at the cost of the advancement of racial minorities.¹⁸

While the nomenclature of the “white ethnic agenda” carried clear racial tones, Mayer and other leaders maintained that the SONSOC did not stem from racism. Mayer asserted that aside from the mayor, “we’re not trying to put anybody down.” Sympathetic newspapers on the Northwest and Southwest Side concurred, although one editorial from Lerner publications (the dominant neighborhood newspaper publisher on the Northwest Side) advised members from both federations that invoking the term “white ethnic” allowed critics to dismiss their communities’ genuine problems as racist. These protestations largely fell on deaf ears. Many black leaders, journalists, and activists immediately charged the formation of the SONSOC as eloquently marketed racism. Monroe Anderson, a *Tribune* columnist, dismissed the SONSOC as an unwelcome reprisal of the “Before It’s Too Late” mantra spouted by the Epton campaign. He concluded that the Southwest and Northwest Sides already developed ‘an unspoken white ethnic agenda’ to keep blacks out of their neighborhoods.¹⁹

Black critiques comprised only a part of the press relations nightmare the convention sparked. Even representatives from the Catholic Church, most notably the Rev. John Egan, asked the federations to call the SONSOC off. Appealing to the pastors of the affiliate parishes in the SPNF, Egan rebuked the Declaration of Neighborhood Independence for “inappropriate, irresponsible and divisive” language. He expressed horror that an organization identifying with the parish produced such a document, which in his view violated Judeo-Christian conceptions of

¹⁸ “A Declaration of Neighborhood Independence,” SPNF Records, Box 9 Folder22, CHM.

¹⁹ Rick Asa, “Ethnics Fight for Their Turf,” *Southtown Economist*, April 8, 1984; “Race Has No Place at Area Convention,” *Lerner-Times Newspapers*, February 15, 1984; Monroe Anderson, *Chicago Tribune*, April 27, 1984.

“justice, balance, and civility.” Above all, Egan feared that the SONSOC represented a major step backward for Chicago’s poor race relations and might provoke the kind of violence both the SPNF and church traditionally denounced.²⁰ Liberal Southwest Siders in the Southwest Community Congress (SCC) concurred and attempted to steal the spotlight for themselves. SCC leaders invited Washington to inaugurate their new officers in 1984 and named the mayor their “Person of the Year.”²¹ These criticisms stung federation leaders, who fired back through a flurry of press statements. They denied that the SONSOC represented a new form of race-baiting, arguing instead that their organizations worked to hold back a “white exodus unprecedented in Chicago history.” They hoped the convention might enlist the mayor’s help in fulfilling this mission. They downplayed the significance of the cordial relationship between Washington and the SCC, dismissing their rival as “a handful of knee-jerk white liberals” masquerading as a viable community organization. Mayer also co-wrote a heated response to Egan, telling the venerable church leader “you have plunged a knife in our backs.”²²

Mayer delivered the keynote address of the convention in front of 1,500 Northwest and Southwest Side residents, as well as major metropolitan and national media outlets. She declared that “we are all descendants of economic and political refugees of oppressive regimes and

²⁰ Letter from John J. Egan to the Religious Leaders of the Southwest Neighborhood and Parish Federation and Northwest Neighborhood Federation, March 21, 1984, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 11, CHM.

²¹ Washington’s appearance at the SCC convention no doubt resulted in part from the help of Marlene Carter, a black SCC officer (see Chapter 4) whose foray into politics in the 1980s drew her into Washington’s camp. With the mayor’s blessing, she ran for Fifteenth Ward Alderman after a court-mandated special election in 1986 to address racial gerrymandering by the white Chicago political establishment. Her victory, along with that of Luis Gutierrez, broke the white-supermajority on the council which allowed Vrdolyak to stymie Washington during the bulk of his first term.

²² Letter from Jean Mayer and Joseph Crutchfield to Msgr. Egan, March 26, 1984, SPNF Records, Box 2 Folder 11, CHM.

intolerable living conditions...yet through diligence, drive, and tenacity our people have bettered themselves and built happy, healthy, safe neighborhoods with rich cultural institutions. WE ARE AMERICA'S SUCCESS STORY." She further remarked that although while ethnics did not create Chicago, their labor shaped it into an economic powerhouse, their assiduousness provided a reliable tax base, and their unique national heritages enriched its culture. Mayer also claimed that accusations of racism left them angry, assertions that their more conservative values compared to the lakefront made them enemies left them perturbed, and predictions of their demise left them afraid. She maintained that all the SONSOC fought for was the ability to co-exist peacefully with Chicagoans of all backgrounds, but it needed aid for neighborhood revitalization from the mayor to make this possible. She concluded by encouraging those in attendance to "carry our 'white ethnic agenda' throughout the city, the state, and wherever needed, and we will not cease our struggle until our story is heard, our neighborhoods secure, and our values and traditions and people appreciated for the contributions they have made to this City."²³

The white ethnic agenda comprised of more than just rhetoric. The SPNF and its ally on the Northwest Side used the SONSOC to introduce a five-point neighborhood policy plan which called for the following: a curbing of Federal Housing Authority (FHA) and real estate abuses; improved schools; reduction of crime; the home equity assurance program; and economic development. Economic development included the 63rd Street ethnic village, but the attendees at the SONSONC also introduced a proposal meant to rectify the longstanding imbalance in

²³ Proceedings of the First Save Our Neighborhoods, Save Our City Coalition, April 29, 1984, SPNF Records, Box 3 Folder 20, CHM.

investment between downtown and outlying neighborhoods: linkage. Linkage would charge a fee to downtown developers constructing office buildings over 100,000 square feet for a neighborhood fund to be proportionally divided among all seventy-seven official community areas by population. The SPNF made home equity assurance and development their chief priorities for the remainder of the decade with mixed results. Yet what remains as remarkable about the agenda as the outcome is the fact that its implementation—or lack thereof—occurred with the qualified support of Mayor Washington.²⁴

In spite of the antagonistic bombast proffered by some convention participants—one woman from the Northwest Federation took time during the real estate panel to declare “we are tired of apologizing for being white”—the great act of defiance opened the door for cooperation between Washington and the rebellious white ethnics who resoundingly voted against him. The actual planks of the white ethnic agenda aligned well with Washington’s major policy goals, something both sides failed (or refused) to acknowledge at the beginning of his administration. Unlike Mayor Jane Byrne, who callously branded herself a progressive to win an election, Washington showed genuine concern for how downtown development rapidly outpaced neighborhood growth. Washington wanted to put neighborhoods and the residents who lived in them on more equitable footing with major corporate interests.²⁵ Yet the mayor admitted that his political background in predominantly black districts made him inexperienced in communicating with white ethnics. Journalists Ben Joravsky and Jorge Casuso noted that while the mayor sometimes made promising gestures—such as comparing Lech Walesa, the founder of the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ E.R. Shipp, “Black Mayor Heed Whites’ Concerns,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1984; David Ring, “Chicago Mayor Blasted,” *Boston Globe*, April 30, 1984.

Solidarity independent trade union and an instrumental figure in securing Polish independence from the Soviet Union, to Dr. Martin Luther King—he seemed unsure of what to do next. As Washington confessed, “People are saying, ‘‘If you can’t relate to me you’re not interested,’ and I’m saying ‘If I can’t, I simply don’t know how.’”²⁶

Fortunately, an African-American businessman and a longtime friend of the mayor, Al Robinson, figured out how to bridge the gap. Robinson was a member of Chicago United, an interracial group of entrepreneurs dedicated to the reduction of racial tensions in Chicago. After hearing a SONSOC presentation at Chicago United, Robinson decided to bring the mayor and federation members together. As a Woodlawn native who witnessed that neighborhood’s steep decline after racial change, Robinson identified with the plight of white ethnics. He also knew that they incorrectly labeled Washington as wrathful. Robinson believed that the white ethnic agenda offered solutions to problems which affected all of Chicago, not just the white Northwest and Southwest Sides, and saw it as compatible with Washington’s vision for the city. The mayor’s staff at first refused, dismissing all of it as “black insurance.” Robinson then enlisted the aid of Alderman Clifford Kelley, another friend of the mayor, to convince Washington to parlay with the Northwest and Southwest Federations in August 1984.²⁷

Kelley became more empathetic toward the SONSOC after meeting Keck during the broadcast of *Beyond the Beltway*, a political news talk show hosted on WBEZ-FM. The alderman’s support seemed far from a sure thing, as Kelley initially viewed the federation’s

²⁶ Joravsky and Casuso. Washington’s “program for neighborhoods” centered upon neighborhood empowerment and investment with a pledge in his 1983 campaign to “give priority to the distribution of resources to the neighborhoods.” See *The Washington Papers*, 1983, 23-26 in SPNF Records, Box 5 Folder 4, CHM.

²⁷ “Drawing Civic Harmony out of Racial Discord,” *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, September 1, 1986;

opposition as fundamentally racist. Kelley's opinion changed after learning of Keck's ties to the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) just moments before the show began. As Keck recalled:

We're getting all suited up, we're getting our ear phones and this kind of stuff, and I look at Cliff and he's got a file folder this big. And he's paging through it, and it's like all articles about the federation. And I didn't know Cliff, but I knew he was like very, he was like loaded to bear. He didn't go unprepared for anything...it was clear that he and Miriam [Hughes] were set up to tear the shit out of me, ok, in this interview. So just like five minutes before the damn show starts, Cliff keeps staring at me...and then he looks at me and says, 'Jim Keck? Are you the Jim Keck that was married to Sue Turkwee?' And I said, 'One and the same.' He said, 'Jesus Christ.' He says 'You got to be kidding.' And all of a sudden we get on this panel, and he starts agreeing with me. And Miriam Hughes was trying to get shit on me, and he like contradicts her, and it becomes this lovefest between Cliff and I on this program.²⁸

Robinson and Kelley then arranged for a meeting between the mayor and Keck. Keck later concluded Kelley and Washington now saw him as an "inside guy" on the Southwest Side given his background. Although no transcript of this meeting exists, Keck said Washington expressed a genuine desire to work with the federation and asked for a joint press conference with SON/SOC leaders to publicize their new understanding of each other.²⁹

A closer examination of the early 1980s ethnic village plan and linkage offers some insight into why Washington became a proponent of the white ethnic agenda. The American City Corporation unveiled a twenty-million-dollar redevelopment plan for 63rd Street on behalf of the SPNF to an enthusiastic reception on May 23, 1984. The plan contained numerous components: 150 senior apartments, two new shopping centers, façade renovations, increased surface parking to attract shoppers from all over the metropolitan area, and an ethnic village for the eastern end of the strip at 63rd and Western Avenue. The ethnic village would cover seven blocks of 63rd

²⁸ Keck interview.

²⁹ Ibid.

Street in total and feature restaurants and specialty shops, with a two-story museum as a centerpiece. The museum would “showcase the heritages of the people who founded our community: The Poles, Lithuanians, Irish, Italians, Bohemians, and Slovaks” and celebrate the past contributions of ethnic Americans to the city and nation. Unlike the first ethnic village proposal in 1975, the ACC did not call for the demolition of more than thousand homes owned by black families.³⁰

A two-man “ethnic consulting firm” created by Theodore Swigon and Dominic Pacyga designed the museum. Both men possessed considerable expertise in the study and preservation of ethnic history. Swigon oversaw the Polish-American museum on the Northwest Side of Chicago. Pacyga, a life-long South Sider, became a renowned historian of Chicago. Pacyga admitted he disliked the federation for positions that he viewed as reactionary, and he did not consider the federation his firm’s client.³¹ In spite of his reservations, Pacyga viewed the museum and ethnic village as an unprecedented opportunity. While numerous museums honoring the past of a particular ethnic group arose during the 1970s and 1980s, one devoted to “ethnics as a whole” did not exist. They gave a more inclusive dimension to the museum than what the SPNF initially promoted in its newsletters, stating that it would profile every ethnic and

³⁰ JoEllen Goodman, “Ethnic/Racial Controversy Imperils 63rd Street Project,” *Crain’s Chicago Business*, June 4, 1984; American City Corporation, 63rd Street Corridor Study Development: Analysis and Recommendations, May 1984, SPNF Records, Box 31 Folder 12, CHM.

³¹ Interview with Dominic Pacyga, November 1, 2016, in author’s possession (hereafter referred to as Pacyga interview). Given his dislike of the SPNF, Pacyga likely only agreed to create the museum proposal on behalf 63rd Street Growth Commission. The Growth Commission was a surprising joint venture between the SPNF and two of its longtime opponents, the GSDC and SCC. This commission only came into being after Speaker Madigan threatened to withhold more state funding unless all three Southwest Side organizations agreed upon a redevelopment plan. See Notes from Meeting with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, September 19, 1984, SPNF Records, Box 31 Folder 14, CHM; Notes from Meeting for 63rd Street Revitalization, October 18, 1984, SPNF Records, Box 31 Folder 14, CHM.

racial group who lived in Chicago over the past two centuries, from the Pottawatomi Nation to all of the city's present-day cultures. They argued that the ethnic village would function as a "viable economic and symbolic base" and utilize "an ethnic revival already taking place" to mitigate the pain neighborhoods across Chicago felt from deindustrialization. They further claimed that white and black Chicagoans would patronize the museum, as the ACC plan accounted for the "cultural dimensions of the city" and repudiated the "colonial attitude" most urban planners had for residential neighborhoods. The grassroots support for the ethnic village lent it an authenticity which appealed to shoppers of any background.³²

Mayer and other federation leaders professed support for the museum's diverse character. In a letter to *Crain's Chicago Business*, they explained that the increase in the black, Hispanic, and Arabic population already made 63rd street a multicultural strip—the ethnic village and cultural center merely gave white ethnic residents an incentive to stay and keep it that way. They argued that doing so benefitted vendors of all races, who otherwise stood to suffer should the SPNF fail to eliminate existing blight. Addressing accusations of racism, they concluded that "our city's ethnic diversity ought always to be expressed and shared with everyone. We have yet to hear anyone call Andersonville, Chinatown, or Greektown 'racist' just because each of these strips highlights a particular ethnic group."³³

³² Pacyga/Swigon Proposal, SPNF Records, Box 31 Folder 1, CHM; Pacyga/Swigon Report to the ACC, March 9, 1984, SPNF Records, Box 31 Folder 1, CHM. The mayor included a similar "linked developments" proposal under his 1984 "Chicago Works Together" master plan. See Mark Brown and Harry Golden Jr., "Mayor Defends Growth Plan," *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 24, 1984;

³³ Copy of Letter from the Redevelopment Committee to *Crain's Chicago Business*, July 30, 1984, SPNF Records, Box 31 Folder 18, CHM.

Linkage offered similar cross-racial, cross-class appeals which dovetailed with Washington's emphasis on neighborhood economic development. The SONSOC linkage ordinance required every developer constructing new office towers in the Loop to pay five dollars per square foot for any building over 100,000 square feet. The fee then would go to a special trust fund for neighborhoods and be correspondingly dispersed across Chicago's seventy-seven official community areas based on population. The idea was not original. The SONSOC leaders copied the rules of similar ordinances recently passed in Boston and San Francisco. The SONSOC leaders cited academic studies which demonstrated that the city concentrated 53 percent of all capital expenditures in two single downtown wards from 1979-1984. This investment certainly paid off; although the city lost nearly 11,000 housing units in the 1970s, the Loop and lakefront neighborhoods gained nearly 5,000. As the SONSOC leaders stated, "There are two economies in Chicago. An economy of investment, wealth and growth, and an economy of disinvestment, decline, and poverty. The boom downtown has been, in no small part, subsidized by the neighborhoods." SON/SOC projections suggested that the approval of linkage would net the Southwest Side \$10 million by 1989.³⁴

Within a month of the August meeting in 1984, the showdown between the mayor and the SONSOC came to an end. Washington became a keynote speaker at the SONSOC

³⁴ "SON/SOC Announces Linkage Referendum Drive," February 12, 1986, SPNF Records, Box 9 Folder 19, CHM; "Estimated Per Neighborhood Returns from Linkage Over a 5 Year Period," "Chicago Capital Expenditures, 1979 to 1984" and "Change in Number of Housing Units, by Neighborhood, Between 1970 and 1980," SPNF Records, Box 9 Folder 19, CHM; Jane Heron, "Downtown Growth Depends on Neighborhoods," *Chicago Sun-Times*, August 5, 1985. Heron was a community planning consultant writing a guest editorial. She pointed out that the concept had "roots" in the suburbs, where villages and towns often required subdivision developers to help pay for infrastructure which otherwise exceeded their limited resources to accommodate the expected influx of new families.

candidates' convention for the upcoming congressional, senatorial, and presidential elections in November 1984. He also endorsed the white ethnic agenda, declaring:

I was a target at the Coalition's last convention in April. Tomorrow, I will be their toastmaster. This is progress. Yes, there is an agenda for the city's outlying, single family home communities, many of them with their own proud ethnic tradition. There is also an agenda for every community and tradition. We look forward to the day when each neighborhood in the city will flourish. The Coalition once asked me to light a candle of understanding with their two communities. I want to light a candle of understanding in each and every community of our city, until the city is blazing with enlightenment, promise, and purpose.³⁵

Washington's statement benefitted both himself and the federations. It made the white ethnic agenda more inclusive by extending it to his base of black and Latino residents and shielded federation leaders from accusations of racism. As he remarked to the press seven months later, "It just proves that a lot of the stereotypes, a lot of the fears, a lot of the slogans, a lot of the naysayers are wrong. If people try to get along, they'll get along. Not only get along, they'll thrive on it."³⁶

SPNF leaders expressed gratitude for Washington's newfound support and Robinson's aid in brokering a truce between them and the mayor. On the first anniversary of the SONSOC, they hosted a banquet at the same hotel where they first launched their 'agenda' to honor Al Robinson with a "One Person Makes a Difference Award." A *Sun-Times* reporter covering the ceremony observed Mayer gift a pink teddy bear to Robinson and "frolicking" on a stage with the mayor, Aldermen Kelley, and other black political leaders. After Washington compared Robinson to another famous American compromiser, Henry Clay, Mayer admitted to feeling

³⁵ *SONSOC News*, October 1984.

³⁶ Bill Rumbler, "Black Exec Honored for Promoting Trust," *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 26, 1985;

“guardedly optimistic. Mayor Byrne lied to us, but Washington has been good to us.”³⁷ Major municipal media initially saw the show of unity between the mayor and white ethnics as a portent to an end of the racial discord which fueled the white opposition to Washington in the Chicago City Council. The *Tribune* editorial board praised the SONSOC members as a “good example” for the rest of the city to follow to reduce racial tensions after feting Robinson.³⁸

Unfortunately, the honeymoon between Washington, SPNF, and the SONSOC proved short-lived. Attempts to implement three core components of the white ethnic agenda—redevelopment, linkage, and home equity—frayed the nascent alliance between the Southwest Side and city hall. Although public relations between the mayor and white ethnics remained fairly harmonious, much of the white ethnic agenda failed to materialize as Washington’s vocal endorsements rarely translated into effective action.

The fate of linkage is a particularly damning case. Washington initially agreed to form an official commission to further study the idea and explore turning it into a law. The commission held a public hearing in the fall of 1985. While other white and black organizations, including the Urban League, expressed similar enthusiasm for linkage as the SONSOC, many of the city’s largest businesses vociferously protested. The intransigence of business appeared to cause the mayor to vacillate on his support in spite of the rare display of grassroots, interracial cooperation.

³⁷ David Roeder, “White Ethnics Mend Fences with Mayor,” *Northwest Times*, May 2, 1985; Basil Talbott, “Mayor Embraces Politics of Peace...but Balky Vrdolyak Still Prefers Conflict,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 28, 1985; “Black Civic Leader to Receive Coalition Honor,” *Southwest News-Herald*, April 25, 1985; Stanley Ziembra, “White Groups to Honor Black Civic Leader,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 23, 1985; Flier for Cocktail Reception on April 25, SPNF Records, Box 22 Folder 8, CHM. The banquet included numerous power brokers, including Vrodlyak, Burke, Madigan, Richard M. Daley, and Governor Jim Thompson, and Senator Paul Simon. See “City Foes to Join Fete,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 24, 1985.

³⁸ “One Person’s Difference,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 30, 1985. Similar effusive praise came from Southwest Side paper editors. See “Making a Difference,” *Southtown Economist*, April 24, 1985.

As he explained, “it’s up to the community groups to get this program passed. You’ve got to figure that the big boys—the developers—will fight it like crazy...to offset that, the organizations have to show the politicians that they have the voters backing the program...right now, I don’t know if they have the numbers.”³⁹ Although he never publicly did so and the city allocated \$3.5 million for a “linkage development initiative” in the 1986 budget, the Chicago City Council—by this point under Washington’s control—refused to reconvene the commission. The mayor instead pushed for a compromise few neighborhood organizations found satisfactory, a voluntary linkage program most businesses simply ignored.⁴⁰

The ethnic village suffered a similarly parlous fate, although more from financial circumstances than any interference from the city’s political leaders. Acknowledging the popular belief among SPNF members in ethnic self-reliance, the American City Corporation plan for 63rd Street called for only \$2 million of public money. SPNF leaders expected the rest to come from private sources, particularly the local financial institutions they campaigned against in the 1970s. Unsurprisingly, the savings and loans of the Southwest Side the federation attacked in a greenlining campaign the previous decade remained cool to the ethnic village, even after the GSDC and SCC offered endorsements. With no funds forthcoming, an uncertain market, and

³⁹ Ben Joravsky documented the support Hispanic and Black communities held for linkage, as well as particular business protests of the plan, in “Linkage: An Idea Whose Times Has Come,” *Logan Square Free Press*, July 31, 1986.

⁴⁰ “Announcing: A Pipeline of Economic Growth for Chicago,” SPNF Records, Box 4 Folder 22, CHM; “Linkage Goes Public: Developers Cry, Neighborhoods Cheer,” *SONSOC News*, November 1985. The Urban League, a previous critic of the SPNF, even co-sponsored a linkage seminar with SON/SOC. See “Linked Development Seminar Co-Sponsored by the Chicago Urban League and the Save Our Neighborhoods/Save Our City Coalition,” SPNF Records, Box 22 Folder 5, CHM; J. Carole Buckner, “Plan Links Developments to Loop Developments,” *Southtown Economist*, October 29, 1986. Ben Joravsky documented the support Hispanic and Black communities held for linkage, as well as particular business protests of the plan, in “Linkage: An Idea Whose Times Has Come,” *Logan Square Free Press*, July 31, 1986.

struggling to attract vendors, the federation dropped all mentions of the ethnic village from their press statements by the middle of 1986. Sixty-Third Street did not go without help in the 1980s, thanks in large part to the efforts of Jim Capraro. He convinced Jewel-Osco, a prominent regional grocery and pharmacy chain, to open a new store at 62nd and Western Avenue in 1985. The arrival of Jewel-Osco brought several hundred new jobs to Chicago Lawn, kept millions of shopping dollars in the community, and cemented the GSDC's status as the pre-eminent organization for economic redevelopment on the Southwest Side. The meek retreat from this role by the federation stood in stark contrast to their defiant posture only four years earlier, when an unidentified organizer expressed a desire in a private memorandum to "fuck the DevCorp once and for all."⁴¹

With linkage and the ethnic village both going bust, leaders in the SPNF and the SONSOC made the passage of a home equity assurance law their chief priority heading into the 1987 election. The SPNF first advocated for such a law in the late 1970s, modeling it off an ordinance passed in the leafy western suburb of Oak Park to prevent white flight after African-American families moved in. The "Oak Park Strategy" levied a special tax to create an insurance fund which guaranteed all formally assessed home values for a five-year period, provided the owners maintained their property. With their home values protected, existing white homeowners in Oak Park no longer fretted over the potential threat of seeing substantial equity wiped out by racial change. Panic peddling realtors working in the suburb lost their most important

⁴¹ Capraro interview; State of Redevelopment Community Memorandum, SPNF Records, Box 31 Folder 2, CHM. The SCC and GSDC officially backed the ethnic village after initial reservations by joining the SPNF in the 63rd Street Growth Commission. See Notes on the Joint Meeting for the 63rd Street Revitalization, October 18, 1984, SPNF Records, Box 31 Folder 14, CHM and Redevelopment Committee Memo, March 20, 1985, SPNF Records Box 31 Folder 15.

psychological tool. Oak Park became a more diverse suburb and homeowners kept their property values high. Oak Park served a national example for neutralizing the social and economic pressures which powered white flight in so many postwar northern cities.⁴² Yet the SPNF would wait over a decade for similar aid. Mayor Byrne initially vowed to help the SPNF with home equity, but her promise rung hollow in the end. A lack of popular and political support thwarted the Southwest Side's first push for home equity assurance in the late 1970s.⁴³

The SPNF version of home equity elicited little praise compared to Oak Park. No matter that the federation's plan borrowed heavily from the Oak Park plan and even improved on it in one facet: guaranteeing the full value of a home as opposed to just 80 percent. Other parts of the Oak Park strategy paralleled the activities of the SPNF and SCC. Like the two Southwest Side community organizations, grassroots groups in Oak Park demanded transparent mortgage data from their banks and protested redlining and picketed real estate offices during the 1970s. The suburb did possess some tangible advantages the Southwest Side could not match: better schools, public transportation, recreational opportunities, and municipal solvency.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, differences in perception of Oak Park and the Southwest Side led more negative assessments of the latter's version. Civil rights groups in Chicago interpreted home equity for the Southwest Side as another racist barricade. Contemporary critics of the federation's home equity plan

⁴² Carole Goodwin, *The Oak Park Strategy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁴³ "A Vote for Stability," *Southwest News-Herald*, May 4, 1978; Proceedings of the First Save Our Neighborhoods, Save Our City Coalition, April 29, 1984, SPNF Records, Box 3 Folder 20, CHM; Raymond Hanania, "Mayor Ignored Mix Critics," *Southtown Economist*, May 11, 1980; "Home Equity Plan Still Good, Needs New Leadership," *Southtown Economist*, October 14, 1979; SPNF Home Equity "Commitment Day" Pamphlet, July 1979, SPNF Records, Box 22 Folder 1, CHM; July 11, 1979 Press Release by Lorraine Pleshar, SPNF Records, Box 22 Folder 1, CHM. Byrne apparently viewed the use of any special service area as an act of 'secession' on the part of a neighborhood.

⁴⁴ Murray, 7-8.

argued that the upper middle-class, highly-educated residents of Oak Park actively sought out integration. They believed the less well-to-do white ethnics on the Southwest Side merely wanted a more refined tool for keeping black families out.⁴⁵ This distrust was not totally unfounded; after all, the first mention of home equity in Chicago came on the heels of the failed effort by the SPNF to clear more than a thousand nearby black homes for a “buffer zone” of townhomes and condominiums in 1976.

Yet the director of the Oak Park program, Joan Filbin, confessed to the *Southtown Economist* that her community pursued equity first out of practical considerations, not idealism. “We told them we can’t answer your racial bigotry,” she explained, “but we can answer your financial fears.” The *Economist* staff reporter then stated Filbin rolled her eyes after he asked if such a program might work on the Southwest Side. She replied in the negative, citing concerns about “fraud and abuse.”⁴⁶ Current historiography overlooks Filbin’s frankness and continues to valorize the nobility of suburban, upper-middle class whites in Oak Park. Planning historian Leonie Sandercock argued that the Oak Park officials served as “diversity pioneers” who intentionally nurtured a “culture of integration” that eventually “pervaded local institutions and local life, from realtors to teachers to local lending institutions.” She also noted that such forward

⁴⁵ Leonie Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities in the 21st Century* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 147; Bob Brown, “Home Equity Gaining Momentum,” *Southtown Economist*, October 7, 1984; Village of Oak Park, Introducing Oak Park Equity Assurance: A New Protection Program for Single Family Home Owners pamphlet, c. 1976-1977, SPNF Records Box 25 Folder 8, CHM. Some of the earliest prototypes of the Oak Park Plan came from the Defense Department, which offered a homeowner assistance program insuring up to 90-95% of home equity for civilian employees who risked harm from a base closing. See Michael A. Murray, “Reassuring the Small Homeowner in Oak Park—An Interim Report on the Equity Assurance Plan,” (January 1976) 1. Murray was a professor of Public Management at Northwestern University and a consultant hired by the village to study the progress of equity assurance.

⁴⁶ Bob Brown, “Oak Park Pioneers Equity Program,” *Southtown Economist*, October 7, 1984.

thinking did not exist in the poorer and blue-collar neighborhoods and suburbs which surrounded Oak Park.⁴⁷

After paying homage to the white ethnic agenda, Washington became one of the first black leaders in the city to express support for home equity. He wrote a letter on the coalition's behalf to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to secure a large grant for a feasibility study. As with other parts of the agenda, Washington re-conceived home equity in a way to make it inclusive for minority communities. He acknowledged the merits of the initial SONSOC bid but encouraged its leaders to push for a home equity law which covered every single neighborhood in Chicago, not just the Southwest and Northwest Sides. The SONSOC leaders did not disagree with this idea in principle but saw it as a further complication which needlessly delayed the enactment of a home equity program in their vulnerable neighborhoods. Supporters on the Southwest Side of a home equity law suggested creating a special service area (SSA) in their neighborhoods for funding.⁴⁸ A SSA allowed for individual municipalities or neighborhoods to vote to pass localized property taxes upon themselves to finance improvement programs. SSAs did not exist in Illinois prior to the passage of the 1970 state constitution, and cities across the state only gradually adopted them by the middle of the 1980s. Most SSAs paid for minor enhancements such as street cleaning and beautification, but the SONSOC interpreted the intent of the law as broad enough to utilize for a home equity program. Accordingly, they

⁴⁷ Sandercock, 146-149. Sandercock overstates Oak Park's influence, implying that the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities was created after the success of the Oak Park Plan.

⁴⁸ A Special Service Area is similar to a TIF (Tax Increment Financing) district, but there are key differences. A SSA is an extra levy for a specific service in the designated area. A TIF district, on the other hand, is not a levy. A TIF uses the equalized assessed property tax (EAV) as a baseline upon the year it is created. Any increase in the EAV in subsequent years goes to a fund that is (in theory) reserved for large capital improvements and development projects. The baseline value is still reserved for traditional municipal services, like schools and parks.

argued that black and Latino homeowners desiring similar coverage could develop their own home equity plans by making their own SSAs.⁴⁹

While the disagreement on scope between the mayor and the SONSOC did not torpedo home equity, it portended trouble to come. Washington appeared at the second mayoral candidates' convention hosted by the SONSOC in February 1987 as part of his re-election campaign, and reiterated his pledge to support linkage and a home equity law. In stark contrast to the cold reception he received four years earlier, the mayor received "raucous applause" for his remarks. Yet similar to linkage, the happier discourse obscured the lack of progress in making home equity (and the rest of the white ethnic agenda) a reality in the two years since the reconciliation between the SONSOC and the mayor. Legal hurdles also made expressing the popular will of the Southwest Side difficult. SPNF leaders wanted to place a home equity question for their neighborhoods alone as an advisory referendum in the April 1987 municipal election. The Illinois election code, however, prohibited such a maneuver. All potential advisory referenda required ten percent of all voters in an entire city to sign a petition to place them on a ballot. The election code provided no obstacles in smaller towns but failed to account for the scale of large cities such as Chicago.⁵⁰

The SONSOC resolved instead to change state law. The group recognized the near-impossibility of acquiring that many signatures for a program many other parts of the city either

⁴⁹ Letter from Harold Washington to Samuel Pierce, August 16, 1984, SPNF Records Box 11 Folder 8, CHM. Pierce was the Secretary of HUD. Letter from Senator Charles Percy to June Koch, August 3, 1984, SPNF Records, Box 11 Folder 8, CHM. Koch was the Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research in HUD; "Announcement of Home Equity Research Grant," November 3, 1984, SPNF Records, Box 22 Folder 2, CHM; *SPNF News*, February 1987; Guaranteed Home Equity Slide Show, July 30, 1986, SPNF Records, Box 22 Folder 25; *Chicago* (October 1987): 14. SONSOC initially estimated that home equity would cost all homeowners \$6-\$25 in additional taxes to provide the fund and a further \$75 for interested homeowners to gain coverage.

⁵⁰ *SPNF News*, February 1987.

did not know or understand. SONSOC members lobbied Madigan and Republican Governor Jim Thompson to pass Public Act 84-1467 in January 1987, an amendment which allowed for referenda in smaller “clearly defined territories,” such as a Chicago precinct. With only four days to spare before the Chicago Board of Elections deadline, thousands of the SONSOC volunteers on the Southwest and Northwest Side collected 19,000 signatures to put a home equity question on the ballot. A gushing SPNF spokesperson bragged that it signified the first time in Chicago history that a grassroots organization “won the chance to put an issue of local concern on the ballot—just for their own neighborhood.”⁵¹

On April 7, 1987, Washington easily won a second term as mayor. That same day, 133 Southwest Side precincts overwhelmingly voted “yes” for the creation of a home equity program.⁵² Only 9.3 percent of voters declined. This support transcended race, as well: black precincts in the 15th Ward covering Chicago Lawn and West Englewood expressed their approval by the same margin. Yet to the dismay of SPNF leaders and the throngs of homeowners who voted affirmatively, Washington asked for a delay until the city council could draft an

⁵¹ The SON/SOC Amendment Pamphlet, 1987, SPNF Records, Box 1 Folder 17, CHM; SONSOC Letter to Members, December 10, 1986, SPNF Records, Box 3 Folder 5, CHM; “Coalition Lobbies for Equity Program,” *Pulitzer-Lerner Newspapers*, November 26, 1986; Dave Roeder, “Home Equity Petitions Filed,” *Southtown Economist*, January 20, 1987; “Putting Bite to the Ballot,” *SWNH*, January 22, 1987; John Holden, “Democracy with a Small D: A Plethora of Referenda,” *Chicago Reporter*, March 11, 1988. Holden notes that the SON/SOC amendment went through one of the most miraculous votes in the history of the Illinois legislature. Madigan initially helped write the bill for limited referendums on behalf of SONSOC only to immediately turn against it once it came up for vote. Sixty-five angry SONSOC supporters bussing down to Springfield to yell at the Speaker in his office seemingly failed to sway him as the Illinois House initially rejected the bill. Yet that same day, only minutes before the General Assembly recessed, the House and Assembly passed the bill in its original form. Reasons for Madigan’s change of heart remain speculative, but politicians and community leaders interviewed by Holden believed the powerful politician realized the bill’s democratic potential threatened his considerable influence on the Southwest Side.

⁵² Keynote address before the 1987 Mayoral Candidates Forum by Joan Shogren, 1987, SPNF Records, Box 3 Folder 4. Shogren was a representative from the Northwest Neighborhood Federation; Home Equity Referendum Voting Results, April 7, 1987, SPNF Records, Box 23 Folder 5, CHM.

ordinance which applied to the entire city. With the council now in mayor's corner following a 1986 special election to correct the racially discriminatory gerrymandering that once allowed for an unbreakable white supermajority, the SPNF required Washington's endorsement to get black and Hispanic aldermen behind a city-wide home equity law. Political reporters offered diverging explanations for the mayor's cold feet. One suggested that Washington, feeling hurt that white ethnic voters rejected him by a similar margin in 1987 as they did in 1983, even after he made amends with the SONSOC, wanted a measure of payback. Another claimed that concerned black aldermen, convinced that a home equity law served as another barrier to black homeownership, lobbied the mayor to stall until it could be made more palatable to their constituents. Keck offered another explanation. After he left the organization in 1986 over a back wages dispute, he thought the mayor ceased to trust the federation once it lost its "inside man." While Mayer admitted to the press she did not believe the mayor truly would break his word to her organizations, no one ever learned of Washington's ultimate endgame after his sudden death from a massive heart attack on November 25, 1987.⁵³

Washington's death and the subsequent tumult of appointing a successor reminded the SPNF that the deceased mayor was the foremost African-American supporter of their agenda despite his recent hesitancy. The new mayor, Eugene Sawyer, only reluctantly took the office after heavy pressure from white Democratic party regulars desiring an "acceptable" black

⁵³ Greg Hinz, "Mayor Deals Blow to Home Equity Program" *Northwest Times*, September 3, 1987; *Chicago* (October 1987): 16; "Thompson: Mayor Breaking a Promise," *Chicago Tribune*, October 18, 1987; R. Bruce Dold, "Activists Point Mayor to Sign of the Times," *Chicago Tribune*, October 12, 1987; "Pass the Home Equity Plan," *Chicago Tribune*, November 7, 1987; June 30, 1987 Real Estate Committee Memorandum, SPNF Records, Box 23 Folder 14, CHM; Sally Daly, "Carter May not Support Group's Funding Request," *Southtown Economist*, December 29, 1987; Michele Mohr, "Civic Group Raps Carter," *Southtown Economist*, July 20, 1987; Dave Roeder, "Mayor, Ald. Carter Drop Home-Equity Support," *Southtown Economist*, July 12, 1987; Keck interview.

candidate under their control. He proved far more hostile to the federation's interests than his predecessor.⁵⁴ Sensitive to accusations that he served at the leisure of Edward Vrdolyak and Edward Burke, Sawyer fought the home equity law as a way to prove to black Chicagoans that he deserved Washington's mantle. At this point state lawmakers intervened. Madigan called for a meeting between himself, Sawyer, aldermen, and the SONSOC members to end the home equity standoff. Madigan threatened to make home equity a state law if the city failed to honor the earlier commitments made by Washington. He secured bi-partisan support for the measure with the endorsement of Jim Thompson. Although this pressure forced the city council into voting for the creation of home equity districts on the Northwest and Southwest Side, Sawyer nonetheless exercised his veto. Madigan and Republican leaders in the Illinois Senate then passed a statewide home equity bill which made all future referenda on the creation of special districts for this specific intent binding. Voters on the Southwest Side once again saw a home equity question on the ballot in the November 1988 election. This time 82 percent officially created the program for their communities.⁵⁵

After creating by-laws and nominating candidates for a board of commissioners appointed by the mayor, The Southwest Home Equity Assurance Program accepted homeowner

⁵⁴ Phil Kadner, "Why the Truth is Hardly Ever Black or White," *Southtown Economist*, May 24, 1988; Ray Hanania, "14 Clergy Endorse City Home Equity Insurance," *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 24, 1988; Dave Roeder, "Clergy Favoring Home Equity Unable to Meet with Sawyer," *Southtown Economist*, May 24, 1988; Vernon Jarrett, "Machine's 'Old Boys' Reveal Motives," *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 21, 1988; Tom Brune and Susy Schultz, "A Wary Welcome for Sawyer," *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 3, 1987.

⁵⁵ Tom Danz, "Madigan Takes Reins," *Southwest News-Herald*, January 28, 1988; Dave Roeder, "Madigan Calls Meeting on Home-Equity Issue," *Southtown Economist*, January 23, 1988; Dirk Johnson, "Plan to Insure Home Value Brings Chicago Racial Rift," *New York Times*, February 9, 1988; James Strong, "Home Equity Plan Looks Like Winner," *Chicago Tribune*, November 9, 1988; *1971-1991: The Federation's First Twenty Years*, 1991, SPNF Records, Box 7 Folder 3; History of Home Equity, 1990, obtained from the Clearing office of the Southwest Home Equity Assurance Program. This document was clearly written by a federation member but does not exist in its official archive at the Chicago Historical Museum.

applications for the first time on March 11, 1990. Within a year, 1,500 residents enrolled, which SPNF leaders viewed as a sign of restored confidence in the neighborhood. The program still exists today and is flush with more than \$25 million in accrued tax revenue. It remains the most enduring monument of the federation and the SONSOC, the only key item of the white ethnic agenda to survive the racially complicated political landscape of 1980s Chicago. The SPNF saw the start of the home equity program as vindication for over two decades of hard work, proclaiming in a history written for their twentieth anniversary that cheered “yes, you can fight City Hall; you can also win!”⁵⁶

Many Southwest Side residents saw the sharp rise in their home values within a few years of the creation of their home equity district as proof of the program’s effectiveness. In this aspect, the SPNF saved their neighborhoods but failed in their mission to preserve the white ethnic culture which it professed to champion. Home equity assurance alone could not prevent the white, non-Hispanic populations in Chicago Lawn and Gage Park from falling precipitously. The 1990 census revealed that whites comprised only 42 percent and 56 percent of residents in each respective neighborhood. Although some contemporary interpretations of this data viewed it as proof of stable integration as the Hispanic and African-American populations rose to 25-40 percent in both communities, in truth the 1990 census presented a snapshot of a neighborhood in major transition. This trend continued over the next two decades: by 2010 less than five percent of the residents in both Gage Park and Chicago Lawn were white. Home equity and other efforts by the parish federation were not completely ineffective, retaining a fairly large number of

⁵⁶ R. Bruce Dold, “City Ready to Roll on Home Equity,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 5, 1989; Jim Sulski, “Plan ‘Buys’ Neighborhood Stability,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 17, 1993. Southwest Home Equity Assurance Program Pamphlet, 2015. Present-day materials such as this pamphlet were obtained from the program’s office in the Clearing Neighborhood.

elderly white ethnic homeowners into the 1990s. Yet these same residents lamented the fact that their children and grandchildren ignored the Southwest Side completely when starting their own households, overwhelmingly preferring other city neighborhoods or the larger space—and better schools—in the suburbs. The celebrated Lithuanian businesses and shops along 69th Street were gone by 2010 as most of the patrons moved to Lemont and other southern suburbs. Today not a single Lithuanian restaurant remains within Chicago's city limits.⁵⁷

These demographic changes took their toll on the federation as its leaders and rank-and-file members all moved out or grew old. As early as 1983, an internal assessment noted the group already leaned too heavily on Jean Mayer for leadership and failed to appeal to younger residents. The aging population could not supply new members nor provide sufficient resources to support the organization's financial needs. Fundraising proved difficult even during the federation's apogee—the organization racked up nearly \$120,000 in debt during the push to create the SONSOC—and practically impossible as city grants and parish contributions dwindled in the middle of the 1990s. The Internal Revenue Service nearly ended the federation in 1985 over \$33,000 owed in taxes. The path back to financial solvency included shedding much of its paid staff, and Keck stated that the organization's board fired him and others without paying their back wages. Even absent this bitter fight with many longtime SPNF leaders he once trained, Keck admitted he felt his time as an organizer was up for personal reasons. By the middle of the 1980s he was drinking excessively due to the stresses of the job and the dissolution of his second marriage. He also started to come out of the closet. He said that most closeted gay men his age

⁵⁷ 1990 Report on Marquette Park, SPNF Records, Box 7 Folder 1, CHM. The SPNF's focus on a working-class white ethnic, urban way of life contrasted the dominant trend of postwar suburbanization which shaped middle-class white identity. See Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 3-19.

went to bars—their only real “social scene” in the 1980s—which exacerbated his alcoholism. After recovery, Keck did not return to community organizing and instead became an addictions and mental health counselor until his retirement. He did not lose his activist spirit, however, and today advocates for the unionization of workers in the counseling field.⁵⁸

Although the massive downsizing helped the organization temporarily regain footing, the federation never completely solved its funding problems. With more than 80 percent of its budget coming from bingo games and the staff reduced to a single executive director by 1997, the organization lacked the energy and influence which once allowed it to combat some of the most puissant politicians in the city and the state. An inability to connect with the area’s now sizeable black and Hispanic constituencies also contributed to the parish federation’s demise. Operating on a far smaller budget than its longtime rival since the early 1980s, the Southwest Community Congress managed to survive into the early twenty-first century by making inroads with the area’s racial minorities. As Joe Demal, the executive director of the SCC observed in 1997, “for a good many years the federation was basically the voice of white homeowners in the area and whether they deserved it or not, they had a reputation for being a kind of reactionary organization.”⁵⁹ Largely shunned by the Southwest Side’s newcomers and suffering from a fading base, the Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation dissolved in 1998.

Did the SPNF fail? By the narrow standard of a white ethnic agenda, perhaps, as most residents living on the Southwest Side today between Cicero Avenue and Western Avenue are

⁵⁸ Larry Finley, “S.W. Neighborhood Group Digging Out of Debt into New Life,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, March 2, 1986; Simonette, *Windy City Times*; Keck interview.

⁵⁹ Curtis Lawrence and Pablo Martinez Monsivais, “S.W. Side’s Aging Federation Coming to End of the Road,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 2, 1997; Jeffrey Steele, “Neighborhoods Symbolize New Southwest Side Community Spirit: Community Spirit Still Strong Factor,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 22, 1994.

Hispanic or African-American. Nonetheless, this agenda included powerful tools for neighborhood stability and democracy for the benefit of the homeowners who replaced them, somewhat ironic given the fears that these programs discriminated against non-white racial groups. Although not the parish federation's original intent—at least to the degree that exists today—the organization helped the Southwest Side become more racially diverse. The parish federation even made peace with the SCC in its twilight years as the congress finally endorsed home equity in exchange for input on the commission's board composition, ensuring that black, Hispanic, and white residents alike had representation once the program started in 1990.⁶⁰

The federation made peace with another longtime foe after securing the home equity law: the Chicago Housing Authority. Under a new chairman appointed by Richard M. Daley, Vince Lane, the CHA finally took steps to provide the thousands of units of scattered site housing mandated by the *Gautreaux* decision. Acknowledging the agency's longstanding reputation for mismanagement and waste, as well as its lack of credibility on the Southwest Side, Lane reached out to Mayer and the parish federation to secure their cooperation. Eschewing the top-heavy approach of the Byrne years, the CHA permitted the SPNF to screen all prospective tenants on its behalf. Mayer expressed appreciation, noting this served as the first time the CHA ever offered her organization any input.⁶¹

⁶⁰ For an example of the diversity on the first home equity board, see *SPNF News*, Fall 1989, SPNF Records Box 22 Folder 7.

⁶¹ John O'Brien, "CHA Gives Neighbors New Voice," *Chicago Tribune*, May 10, 1991; Don Hayner, "Lane Sweeps Despair out of CHA—But Will He Stay?" *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 7, 1991. Lane was also known for advocating to tear down failing CHA projects and replace them with mixed-income private developments, a preview of the plan for transformation. He earned accolades from the *Chicago Tribune* for his management of the CHA, until he was convicted for bank fraud in 2001. See "Vince Lane, Visionary and Fraud," *Chicago Tribune*, March 26, 2001.

The partnership between the CHA and SPNF also demonstrated the increasing popularity of privatizing city functions and obligations. Cities across the United States contracted out services to private firms during the 1980s and 1990s as a way to loosen budgetary constraints, and privatization became one of the foremost policies of Richard M. Daley's twenty-two-year stint (1989-2011) as mayor. From the administrative point of view, privatization in theory offered more cost efficient and higher quality service, yet Southwest Side residents ignored technocratic justifications. To them, local privatized programs fulfilled critical purposes the city failed to meet. Home equity assurance allowed residents to spend their own money to provide a bulwark against panic peddling that mayors and aldermen never provided. Both linkage and home equity provided additional tax revenue for specific programs to benefit individual homeowners, not the city's coffers. Indeed, one of the final accomplishments of the parish federation stemmed from the creation of another special service area in 1994, when white, black, and Hispanic residents voted to hire a private security firm to patrol their streets after crime rates rose. The SPNF and other Chicago Lawn denizens first lobbied the mayor and Chicago Police Department for more patrols, yet their pleas yielded no results. The contracted firm, managed by the Lithuanian Human Services Council of the United States, had circumscribed powers—its officers could only observe and report, not arrest. Yet even a mayor who enthusiastically privatized city parking and janitorial services balked at doing the same for public safety. He eventually gave grudging support to the creation of Special Service Area 14 in 1994.⁶²

⁶² The Marquette Park Special Service Area (SSA#14) covers the eastern half of Chicago Lawn: Kedzie Avenue to Bell Avenue, 67th Street to 75th Street. The Chicago City Council passed an ordinance which formalized the taxing district, but Mayor Daley took his time in appointing its first commissioners. The commissioners hired a firm by May of 1995 and its officers have patrolled this section of the neighborhood ever since. See "Special Service Area #14," accessed December 16, 2015, <http://www.mp-security.org/>.

Although the general rightward shift in American politics might serve as the easiest explanation for the increasing reliance upon privatization by political elites and white ethnic residents in Chicago, this explanation has limits. While some of the white ethnic homeowners who supported Reagan in 1980 and 1984, home equity, and the private security patrols might have seen it as a way to advance a conservative ideology, parish federation leaders never justified these in programs this way. Leaders such as Mayer instead presented their organization and members as ideologically flexible and willing to support whichever party helped them out the most. The defection of so many traditional Democratic voters in the 1980s offered the SPNF and the SONSOC significant leverage with the city and state's Democratic establishment. In the most egregious example, the SPNF created thousands of pins with an image of a dead donkey to remind Madigan and other Democratic lawmakers the stakes should they fail to pass a home equity law in 1988.⁶³

Similar to the SCC, however, the parish federation proved no more successful in eliminating racial violence on the Southwest Side. Although the large riots in the park which recurred throughout the 1970s largely subsided with the fall of the neo-Nazi leader, Frank Collin, the Chicago Commission on Human Relations reported that Chicago Lawn led the entire city in hate crimes throughout the late 1980s as thousands of black and Hispanic residents moved in.⁶⁴ The majority of these crimes featured black victims and white perpetrators. Nothing in what remains of the federation records suggests they had an official strategy to specifically prevent

⁶⁴ Sally Daly and Michelle Mohr, "Racial Bias Report Dismays Community Leaders," *Southtown Economist*, February 15, 1988; Dave Roeder, "Southwest Side Takes Lead in 'Bias Crimes,'" *Southtown Economist*, February 7, 1988; Chicago Commission on Human Relations, "Report on Bias January through December 1987," 1, in SPNF Records, Box 19 Folder 11, CHM.

hate crimes, but its leaders routinely condemned acts of violence. Nearly ten years after Dr. King's open housing march, Keck and Connolly issued statements demanding that the Nazis leave the Southwest Side. Federation leaders argued that the stability offered by a successful implementation of their white ethnic agenda would reduce interracial tensions. Keck also stated that federation members routinely booed Collin whenever he tried to crash their meetings, and much to their disappointment, the media never reported this kind of resistance. In 1986, Mayer joined Alderman Marlene Carter, Jim Capraro, the SCC, and local clergy in publicly rebuking fighting instigated in Marquette Park by the Ku Klux Klan.⁶⁵

The SPNF also embodied the changes many Alinsky-style organizations experienced as the "golden age" of community organizing came to a close by the 1990s. Many other community organizations in Chicago and other cities transitioned toward conciliatory, instead of confrontational, strategies due to numerous factors: the achievement of major victories, aging membership, and a perception of legitimacy from major social, political, and economic leaders. While the declination thesis of community organizing suggests groups such as the SPNF "devolved" into a role as a facilitator and provider of services instead of a vanguard of conflict, this undersells the achievements of the parish federation's leaders and members in its twenty-seven-year history. All their fights and protests against realtors, and financial institutions, and several mayors were accompanied by clear, attainable goals. Their ability to as quickly cooperate as they clashed is a testament to their effectiveness. If their initial opposition to Washington stemmed from prejudices some of their members had against the mayor, the federation offered

⁶⁵ Bertlet, 152. The one exceptional year in this case is 1986, the twentieth anniversary of the King march. The Ku Klux Klan staged a rally in Marquette Park which recalled the outbursts of the 1970s, but most of the hate crimes recorded by the CCHR were on a smaller scale. See Larry Weintraub, "17 Arrested, 6 Injured in Racial Clashes Here," *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 29, 1986.

these disaffected voters a constructive outlet for their discontent. If racial anxiety helped propel the SPNF and the SONSOC to unimagined heights in the 1980s, organizational leaders funneled these negative emotions into workable neighborhood policies that netted tangible results. The federation helped put the extreme racial conservatism which previously flourished on the Southwest Side in the late 1960s and early 1970s to rest.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Knoepfle and Joravsky, 1-10.

EPILOGUE

On February 1, 1987, the pastors of St. Clare of Montefalco in Gage Park posed a question to their parishioners: if Jesus addressed them in the park a few blocks down the street, what would he say? They then delivered a reimagined Sermon on the Mount, updated to address the anxieties white ethnic families held about racial change. “Blest are you,” the pastors intoned, “who do not panic and run from our neighborhood in one big wave.” God also blessed those who healed the past traumas wrought by failed race relations on the Southwest Side for the sake of “a new life.” Residents who strived to “welcome your new neighbors on the block, be they white, black, Polish, Mexican and Arab” and cleansed their hearts of prejudice would build a stronger community of the faithful. The pastors also encouraged their congregation to disprove the “negative talk and so many false rumors” which depicted them as racists.

Reprinted across local newspapers over the next two months, the “Gage Park Beatitudes” called for the rebirth of the Southwest Side as a haven for diversity and peace. They also marked a starting point for a new strategic initiative by local parishes, community organizers, academics, and the Greater Southwest Development Corporation called the Southwest Catholic Cluster Project. The Catholic Cluster Project resolved that the Southwest Side would retain its working-class character, even if the area no longer remained predominantly white ethnic and Catholic.¹

¹ “The Text of the Gage Park Beatitudes,” *SWNH*, March 26, 1987. The sermon was delivered to every mass on the February 1, 1987, by the “parish staff.” The principal author was the Rev. James Friedel, OSA.

The 1990 census showed that Chicago Lawn was now just 43 percent white, 28 percent Hispanic, 26 percent Black, and 3 percent Asian (predominantly Arabic). Gage Park was 56 percent white, 39 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent black. Yet Catholic Cluster Project leaders noted that even if the white population never rebounded, the Southwest Side would still be a good place to live, so long as property values did not fall due to hasty sales by jittery homeowners or violent, racist extremism. Even as their numbers declined, Catholic Cluster Project leaders maintained that the remaining white ethnics still played an important role in preserving their neighborhoods for a new generation of residents from different racial and cultural backgrounds.²

In 1990, Catholic Cluster Project leaders attempted to persuade white ethnic residents to buy-in to the notion of a multiracial, multicultural Southwest Side. They insisted that the acceptance of neighborhood change offered both spiritual and material salvation. Parish priests made the first argument in a short booklet, *Christians in Their Neighborhood*, claiming that people who stayed “conscious of their community” kept closer to God in an increasingly impersonal world. Citing the Second Vatican Council, the priests noted that the Church now called for Catholics to practice a more communal faith. “To the Christian, the neighborhood, like the Bible and like the Eucharist, is a sacrament,” the priests wrote, “it is something that can reveal Christ ‘to those who have eyes to see.’” Merely going to mass every Sunday did not suffice; Southwest Side Catholics must toil for stable neighborhoods by rejecting racial violence, their own prejudices, and participating in community organizations. They confessed that as

² Jim Capraro, *The Future of Southwest Chicago: Where Are We Going? How Will We Get There?* (Chicago: Southwest Catholic Cluster Project, 1990), 11.

spiritual leaders, they often did not set a good example in the past. Many former Catholic pastors rarely voiced direct support for integration outside of providing startup money for organizations such as the SCC. Worse, they acknowledged that priests who previously defended segregation compromised the moral authority they now reclaimed. They also emphasized that the black, Hispanic, and Muslim families moving into Chicago Lawn worshipped the same God as white ethnic Catholics. Reflecting the Alinsky spirit of the parish federation to which many of their parishes still belonged, the priests suggested that “it will be in our Christian self-interest” to live on the Southwest Side in the 1990s and beyond. Nonetheless, they rejected any proposals for conservation which simply tried to “discourage” people from moving. Change was inevitable.³

Jim Capraro, with the input of historian Dominic Pacyga and other community leaders, laid out the economic case for the Southwest Side’s future. He noted that the city and federal government recently made a \$510 billion investment on the Southwest Side: a rapid transit line which ran from the Loop to Midway Airport, today known as the Orange Line. Capraro stated that the kind of bungalow homes which predominated on the Southwest Side often sold for nearly \$50,000-\$60,000 more on the Northwest Side. He argued that the public transportation of the North Side, with its multitude of ‘L’ lines, served as reason for this disparity. The Southwest Side, on the other hand, remained dependent on cars and busses after the end of World War II, effectively isolating it from the job-rich Loop. Capraro argued that for the Southwest Side to remain competitive in the city’s emerging postindustrial, service-sector economy, the “new working-class” needed both a convenient way to get to work and an affordable place to live. The

³ “Stability is Possible on the Southwest Side,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, February 20, 1990; Rev. Michael Slattery, O.S.A., Ellen Skerrett, and William Droel, *Christians in their Neighborhood* (Chicago: Southwest Catholic Cluster Project, 1990), 1-11. Ellen Skerret did not receive formal credit for her contributions to this booklet, but she pointed out that the original authors copied some of her writing.

workers of the 1990s no longer just meant a man in dirty overalls; they now included more “computer keypunch operators” and “women sporting dresses, gym shoes, and headphones.”⁴ The Orange Line and modestly priced bungalow homes made the Southwest Side an attractive option for such workers, and Capraro predicted that the increased volume of home sales would raise existing residents’ property values. He also pointed out that the recently enacted home equity assurance program gave homeowners a failsafe against panic peddling. His prediction came true. Even prior its completion in October 1993, the Orange Line spurred a sharp increase in home prices and the development of several shopping centers near its stations.⁵

Catholic Cluster Project leaders extensively advertised their mission. They printed 60,000 copies *Christians in Their Neighborhood* and *The Future of the Southwest Community*. Each participating parish distributed the booklets at mass, which contained photographs of black, Arabic, Hispanic, and white children playing and praying together. In June 1990, ten parishes hosted an interethnic service to profess their “diversity-yet-unity in Christ.” Five hundred Catholics marched down 63rd Street from Maria High School to St. Rita of Cascia, proudly holding the flags of Poland, Mexico, and Lithuania. Women in traditional Lithuanian garb carried the communion wafers to the church’s altar while a Mexican chorus sang in Spanish.

⁴ Capraro, *The Future of Southwest Chicago*, 3.

⁵ Capraro, *The Future of Southwest Chicago*, 12; Capraro interview, August 3, 2016. In the interview, Capraro stated that the Orange Line allowed the Southwest Side to reclaim its original neighborhood function: a place which housed workers which then were “exported” to their places of employment; Gary Washburn, “Southwest Side May Be on Fast Track,” *Chicago Tribune* January 21, 1990; Alfred Borcover, “Quickening the Pace: Rapid Transit Line Spurs Interest in Development, Housing on Southwest Side,” October 10, 1993. Midway Airport is an economic titan in its own right: a 2001 study by Booz, Allen, and Hamilton, a private consultancy firm, estimated that the Southwest Side Airport directly and indirectly created 90,000 jobs, \$2.1 billion in income, and 3.1% wage growth. See “Update Study on the Economic Impact of Chicago’s Airports,” Booz, Allen, and Hamilton (2001), at ftp://ftp.agl.faa.gov/2009-03-01_LOI/Economic%20Studies/Update%20Chicago%20Aviation_Booz%20Allen_2001.pdf, accessed September 5, 2016.

Capraro remarked that “the reaction most people had today was: ‘This was wonderful, it’s the beginning of a tradition, it will grow, this really can work.’”⁶

The true effectiveness of the Catholic Cluster Project became evident five years later. Chicago Lawn no longer led the city in hate crimes. Residents of all races used Marquette Park peacefully. Property values continued to improve, and none of the homeowners participating in the home equity assurance program filed a claim. Residents interviewed by the *Chicago Sun-Times* expressed happiness for the improved racial relations. Sociologists and civil rights organizations cited Chicago Lawn as an example of “stable integration.”⁷ Still, not everything went perfectly. The benefits of the Orange Line did not reach everyone. The eastern halves of Chicago Lawn and Gage Park faced higher numbers of commercial vacancies and foreclosures during the 1990s, resulting in a higher violent crime rate than the rest of the Southwest Side. The white population across the Southwest Side continued to fall. Most of those who stayed were elderly seniors who did not want to take out a new mortgage to move away. The fact that most of the new homeowners who replaced them were Hispanic, not African American, surprised leaders of the Catholic Cluster Project. Dominic Pacyga recalled that no one saw that demographic pattern coming, although in hindsight it made perfect sense. After all, Southwest Side neighborhoods often represented the next rung of social status for upwardly mobile first or second generation immigrants living in crowded neighborhoods such as Pilsen, South Lawndale,

⁶ Daniel J. Lehmann, “Priests, Laity Put Faith in Battle Against S.W. Side Bias,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 4, 1990.

⁷ J. Linn Allen, “Rare Blend: Achieving, Maintaining Diversity Is No Easy Task,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 28, 1993.

or Back of the Yards. Many of the first white ethnic families who moved to the Southwest Side came from the same places decades earlier.⁸

The dwindling white ethnic population deprived the Southwest Side's two long standing Alinsky organizations, the Southwest Community Congress and the Southwest Parish Federation, of fresh resources and new leaders. Both ceased to exist by the start of the twenty-first century. Recognizing that the Southwest Side's new majority of black, Hispanic, and Arabic residents needed their own version of the SCC and SPNF, the Catholic Cluster Project rebranded themselves as the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) in 1996. The executive director of the Catholic Cluster Project, Jeff Bartow, serves SWOP in the same capacity today. Other ties to past organizing efforts existed, too. Bartow recalls how SCC members, at this point in their seventies, attended early SWOP meetings to symbolically pass along the torch.⁹

SWOP gained an important ally the year of its formation, when a young graduate from DePaul University, Rami Nashashibi, founded the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN). Although growing up in a secular household, Nashashibi's mentorship under a former member of the Black Panther party while in college inspired him to combine grassroots activism with his faith. IMAN primarily focuses upon providing job training and health services to people of all religious backgrounds on the Southwest Side. SWOP, IMAN, and the Greater Southwest Development Corporation all work closely together in the present day. Their offices, all located on the same four block stretch of 63rd Street, present a formidable corridor of empowerment that

⁸ Pacyga interview.

⁹ Annie Sweeney, "Seeking Diversity Amid Racial Strife, Interfaith Group Works to Mend Widening Rifts," Interview with Jeff Bartow, *Chicago Tribune*, April 28, 1997.

honors the tradition of Southwest Side community organizing begun by the SCC, SPNF, and South Lynne Community Council.¹⁰

Residents today take pride in diversity they have achieved. This commitment to tolerance shone after the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, when hundreds of people from SWOP and nearby synagogues stood guard outside of Chicago Lawn mosques to ward off any potential vandals during Friday prayers. SWOP's logo affirms this alliance: a star and crescent moon next to the profile of a brick bungalow topped by a cross.¹¹ In 2005, the GSDC and SWOP organized a rally of 700 residents, black, white, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim, at an elementary school named after the founder of Chicago Lawn, John Eberhart. They gathered "to celebrate connections between residents" and "reinvent Chicago Lawn, one relationship at a time." Jim Capraro asked the audience if this was possible, and they shouted back in English and Spanish, "Si, se puede! Yes, we can!" One Hispanic Sunday school teacher in attendance remarked that while her family faced some prejudice when they first moved into the neighborhood, the meeting at Eberhart was a revelation. "The feeling I had onstage was wonderful. My heart was pounding to see all the white people, black people, and Hispanic people together," she explained, "and to be reminded of that, I want to cry. My skin goes bumpy. It was so beautiful."¹²

¹⁰ Margaret Ramirez, "Muslim Confronts Needs of City: Activist Sees Poverty, Gangs as Top Threats to Urban Brethren, and He Won't Stand for It," *Chicago Tribune*, May 3, 2006.

¹¹ Noreen S. Ahmen, "Muslims Witness Support Amid Anger," *Chicago Tribune*, September 15, 2001.

¹² Patrick T. Reardon, "Agents of Change: Reinvent the Chicago Lawn Neighborhood? Si, se puede! Yes, we can!" *Chicago Tribune*, September 22, 2005.

On August 5, 2016, a collaboration between Southwest Side mosques, parishes, SWOP, IMAN, and numerous other civil rights organizations unveiled a memorial honoring the memory of Dr. King and the Chicago Freedom Movement in Marquette Park at 67th Street and Kedzie Avenue. The memorial includes sculptures depicting King and the activists who followed him in 1966, but it also highlights the diversity of the Southwest Side today. Artistic tiles designed by current residents depicting their idea of “home” in multiple languages appear alongside the avatars of the past. The next day, thousands of people of every racial and religious backgrounds joined the veterans of the Freedom Movement to re-enact the open housing march through Marquette Park. They recognized the impact of the civil rights movement while acknowledging the long strides the nation still must take to achieve a racially just society.¹³

The displays of tolerance, respect, and love over the past fifteen years demonstrate how an important part of the vision of the Catholic Cluster Project came to pass on the Southwest Side. Yet their aspirations were only partially fulfilled. Documents such as *Christians in Their Neighborhood* imagined a more heterogeneous Southwest Side that included white ethnic families happily co-existing with neighbors of different races. Younger white ethnics, however, largely opted against raising their families in the neighborhoods where they grew up. The final remnants of white ethnic institutions now fade like the embers of a dying fire. The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary still offers Lithuanian mass, many of the parishioners who attend travel in from a distant suburb. The famed Polish shops, delis, and restaurants of the Southwest Side have

¹³ See “The Martin Luther King Living Memorial,” accessed August 10, 2016, <http://www.mlkmemorialchicago.org/the-project/the-1000-mile-march/>; Kelly Bauer, “MLK Honored in Marquette Park 50 Years After Freedom Movement,” *DNAInfo Chicago*, accessed February 5, 2017, <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20160806/marquette-park/mlk-honored-marquette-park-march-50-years-after-freedom-movement>.

largely given way to taquerias, panaderias, and mercados. The razing of the massive Talman Savings and Loan building in 2013 perhaps best symbolized the end of one era and the start of the new. Rocked by the recession of the early 1980s and weakened by a merger with another large Chicago thrift, Talman went technically insolvent by 1991. A merger with LaSalle Bank marked the end of Talman's independence, and the hulking facility served as a branch for a series of new corporate parents until closing in 2012. Fittingly, the savings and loan so closely tied to the fortunes of the various white ethnic communities who used it left alongside them.¹⁴

Although today few in number, the white ethnics of the Southwest Side left an important legacy behind for current residents. SWOP, IMAN, and the GSDC embody an ethos that ordinary residents could come together to solve their neighborhood's problems, just as the SLCC, SCC, and SPNF did. Like their white ethnic predecessors, the community organizations which now champion the Southwest Side combat remarkably similar problems. Whether in 1966 or 2017, housing remains the issue. Several years before the real estate market collapsed and the subsequent recession in 2008, both SWOP and the GSDC expressed concern at the prevalence of predatory lending and the growing numbers of foreclosures across the Southwest Side. The new racial and ethnic makeup of Chicago Lawn made it a juicy target for subprime lenders and their agents, who gravitated toward the large concentration of working-class, immigrant, and elderly residents with poor-to-no credit.

¹⁴ "2010 Census Data by Community Area," CMAP Data Hub, accessed February 5, 2017, <https://datahub.cmap.illinois.gov/dataset/2010-census-data-summarized-to-chicago-community-areas>; William Gruber, "Talman Home to Shut Branches," *Chicago Tribune*, January 17, 1985; Mike Dorning, LaSalle's Owner to Buy Talman, *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1991; Nancy Ryan, "Old World Values Built Talman," *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1991;

Like the blockbusting realtors who once marauded across the South Side, twenty-first century mortgage brokers utilized a myriad of deceitful tactics to win the confidence of Southwest Side families. Mortgage brokers overtook numerous storefronts on Pulaski Avenue between the Eisenhower Expressway and 63rd Street and preyed upon the desire of many Hispanic residents to achieve the dream of home ownership. These brokers perversely twisted the slogan of “Si, se puede”—the joyous motto of an optimistic new community—into a siren’s call offering “affordable” adjustable-rate mortgages. They misled their clients about the interest rates on their loans, and a GSDC investigation discovered that nearly 60 percent of all loan files featured inaccuracies that harmed borrowers. Other brokers, often hailing from the same village in Mexico as an immigrant family, falsely claimed that those who qualified for conventional loans risked deportation if they refused to use an intermediary.¹⁵ Convinced they had no other option, many borrowers relied upon these brokers for unfair home loans and soon found themselves unable to keep up with their mortgage payments. Their new homes went into foreclosure.

The results were disastrous. By 2005, the Southwest Side had 3,343 out of 7,499 (44.5 percent) of all foreclosures in Chicago. Nearly every block in Chicago Lawn, particularly east of Kedzie Avenue, featured at least two or three boarded up properties during the height of the recession. On some streets, nearly half of the homes went into foreclosure. Worse, many of the banks that initiated foreclosure proceedings, viewing Southwest Side homes as worthless after the housing bubble deflated, refused to put them back on the market. One report noted that while

¹⁵ Jacob Wheeler, “Life on Mortgage Street: Two Brothers Face Opposing Realities,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, March 16, 2007; Kimbriell Kelly, “The High Price of Home Ownership,” *Chicago Reporter*, December 1, 2007.

banks often still performed basic upkeep on properties in wealthier, whiter communities, they often did nothing to fix busted windows and doors in neighborhoods with larger minority populations.¹⁶ The financial industry redlined the Southwest Side once again, except the perpetrators were now giant, distant global banking behemoths—not a local savings and loan down the street. Indeed, Deutsche Bank AG, based in Frankfurt Germany, held most of the vacant homes, a fact that caused one *Chicago Tribune* reporter to designate Marquette Park as “ground zero of the international financial collapse.”¹⁷ The multitude of “zombie” properties depressed property values and presented notable public safety hazards. Street gangs moved into many of them, exacerbating crime. Jeff Bartow minced no words during the recession, stating that “our neighborhood is hemorrhaging.” Even Capraro, a longtime booster for the Southwest Side, concluded “we’re circling down the drain.”¹⁸

Yet people of the Southwest Side and their community organizations did not surrender. They banded together and fought back against the tide of foreclosures—house by house, block by block. With large corporate banks uninterested in maintain their foreclosed homes, residents took matters into their own hands. IMAN assumed ownership of one-long abandoned “zombie,” a Deutsche Bank-owned two flat on Fairfield Avenue. A magnet for drugs and crime, IMAN successfully renovated the building into a safe property. SWOP, with advisement from the GSDC, secured \$9 million from the city and the state to purchase numerous vacancies, hire a

¹⁶ Robin Amer, “Redlining Redefined,” *1964 Project*, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://www.the1964project.com?p=160>.

¹⁷ John McCarron, “See the Global Crash Hit Home,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 29, 2009.

¹⁸ Mary Ellen Podmolik, “A Neighborhood in Crisis: Spate of Foreclosures Puts Chicago Lawn, other African-American Communities in Downward Spiral,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 30, 2009.

private contractor to rehabilitate them, and sell them to prospective buyers for \$80,000. With the help of Neighborhood Housing Services, these organizations implemented a mortgage counselling service—not unlike what the SCC offered residents in the late 1970s—for distressed homebuyers and initiated a pilot program with Bank of America to refinance subprime loans. SWOP also surveyed every foreclosure in Chicago Lawn in 2013. They presented the data to Mayor Rahm Emanuel, hoping to force banks which make lucrative business deals with the city to take better care of their residential possessions. While the results of these initiatives remain to be seen, SWOP, GSDC, and IMAN will not remain idle in healing the scars left by the recession.¹⁹

Much remains to be done as the neighborhood—and the city and nation at-large—recovers from one of the worst economic crises in history. Foreclosure rates declined precipitously since the recession yet stay higher than other neighborhoods in Chicago. Most of the Southwest Side enjoys low crime, but the violent crime rate in Gage Park and Chicago Lawn exceeds the city’s average. The GSDC continues to court entrepreneurs for businesses to replace those which closed on 63rd Street over the past ten years. Notable leaders and organizations remain behind to defend the Southwest Side and its inhabitants, and they have a wealth of experience and history to draw upon. The rows of humble, stoic brick bungalows lining the residential streets of the Southwest Side have weathered race riots, redlining, and blockbusting over their long lifespans. They will survive the foreclosure crisis, too. They continue to stand and still beckon to Chicago’s

¹⁹ Angela Caputo, “A City Ordinance is Failing to Keep Owners of Vacant Properties in Check,” *Chicago Reporter*, November 27, 2013; Caputo, “Reclaiming the Avenue,” *Chicago Reporter*, May 11, 2014; Maria Ines Zamudio, “Match-Makers,” *Chicago Reporter*, May 11, 2014; Interview with Ghian Foreman, February 16, 2015, in author’s possession (hereafter Foreman interview).

working families. They are the platform which will allow the Southwest Side to reinvent itself once more in the twenty-first century.²⁰

²⁰ SWOP states that as of 2016, Chicago Lawn now has 2.2 foreclosures per 100 residential properties, down from 7.5 in 2008. This remains above the city average of .9 foreclosures per 100 residential properties, however. See Chris Brown, “The Good News and Bad News about Foreclosures,” Southwest Organizing Project, accessed February 4, 2017, <http://swopchicago.org/2016/11/11/the-good-news-and-bad-news-about-foreclosures/>; Foreman interview; Foreman is the current executive director of the GSDC after Capraro’s retirement in 2014.

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