

**UCLA**

**UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations**

**Title**

Push Back: Race, Jobs and the Struggle for Power in the Late Twentieth Century

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5tk0x3c9>

**Author**

Baker III, Robert Earl

**Publication Date**

2013

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Push Back:

Race, Jobs and the Struggle for Power in the Late Twentieth Century

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor  
of Philosophy in History.

by

Robert Earl Baker III

2013

Copyright by  
Robert Earl Baker III  
2013

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Push Back:

Race, Jobs and the Struggle for Power

in the Late Twentieth Century

by

Robert Earl Baker III

Doctor of Philosophy in History University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Scot Brown, Chair

In the mid-1960s, the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was at a crossroads. The exploding African American population, combined with the growing strength of the Civil Rights movement, challenged the socially democratic principles on which the city was founded. While the growing black population provided surplus labor for the robust manufacturing sector, the racially restricted housing market helped foster a discriminatory, yet often times "color-blind" political climate, that challenged and undermined the growing political strength of the African American community well into the late 1990s.

This dissertation surveys the last 40 years of local public policy and African American activism in Milwaukee to deepen the growing discourse around Michelle Alexander's concept "the New Jim Crow", challenge the notion that effective black activism ended in the 1960s, and to uncover how black activists in the late twentieth century struggled for power.

While today's political discourse is dominated by the debate over cutting the social safety network, in the 1980s and 1990s, the political and business elite in Milwaukee first advanced the ending of AFDC, the growth of the local prison economy, and the development of an anti-youth central business district, to maintain control of the local political narrative, divert resources from public institutions and sustain the racial status quo. Although wrapped in anti-discriminatory rhetoric that frequently avoided mentioning race, the local political narrative hinged on stoking racial fear to justify eliminating social services and public programs and ramping up police presence in black communities.

Although many African American organizations and causes were unable to adjust to this multi-pronged barrage of punitive color-blind policy and the subsequent rise of rampant joblessness, a coalition of black leaders led by former black-militant-turned-turned-local-bureaucrat Howard Fuller, was able to shift the local political narrative, challenge white-led institutions for public resources and forever alter the public economy by shifting resource allocations in the Milwaukee Public School System. Today, the movement to advance choice and alternative schooling may be perceived as a product of conservative activism, but a deeper analysis of the social and political context in which these movements first took root reveals a much more nuanced, yet radical, brand of black activism that was only made possible by the growing political strength of post-Civil Rights black America.

The dissertation of Robert Baker III is approved by

Tobias Higbie

Walter Allen

Richard Weiss

Scot Brown, Committee Chair

University of California Los Angeles

2013

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Glossary of Useful Terms.....	v
List of Abbreviations.....	vii
List of Tables.....	viii.
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Vita.....	xii
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Backdrop: Work, Poverty and Crime.....	43
3. Mayor Frank Zeidler’s Attempts to Build are Thwarted.....	68
4. Frontlines: The War on Drugs Exacerbates Tensions.....	94
5. Push Back: The rise of “Tough Love” Policies.....	129
6. Opportunity: A Survey of Grassroots Struggle.....	158
7. Howard Fuller and the Future of Black power.....;	196
8. <i>Black Milwaukee</i> Revisited .....	246
10. Bibliography.....	256

## GLOSSARY of USEFUL TERMS

*Activist:* Community member engaged in the act of improving one's community through grassroots action

*Black Power:* Historically associated with the Black Nationalist and cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s, for the purpose of this study, black power means the social, cultural, political and/or economic empowerment of black people

*Chapter 220:* A statewide bill passed in WI in 1975 that attempted to end segregation by busing inner city youth to suburban schools

*Civic Process:* Democratic participatory processes, like voting, or legislative advocacy to cause change

*Color-Blindness:* A term developed by Critical Race theorists to describe the trend by politicians, the courts and decision makers to ignore race and the impacts of racism in public settings. Color-blindness has made it difficult to advocate for racial justice.

*Commandos:* Milwaukee's NAACP Youth Council 1964-1969

*Critical Race Theory:* Theory promoted by legal scholars who study the impacts of race in the law and politics

*Justice for Ernest Lacy Coalition:* Ernest Lacy, an innocent man, was killed by police in 1981. As a result, a coalition of activists and organizers formed to mobilize the community for justice

*Mobilize:* A term associated with community organizing, usually meaning to take action

*Movement:* Grassroots organizations and individuals working together to advance policy or social changes

*Neo Liberalism:* A trend in local, state and federal government, which sees elected officials privatizing public goods and services

*Open Housing:* Housing that isn't defined or limited by state-sponsored segregation



*Organizer:* Community member engaged in mobilizing peers and community members for a specific cause

*Politics:* The struggle for finite resources

*Political Economy:* Historically the term “political economy” has been associated with Marxist theory. For the purpose of this study the term is used to describe monies, jobs, and investments procured from public dollars

*Power:* The ability to influence decision makers to act in one’s best interest. Often demonstrated through mobilizing people or money.

*Stakeholders:* Person or group of people who identify with a specific plan of action or institution

## IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS

WPA – Work Progress Administration  
CETA – Comprehensive Employment and Training Act  
DOC – Department of Corrections  
MPD – Milwaukee Police Department  
MUSIC – Milwaukee United School Integration Committee  
NALC – Negro American Labor Committee  
NAACP – National Association of Colored People  
CORE – Congress of Racial Equality  
MPA – Milwaukee Police Association  
MTEA – Milwaukee Teachers’ Education Association  
MATC – Milwaukee Area Technical College  
SDC – Social Development Commission  
AFDC – Aid for Families with Dependent Children

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Milwaukee African American Population 1900-2000.....45

Table 2. Milwaukee Total Violent Crimes 1990-2005.....102

Table 3. Milwaukee Homicide/Murder 1990-2005.....103

Table 4. & 5. Chicago and Milwaukee murder per 100,000 1980-2005.....,...105

Table 6. Milwaukee Police Funding Adopted Budget 1986-1992.....118

Table 7. Milwaukee Violent Crime and Murder by Race 1990-1999.....136

Table 8. Milwaukee African American Population 1970-1990.....137

Tables 9, 10 & 11. 1986, 1990, 1994 Gubernatorial Results.....149

Tables 12 & 13. Infant Mortality and Prenatal Care First Trimester 1985-1995.....152

Table 14. Milwaukee Low Birthweight 1985-1995.....153

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation project almost never happened. In fall 2003, I became an organizer for the Los Angeles Organizing Committee of the National Hip-Hop Political Convention. By the time we got to the national convention, a powerful event held on Rutgers University's Newark, NJ, campus June 16-19, 2004, I was serving as the California State Chair and spending less time on research. By fall 2004 I was a full-time organizer with the League of Young Voters, a national organization of which I am currently the executive director.

Prior to becoming a full-time organizer practitioner, I had begun writing a prospectus focused on "hip-hop as a tool of political resistance," yet as hip-hop studies were growing on university campuses, and I spent more time organizing, I was having trouble coming up with something unique to offer the academy. I want to thank Professor Scot Brown for helping me find my way, and patiently helping me construct my project. He pushed me to think critically about the role black politics played in the 1980s and 1990s, and, although I started my graduate program a decade ago, he felt it was possible to write a strong history about black power in the late twentieth-century Milwaukee *if* I started my inquiry by assessing some of the questions brought up by Joe William Trotter's *Black Milwaukee: The Making of the Industrial Proletariat 1915-1945*. Although I was worried about the "recency" of the project, and initially resistant because I saw myself as a cultural historian, Professor Brown's advice reinvigorated my academic career and undoubtedly helped me become a stronger organizer practitioner.

I want to thank Professors Tobias Higbie, Walter Allen and Richard Weiss for being patient with me as I worked out the details of my project. Their gentle encouragement, check-ins and reminders that I had the potential to finish were appreciated. I also want to thank the UCLA Labor Center for inspiring me to become an organizer. Without the support of Kent Wong, I would have never had an opportunity to apply the theory I was learning while reading civil rights and black power histories. Inspired by many of the activists I met or worked with in South Los Angeles, including Rev. James Lawson, Jayson Pope, Rob McGowen, Lisa Nevins, Gloria Walton, Tarik Ross, Kyle Stewart, Bernard Dory and Anthony Thigpen, the UCLA Labor Center provided me and other students a real-life learning lab to test our assumptions as organizers. Dr. Marcyliena Morgan, whose constant support and advice continued after she left UCLA's Center for African American Studies, was also a huge help to me during my time on campus.

I also want to thank the thousands of young leaders I met while finishing this project. Although Peneil Joseph argues that Barack Obama 2008's campaign victory should be seen as an extension of the Black Power movement, when the National Hip-Hop Political Convention and the League of Young Voters launched in 2003, none of us could have predicted the nation would elect a black president five years later. Unfortunately, although many friends, loved ones, and coworkers helped set the stage for Obama's victory, the problems that have plagued the black community for the last 40 years have not gone away. I am sure that most of us who are now advancing in age haven't given up our attempt to improve the socio-economic standing of our communities.

One of the most important lessons I learned while writing this dissertation is that we have much to learn from our ancestors and elders from the labor, civil rights and black power movements, and that our generation must take seriously our efforts to transform our communities. The progressive movement's strongest campaigns used creative tension (civil disobedience, direct action) and political power (courts, electoral politics) to fight against inequality. If today's activists are to continue with that tradition we must better articulate our policy demands and increase our willingness to work in coalitions. Fortunately, leaders like Congresswoman Gwen Moore, Paul Blackman and Howard Fuller have left impressive blueprints for us to study.

Finally, I'd like to thank my wife, Jayme Montgomery-Baker, and son, Robert Earl Baker IV, my parents, Robert Baker Jr. and Dawn Baker, and my mother-in-law, Jacqueline Montgomery, for being patient with me as I missed far too many family functions to finish this project. Their prayers, steadfast patience and constant reminders that I should "just go ahead and finish" motivated me to complete this project. I might not have always expressed it, but I have appreciated their love and encouragement. I thank God for them bearing with me during this process.

## VITA

### EDUCATION:

June 2002 (Never Completed -Transferred to History Ph.D.)  
MA African American Studies  
University of California- Los Angeles

Spring 1996  
BA African American Studies BA Political Studies  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

### RESEARCH:

April, 2012-June, 2012

Effect of Voter ID message on African American election turnout. (Collaboration with the League of Young Voters, Analyst Institute and New Organizing Institute.)

- Convened principals for largest civic engagement field experiment ever conducted in African American community.
- Helped design experiment protocols and research questions.
- Coordinated field team that implemented 100,000 household field survey.

Sept 2005-May 2007  
Stanford Hip-Hop Archive Research Fellow

August, 2002-June, 2004  
Research Assistant/Archivist  
UCLA Labor Center (Rev. James Lawson)

- Developed classroom materials for historic civil rights activist.
- Sorted personal papers and archive materials.
- Wrote official 70th Birthday/Commemoration Biographical Note.

Summer, 2002 Summer Internship Program

UCLA Labor Center

- Participant in an intensive internship that focused on training the next generation of labor leaders.
- Learned techniques in power analysis and campaign planning.
- Labor research.
- Conducted survey of international workers movements.

JOURNALS: (Academic/Professional)

Summer 2012

Shelter Force: Journal of Affordable Housing and Community Building (National Housing Institute) No. 6 August, 2012

*"Picking up the Pieces After ACORN."*

Momentum Magazine (A periodical published by the Tides Foundation) Fall 2012

*"Truthing the Field: How Gaps in the Voter File Can Help Us Win the Future."*

Socialism and Democracy Vol 18, Issue 2, 2004

Special Issue: Hip Hop, Race, and Cultural Politics

*"Take Me To Your Leader: A Critical Analysis of the National Hip-Hip Summit Action Network."*

Revolutions of the Mind: Cultural Studies in the African Diaspora Project (A Book Published by UCLA's Center For African American Studies 2003 Edition

*"Afros & Mics."*

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE:

April 2008- Present

**Executive Director**

The League of Young Voters/League of Young Voters Education Fund

June 2006 -March 2008

**National Organizing Director**

League of Young Voters

The League of Young Voters Education Fund



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

By the late 1970s, with gas prices and inflation soaring, Milwaukee's biggest manufacturing firms were downsizing, consolidating and/or closing their doors and reopening in other markets with cheaper labor forces. The winds of change were in the air and once-stable black neighborhoods on Milwaukee's segregated north side were forever altered by the economic shifts. In 1970, manufacturing employed 41% of workers living in north side census tracts with high concentrations of African Americans. By 2000, only 19% held industrial jobs. As a result, by 2000, unemployment in black neighborhoods was four times the metro Milwaukee average.<sup>1</sup> The hardest hit were African American workers, many of whom a generation prior left the south or other northern cities for steady work in the city's many machine shops and auto part plants. Between 1970 and 2000, unemployment in Milwaukee's black community tripled as African American unemployment grew from 5.2% to 16.2%, crushing the black middle class. Additionally during this period, black households below the poverty line grew from 28% to 67%. By the time the former manufacturing giant A.O. Smith, a plant with nearly a 30% black workforce, sold its north side operation in 1997, the impact of the rapid loss of work was felt throughout every aspect of inner city life as poverty, unemployment and violence became permanent fixtures of black life in Milwaukee.<sup>2</sup>

During this time period, Milwaukee's black population experienced high levels of poverty similar to African Americans living in other Rust Belt cities like Chicago, Detroit,

---

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau. *1970 and 2000 Milwaukee County Households Poverty by Status* Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 2011

and Cleveland. Rapid deindustrialization impacted every Milwaukee neighborhood, but it hit working-class black households the hardest. In 1970, Milwaukee had 11 census tracts in which 40% or more of the residents were poor, but by 2000 that number jumped to 43 census tracts. Even during the economic upswing of the 1990s, individuals living in black neighborhoods continued to experience depression-era levels of unemployment and disarray.<sup>3</sup>

In this environment, African American males especially faced tremendous obstacles, with black male unemployment hovering between 40-50% for most of the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>4</sup> And the social consequences of poverty were often deadly.<sup>5</sup> Violent crime nearly doubled between 1970 and 1999 and the city's homicide victims, mostly African American males, also doubled despite population losses.<sup>6</sup> African American incarceration was also on the rise, as African Americans disproportionately filled the state's prisons, despite never being more than 6% of the state population.<sup>7</sup> By 2005, once-"clean and safe" black neighborhoods in Milwaukee such as Sherman Park, Metcalfe Park, and Brewers Hill, that had once pulled tens of thousands of blacks away

---

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau. *1970 Poverty Demographic Report, 1970 Census, Milwaukee County, WI* Washington, DC: US Census Bureau via *Social Explorer 2010*

<sup>3</sup>US Census Bureau *2000 Poverty Demographic Report, 2000 Census, Milwaukee County WI,* Washington, DC: US Census Bureau via *Social Explorer 2010*

<sup>4</sup> Levine, Marc. "The Two Milwaukees: Separate and Unequal." The Milwaukee County Task Force on Segregation and Race Relations April 30, 2003

<sup>5</sup> Oliver, Pam "Wisconsin Total Admission"

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~oliver/RACIAL/Graphics/WisconsinTotal.htm> (March: 2011)

<sup>6</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Uniform Crime Reports and Index of Crime in Milwaukee in the State of Wisconsin enforced by Milwaukee Police from 1985 to 2005"

<sup>7</sup> US Census Bureau. "State and County Quick Facts"

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/55000.html> Washington DC: US Census Bureau, 2011

from Southern cities and northern ghettos in Chicago, had been dubbed by one critic as the worst place in America “to be black.”<sup>8</sup>

Yet, despite the tough economic realities, during this period blacks became more powerful politically than they ever had been due to the city’s shifting demographics.

White flight, which started in the 1950s, continued into the 1990s as whites abandoned north-side census tracts and election wards that historically elected white candidates.<sup>9</sup> The exodus of whites was coupled with a rapidly growing African American population.

Although African Americans did not start moving en masse to Milwaukee until the 1950s, by the late 1990s, their population swelled to nearly 40% of the city’s entire population<sup>10</sup> and African American representation grew at all levels of local government.

While the strength in numbers provided African Americans newfound political power, the legal victories of the national Civil Rights movement had also fundamentally altered the political landscape at the local level. The shifting legal precedent brought on by *Brown v. Board* and federal legislation like the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1965 Voting Rights Act and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, opened new possibilities for change at the local level. Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, the African American community asserted its power and won significant policy wins at the local level, including a landmark legal victory to end segregation schooling, and a precedent-establishing statewide housing bill, which would precede the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

As in other parts of the country, the sweeping changes brought on by the rights revolution

---

<sup>8</sup> Dixon, Bruce. “Ten Worst Places to Be Black.” *Black Commentator* July, 2005

<sup>9</sup> Doug Hissom. “Milwaukee’s Suburban Apartheid: America’s No. 2 Segregated City has BIG problems to solve” *Shepherd Express* December 12, 2002

<sup>10</sup> US Census Bureau. *City of Milwaukee Quick Facts: 2000 Census* (Washington DC: US Census Bureau, 2011) <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/55/5553000.html>

shifted the balance of local power by forcing institutions to behave more equitably. Emboldened by the momentum, Milwaukee's black community pressed ahead for equality and power.<sup>11</sup>

No longer confined by racially restrictive housing covenants, between 1970 and 2000 the African American population expanded throughout Milwaukee's north side. And for the first time in the city's history, black political leaders were able to have significant influence on public policy at the local and state levels. Although African Americans were never a majority at any level of local government and thus unable to pass many sweeping reforms, African American leaders held positions of power in many of Milwaukee's biggest bureaucratic institutions and were able to influence significantly the direction of the city's political economy in ways unimaginable in previous decades. And although the city has yet to elect a black mayor or county supervisor, African Americans have held positions of power as the chief of police, sheriff, school superintendent and city council president. Yet despite this political power, the socio-economic statistics indicate that blue-collar African Americans faced tremendous obstacles on the pathway towards social mobility and personal and collective empowerment in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Hindered by high levels of unemployment and poverty, the burgeoning proletarian force described by Joe Trotter in *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat* was hampered by relentless

---

<sup>11</sup> Dougherty, Jack. *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of School Reform in Milwaukee* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004

<sup>11</sup> Jones, Patric *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009

joblessness. Even with blacks in elected offices and high levels of leadership, the African American community faced extreme bouts of powerlessness and disenfranchisement.<sup>12</sup>

This project will be an attempt to analyze the ways that joblessness, poverty and racism impacted community organizing and grassroots leadership in the African American community in the late twentieth century. Between 1970 and 2000, the effects of poverty and joblessness transformed Milwaukee's African American neighborhoods. African American grassroots organizations, which had once successfully pressed for social justice in the 1960s, were in this era fending off the socio-economic problems associated with poverty. By analyzing the language of public policy, political speeches, government plans and reports, televised news reports and interviews, talk radio shows and popular discourse, I will attempt to uncover how the black community organized itself against the plethora of socio-economic problems in the post-civil rights era. While there is a growing discourse about the ways deindustrialization and the loss of jobs weakened the socio-cultural underpinnings of the black community, very little has been written about the ways African American community organized itself to combat problems associated with poverty.

This project will answer the following questions: a) In what ways did African American community leaders step up to redress the socio-economic problems of poverty and joblessness of the late twentieth century? b) In what ways did grassroots activists adapt their campaigns and strategies to adjust to the political realities of a post-civil rights

---

<sup>12</sup> For a synopsis on the unemployment trends in Milwaukee since 1975 see: Marc Levine's "The Crisis of Black Male Joblessness" (Center of Milwaukee Economic Development: University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, 2007)

era? c) How did race, class and gender impact public policy, leadership, strategy and community organizing?

I focused my inquiry on African American political activism, civic leadership and the socio-economic transformations that took place in inner-city neighborhoods on Milwaukee's north side between 1970 and 2000. By putting a magnifying glass on the major themes of late-twentieth-century black life, I have analyzed the public statements, oral histories, writings and campaigns of organizers from Milwaukee's black community. I uncover how African American community organizations and activists used the civic process to meet their constituents' needs and reveal how racism and structural inequality continued to hinder social mobility. Another goal of this project is to uncover connections between older social justice movements, note the political strategies and ideologies influencing black leadership, including black power, service and accommodation, and point out the changes in community organizing in the post-civil rights era. I also focused on the way local white leaders sought to resist or push back against the growing strength of the black community and the gains of the Civil Rights movement. While the traditional historical narratives see the Civil Rights movement described as the final battle against America's history of discrimination, the truth is that white political actors and institutional racism continued to create obstacles for the black community.

### *Rationale*

For years, scholars in other disciplines have discussed how society has changed as a result of the reforms of the civil rights movement and the deindustrialization of the late

twentieth century. Social scientists have paid particular attention to the social inequalities and the persistent economic problems caused by joblessness. Cathy Cohen, William Julius Wilson and others have opened the door for this project by investigating the continued influence of race on social and political outcomes in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>13</sup> The loss of jobs, persistent structural inequality and the resultant socio-economic and political powerlessness transformed blue-collar African American communities and shifted their worldview. No longer bolstered by industrial jobs that were created as a result of the post-war boom, much of the discourse stemming from social scientists reveals how inner-city neighborhoods were devastated by social problems in the 1980s and 1990s:

“The consequences of high neighborhood joblessness are more devastating than those of high neighborhood poverty...Many of today’s problems in the inner –city ghetto neighborhoods- crime, family dissolution, welfare, low levels of social organization, and so on-are fundamentally a consequence of the disappearance of work.”<sup>14</sup>

Wilson’s assessment above is consistent with much of the research from social scientists studying this era who argue that poverty, structural inequality and powerlessness had drastic effects on the black community.

Scholars from ethnic and American studies have also spent a considerable amount of time studying the postindustrial realities of inner city life. Typically adopting a bottom-up perspective, scholars using an interdisciplinary approach focused their research either on a) cultural agency b) the ways in which public policy and the criminal

---

<sup>13</sup> See Cathy Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997 for a strong synopsis of the intersection of culture, powerlessness and policy.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson, William Julius. *When Work Disappears* New York: Random House, 1996

justice system impacted communities of color worldview c) or the pathos associated with poverty. These bottom-up analyses frequently indicate generational changes in blue-collar communities between the civil rights and post-civil rights era.

Hip-hop culture has had a tremendous influence on scholars writing from a bottom-up perspective. In his text, *The Hip-Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture*, Bakari Kitwana argued that African Americans born after 1965 have adopted a different worldview than that of previous generations of African Americans.

“For our parents’ generation, the political ideals of civil rights and Black Power are central to their worldview. Our parents’ generation placed family, spirituality, social responsibility, and Black pride at the center of their identity as Black Americans. They, like their parents before them, looked to their elders for values and identity. The core set of values shared by a large segment of the hip-hop generation - Black America’s generation X- stands in contrast to our parents’ worldview. For the most part, we have turned to ourselves, our peers, global images and products, and the new realities we face for guidance. In the process, the values and attitudes described above anchor our worldview.”<sup>15</sup>

Like Kitwana, scholars interested in hip-hop culture, like Jeff Chang and Patricia Rose, have highlighted how thoroughly influential hip-hop culture was in shaping the political consciousness and political approach of blacks living and organizing in the post-civil rights era. More importantly, many like Kitwana have noted how the unique social and political context of the 1980s and 1990s distinctly transformed black life.

Legal scholars have also been particularly interested in the ways race and the law impacted social outcomes in the post-civil rights era. Critical Race Theorists argue that

---

<sup>15</sup> Kitwana, *The Hip-Hop Generation*, p. 7



*de facto* racism continued to influence society after the civil rights movement. After the legal changes of the 1950s and 1960s, scholars Derrick Bell, Devon Carbodo and Kimberle Crenshaw argued that the courts adopted a “color-blind approach” making it more difficult for organizers to thwart societal inequality through traditional civil rights approaches. They believe that while structural racism existed during the post-civil rights era, the policies of civic institutions, governmental agencies and corporations adapted to the race-neutral or “color- blind” values brought on by changes in the court and legal discourse in the 1970s and 1980s. Since the strategies of the civil rights movement were frequently tied to eradicating *de jure* racism, addressing the interlocking grips of economic and racial discrimination became more difficult during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Race and racism were alive and well during post-civil rights America, but these scholars argue that without a racist policy or a discriminating boss to point to, the strategies used during the civil rights movement became less transformative. I also use Michelle Alexander’s analysis in the *New Jim Crow* as a lens by which to discuss the changing social and political landscape. The War on Drugs would loom large in the lives of African Americans in Brew City. By 1989, the Milwaukee Police Department’s annual budget was growing at a rapid rate. A new environment was taking shape as crime grew as a new layer of oppression was taking root.

Despite the growing and diverse scholarship on the problems of urban America, very little has been written about how African Americans continued to struggle for social justice and political power in the post-civil rights era for a number of reasons. First, the societal change brought on by community organizing does not happen overnight. Often times the fights and/or court battle for public policy often take years to finish. Thus, the

evidence of transformation is not easily seen through social statistics, polling data or by assessing the cultural productions of a given movement. Scholars, especially historians, interested in a longer story arc are best suited for this discussion.

Another reason for the dearth of literature about the civic leadership and political activism of African Americans in the 1980s and 1990s is because historians are still researching the impact of the civil rights movement. While scholars continue to uncover and research the transformations of the 1950s, 1960s and early part of the 1970s, the black community continued to press for full enfranchisement long after the rights revolution had ended. The civil rights and black power movements were just one stop on the continued march for social justice as black communities across the country persisted to push for equality long after the reforms of the 1960s. This project is an attempt to discuss some of the major themes from this era in order to begin to give voice to the activists and causes of the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>16</sup>

The political and social transformations brought on by the civil rights movement fundamentally altered the way race, class and power were experienced in the United States. The legal changes spurred by the organizing victories of the 1950s and 1960s fundamentally altered the civic process and political discourse in this country. Structural obstacles that had once prevented blacks from asserting their political agency, even in

---

<sup>16</sup> This isn't to say that nothing has been written. However, much of what has been written focuses on national organizations, or key figures. The grassroots narratives are often absent. For a compelling look at black political leadership and organizations see: Ollie Johnson and Karin Stanford, *Black Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002

<sup>16</sup>

communities where they were a majority population, were no longer exclusively able to prevent African Americans from engaging in the civic process in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>17</sup>

This project rests on the hypothesis that the reforms brought on by the civil rights movement fundamentally altered the civic process and created an opportunity for African Americans to assert leadership inside governments and public institutions in new ways. This is not to say that race and racial discrimination had ended, but rather that throughout the 1980s and 1990s blacks exerted their power and influence at both the local and national levels. If we assume that the civic process and the rules governing participation changed, we can also assume that community organizing and the nature of grassroots leadership had also changed. Given the social and political realities, this era deserves further review by historians. It's also fair to assume that those opposing the changes of the civil rights movement altered their strategy.

On the surface, late twentieth-century Milwaukee might appear to be a strange point of entry for a discussion on the political and cultural agency of the African American community. After all, during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, African Americans experienced unprecedented political gains in bigger cities such as Chicago, Atlanta, Detroit and Los Angeles. Yet, a closer look at this midsized Midwestern city is warranted as the relatively large size of the black community, coupled with intense levels of inner-city poverty, offers a unique perspective of power and *powerlessness*.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Peniel Joseph contends that the election of Barack Obama is a sign of a historical shift in his text *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2010

<sup>18</sup> Scholars have discussed black power at length. Below I will attempt to synthesize the discussion in a literature review. For an excellent overview on powerlessness see: Michael Lerner, *Surplus Powerlessness: The Psychodynamics of Everyday Life and the Psychology of Individual and Social Transformation* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1991)

Additionally, Milwaukee's unique history of socialism, ethnic pluralism, and union organizing provides an opportunity to assess how African American organizing transformed and adapted to the political and economic realities of the late twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> African American political movements in the latter part of the twentieth century continued to focus on racial justice, often adopting black power approaches, even while multiculturalism was being debated in popular discourse and on university campuses.<sup>20</sup> While the victories of the civil rights movement set the African American community up for more influence and access throughout the civic process, local politics still hinged on America's (and, in this instance, Milwaukee's) complicated racial history.<sup>21</sup> This study will illuminate the ways that race continued to influence the civic process, community organizing and politics in a post-civil rights era.

---

<sup>19</sup> One of Milwaukee's nicknames is the city of festivals as every summer local heritage groups put on ethnic fests that celebrate European, Asian and Latin American national pride. Blacks have historically hosted a large festival, initially called Afro Fest, which is now called African World Festival. For a concise history of Milwaukee's immigration patterns see: Wisconsin Cartographers' Guild, *Wisconsin's Past and Present: A Historical Atlas* Madison: University of Wisconsin p. xliii

<sup>20</sup> There is perhaps no better example of the juxtaposition between the struggle for Black Power and Multiculturalism than Jesse Jackson's 1988 Democratic National Convention Speech. Throughout the speech Jackson frequently highlights the importance of "common ground" and the importance of racial groups having "patches" of the blanket. Yet, a critical analysis of the speech reveals that Jackson was also very much in tune with the unique struggles of black America. Jesse Jackson, "1988 Democratic National Convention Address" Democratic National Convention, Omni Coliseum, Atlanta GA 19 July, 1988

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion on Milwaukee's unique working class history see: Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: the Knights of Labor and American Politics*. Urbana:University of Illinois Press, 1983 p. 178-218.

<sup>21</sup>Geib, Paul. "From Mississippi to Milwaukee: A Case Study of Southern Black Migration to Milwaukee" *Journal of Negro History* v. 83, no. 4 Autumn: 1998 p. 229-249; Robert Ozzane *The Labor Movement in Wisconsin: A History* State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1984

## Chapter Review

### CH. 2 -Backdrop: Work, Poverty and Crime

By the late 1970s Milwaukee's biggest manufacturing firms were downsizing, consolidating and/or closing their doors and reopening in other countries with cheaper labor markets. Between 1970 and 2000, Milwaukee's manufacturing sector shrunk from over 30% of the work force to 20%. The hardest hit were African American workers, many of whom a generation prior left the South for steady work in the city's booming post-war manufacturing industries.<sup>22</sup> By the early 1990s, several of the city's biggest employers of black workers including A.O. Smith, Allis Chalmers and AMC automotive had moved, closed or downsized. The impact of the rapid loss of work was felt throughout every aspect of inner city life as poverty, unemployment and violence became permanent fixtures of inner city life. A 2004 analysis of 50 years of census data by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* "found that the whiplash downsizing hit Milwaukee's black workers with unprecedented force because they relied more on sweat-and-muscle labor than blacks in any other American city."<sup>23</sup>

Between 1974 and 2000, the economic base of the black community weakened as the area's largest employers of African Americans, such A.O. Smith and Allis Chalmers, began to downsize and shut down. While during the 1970s and 1980s Milwaukeeans of all racial backgrounds experienced increased bouts of unemployment, African Americans were worse off than other groups because they were employed overwhelmingly in

---

<sup>22</sup> Currey, Josiah Seymour. "Migrating North for a Better Life" *University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Graduate School* Vol. 19, No. 2

<sup>23</sup> Schmid, John. "Out of Steam Decline of Railroad Sidetracked Hopes of Many" *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Dec. 5, 2004

manufacturing jobs. As the major plants on the origination point for the Milwaukee Road Railway system (the railroad distribution system that fed Milwaukee's products to the nation) died, so did the economic stability of the black community.<sup>24</sup> Although African Americans, like A.O. Smith's Paul Blackman, were able to ascend to positions of power in unions like the steelworkers, many African Americans were unable to find work in other industries even though some unions, like the pipefitters, had been taking stronger stances to hire African Americans since the late 1960s.<sup>25</sup> Unable to open pathways to other employment opportunities, the black community was weakened economically.<sup>26</sup> Even as the national economy picked up in the 1990s, African Americans experienced unemployment at 35% higher than the national average.<sup>27</sup> This weakened economic position created a plethora of social problems and exacerbated lingering racial tension.

### CH. 3 – Mayor Frank Zeidler's Attempts to Build are Thwarted

The traditional narrative driving late-twentieth-century history is that America and its many institutions became more accepting after the civil rights movement. But a closer look back on Milwaukee's past reveals that prior to the rapid influx of African Americans, city leaders were more racially tolerant and accepting to blacks before the transformative period of the 1960s. Led by a socialist mayor, Milwaukee's local

---

<sup>24</sup> John Schmid, "Out of Steam"

<sup>25</sup> Paul Geib "From Mississippi to Milwaukee"

<sup>26</sup> see: Chris Deisinger, "As contractors gripe, city studies upping 21 percent 'solution'" *The Business Journal-Milwaukee*, June 12, 1993 and Mike Nichols "2 Issues Decided Along Racial Lines in Council Voting on Stadium, Zoning Ordinance Showed a Split" *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, August 5th, 1996

<sup>27</sup> Robert Hersh "Milwaukee Community Brown Fields Workshop" Center for Public Environmental Oversight (CPEO) December, 2007

government attempted to help make the city's manufacturing businesses more competitive for federal dollars by tackling the city's housing segregation.

Although the Milwaukee Common Council once universally accepted the mayor's plan, by the mid-1950s local conservatives began to undermine the attempts to welcome black immigrants. Conservative leaders began developing a racially tinged anti-tax, free-market narrative, which would delay local investment in an African American housing project. By kindling racial flames and working to prevent outsiders from becoming stakeholders in the local economy, conservatives developed a strategy that would be used to disempower African Americans for years to come.

#### **CH. 4 – Frontlines: Tension Between the Police and the Community Grows**

In the late 1960s, relations between black residents and the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) were so strained that activist-turned-Wisconsin Assemblymen Lloyd Barbee advocated that the local police be disarmed.<sup>28</sup> Throughout the next three decades, the African American community frequently organized against police brutality through collective direct action. Although the relationship began to improve after the 1984 retirement of controversial police Chief Harold Breier, the African American community's distrust of the force again flared up after infamous serial killer Jeffery Dahmer was arrested by the MPD in the summer of 1991. Because most of his victims were African American men, many community residents, including activist/alderman Michael McGee Sr., felt that Dahmer was not caught sooner because of both his and his

---

<sup>28</sup> *Milwaukee Courier* "Barbee says Disarm" Sept. 21, 1968 p. 1

victims' race. These feelings of distrust and disdain for the MPD would continue even after Arthur Jones, Milwaukee's first black police chief, was hired in 1996.<sup>29</sup>

After the 1967 riot, a survey conducted by the Urban League and UWM revealed that whites viewed the riot's cause to be a by-product of "rebellious youth who lacked parental control." This vilification of black youth would continue through from the 1970s to the 1990s. In fact, in his 1999 text, *Wealth of Cities*, Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist (1988-2004) outlined how City Hall and the Milwaukee Police Department worked to increase police patrols in the downtown business district after area high schools let out. While Norquist never mentioned how race impacted his policy, he notes that loitering youth attended schools surrounding the downtown area. (Since the early 1990s, Milwaukee Public Schools has been mainly black.) Moreover, as Milwaukee Public Schools integrated in the 1970s and 1980s, black youth were depicted in local media increasingly as out of control as racial tensions frequently spilled over at area high schools.

#### **CH. 5. – Push Back: The rise of "tough love" policies**

Shifting population trends and white flight expanded the number of black elected officials at local, county and state levels. While whites still outnumbered them, by the late 1960s the African American community was becoming more powerful politically. This power was expressed at the voting booth; by 1972 the African American community, which hadn't elected its first African American alderperson until 1956, had elected three

---

<sup>29</sup> City of Milwaukee "Arthur L. Jones 1996 – 2003"  
<http://city.milwaukee.gov/Police/ArthurJones.htm> (March 1: 2011)



black leaders to city government. By 2000, African Americans would make up nearly a third of the common council. During this time, African Americans also had a growing presence at the state and other levels of local government.

Despite this growing political power, conservative elected officials, led by Barry Goldwater-style Republican governor Tommy Thompson, would forever alter the local political landscape with his “tough love” approach. Cutting social services, and ending programs like AFDC, Thompson would amplify a decades-old narrative that argued that blacks were lazy and undeserving of public investment. By the turn of the century, prisons had become big business, and Tommy Thompson had become virtually unbeatable as his conservative policy innovations won support from leaders from both sides of the aisle.

## **CH. 6. – Opportunity: A Survey of Grassroots Struggle**

Ironically, at the very time that the urban crisis began to take hold, black Milwaukeeans experienced unprecedented levels of political power. By the mid-1960s, the political resolve and efficacy of the black community was intensified. The shifting legal precedent brought on by *Brown v. Board* and federal legislation such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1965 Voting Rights Act and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, opened new possibilities for change at the local level. Although the courts left it to local actors to define integration and equal access, these sweeping legal changes opened up a window of opportunity for Milwaukee’s black community to push local institutions to end discriminatory policies. Grassroots leaders and community-based organizations seized the day, and pressed for changes through mass protest, economic boycotts and increased

civic participation. The high point of this political activity took place between 1967 and 1970 as local organizations secured policy wins at the city level.

On July 30, 1967, riots broke out on Milwaukee's north side. Although initially sparked by an altercation between police and community members at a downtown establishment, growing frustrations related to police brutality and political and economic disempowerment had been growing for years. The uprising forced city leaders to take notice and eventually give concessions to the growing local civil rights movement. Yet, the bitter memory of the riots and the subsequent housing marches would continue to impact policy makers for years.

While Milwaukee's rapidly growing African American population gave rise to an increased number of black elected officials, community-based organizations serving Milwaukee's inner city were also a catalyst as they began pushing for voter turnout in the late 1960s. In 1968, the *Milwaukee Courier*, a leading local black paper, printed the names of local residents not registered to vote, to pressure them to get on the rolls. The use of the ballot as tool for change was seen as a necessary part of the strategy for community empowerment during this transition period.

The growing political efficacy was especially present among younger African Americans. Politicized through a series of intensive civil rights campaigns led primarily by the NAACP Youth Council, by 1967 young blacks were becoming less wedded to the idea that change had to be gradual. More importantly, despite a series of victories against segregation, there was a growing feeling that traditional avenues of civic engagement and civil rights protests could not alone force elected officials and the business community to

fully embrace tenets of equality and social justice. The tone and tenor of political rhetoric became much more revolutionary and tied to expressions of the black power.

#### **CH. 7. – Howard Fuller and the Future of Black Power.**

Howard Fuller/Owusu Sadauki made a name for himself in the student/black studies movements of the late 1960s in North Carolina. He moved back to his childhood home in 1973 and became one of the leading voices in Milwaukee's black community.

Although the one-time AFCSME organizer left the union movement and became a bureaucrat in local government, Fuller still engaged in grassroots activism and was involved in numerous campaigns, and helped lead a coalition that took on police brutality after an African American man named Ernest Lacy was killed by police in 1981.

Although his opponents and adversaries frequently brought up his radical past, he became one of the most influential leaders in the state, assuming the position of Milwaukee Public School System Superintendent in 1991, although he abruptly resigned in 1995 because of tensions with the school board. He eventually became one of the leading voices for school choice in the country and served as an advisor to President George W. Bush during his 2000 presidential campaign.

Fuller didn't work alone. Building off of the momentum of the previous era's activism, black leaders across the state would work to earn a bigger share of the local political economy. While color-blindness and race-neutral policies dominated the political landscape, black leaders like Fuller reshaped their local environments by advancing innovative ideas that would seek to further the struggle for black power.

#### **CH. 8 – *Black Milwaukee* Revisited**

In *Black Milwaukee*, William Joe Trotter argued that despite their harsh living and working conditions, African American workers in the first half of the twentieth century were able to use their skills as industrial workers and artisans to forge a new political and economic identity for themselves. However, in the late twentieth century, the momentum that Trotter described in Milwaukee's nascent black community was disappearing. The blue-collar work ethic was no longer rewarded in the local economy as the surplus black labor force increasingly joined the roles of public assistance programs. Moreover, because black workers were overwhelmingly clustered in industries that required heavy labor, Milwaukee's black community was ill prepared to compete in the technology and communication booms of the 1990s. By the end of the century, most black Milwaukee's neighborhoods were mired in the socio-cultural and political consequences of permanent poverty and disempowerment.

This chapter will reassess African Americans' relationship to work, community and culture. While many blacks were cut off from mainstream employment opportunities, the streets and hip-hop provided African Americans an avenue to build their own "workplace" culture. Not only did Milwaukee drug dealers from this era call their drugs "work," but also an entire culture, complete with music, clothing, and muscle cars developed during the 1980s and 1990s. While the proletarian ethic shifted and waned during the era, urban blacks continued to forge for community and create cultural sensibilities that empowered the next generation of leaders to assert themselves in the socio-economic structures of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

### *Literature Review*

Historians are beginning to join the debate on how the loss of work, shifts in the political climate and the social problems associated with poverty and unemployment fundamentally altered the black experience in the late twentieth century. While sociologists, legal scholars, political scientists and anthropologists have written at length about the social problems and ‘pathology’ created by the loss of work and poverty, the recent nature of the debate and contemporary consequences has prevented historians from digging deeply into how late-twentieth-century grassroots activists and organizations responded to the changes brought on by deindustrialization. Though a number of historians--including Josh Sides, Thomas Segrue and Gerald Horne-- have written about how African Americans responded to the social problems created by the economic slowdown of the 1960s and early 1970s, until now the debate on the major themes of the post-civil rights generation has been dominated by scholars from other disciplines.<sup>30</sup>

The often-provocative discussion about the loss of work, poverty, and its impact on the social and political realities of Black people living between 1970 and 2000 has been extremely influential in shaping the direction of this study. The discourse created by social scientists, cultural theorists, and journalists influenced public policy and economists and also shaped the strategies and campaigns adapted by grassroots leaders and organizations to build (often times rebuild) and empower their community. While many of the prevailing themes have focused on the problems and pathologies created by the loss of work and the continuing impact of racism, there has also been a steady and growing body of literature that looks at and celebrates the cultural and social capital of inner-city black America. Both viewpoints are necessary in helping set the stage for a

---

<sup>30</sup> In *African American Urban History since the WWII*, Kenneth Kusmer and William Joe Trotter’s argue that the post-civil rights era needs to be investigated further.

historical inquiry about activists and grassroots organizations that adjusted to the social, economic and political changes of the era.

Until now, the scholars most interested in this era have been social scientists as the increased effectiveness of personal computers and statistical software has allowed academics to have a much more nuanced understanding of how social phenomena are interconnected. These tools have provided researchers with the ability to track social changes with more precision than could have previously ever been imagined.

Additionally, improved and advanced survey methods, combined with enhanced census data sets, often reveal complex problems impacting inner-city communities. Some of these problems, like persistent inequality and intense poverty, have been prominent throughout African American history. Others, like joblessness, crime and an increased reliance on state run programs, became more pronounced in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

### *William Julius Wilson*

Many sociologists writing about urban life focused their research on the social and cultural problems caused by constant unemployment and poverty. Perhaps no scholar has been more influential in this debate than William Julius Wilson. While a number of his studies, including *More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City* and *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, have had a strong influence on the discourse, the most important for this project is *When Work Disappears*. Wilson analyzes the impact the rapid disappearance of manufacturing and industrial jobs had on Chicago's blue-collar black community during the 1980s and early 1990s. Wilson argues that permanent joblessness created a culture and cycle of hopelessness in black

America that had not been present in the past. From this perspective, the “consequences of high neighborhood jobless [were] more devastating than those of high neighborhood poverty.” African Americans, Wilson argued, had historically faced bouts of poverty. However, persistent joblessness was not a key component of Black life in either the post-war, pre-war or Southern experience.<sup>31</sup>

Although historians reflecting on the late 1960s began signaling that urbanization and the subsequent deindustrialization of African American communities was beginning to alter the black experience, scholars like Wilson were the first to argue that persistent and generational problems had altered permanently the worldview of African Americans. In previous eras, African Americans living in urban areas might have relied on the strength of black kinship networks and the black family to survive the pervasiveness of poverty, but in this environment too many Black families’ survival would, as Wilson stated, “require at least some participation in the informal economy.”<sup>32</sup>

While Wilson’s argument about the disastrous and transformative effects of unemployment is compelling, as it emphasizes a shift and dramatic change in the fabric of the post-civil rights black community, it does little to uncover the resiliency of African American communities. In fact, many of Wilson’s critics assert that his discussion of the “new poor” provided fodder for conservative scholars like Charles Murray, who argued that African American communities were ‘naturally’ disposed to chaos and

---

<sup>31</sup> Of course, others have talked about the social problems created by joblessness and urbanization. Sociologist turned US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s 1965 report *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*, also known as the Moynihan Report, continues to have a big impact on the discourse as does Cornell West, who writes at length about nihilism and hopelessness in his 1994 text *Race Matters*

<sup>32</sup> Wilson, William Julius. *When Work Disappear*, New York: Random House, 1996

fragmentation.<sup>33</sup> While Wilson maintained that his goal was to highlight the disastrous impact unemployment was having on the black community, several of his liberal colleagues felt he had not done enough to illuminate the role racism continued to play in impacting social outcomes.

Roger David Waldinger is one of Wilson's critics. In his text, *Still the Promised City: African-Americans and New Immigrants in Postindustrial New York*, Waldinger argued that the societal changes created by the loss of work and white flight, while often pernicious, also opened up new opportunities for blacks to compete for jobs. In this environment, Waldinger argues, blue-collar workers were able to advance in the public sector job "queue," as the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, which extended Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, allowed African Americans to compete for public jobs in a way that would have been impossible a generation prior.<sup>34</sup> Waldinger argues that African Americans still faced difficulties in competing for low-skilled work because of a steady influx of cheap immigrant labor, but he also notes that African Americans were able to have significant influence on their own fate by creating economic niches outside the industrial and manufacturing sector, especially in the public sector. And thus, unlike Wilson, Waldinger highlights the agency and efficacy of the black community in an era in which social mobility was extremely difficult. Moreover, Waldinger further counters Wilson by arguing that African Americans were never truly

---

<sup>33</sup> Charles Murray's controversial 1994 text, *The Bell Curve*, argued there was an implicit link between race and intelligence. Ironically, the Bradley Foundation, a conservative foundation based in Milwaukee, funded Murray's research.

<sup>34</sup> David Waldinger, *Still the Promised City: African-Americans and New Immigrants in Postindustrial New York* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996 p. 5



integrated into America's industrial economy, and thus deindustrialization and the accompanying loss of work could not have as big an impact as Wilson postulated.<sup>35</sup>

But while he argued that social mobility and resistance was possible, Waldinger also points out that low-skilled African Americans faced a particularly difficult uphill battle during this era. The economic, social and political gains made by African American civil servants did not transfer to the entire black community, as the skills needed to compete in the public sector were not easily transferable to individuals that lacked education. Furthermore, Waldinger points out that class divisions in the African American community, although less prominent than in previous eras, were becoming more pronounced.<sup>36</sup> The debate will undoubtedly wage on as a large number of social scientists have continually argued that racism, poverty and unemployment prevented many African Americans from advancing both socially and economically. This growing discourse has provided historians an excellent starting point for understanding the structural forces influencing the direction of African American activism in the late twentieth century.

### *Legal Strategies*

For years, black civic institutions have utilized a legal approach to challenge economic and social inequality. African American history is filled with examples of how groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

---

<sup>35</sup> Waldinger writes about New York, a global city with a very diverse economic infrastructure, and very different than the rust belt cities researched by Wilson.

<sup>36</sup> Waldinger's analysis is comparable to that found in Wilson's *More Than Just Race*

(NAACP) used the courts to challenge the inequalities of the day.<sup>37</sup> While legal strategies continued to be used by activists in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, there is a growing body of scholarship by Critical Race Theorists (CRT) that posits that the rise of the conservative movement after Barry Goldwater's failed run for president in 1964 forever altered the political process and correspondingly made the courts a less viable venue for African American activism.

Much of this scholarship developed in response to the arguments put forth by claims that the effects of racism were becoming less pronounced in post-civil rights America. Pointing to the expansion of the black middle class that took place as a result of enhanced government protections, this school of thought argues that race had become less of a decisive factor in America.<sup>38</sup> However, Critical Race Theorists such as Derrick Bell, UCLA's Devon Carbado and Kimberle Crenshaw, as well as historian Thomas Holt, have demonstrated that the courts never truly eradicated racism after the *Brown v. Board*<sup>39</sup> decision—contending that the judicial system and public institutions shifted to a “color-blind approach” which began to discount race as a legitimate characteristic to determine public policy. In *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* and *Critical Race Theory in Education: All God's Children Got a Song* Derrick Bell asserts that the courts (and thus American society), still remained racist institutions, despite an embrace of color-blindness in the law. Moreover, changes brought on by the Civil Rights movement,

---

<sup>37</sup> For a recent text on the NAACP see: Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement*. New York: New Press, 2009

<sup>38</sup> Wilson is again perhaps the most cited scholar on this topic but others have also been influential:

<sup>38</sup>Wilson, William Julius. *The Bridge over the Racial Divide: Rising Inequality and Coalition Politics* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001

<sup>38</sup>----*The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980

while significant, could not eradicate the racist underpinning of the American constitution and the judicial system. Structural racism, Bell contends, endured throughout the post-Civil Rights era even though the policies of civic institutions, governmental agencies and corporations rhetorically embraced race-neutral or “color-blind” values brought on by the Civil Rights movement. The strategies of the Civil Rights movement frequently were tied to eradicating *de jure* racism and were unable to address the interlocking grips of economic and racial discrimination. In short, CRT scholarship maintains that race and racism persists in post-Civil Rights America, even without explicitly racist public policies or overt discrimination. Thus, many of the strategies used during the Civil Rights movement became less effective in response to the new legal reality. This text also relies heavily on Michelle Alexander’s *New Jim Crow*, which will be discussed in more detail below.

### *Resistance*

There clearly were a number of obstacles preventing African American grassroots leaders and organizations from countering the realities of poverty and joblessness. In fact, the changes brought on by the failing economy and the shifting political climate were so immense that few have even written about the strategies used by activists to positively change their communities. The problems, simply, were too complicated. However, throughout the last decade and a half there has been a growing scholarly literature seeking to uncover how black folks sought to struggle for change.

Both New Labor History and Anthropology have developed analyses for uncovering the often-silent and subtle ways culture aided working-class African

Americans in their attempt to shape their environments.<sup>39</sup> These theories argue that forms of resistance are often invisible and silent, yet powerful. Robin Kelley's *Race Rebels* underscores the collective and creative power of working people and emphasizes the role cultural forms, including jazz and hip-hop, have played in resistance and struggle. Kelley attempts to "recover and explore aspect of black working-class life and politics that been relegated to the margins."<sup>40</sup> Kelley's text, published in 1994, is a forerunning contribution to the hip-hop canon, opening the door for scholars who want to assess the concepts of "agency" and "resistance" in black and working-class life during the post-Civil Rights America.

Other works continue to dig deeper into the role culture, especially hip-hop culture, played in advancing the black community. Bakari Kitwana, Tricia Rose, Jeff Chang and Nelson George have argued that hip-hop culture has served to empower a whole generation of politically minded cultural practitioners and consumers to think critically about the role that race and class plays in shaping society. While acknowledging the contradictions of hip-hop and its often violent and misogynistic

---

<sup>39</sup> See: George Rawick, *From Sunup to Sundown the Making of a Black Community* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972 Rawick's analysis is especially helpful, as he asserts that historically, black people have never been the total victim of their oppression and have thus been able to impact society, even when those in charge are unable to see it.

<sup>39</sup> Gutman, Herbert. *Working, Culture, & Society in Industrializing America* New York: Vintage Books, 1977

<sup>39</sup> Mintz, Sidney. *Worker and the Cane New Haven: Yale Press*

<sup>39</sup> Painter, Nell Irvin "New Labor History and the Historical Moment" *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 2, no 3 pp 367-370 Spring 1990

<sup>40</sup> Kelley, Robin. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* New York; Simon and Schuster, 1996 pg 4

<sup>40</sup> Kelley also tackles the problems of the post civil rights era in the succinct *Into the Fire-African Americans since the 1970s*. During this era blacks, according to Kelley, "fell out of the frying pan into the fire" p. 6

40

rhetoric, the work of hip-hop scholars has afforded academics a lens by which to see these twentieth-century artistic phenomena as sources of cultural and social capital.<sup>41</sup> Not everyone writing about the late-twentieth-century African American experience has viewed this cultural and social capital as an asset. Cultural critics John McWhorter and Stanley Crouch, for example, have viewed hip-hop culture as lowbrow art that embraces values that hinder the post-Civil Rights generation and prevent it from being able to compete in mainstream society. McWhorter, a conservative think-tank Manhattan Institute fellow, has been particularly critical of the role that hip-hop has played in late twentieth century urban America. In his text *All About the Beat: Why Hip-Hop Can't Save Black America*, McWhorter focuses on the pathologies of inner-city life and argues that they have a debilitating effect on the social mobility of African Americans, saying, effectively, that hip-hop sustains problems. Crouch, a nationally syndicated columnist with the *New York Daily News*, has frequently used his column to criticize hip-hop culture and other African American cultural forms for its negativity. Crouch's writings have repeatedly condemned rappers like Tupac and other artists including filmmaker Spike Lee. Crouch believes hip-hop's embrace and glorification of street life prevents young African Americans from being able to compete in society.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Chang, Jeff, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005

<sup>41</sup> Chang, Jeff *Total Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip-Hop* New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2006

<sup>41</sup> George, Nelson *Hip Hop America* New York: Viking, 1998

<sup>41</sup> Tricia Rose, *Black Noise* Middleton: Wesleyan Press, 1994

<sup>42</sup> McWhorter, John H. *All About the Beat: Why Hip-Hop Can't Save Black America* New York: Gotham Books, 2008

<sup>42</sup> For other critiques of hip-hop culture see:

In *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture in the Post Soul Aesthetic*, Mark Anthony Neal makes a particularly strong argument about how culture and the political underpinnings of black power and the Civil Rights movement continued to influence society well into the 1980s and 1990s. He argues that blacks born after the 1963 March on Washington viewed the protest tradition of their elders with irrelevance because popular depictions of the “soul aesthetic,” were watered down, unrealistic, and stereotypical portrayals of the realities of black life. Yet despite the dissonance with the previous generation’s portrayal and approach to activism, Neal argues that hip-hop culture and mass media had the potential to become strong vehicles for social and political change. Not only did cultural products of the post-Civil Rights generation reflect a persistent disenchantment with the status quo and an inherent political consciousness, but also they provided cultural purveyors huge platforms that reached diverse and vast audiences.

### *Power*

While academics and cultural theorists have outlined how culture played both a positive and negative role in the lives of African Americans in the post-Civil Rights era, black folks did not only fight to change their community through coded and subtle ways. Community activists also adopted grassroots advocacy campaigns and electoral strategies during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. While the scholarship on this topic is starting to grow, there are many strong works that uncover the role that activism and

---

<sup>42</sup> Asante, M. K. Jr. *It's Bigger Than Hip-Hop: The Rise of the Post Hip-Hop Generation*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008 Asante believes “hip-hop has drifted to the shallowest pools of poetic possibilities”

civic engagement played in advancing the black community's agenda long after the Civil Rights movement and black power movements had ended.

Literature focusing on black grassroots organizing during the 1960s and 1970s has moved beyond the Civil Rights movement to include the black power movement as well.<sup>43</sup> Peniel Joseph, Timothy Tyson and Komozi Woodard explore the fundamental altering of the style, tone and scope of black community organizing during the black power movement. Unlike the nonviolent strategy of the civil rights activists, the black power movement was primarily concerned with power, as expressed through social, cultural, economic and political self-determination. Activists who pressed for change in the last 1970s, 1980s and 1990s continued to frame their movement through the prism of power and liberation.

In the edited text *Black Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, a number of political scientists assess the civic engagement of activist organizations, and the shifting political and economic realities of post-Civil Rights America. The text gives readers an insight into the nuances and transformations of African American political movements after the passage of key legislation like the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act. The contributors raise the point that even though the nature of political movements had changed in the 1980s and 1990s, the lessons, strategies and networks

---

<sup>43</sup> Tyson, Timothy *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001

<sup>43</sup> Joseph, Peniel. *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* New York: Owl Books, 2007

<sup>43</sup> Joseph, Peniel *Dark Days and Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama* New York: Civitas Books, 2010

<sup>43</sup> Woodard Komozi, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) and Black Power Politics*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999

<sup>43</sup>

built in the previous movements continued to be utilized by black political actors. More importantly, the text emphasizes how the harsh social and political realities emboldened leaders to adapt and remix the radical protest traditions of the 1960s and 1970s.

Claude Clegg's chapter in *Black Political Organizations in Post-Civil Rights* "You're Not Ready for Farrakhan: The Nation of Islam and the Struggle for Black Political Leadership, 1984–2000" is particularly helpful in connecting the linkages between the movements of the 1960s and the 1970s and the political leadership of the late twentieth century. By focusing on the relationship of Louis Farrakhan and Jesse Jackson, Clegg shows how the radical politics of the 1960s matured through the duo's dynamic leadership. For Clegg, the unlikely and frequently strained partnership between Jackson and the Farrakhan, which was fortified by Jackson's 1984 run for the White House, represented a key shift in black activism. No longer confined by traditional NOI doctrine, which, under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, shunned political activism, Farrakhan learned to embrace the electoral process and used his influence amongst the black community to affect the political discourse. And because he could pack local sports arenas with thousands of followers and was also willing to forge economic and political relationships in the Arab world, including with American adversaries like Libya, the spiritual leader wielded a tremendously influential bully pulpit. Like many of the case studies in *Black Political Organizations*, Clegg links Farrakhan's successes in the post-Civil Rights era to the longer history of black protest traditions.

Another chapter in *Black Political Organizations* that is relevant for this study is Todd C. Shaw's "We Refused to Lay Down" which highlights how the National Welfare Rights Organization and its many affiliates were able to build successfully on the lessons



of Civil rights and black power organizations to impact policy as the nation took a turn towards neoliberalism. Critics of welfare rights organizations have argued that their brand of protest politics, which focused on direct action protest, inadequately protected this unique constituency during the intense political attacks on welfare during the 1980s and 1990s. Shaw points out, however, how welfare rights groups were able to meet the holistic needs of their members while also seeking to expand or protect entitlement programs that subsidized poor women.

Marable's *Race, Rebellion and Reform* (originally published in 1985 and republished again in 1991 and then 2007) and Greta de Jong's *Invisible Enemy: The Freedom Struggle After 1965* raise many themes discussed above including: the entrenchment of conservative political thought, the rise of neo-liberalism, the prison industrial complex and the continued impact of *de jure* racism at the institution level. They also open the door for more detailed assessments of post-Civil Rights black activism as well as provide a framework to discuss the major themes of the era. Moreover, when this framework is combined with research and narratives found in texts like *Black Political Organizations*, one gets a clear sense that African Americans may have experienced a number of new roadblocks, but they also continued to organize their communities. Marable sums up this best when he stated, "Justice arrives slowly, for oppressed people...inevitably, a day of reckoning occurs."<sup>44</sup>

In *The Politics of Black Empowerment: The Transformation of Black Activism in Urban America*, James Jennings interviews grassroots activists in the late 1980s and early 1990s to raise up the important work of unsung community leaders. He analyzed these

---

<sup>44</sup> Marable, Manning. *Race, Rebellion and Reform*, University of Press Mississippi, 2007 p. 257

interviews through his personal lens of a grassroots activists and identified two strands in black activism: a) voting and elections, which he describes as a behavioral approach, and b) a cultural approach which focuses on philosophical and ideological inclinations of the black community. Published in 1993, Jennings argued that the activists of the late twentieth century combined traditional protest politics of the previous era, with traditional electoral politics with growing success. Jennings was optimistic about the potential of this new “social movement” and saw the success of black activists’ ability to impact elections, while also holding corporate America accountable to equality, as a sign that the African American community was strong politically. He even goes as far to compare the work of post-Civil Rights activists to Marcus Garvey.

Finally, in *Democracy Remixed* Cathy Cohen discusses the role of the political process as a growing expression of black political power as she examines the ways African Americans have used their electoral power to change the political landscape between 2000 and 2008. The most obvious example of this is the 2008 election of Barack Obama, which, she argues, would have been impossible without a strong black electorate. *Democracy Remixed* explores African Americans’, especially those born in the post-civil right generation, perception of government and the political process. Through a nationally representative survey of young people of color, Cohen, a political scientist, uncovers the ways young blacks view culture, sexuality and government. Unlike the generation before them, Cohen argues that despite isolation and hopelessness created by the immense social problems impacting their age cohort, young blacks are optimistic that they can positively impact change in their communities. While Cohen’s research highlights that young blacks are unlikely to use traditional protest strategies like boycotts,

they have embraced electoral politics as a potential tool, albeit an imperfect one, for continuing the march towards freedom.<sup>45</sup>

### *Milwaukee*

A study of late-twentieth-century activism is incomplete without an assessment of how Milwaukee-based civil rights and black power organizations paved the way for the late-twentieth-century political landscape. Thankfully historians have laid a strong framework for a deeper analysis of late-twentieth-century grassroots activism in Milwaukee. William Trotter's text, *Making of Black Milwaukee an Industrial Proletariat*, originally published in 1985, is perhaps the most important text for this dissertation. Trotter argues that through the process of migrating North, African Americans forged a new culture that changed the socio-economic and cultural worldview of Southern migrants.<sup>46</sup> The study covers 1915-45, an era that saw a small but steady influx of African Americans to the Midwestern city. Trotter argues that this proletarianization process created a new worldview for Southern blacks who settled in Milwaukee during the pre-war period. The process wasn't only prompted by the industrial work, but by the holistic experience of becoming urban peoples. Through their newly lived experiences, African American workers living in Milwaukee forged a new reality for themselves while

---

<sup>45</sup> The generational theme and the generational gap have been particular influential themes in texts on the era. Bakari Kitwana's text *The Hip-Hop Generation* highlights that there are major ideological difference between the civil rights and hip-hop generation (individuals born between 1965 and 1984). Social Scientists have begun to talk about the "Millennial Generation" or "Generation Y", which typically starts in between 1977-1980. A strong primer on the topic is William Strauss' *Millennials Rising: The Next Generation*

<sup>46</sup> William Joe Trotter, *Making of Black Milwaukee an Industrial Proletariat*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007 p. xiv

establishing new societal norms that would challenge racism and enhance their Southern values.

*More Than One Struggle: Black School Reform in Milwaukee* by Jack Dougherty and *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* by Patrick D. Jones both explore how black Milwaukee struggled for power during the 1950s and 1960s. Both Jones and Dougherty highlight the importance of community organizations and grassroots leadership and their ability to change society. Dougherty's assessment of Milwaukee's school reform movement is a strong case study on the slowness of institutional change. Examining the work of Lloyd Barbee (Milwaukee's "Martin Luther King Jr.") and the organizations that fought to integrate the Milwaukee Public School system, Dougherty demonstrates that it took nearly two decades after the *Brown v. Board* ruling for Milwaukee's black community to become major stakeholders in the school district. And it wasn't easy. Through different waves of community organizing, grassroots activists were effectively able to transform the Milwaukee Public School system. These institutional changes led to integration in the classroom, and sweeping policy reforms created social mobility opportunities for black teachers and administrators. While these transformations would later become the subject of highly political and frequent debates around the role of integration and school choice, Dougherty shows how the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s again set the stage for further activism in the later part of the century.

The texts above highlight that black political movements continued to press for change long after the 1960s. While scholars will continue to research the importance of other eras, the literature by scholars above shows that blacks continued to struggle for

power through a variety of tactics. This dissertation will build on these strong studies by digging deeper into the strategies and opinions moving grassroots leaders to action.

There is clearly room for further analysis, as the social and political transformations in the black community during the post-Civil Rights era must be further researched in order to assess how the African American protest tradition continued to influence policy creation and meet the holistic needs of the black community. More importantly, without further investigation into this topic by historians, the stories of those who have struggled to improve impoverished black communities during the difficult decades following will remain untold.

#### *Methods and Sources*

By reexamining and uncovering archival sources from the period, this study aims to assess the ways local public policy was impacted by popular discourse and social research, and investigate how the black community adjusted its political strategy during the post-Civil Rights era. Additionally, I hope to unpack how the tone of public discourse shaped interracial collaboration and community development. It is believed that through a thorough interrogation of archival sources, previously conducted oral history interviews, and a historical analysis of socio-economic trends at the census-tract level, I will be able to present a bottom-up perspective of life in post-Civil Rights black America.

There are at least four important archives that will potentially influence this discussion. The first is the Wisconsin Black Historical Society's archives, which holds a large number of community groups' organizational records, meeting minutes, communication materials and pamphlets. The records include a large number of sources

from the Harambee community organization, NAACP, Urban League, Community Brainstorming and other key local black organizations. The Black Historical Society sources are extremely useful in understanding how grassroots organizations struggled to develop their political strategies, and reveal the inner-workings and turmoil of organizations as they adjusted to the transformations of post-Civil Rights America. The pamphlets, programs and yearbooks give voice to community organizers.

Additionally, along with key organizational records, the Wisconsin Black Historical Society has several personal papers from Lloyd Barbee's archive. Barbee was a key public intellectual, politician and lawyer who played an influential role in several of the key civil rights struggles, including the effort to desegregate schools. Along with the vast array of ethnic and labor newspapers, and organizational records from the community-based organizations and black civic leaders, the Wisconsin Black Historical society's Executive Director Clayborne Benson was also the first African American cameraman/photographer on the airwaves in Milwaukee. There is a large collection of television and radio interviews on film, VHS and cassette dating back to 1967 conducted by Benson, as well as a large collection of television and news programming from the Jeffrey Dahmer trial, the police killing of Ernest Lacy and community events like Marcus Garvey Fest, which highlight the strong cultural underpinnings in the black community. Finally, the staff at the Wisconsin Black Historical society has conducted a large number of oral histories from community residents. While much of it is still on VHS tape, there is a large selection of interview transcripts to pull from including interviews with Michael McGee, Jeanetta Robinson and Howard Fuller.

Along with the interviews at the Wisconsin Black Historical Society, I will also use the growing list of digitized resources collected on the March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project courtesy of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library Archive. The Archive includes digitized primary sources from the Open Housing Marches, as well as the school integration struggles of the mid-1960s. The archive also houses a large collection of hate and criticism mail sent to Father James Groppi during the Open Housing Marches.

Additionally, I will be using campaign materials, official speeches, and annual budgets from the Tommy Thompson papers housed at Marquette University's Library. I will interrogate annual budgets, reports, and policy briefings from the City of Milwaukee, County of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Schools and Wisconsin State Government.

Both Michael McGee and Howard Fuller rose to national prominence as community leaders. McGee was a frequent guest on national news programs including *Phil Donahue* and *60 Minutes*; written transcripts for these shows are available via LexisNexis Academic Universe. Additionally, his racialized rhetoric was frequently covered in the *New York Times*, *NPR* and the *USA Today* as he made national headlines in 1990 as he revamped the Black Panther Community Militia. His use of mass media and frequent direct action tactics allowed him to get the attention of the press throughout 1990. He shows up in the national papers again in the spring of 1992, when he threatens sniper fire if he isn't reelected into his gerrymandered district.

Fuller was a national figure by the 1960s, and other scholars have assessed his work as a student and labor organizer. I have focused my inquiry on the later part of his career. In the 1990s, Fuller's groundbreaking work as MPS superintendent made national

news in *The New York Times* and *USA Today*. Fuller also showed up in the national press in the 1987 and 1988 as his innovative ideas on transforming the Milwaukee Public School System saw him by 1992 advocating for a \$300 million loan for the district. His subsequent and controversial departure from MPS also made national papers in 1995, as he was openly critical of the local teachers union. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, as he became a champion for voucher and choice schools, Fuller rose to national prominence again. He was also a subject of at least two oral history projects including an interview conducted in 1996 by the Southern History Oral History Project and an oral history conducted by Jack Dougherty for *More Than One Struggle*. He has also been the subject of hundreds of news stories, exposes, feature stories and has himself been published dozens of times. His dissertation is also valuable for this project. Finally, Howard Fuller has given me digitized copies of the official proceedings, planning papers, workshop descriptions, and programming materials from the 1984 Wisconsin Black Political Convention.

Another source that will be important is an official City of Milwaukee newsletter entitled “Human Rights Commission: Newsletter.” The newsletter is a public communication from the Mayor’s office. These mimeographed newsletters were only published between 1953 and 1960, while Socialist Mayor Frank Zeidler was in office. During his tenure as mayor, Zeidler frequently was attacked by conservatives for being soft on race.<sup>47</sup> These newsletters are the city’s official statements on race relations, and are written to quell fears of African Americans. They play an important role in proving the deep-rooted racial animus that existed in the city long before the pending urban crisis.

---

<sup>47</sup> Frank Ziedler, *Liberal in City Government* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Publishers, 2010)



The other key source of material will be the archive of Milwaukee's biggest daily papers, the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Milwaukee Sentinel*. Their role in shaping popular opinion, public discourse, and public policy during this era cannot be understated.

This study will make use of at least four black newspapers, *The Milwaukee Courier*, the *Milwaukee Times*, *The Milwaukee Star*, and *The Community Journal*. The most influential of these papers is perhaps the *Milwaukee Courier*, whose parent company, *Courier Communications*, also owned a popular AM radio station, WNOV, which was first purchased by owner Jerrell Jones in 1973. Along with its music format, WNOV also featured a morning radio talk show, the "Word Warriors." One of the key personalities on WNOV was Michael McGee. While other black media outlets, especially the *Community Journal*, played a role in shaping the political strategy of African American elected officials, *Courier Communications* and its radio personalities had tremendous influence over black political thought during the era.

The last key source of archival material will come from the large number of social research, urban planning and economic development reports produced by the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Center of Economic Development and the Center on Wisconsin Strategies (COWS), Wisconsin Public Research Institute and a data set of State of Wisconsin Department of Correction inmate information provided by University of Wisconsin Sociologist Pam Oliver. While much of the public discourse around the black community has been couched in discriminatory undertones and color-blind policy, the research outfits at UWM and COWs provide an alternative perception of the problems facing inner-city Milwaukee. The work of researchers like Marc Levine and Lois Quinn, which includes "The Crisis of Black Male Joblessness in Milwaukee: Trends,

Explanations, and Policy Options”, “Stealth Depression: Joblessness in the City of Milwaukee Since 1990”, and “The Economic State of Milwaukee's Inner City: 1970-2000” provide an array of charts, maps and timelines of the socioeconomic trends of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BACKDROP: WORK, POVERTY and CRIME

When 16-year-old Preston J Blackmer was murdered on a cold spring day in 2005, few people outside of his small clique of homeboys and family members noticed.<sup>48</sup> Shot by a jealous rival on the corner of 29th Street and Burleigh Ave. in Milwaukee, WI, Blackmer died in a neighborhood that had over the years experienced more than its fair share of murder. Ironically his hood, once a proud bastion of working-class homeownership, is nicknamed Amani after the Kiswahili word for “peace.” But since the 1980s, the slain teenager’s stomping grounds had been far from peaceful. Between 1980 and 2000, the rapid loss of work, combined with persistent poverty, helped foster an environment of intense social disorganization throughout many of Milwaukee’s previously stable working-class black neighborhoods like Amani. Violence was an unfortunate outcome of a community turned upside down by joblessness and persistent poverty.<sup>49</sup>

The abandoned warehouses and boarded-up buildings that dotted Preston’s neighborhood made the area look like a backdrop for an urban warfare video game. Although the railroad tracks and the many abandoned industrial garages were signs that

---

<sup>48</sup> “Boy, 16, Fatally Shot Sitting in Car.” *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 26, 2005

<sup>49</sup> “Welcome to the Imani Area.” Milwaukee County Government Website <http://county.milwaukee.gov/Aging7705/ConnectingCaringCommunities/Neighborhoods/Amani.htm>

<sup>49c</sup> “Metcalf Park to Receive Grant to Fight Gangs, Violence.” *Milwaukee Journal* Sept 22nd, 2003

the area was once a hub of interstate commerce, for the most part, the once bustling neighborhood had come to an economic standstill. Yet, just three decades prior, the dilapidated buildings on 29th Street and Burleigh Ave area were once an integral of a booming industrial zone that was connected by a series of railways linking Milwaukee's industrial 30th Street Corridor to the world's economy.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the socio-economic woes impacting Milwaukee neighborhoods like Amani, there was a time in recent history when the city was one of the best places in the country for African Americans to live. Although there was a burgeoning working-class black population prior to 1945, large numbers of Black folks didn't start making their way to Brew City until the post-WWII demand for automobiles sparked increased production at local manufacturing firms. By 1950, African Americans were moving to Milwaukee in droves as ample jobs and "safe and clean" neighborhoods pulled blacks from other urban areas such as Chicago and the Jim Crow South. With work opportunities abundant, Milwaukee's working-class African American community was able to assert political and economic power in new ways. Politically influential, both inside and outside of the plant, in the 1970s and early 1980s, black leaders were able to shape the popular discourse while also making gains economically.

The increased economic opportunities also saw a rapid in-migration of African

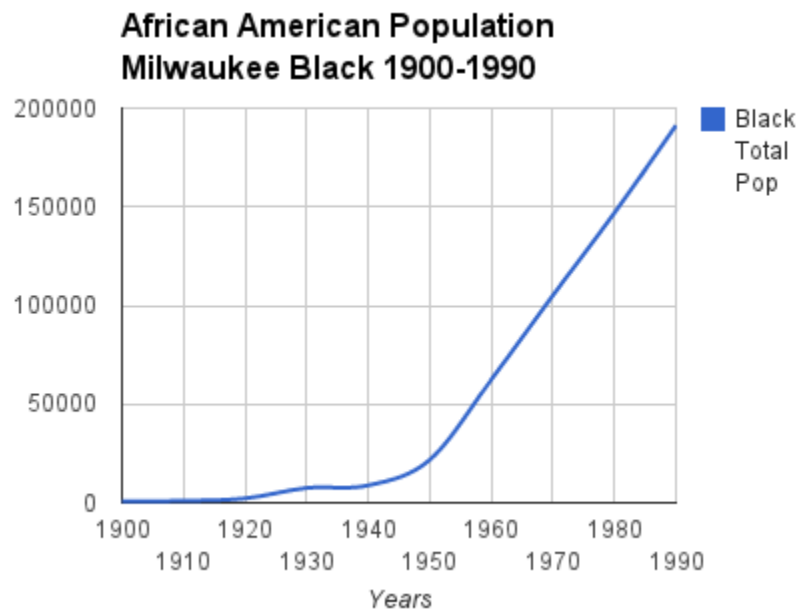
---

<sup>50</sup>Schmid, John . "Out of Steam: Still Seperate and Unequal a Dream Deferred--Second of Three Parts." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 6, 2004.<sup>50</sup>Kisiel, Frank. *Automotive News*, "Frame Supplier A.O. Smith Ends Century-Long Auto Link," February 3, 1997.

<sup>50</sup>Schmid, John. "Out of Steam: Hit By A Global Train—First of Three Parts." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 5, 2004.

<sup>50</sup>*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. "A.O. Smith Still Here and Making Motors," May 5, 2008, sec. Business

American families that moved to Milwaukee to increase their chances for social mobility. Like during the Great Migration of the early 1900s, agents from local firms worked to recruit blacks from throughout the Great Lakes region and the Deep South as the demand for surplus labor increased. Between 1950 and 1960, the African American population expanded in Milwaukee from around 20,000 to 63,000. The rapid growth of the black community didn't slow for the next three decades; by the 2000 Census there were nearly 300,000 African Americans living in the city of Milwaukee.<sup>51</sup>



Yet, as the job market cooled, African Americans faced unprecedented obstacles in their effort to compete in the rapidly shifting global economy. Not only had the growing black community been over-represented in dying industries, a conservative political climate, combined with intense segregation, worked to keep African Americans from getting a bigger stake of the local economy. While African American leaders worked to divert the pending crisis by fervently organizing with their peers in the

---

<sup>51</sup> Survey: Census 1960 (US, County & State), Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau Data set: Social Explorer Tables (SE) Table:t16. Race [8] Universe: Total Population

workplace, the gaping hole caused by the loss of manufacturing was staggering. Intensified by persistent segregation and economic isolation, black Milwaukee's economic woes were driven by the loss of work opportunities and undermined by the city's inability to break away from its manufacturing past.

This chapter helps set a backdrop to the extreme social disorganization that took place throughout Milwaukee's segregated north side. By placing Milwaukee's black community in a growing discourse about the late-twentieth-century urban crisis, this chapter will give greater context to the struggle that previously stable African American communities faced as the demand for American manufacturing decreased in the last decades of the twentieth century. As America shifted away from heavy manufacturing, black communities like Milwaukee worked to push back against the onslaught of economic problems by organizing both inside and outside the workplace. Although the pervasiveness of joblessness would eventually overcome the black community, African Americans asserted their agency in new and effective ways inside the workplace.

This chapter also aims to add to the debate about the role segregation and joblessness played in limiting economic options for working-class black communities during the latter part of the twentieth century. While, nationally, black median wealth advanced relative to whites in the 1990s, black communities like Milwaukee that relied on manufacturing work were economically hampered, financially isolated, and unprepared as the domestic manufacturing sector declined.<sup>52</sup> Yet, the loss of jobs was not the only variable impacting the rapid decline of African American neighborhoods as

---

<sup>52</sup> "Changes in Household Wealth in the 1980s and 1990s in the U.S." in Edward N. Wolff, Editor, *International Perspectives on Household Wealth*, Elgar Publishing Ltd.,

segregation and economic and political isolation worked to create a pressure-cooked environment in which children frequently lost their lives to gun violence.

### *Sun Sets on Manufacturing*

For nearly two generations, the assembly lines in A.O. Smith connected Milwaukee's African American community to a national and global economy. Employment at A.O. Smith provided African Americans an instant passport to the middle class. A massive car frame factory, that at its height sprawled 148 acres, the plant once employed thousands of African Americans living within walking distance of the worksite. Even though workers' hours were undoubtedly tied to the shifting demand curves of the American automobile industry's "Big Three", blacks who were able to get hired could by 1990 earn up to \$60,000 a year after several years on the job.

Although whites were still given the safer and cleaner jobs at the A.O. Smith plant, the workforce reflected the growing diversity of Milwaukee's community.<sup>53</sup> Many employers like Allen Bradley sought actively to keep African Americans out of the workplace, but the city's manufacturing plants provided a variety of entry points for black workers to get a foothold in the American economy.<sup>54</sup> During the 1970s and 1980s plants like Allis Chalmers, Briggs and Stratton and AMC Automotive employed

---

<sup>53</sup> Fauber, John. "An Era Ends for Blacks at A.O. Smith" *Milwaukee Journal* March 4 1990,

<sup>54</sup> "The Allen Bradley Case." *Milwaukee Journal* January 15, 1969

<sup>54c</sup> "Allen Bradley Denies Discriminating Against Blacks." *Milwaukee Journal* Milwaukee August 6th, 1968

thousands of African Americans who continued to move to Milwaukee in the post-war era.

A.O. Smith, established in 1889 as a bicycles part manufacturer, was a family-run corporation that grew rapidly as it diversified the products manufactured in its assembly lines. By 1903, the company was building automobile frames for Cadillac and throughout the first half of the twentieth century achieved a number of historic milestones, including being the nation's largest manufacturer of bombs in WWI and building the first fully automated frame production line in 1921. As the nation exited WWII, the company's close relationship with the federal government led to orders of 4.5 million bombs, 16,750 sets of landing gear, and 46,700 propeller blades, as well as nose frames for the B-25 bomber, water heaters, jeep frames, and components for the atomic bomb project.<sup>55</sup>

As the post-WWII demand for automobiles increased, A.O. Smith was able to regain its position as one of the nation's leading frame manufacturers. As a one-time manufacturer of wartime products, the corporation was familiar with new standards the federal government required of defense contractors after Harry Truman's 1941 Executive Order 8802, which forbade discrimination in the national defense industries. As African Americans moved to Milwaukee in the post-war era, A.O. Smith took public stands against employment discrimination and led the charge to employ African Americans.

However, this hadn't always been the case, as A.O. Smith and its local manufacturing competitor, Allis Chalmers, were cited in 1942 for being non-compliant with Truman's effort to level the playing field in defense industries. While Milwaukee

---

<sup>55</sup> "History Milestones". A. O. Smith Corporation, Milwaukee, WI <http://www.aosmith.com/About/Detail.aspx?id=130> (accessed January 21, 2013)



still had a relatively small black population at the time, the public pressure applied by civil rights and labor leaders like A. Phillip Randolph and the NAACP's Walter White pushed the federal government to pressure firms receiving public defense contracts to act accordingly. By 1963, A.O. Smith was a local leader in combating racism and actively worked to employ and prepare black workers to man its automotive assembly lines.

Factory work, although strenuous and labor intensive, provided an unprecedented opportunity for black workers to advance economically, and A.O. Smith aggressively recruited black workers to work its shifts as welders and forklift and press operators. From working with community-based organizations like the Urban League to recruit workers, to helping raise a quarter of a million dollars for the United Negro College fund in 1982, factories like A.O. Smith once helped provide economic stability for Milwaukee's black community.<sup>56</sup> While whites still had access to the better-paying and safer jobs inside the plant, A.O. Smith gave black folks a working person's shot at social mobility and financial stability. In 1980, the Smith Steel Workers Union had 5,100 employees at A.O. Smith, about a third of who were black. Prior to the expansion of production at the major manufacturing plants, blacks worked the hot and dirty jobs, for instance at the area's large tanneries like Pfister and Vogel.<sup>57</sup> But, as the demand for work increased, employers like A.O. Smith sought actively to reach outside the city for new sources of labor. In 1946, they even recruited workers from Jamaica to work the assembly lines, only to see them retreat back to the Caribbean as a result of Wisconsin's

---

<sup>56</sup> "140,000 Raised in State Campaign For College Fund" *Milwaukee Sentinel* October 8th, 1982 Page 4, part 1

<sup>57</sup> Trotter, William Joe. *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-45* pg 62

harsh winter. Those of African ancestry who were able to withstand the cold could expect a higher standard of living than most of the other post-war Midwestern cities.

Of course, while employers like A.O. Smith sought actively to diversify its labor force, black workers organized to increase their influence inside the plant. In 1972, Paul Blackman was elected president of the Smith Steelworker Union, the union representing the majority of workers at A.O. Smith. The Chicago native, who first moved to the city in 1959, started at the plant as a forklift driver, and eventually moved his way up to the welding line.<sup>58</sup> A strong-willed leader, Blackman earned a reputation from his fellow workers for being a hard worker and being willing to take on the bosses. In 1974, only two years after being elected the Steelworkers 19806's first black president, Blackman organized his local to lead the first strike in A.O. Smith history, and helped win the right of workers to retire after 30 years in the plant, regardless of age.<sup>59</sup>

With nearly a third of A.O. Smith's workers African American, black labor leaders like Paul Blackman wielded tremendous political power both in and outside of the plant. Like many labor leaders before him, Blackman's militancy was tied to an effort larger than just worker relations as his efforts to organize at the plant undoubtedly helped shape the overall economic and political health of the African American community. In fact, by the 1980s, African Americans had begun to hold positions of power throughout the Labor movement. With African Americans holding senior positions in organizations like AFSCME, The United Food and Commercial Workers, the Steelworkers, and the

---

<sup>58</sup> Doremus, Mark/ "Paul Blackman Retrospective" Youtube Interview with Blackman May 19th, 2012 <http://youtu.be/JMa-f4hnn44>

<sup>59</sup> "Union Rejects Smith Proposal." *Milwaukee Sentinel* August 18th 1977, part 2 pg 11

Amalgamated Transit Union, the African American community was able to increasingly assert itself as a power bloc in the local political narrative.

Not only did these leadership positions provide African Americans a voice to shape the direction of their work, but also gave them leverage to influence collectively the political discourse and enhance the quality of life for the black community. By working to organize a black political agenda, labor leaders were able to increase their impact and influence in the economic and political landscape.<sup>60</sup> After all, black workers not only voted on their contracts, but the relative success of Jesse Jackson's 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns reflected their ability to vote at the ballot box during the last decades of the twentieth century.

Leaders like Paul Blackman used their bully pulpits to help strengthen the black community's causes, while seeking ways to improve the pay and working conditions for workers they represented. A noted militant, Blackman was willing to challenge Labor's traditional allies, like the Democratic Party, that were less progressive and less committed to racial equality than he liked. But Blackman also won the trust of A.O. Smith management, as he was praised by his opponents for being diplomatic when the plant started to face leaner times.<sup>61</sup> At a time when the city's conservative movement was dominating the local landscape, Blackman's radicalism was frequently chronicled in the business sections of both daily papers, the *Milwaukee Journal* and the more-business-

---

<sup>60</sup> "Black Unionists Urge Members to Speakout." *Milwaukee Journal* March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1986 (metro part 2)

<sup>61</sup> "Cooperation Replaces Labor Militancy." *Milwaukee Journal* April 18th, 1988

<sup>61</sup>"Who's to Blame: The Briggs Debacle." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. May 22, 1994

friendly *Sentinel*. Undoubtedly, his ability to organize his fellow workers provided opportunities to shape A.O. Smith's business plans as he met with company management weekly while leading the union.

But cooperation between the union and management could not prevent the inevitable. As the 1970s came to an end, Milwaukee's economy started to sputter as a recession and rising gas prices made American automobiles less attractive. Temporary work shortages at plants like A.O. Smith had been replaced by permanent layoffs. Even though A.O. Smith remained relatively competitive as it continued to innovate and produce less expensive and safer automobile frames, the company's automotive division was overwhelmingly tied to the demand for American cars. The company's CEO and chairman, Lloyd B. Smith, worked to keep his company positioned competitively to work with Detroit, but he couldn't undo the harsh economic environment of late 1970s, or the inability of the Big Three to compete effectively with foreign imports in the 1980s.<sup>62</sup>

By the late 1970s A.O. Smith was laying off large segments of its workforce and the entire manufacturing sector continued to falter as the American automobile industry saw decreased demand. With the automobile industry failing, work became increasingly scarce. Unemployment hit the city so hard that, in 1983, 15,000 people showed up to Wisconsin State Fair Park in 20-degree weather after A.O. Smith announced it would hire 200 welders and press operators.<sup>63</sup> Although workers were used to slow downs and shortages, blue-collar workers now competed for a rapidly shrinking pool of jobs.

---

<sup>62</sup> "Remembering an Era 1921-1958: 10,000 Automobile Frames a Day." A. O. Smith Corporation, Milwaukee, WI 1978

<sup>63</sup> "15,000 line up for 200 jobs: Jobless brave 20 degree weather in Milwaukee". *The Deseret News*, Jan 18 1982

“I’ve watched A.O. Smith over the last 35 years and it’s not getting any better....it [the loss of jobs] is going to hurt a lot of people,” said Earl Ingram Sr. in 1990, a year after A.O. Smith had lost \$13 million in projected revenue. Ingram, like many African Americans, moved to Milwaukee in 1950 from Arkansas, and was able to provide his family a better standard of living had he stayed in the south. But by 1990s the stability of northern manufacturing began to dry up.<sup>64</sup>

A.O. Smith’s automotive division would never regain its footing. Although the automobile industry had once attracted thousands of workers from across the country, the shifting global economy would forever alter black workers’ ability to provide stability for their families, and would ultimately contribute to the social decline of black neighborhoods in the city’s north side. The middle class lifestyle that had once attracted workers like Ingram to abandon their southern roots would disappear with the dwindling shifts at area plants.

Ingram’s son, Earl Ingram Jr., also an employee at the plant, knew that A.O. Smith would not be the next generation’s ticket into the middle class. “There’s no doubt in my mind you have to be concerned about the future,” said the younger Ingram in 1990. “We’re up against the worldwide competition. The powers that be, whoever they are, have decided that blue-collar workers are overpaid.” Of course, the manufacturing sector’s woes weren’t as cut and dry as workers being overpaid.

---

<sup>64</sup> “A.O. Smith’s Future Looks Bright” *The Milwaukee Journal* - Mar 4, 1990

<sup>64</sup> Masterson, Peg “A.O Smith in Throes of Restructuring” A.O. Smith March 24 1988

Besides automation, expanding global competition in the automotive industry, and increased access to cheap surplus labor in other global markets (which would get easier after the 1994 signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement), workers at A.O. Smith also had to contend with the fact that the once-family-owned business had in 1984 ended a four-generation tradition of hiring a member of the Smith family to run the company. Family members who had grown up in the business were sympathetic to the plight of A.O. Smith's workers, but after the retirement of Lloyd B Smith, the founding family's stake in the corporation was controlled through their investment company, Smith Investment. After "L.B's" retirement, the Smith Investment Company summarily sought not to actively interfere with strategic planning decisions.<sup>65</sup> Although a family spokesperson, Arthur Smith, noted in 1990 that "[W]e've got a huge investment in Milwaukee and... it's not easy for us to move elsewhere," and even acknowledged that the Steelworkers Union was helpful in "trying to help us," Smith family members were no longer the only ones steering the company. A.O. Smith workers might have lovingly remixed the 1960s pop tune "Hang on, Sloppy" to "Hang on, L.B" to encourage the last Smith family member to hold the CEO position not to give into shareholders who wanted to move the company out of Milwaukee, but the interests of stockholders increasingly influenced the direction of the company as it continued to grow into a multinational corporation.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> "Owners: A.O Smith Company Milestones" A.O. Smith Corporation, Milwaukee WI <http://www.aosmith.com/About/Detail.aspx?id=130> (accessed January 15, 2012)

<sup>66</sup> "Family Ties Not Enough to Keep Family." *Milwaukee Journal*, March 4 1990

<sup>66</sup>"Lloyd B. Smith, Former Chairman and Chief Executive of A. O. Smith Corporation Dies at Age 87" A.O. Smith Issued Press Release Accessed January 1st, 2013

With board chairman and non-Smith family member Thomas Dolan in charge, A.O. Smith sought to shrink its payroll, diversify its product lines, purchase smaller competitors, and export segments of its work to Mexico.<sup>67</sup> For the 15 years following Lloyd B Smith's retirement, the company, that had once made 10,000 car frames a day, downsized its automotive division on Milwaukee's north side. In 1997, following a similar trend at the city's other major employers of African Americans, including AMC Automotive and Allis Chalmers, A.O. Smith sold the production of its century-old automotive division to Tower Automotive, refocused its energies on smaller manufacturing goods like water heaters, and reduced labor costs in order to increase profit margins and compete in the expanding global market.

But the Steelworkers and Paul Blackman didn't go out without a fight. In 1991, just a year before Blackman retired, Smith workers voted to strike after executives tied their contract extension to productivity. The automotive division might have shrunk dramatically—with around 1,200 workers voting to go on strike—but the remaining employees at A.O. Smith were fighting for their future. “Workers did not trust the compensation plan,” said Blackman to a *Milwaukee Sentinel* reporter in September 1991. “They were fearful that too many things would impact their compensation.”<sup>68</sup> Even though the company had cut nearly 4,000 jobs at the plant in less than a decade, workers continued to assert their voices, as the company's financial analysts continued to devise

---

<sup>67</sup> Masterson, Peg “Dolan Alters A.O. Smith Course.” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 24, 1988 pg 1 part

<sup>67</sup>“Smith Plans to Issue Stock” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 5th 1986

<sup>68</sup> “A.O. Smith Workers Say No To Contract.” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 12th 1991

ways to increase profits.<sup>69</sup> It would only take about 45 days for the workers to agree to a new contract, but the fighting spirit of leaders like Paul Blackman created a new power dynamic for African American workers who had previously been ignored by the power elite.<sup>70</sup> In fact, in 1994, Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist granted the company his annual corporate citizenship award for its ability to work through labor difficulties.<sup>71</sup> Yet, with A.O. Smith moving out of the car frame business, employees' attempts to improve their position of influence through collective bargaining would, ultimately, come to a halt.

By the end of the century, the battle between the corporate giants and the city's workers came to a dramatic climax. Between 1979 and 1983, the city of Milwaukee lost nearly 70,000 jobs.<sup>72</sup> Manufacturing, once the cornerstone of the Milwaukee economy, was the hardest hit as nearly 60,000 of these lost jobs were from the manufacturing sector.<sup>73</sup> African Americans, who were overwhelmingly clustered in manufacturing, were rocked by the economic downturn, and black neighborhoods all over Milwaukee's north side experienced a similar entrenchment of joblessness, poverty and crime as the Amani neighborhood.

*Neighborhoods hit Hard.*

---

<sup>69</sup> Fauber, John. "Analysts question A.O. Smith cost cuts." *Milwaukee Journal*, May 22nd 1991

<sup>70</sup> Gunn, Erik. "A.O. Smith union oks contract." *Milwaukee Journal*, October 31st 1991

<sup>71</sup> Gunn, Erik. "Norquist praises the 'partnership' between A.O. Smith and it's unions." *Milwaukee Journal*, Oct 4th 1994

<sup>72</sup> Wilkerson, Isabel. "How Milwaukee Has Thrived While Leaving Blacks Behind." *New York Times*, March 19, 1991, Late Edition. The New York Times

<sup>73</sup> "Manufacturing Jobs Losing Out to Service" *Milwaukee Sentinel* March 8th, 1993



The rapid economic downturn may not have only affected black neighborhoods, as the city's overall unemployment rate grew between from 4.1% in 1970 to 6.9% in 1980, but working-class black neighborhoods like Metcalfe Park and Harambee Community were the most devastated.<sup>74</sup> Even more well-to-do-areas like the Sherman Park area, which had once attracted middle-class and white-collar African Americans, were experiencing a plethora of social problems. By the 1990 Census, the black poverty rate was 42% and the black community's economic and social woes worsened.

Downsizing of the African American community's largest employers—like A.O. Smith—not only impacted blue-collar workers; commercial businesses, including large shopping malls throughout the north side, closed their doors and never reopened. A diminished tax base also prompted cutbacks in public-sector employment, which, in Milwaukee as in other areas, had been a large employer of African Americans. Smaller businesses that serviced black workers also struggled.<sup>75</sup> And many black businesses, already hamstrung by decades of redlining by banks, real estate and insurance companies, went belly-up as their customers' pocketbooks dried up.

---

<sup>74</sup> "Economic State of Milwaukee" University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development 1998

<http://www4.uwm.edu/ced/publications/milwecon/chap5.cfm> Table 5.15 (accessed September 23, 2011)

<sup>74</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Nelson, James. "County Employees Could Face Layoffs." *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 15th 1992 pg 13 a

<sup>75</sup>Demkovich, Linda. "Milwaukee: Feeling the Fiscal Pinch." *The National Journal* 14, no. 23 (1983): 999.

Ahern, Tom. "Minority Cuts Noted in County Work Force." *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 30th 1982 Tom Ahern

<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup>Collins, Thomas. "Leaders of Minority Business Cite Lack of Financing." *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 24th 1987 pg 5 part1

<sup>75</sup>

Prior to the Fair Housing Act of 1968, African Americans living in Brew City were clustered in a handful of census tracts just west and north of Milwaukee's central business district. Milwaukee's city leaders worked to annex unincorporated towns in the 1950s and 1960s to the north and west of city limits to expand the housing options, but segregation was strictly enforced, as racially discriminatory housing covenants restricted homeowners and landlords from accepting solicitations from potential African American patrons. Although scholars like Jack Dougherty and Patrick D. Jones have highlighted how African Americans worked to circumvent the segregated boundaries of Milwaukee prior to the passage of the historic Open Housing Bill, in the 1980, 1990, and 2000 Censuses, Milwaukee remained one of the most segregated cities in the United States.<sup>76</sup>

Some pundits and activists have argued that such intense segregation was ultimately an asset for the African American community, positing that the density fostered bonding between black neighbors and provided unique opportunities for economic entrepreneurship.<sup>77</sup> Even in cities like Milwaukee, which saw local banks and insurance agencies limiting black entrepreneurship through red lining, the argument goes that the forced close proximity intensified and strengthened kinship networks and built

---

<sup>76</sup> "Milwaukee Annexation is the only way we can provide housing," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 2nd 1949

"Annexation Proposal Would Hit the City Very Hard" *Milwaukee Journal* June 13 1955

<sup>76</sup> *Milwaukee Journal*, February 4, 1940

Quinn, Lois and John Pawasarat "Racial Integration in Urban America: A Block Level Analysis of African American and White Housing Patterns" *Employment and Training Institute, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 2002, revised January 2003.*

<sup>77</sup> McWhorter, John "Segregation Is Down. Great News, Right? But was it ever really a bad thing that black people lived together?" *The Root* January 31, 2012

<http://www.theroot.com/views/black-residential-segregation>

inter-class bonds between poor and more socially mobile blacks. Such discrimination may have prevented black businessmen from getting access to capital to start large manufacturing businesses, but the proverbial village was stronger as successful black doctors and craftsmen lived amongst and shared with the sons and daughters of cooks and meatpackers.

But in his 2008 dissertation, “*Why Some Cities Succeed more than others at black entrepreneurship: An Analysis of Variable Predicted to Impact Rates of Black Business*”, Matthew L. Wagner provides an alternative view. Wagner argues that although Milwaukee's economic infrastructure and lack of diversity was ultimately the biggest obstacle preventing black Milwaukee from being economically successful, segregation only further intensified the struggle for black social mobility. Wagner's research offers a nuanced perspective on the scarcity of options for Milwaukee's workers, and will be discussed at length to help lay the foundation for later chapters that discuss why racial narrative was used by the power elite to maintain the social and economic status quo as African Americans became more powerful politically.

Wagner compares two similar regional economies—Milwaukee and Minneapolis—both of which pulled black workers after other Midwestern cities like Detroit and Chicago became prime destinations for African Americans during the first phase of the Great Migration. Using census data, public information about black businesses, and information from the black chamber of commerce, Wagner argues that Minneapolis' African American community fared much better during the 1980s and 1990s than Milwaukee's black community and had a much stronger base of black entrepreneurship. Even after America's economy shifted during the Reagan, Bush and

Clinton eras, he notes that Minneapolis' black community, which only made up between 5% and 15% of the population between 1960 and 1990, was better prepared to weather the turbulent economic times.

He argues there were at least two variables that made Minneapolis' black entrepreneurs, and black economy as a whole, more successful than Milwaukee's. The first variable, the smaller population, made black workers less of a threat to white workers. The second was that Minneapolis' economic infrastructure, while dependent on black low wage workers, was more diverse, less dependent on heavy manufacturing, and provided a broader array of opportunities for African Americans to compete, both as workers and as entrepreneurs. When low-wage black workers moved to Milwaukee to work in the manufacturing sector, others in Minneapolis wound up in the booming mill industry. As the local economy slowed, black workers were able to adjust and learn new skills to compete in other sectors and/or as black entrepreneurs.

Wagner posits that Milwaukee's reliance on manufacturing has had long-term negative impacts on the city's ability to compete in a regional, national and international economy. Not only were the skills learned in factories not easily transferable to other sectors, but also they didn't necessarily prepare workers to become independent business owners. Despite having toiled to help make Milwaukee one of the strongest economies just a few decades prior, the skills used to keep plants like Briggs and Stratton, A.O. Smith and Allis Chalmers competitive, such as implementing detailed blueprints, staying focused during mundane yet tenuous physical labor, and the ability to employ steward leadership to foster improved working conditions, were of little help as Milwaukee's

manufacturing firms either closed down, or reindustrialized to exurban and whiter communities like Waukesha, Wisconsin.

While Wagner notes that persistent economic discrimination prevented black businesses from having access to enough finance capital to compete in the local economy as part distributors or subcontractors, he also points out the demand for low-skill labor ultimately stripped the local economy of its diversity, as many of Milwaukee's most talented took jobs in the plants. To Wagner, Milwaukee's local economy was so dependent on manufacturing that it drained its workforce of its diversity and innovative potential.

Take, for example, Earl Ingram Jr., who unlike his older siblings, chose to work for A.O. Smith, rather than attending college. "On one hand, A.O. Smith is a godsend," said Ingram to a *Milwaukee Journal* reporter in 1990. "It allowed me to start a family early and maintain that family. But it has also been a blow. At 18, when you should be deciding what you should do with your life, you're at this plant making all this money. That's the trap the blue-collar worker has." Even though Ingram had more economic stability than most African Americans in the region, he realized that his dependence on A.O. Smith came at a cost, and was ultimately not controlled by him.

Prior to rapid growth of Milwaukee's Bronzeville area, a hard-working individual like Ingram might have explored other outlets to express his talents. According to Joe Trotter, pre-WWII Milwaukee was a fertile environment for black entrepreneurs. But, as the federal highway project of the 1950s and 1960s helped boost domestic automobile production, the landscape was dominated by black workers seeking employment at places like A.O. Smith rather than continuing their family business, going it alone as an

entrepreneur or trying to compete in the white collar job market. Even black businesses that were able to keep their doors open as Milwaukee's economy grew were, according to Wagner, less likely to survive by catering only to black patrons as the scope and scale of the manufacturing sector made it difficult to develop a strong enough business model to withstand the cyclical nature of the automobile industry.

To the point that segregation was good or could have been good for the black community, Wagner argues that a shift towards “black capitalism” in the late 1960s, while empowering many ideologically politically, further isolated black businesses, as their customer base was dependent on black worker patronage. Unable to diversify their customer base, or provide information or technical services to the growing health services or retail sectors, black entrepreneurs were on a rapidly shrinking island.

Black capitalism, he surmises, may have been more successful had there been a larger middle class black population to sustain a bourgeois workforce or if the black workforce was smaller, like Minneapolis’. But the structural disadvantages black businesses faced were intensified because of Milwaukee’s deeply rooted segregation, as the “lack of capital, inability to secure credit, few influential and cooperative white contacts, lack of political influence, and competition from better financed white companies limited access to capital.”

At the height of African American migration to Milwaukee, civil rights victories ended formalized segregated housing and, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, African Americans had moved throughout the north and northwestern parts of the city. But these shifts in legal precedent, whether the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of the 1965 and even the Fair Housing Act of 1968, could not guarantee that whites would live,

work, or play amongst, or invest in, the growing black community. By 1990, census tracts with city-owned housing projects like Westlawn and Parklawn, which were previously established for working-class white families, had become mostly black.

White flight, like that discussed in Thomas Segrue's Detroit, opened up housing stock, and African Americans occupied many census tracts that had previously been off-limits to black communities. In 1970, 85% of the Milwaukee's population was white; by 2000, the city was nearly 40% African American. Even areas in the far northwestern parts of the city like Granville Station, annexed in 1956 by city government to compensate for the city's decreased housing stock, had neighborhoods that were densely populated by African Americans.<sup>78</sup>

Frustrated that their black neighbors might decrease the value of their homes, and unwilling to let their children become classmates with blacks, many whites abandoned the city. While many city and county workers, including teachers and firemen, were mandated to stay in Milwaukee due to a controversial residency law that passed at the city level in the 1890s and at the county level in 1918, others in the private sector simply moved west, or moved to whiter neighborhoods on the south side. By the 2000 Census, segregation had become a permanent fixture in Milwaukee, as there were 47 census tracts in which at least 75% of the population was black.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Kenny, Judith. "Picturing Milwaukee's Neighborhoods" Department of Geography University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

<http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/picture/collection/mkenh/>

<sup>79</sup> "Residency Rule Fought by Employee" Milwaukee Journal, May 5th 1971 pt 2 g 8<sup>79</sup>

For a while, whites leaving the city meant that African Americans were able to better compete for jobs that had been previously off limits. Milwaukee's manufacturing sector thrived as plants like A.O. Smith continued to have busy assembly lines for nearly 10 years after the passing of the Federal Housing Act in 1968. African American workers, strengthened by the organizing efforts of the local Steelworkers and the United Auto Workers, were finally beginning to make headway in Brew city. "In 1970, at the city's industrial peak, the black poverty rate in Milwaukee was 22% lower than the U.S. black average."<sup>80</sup> Thanks to the manufacturing sector, African Americans workers, could, for the first time, afford to buy houses in the neighborhoods that had once been reserved for working-class whites.

But the economic stability would not last. As the manufacturing sector shrunk, so did African American's pathways for social mobility. During the late twentieth century, Milwaukee's black community experienced such tremendous economic obstacles that sociologist Marc Levine stated that African Americans were experiencing a "Stealth Depression." His analysis, based on census data between 1970 and 2000, revealed that joblessness in Milwaukee's black community had reached epidemic levels. And more poignantly, race and structural inequality were definite factors in the gripping economic statistics. According to Levine, "Despite significant employment gains at the end of the

---

<sup>79</sup>Since the late 1960s, public workers have tried to work around the residency rule, often by taking local government to court, however the courts, including the US Supreme court have ruled that the law is constitutional.

<sup>80</sup> Schmid, John "Where city factories, and now babies, die" Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel Nov 11, 2011



1990s economic boom, by 2001 black unemployment in the city was higher than it was in 1990.” In fact, by the turn of the century, unemployment amongst Milwaukee’s African American population was higher than blacks living in any large city in the country.

Levine is not the only scholar to note that Milwaukee’s black community was experiencing unprecedented problems. In 1995, Lois M. Quinn, John Pawasarat and Laura Serebin published an article entitled “Jobs for Workers on Relief in Milwaukee County, 1930-1994” that also compared the joblessness of late-twentieth-century inner-city Milwaukee to that of the Great Depression. Pointing to the Work Progress Administration (WPA) programs of the 1930s and the 1973 Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), which provided federal monies for local agencies to train and employ workers in the public sector, they argued that local government needed to counter the tough realities of unemployment and joblessness with innovative public policy.

It is important to note that even though the entire city of Milwaukee experienced economic difficulties as it transitioned from being the “machine shop to the world,” white unemployment never hit above 7% during the later part of the twentieth century. Whites simply experienced a higher standard of living in Brew City and never faced the onslaught of socio-economic problems that affected the black community in the later part of the century. Subsequently, between 1979 and 1989 the number of African Americans below the poverty line nearly doubled from 43,000 (30%) to 78,000 (41%).<sup>81</sup> While the

---

<sup>81</sup> Wilkerson, Isabel. "How Milwaukee Has Thrived “

<sup>81</sup>Survey: Census 1980 Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer Data set: Social Explorer Tables (SE) Universe: Black Alone Population for whom poverty status is determined

<sup>81</sup>Survey: [Census 1990](#) 1Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

<sup>81</sup>Data set: [Social Explorer Dataset \(SE\)](#). Table: T101. Poverty Status in the 1989 (Black Population) [3] Universe: Black Persons for whom poverty status is determined

total number of African Americans below the poverty line leveled off by 2000 to 71,000 (33%), the economic strength of the black community had weakened tremendously since the 1970 Census when nearly 92% of African Americans above age 16 were employed.

The racial differences were so glaring between black and white workers that in 1991 Democratic State Representative Annette Polly Williams noted to a *New York Times* reporter that "Black people see one thing, Whites see another. We are not included in this new prosperity. The struggle is, how do we fit into the new order."<sup>82</sup> The disparities became even starker in the decades leading up to the new millennium as the black median family income as a proportion of white family income dropped from 70% in 1970 to a paltry 48% in 1990.<sup>83</sup>

In 1991, Milwaukee's economy had experienced 88 straight months of job growth and the city government was sitting on a \$58 million surplus, yet 20% of the city's African American population was unemployed. In a previous era, Milwaukee city leaders may have fought more aggressively to solve the city poverty issues. Yet with African Americans as the face of Milwaukee's poverty, the tone of the local debate around the city's social problem focused on a free-enterprise anti-tax narrative that sought to minimize government investment in social programs.

Had poverty been the only problem, there is a chance that Preston Blackmer might have survived 28<sup>th</sup> Street and Burleigh. After all, African Americans have been at

---

<sup>82</sup> Wilkerson, Isabel. "How Milwaukee Has Thrived"

<sup>83</sup> Economic State of Milwaukee" University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development 1998  
<http://www4.uwm.edu/ced/publications/milwecon/chap5.cfm> (accessed September 23, 2011)

83

the bottom of America's economic ladder since Reconstruction. Surviving the social economic realities of poverty is nothing new for black folks. Historians have long pointed out how African Americans have used their collective creativity to survive harsh living conditions. But there was something unique about the obstacles in the 1980s and 1990s as the joblessness and socio-economic consequences of economic isolation had worked to create extreme social disorganization that undermined nearly four decades of social and political advancements by the black community.

Even though African Americans continued to grow in power politically after the plants closed, as African Americans would take up more seats on the city council and individuals like Paul Blackman would later serve as an advisor to Mayor John Norquist, the lack of jobs would rapidly alter the quality of life in the black community. And to make matters worse, the social safety net, which had been bolstered by the labor movements' organizing efforts throughout the middle part of the twentieth century, would disappear as privatization and neo-liberal ideologies dominated the local, state and federal political discourse in the 1990s. In the past, young men sought out employment at companies like A.O. Smith to improve living conditions, but as the century came to the close the harsh socio-economic landscape saw African American communities trying to survive a rapidly shifting and increasingly conservative socio-economic landscape. Many turned to the underground economy. Others, like Preseton J Blackmer, became victims.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MAYOR FRANK ZEIDLER'S ATTEMPTS TO BUILD ARE THWARTED

“When men prominent in Milwaukee’s business and industrial life promote [equal opportunity for all], they are making a social and business contribution of greater significance to the welfare of the people of the Milwaukee area, greater than perhaps they realize.” William Frank Rasche, Director of Milwaukee Vocational and Adult Schools - 1946<sup>84</sup>

In 1948, the bespectacled Frank Zeidler was elected as Milwaukee’s third socialist mayor. Beating out a crowd of twelve other candidates, during the campaign the 35 year-old “sewer socialist” promised to expand the city’s paltry public housing and annex land south and northwest of the city boundaries to help make Milwaukee become more competitive with other regional markets. Although he had been elected as the Milwaukee County Surveyor and as a School Board Director prior to the race, Zeidler said he had won due to a series of “flukes.” Despite his humility, the truth is he most likely won due to the familiarity of his last name.

In 1940, his older brother Carl Zeidler beat six-term mayor socialist mayor Daniel Hoan, only to resign two years later to enlist in the Navy Reserves. After just six months aboard the SS Lasalle, the older Zeidler was killed in action near South Africa. Carl Zeidler, nicknamed “the singing mayor of Milwaukee” because of his proclivity for singing “God Bless America” at public meetings, had asked for the most dangerous job aboard the merchant ship. Although Germans had been attacked in the streets of Milwaukee during WWI, Zeidler’s older brother was extremely patriotic and felt a

---

<sup>84</sup> Rasche, William Frank “The Need in Milwaukee for Extending Employment to Negroes” Employeers Association of Milwaukee 1946 (accessed 11.22.11)  
<http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/tp/id/54229/show/54214/rec/13>

responsibility to his constituents to serve amongst them during the war. The newly elected kid brother had very big shoes to fill.<sup>85</sup>

While the younger Zeidler had neither the boyish good looks nor the movie star charm of his brother, he was a committed intellectual and activist who understood the issues. Having grown up in Milwaukee during the Great Depression, Zeidler had seen the city's economy sputter as American businesses continued to falter through the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>86</sup> Despite its economic diversity, Milwaukee experienced a rapid increase of worker strikes and labor-related violence during Zeidler's formative years as an adult. As a result, although he was a socialist, throughout his young career as a public servant he took a pragmatic approach to governing.

As the fighting wound down in Europe, there were glimmers of hope that the city could once again regain its economic footing. The wartime economy had strengthened the nation's manufacturing sector as local firms like A.O. Smith and Allis Chalmers built bombs and other military-issued goods for the wartime effort. With the victory against the Axis powers near, Congress began looking to fix problems on the home front. The Great Depression still fresh in their minds, elected officials looked to rebuild and extend the nation's crumbling infrastructure. Milwaukee, which had been an important regional economic hub since the 1850s when Canadian fur trader Solomon Juneau first settled the city, could play an important role in the nation's rebuilding process if it could present itself as a strong partner to the federal government.

---

<sup>85</sup> "Zeidler, Carl, Frederick (1908-1942) *Dictionary of Wisconsin History* Wisconsin Historical Society

<sup>86</sup> "Turning Points: Depression and Unemployment," *Wisconsin Historical Society* [http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-045/?action=more\\_essay](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-045/?action=more_essay)

Yet over the course of his career, Zeidler's attempts to invest in the public good were repeatedly undermined by his political opponents, the city's real estate developers and home builders, who sought to weaken the economic strength of Milwaukee's working class communities and limit the growing political power of the African American community. By framing Zeidler's progressive policies through a racialized lens, the city's business elite were able to first develop a political strategy that would be used throughout the next 60 years. While policy planks such as public housing and annexation were, on their face, race neutral, Zeidler's opponents were able to weave a sticky racial political narrative that would influence the direction of public policy and race relations for the next three generations.

By the end of the century, the political narrative first spun during Zeidler's 12 years as mayor would continue to limit African Americans' attempts at securing a bigger share of the political economy, and ultimately eviscerate the social safety net that had been won during previous eras of organized struggle. In the short term, the strategy prevented the growth of public housing; in the long term it laid the blueprint for Wisconsin's conservative movement, which, along with a shifting local economy, would prevent African Americans and working people generally from controlling a bigger share of the local economy.

To strengthen the overall thesis of this project, which is that the loss of work mentioned in the previous chapter did not alone prevent African Americans from achieving social mobility in the twentieth century, this chapter will discuss how this racialized strategy first took root. Institutionalized racism, codified through a series of public policy battles, hindered the black community from making socio-economic

advancements. Unlike other ethnic groups, like Eastern Europeans, which had previously overcome second-class citizenship through their work and service in WWI, Blacks were unable to truly become full participants in the local and federal economy in the post-WWII era as conservatives increasingly used race to shape the political narrative and steer the direction of the local political economy. This chapter will help to further establish the political motivations and roots of the late twentieth century conservative movement, which sought to criminalize and restrict the mobility of Milwaukee's growing black community.

#### *Federal Agenda Influences Local Actions*

Unlike his brother, whose creative use of public spectacle and storytelling helped him upset a popular four-term mayor, Frank Zeidler was a proud socialist, and entered the race to replace incumbent John Bohn after he announced that he would not seek reelection.<sup>87</sup> Running on a platform to expand public housing, clear blight and build local expressways, Zeidler's platform projected the post-war priorities of the federal government. Strengthening the economy by building twentieth-century housing, improving the transportation infrastructure and putting returning veterans back to work would be key priorities for political leaders from across the ideological spectrum in the immediate post-war era.

As the fighting in Europe, Asia and Africa died down, Black veterans returned to cities like Milwaukee with renewed interest in helping post-war America succeed.

Inspired by the "Double V", or the double victory campaign against the Axis powers and

---

<sup>87</sup> Hylton, J Gordon "The Singing Mayor from Marquette Law School" *Marquette Law School History*, September 26th, 2010

American racism, the African American community was growing stronger politically and working hard to earn a bigger share of the domestic economy. As federal institutions worked to adjust to President Harry Truman's Executive Order 9981, which abolished racial discrimination in the armed forces and eventually led to the end of segregation in the services, America's Progressive and Civil Rights movements worked to strengthen its resolve and take advantage of the momentum it had built. Before the sit in movements of the 1960s, leaders like A. Phillip Randolph, A.J. Muste and Walter Reuther were shifting the national discourse on race, class and equal rights.

Locally, African Americans used the shifting popular narrative to leverage for political and economic power. In 1940, the local Urban League chapter invited their national body's assistant executive secretary to speak at their annual conference. Lester B. Granger, who helped lead the Urban League's support for A. Phillip Randolph's March on Washington, continued with the prevailing theme that putting blacks to work was good for the country. His message, while patriotic and supportive of America's war effort, highlighted a consistent and effective strategy used by the strengthening progressive movement. "[I]f the nation is to be truly secure, the government must have the co-operation of Negro labor and its most effective use in the defense program," said Granger on December 17th, 1940.<sup>88</sup> While vestiges of intense structural racism would not be undone overnight, mid-twentieth-century America was a time of great transition as America struggled to right its history of oppression, and not only on the racial front.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> Negro Uplift Chance Seen: Defense Emergency Holds Great Opportunity, Say Urban Leader." Milwaukee Journal, December 18th 1940 pg 14

<sup>89</sup> Taylor, Jon E. *Freedom to Serve: Truman, Civil Rights and Executive Order 9981* Routledge New York, NY 2013



Working people, both returning veterans and those first entering the workforce, faced unprecedented employment opportunities in the immediate post-war era. Wartime manufacturers, strengthened by public investment from federal government contracts and grants, were primed to shift gears to help expand America's domestic manufacturing economy. While an emboldened conservative movement had effectively pushed back against the growing strength of the labor movement by passing the Taft Hartley Act of 1947, limiting the organizing activities of unions, working people still had many reasons to be hopeful. Nearly 25% of the nation's workforce was unionized, and President Truman's Fair Deal initiatives sought to reinforce the liberal gains of the FDR administration. While the poverty and desperation of the Great Depression were still fresh in the minds of many, progressive policies of the 1940s and early 1950s opened new opportunities for America to fix the many problems that had resulted from the last three decades of financial instability.

Milwaukee's 6th Ward, a ticking social time bomb, sat atop Zeidler's list of things to fix once he entered office. In his seminal text, *Making of Black Milwaukee*, Joe William Trotter discussed the many ways black workers were able to make social, economic and political advances prior to WWII. But Milwaukee's intense segregation created limited housing options for the expanding African American population. Clustered into some of the city's oldest and most dilapidated housing stock, a 1946 city-commissioned study revealed that nearly 67% of Milwaukee's black community lived in poor housing.<sup>90</sup> Milwaukee's growing black community had very few housing options;

---

<sup>90</sup> Miner, Barbara, *Lesson from the Heartland: A Turbulent of Half-Century of Public Education in Milwaukee*, New Press New York 2013

Zeidler's public housing platform was a solution to a pending crisis in the black community.<sup>91</sup>

Fixing the housing problems in Milwaukee's segregated 6th Ward would have numerous benefits, not just for the black community, but also for the city as a whole. The housing stock in Milwaukee's inner core was dilapidated. Built during the late 1800s when Western and Eastern European immigrant groups worked in the city's booming blue-collar industries, many of the houses in the compact black section of the community were in disrepair. Focusing on blight removal and expanding the city's boundaries, combined with securing more housing options, would be huge economic opportunities for the city, especially because Congress had signaled that deep investments in the nation's infrastructure were coming.

While it had not yet passed at the time of his election, for nearly four years, local leaders like Zeidler watched Congress debate the finer points of President Truman's 1945 "21 point plan" for improving the nation. Three of the points, 1) lowering the cost of living as the nation shifted to a peacetime economy, 2) passing comprehensive housing legislation and 3) removing surplus property, would eventually make their way into the Taft Ellender Wagner Housing Bill, which would become known as the Housing Act of 1949.<sup>92</sup> Along with financially seeding the construction of publicly owned housing, the Housing Act of 1949 also included funding for blight and urban slum removal.

---

<sup>91</sup> See Selma of the South

<sup>92</sup> 128 – "Special Message to the Congress Presenting a 21-Point Program for the Reconversion Period." President Truman September 6, 1945 The American Presidency Project

Milwaukee's 6th Ward was the perfect project to pitch to the federal government for funding, as the removal of blight in the black neighborhoods, and the subsequent reconstruction of public housing, would provide local construction firms work and help the city expand local infrastructure.<sup>93</sup> And if the city's leaders' collective moral conscience was driving them to build a new housing project, it also didn't hurt that, in 1944, the Federal Housing Agency stated that Milwaukee's limited housing options for African Americans presented a potential obstacle to making the city competitive for future grants.<sup>94</sup> City leaders had to carefully balance the local racial narrative while improving the housing conditions for the African American community if it were to partner with the federal government in modernizing the city's infrastructure. Politically, city leaders would be walking a racial tight rope, but improving Milwaukee's public housing was a strategic step in making the city a strong economic player in the post-WWII economy.<sup>95</sup>

For the newly elected Zeidler, the issue of public housing was part of his larger agenda to invest in the city's crumbling and outdated infrastructure.<sup>96</sup> Lacking both the housing stock to support an expanded workforce and a top-notch interstate highway

---

<sup>93</sup> "The Milwaukee Newsreel Program. March 19, 1952" WTMJ News Collection. Archives / Milwaukee Area Research Center. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries.

<sup>94</sup> "Sees Federal Housing Help: City May Be Aided in Slum Clearance If It Hurries, Chicagoan Says." Milwaukee Journal, July 25th 1944

<sup>95</sup> "Bohn Requests Aldermen Be Prepared When US Lifts Curbs" *Milwaukee Journal*, January 15, 1945

<sup>96</sup> "Blight Elimination and Prevention - Prepared for Frank Zeidler " Budget Supervisor, City of Milwaukee August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1954

Zeidler, Frank "The Problem of Metropolitan Government in the United States and Some Answers" 194?

system, the once-proud regional giant was hobbling. While many businesses still called “Cream City” home, Milwaukee did not have the necessary infrastructure to grow into a mid-twentieth century powerhouse. A press for public housing offered returning veterans and their families a jump-start towards middle-class social mobility and provided employers an incentive to seek surplus labor stock from outside city boundaries. Even to a committed socialist, expanding public housing seemed like good business.

During his inaugural address in 1948, Zeidler urged city, county and private entities to come together and be ready to build public housing once Congress passed the Housing Act.<sup>97</sup> Zeidler, ever the visionary, entered city hall with the stated goal of building between 5,000 and 10,000 public housing units.<sup>98</sup> But for the next twelve years, Zeidler’s political opponents would seek to undermine the mayor as he attempted to expand public housing and strengthen the public good. While his opponents undoubtedly feared that the public sector’s growing strength would limit the influence of the private sector, they were also worried that the growing black community would forever shift the balance of political power towards the left. After all, even though Wisconsin had a been a bastion of working class political power and union organizing prior to WWII, the state

---

<sup>97</sup> Although he approved the Housing Act of 1948, Harry S Truman was very disappointed with the early version of, which led to the Housing Act of 1949. Truman felt the 1948 “bill I fails to make any provision for low-rent public housing. It fails to make any provision for slum clearance and urban redevelopment. It fails to include any provision for special aids for farm housing. It includes only limited provision for research to bring down building costs.” (Truman, Harry, “Statement by the President Approving the Housing Act” August 10th, 1948 Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12975>.) Also see Truman, Harry S “Address at the University of Wisconsin.” *Miracle of 1948: Harry S Truman Major Campaign Speeches & Selected Whistle Stops* Edited by Steve Neal

<sup>98</sup> “Zeidler Urges Speed on Permanent Housing” pg two *Milwaukee Sentinel* April 21, 1948, pg 2

<sup>98</sup>

had also produced anti-communist and anti-union juggernaut U.S. Senator Joe McCarthy.<sup>99</sup>

### *Growing Black Community*

Prior to Zeidler even taking office, the man that he had replaced, Mayor John Bohn, had been an advocate for racial justice during his term, and on more than one occasion spoke out against racial violence.<sup>100</sup> Although Bohn was in his late seventies, and an unexpected champion for Milwaukee's modernization project, he had been Common Council president for four years as Milwaukee entered the war and understood the city's need to reinvent itself. While Bohn hadn't intended on being mayor prior to being thrust into the position by parliamentary procedure due to Carl Zeidler's resignation, he was noted by his opponents for his ability to build coalition and work outside traditional silos.<sup>101</sup> Although he was a former real estate broker who built his career as a private businessman, Bohn and other members of Common Council understood that building public housing, combined with expanding the city's boundaries and attracting new sources of labor, could be an economic windfall for a city that hadn't seen any major development since the 1920s.

In 1945, Bohn and the Common Council unanimously passed a resolution requesting that the federal government's National Housing Agency reserve \$1,100,000

---

<sup>99</sup> "Remembering McCarthy: Career Timeline" Wisconsin Historical Society <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/feature/mccarthy/timeline.asp> (accessed January 19th, 2013)

<sup>100</sup> Mjageki, Nina. "Milwaukee Commission" *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Organizations* pg 291

"Bohn Supports Lynch Protest" *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 6th, 1948 pg 2

<sup>101</sup> "John Bohn Served Well", *Milwaukee Journal* April 21st, 1955 part 1 pg 22

for a 144-unit public housing project for “negro” veterans. African American workers were beginning to take on more shifts at plants like A.O. Smith, and it was becoming clear that Milwaukee’s budding segregated boundaries needed to grow. It seemed that Milwaukee, unlike Chicago and Detroit, was going to proactively avert the social woes created by the rapid influx of African Americans.<sup>102</sup>

Although Milwaukee had “an excellent chance to receive the federal funds,” opponents of the housing project objected immediately to the resolution. The loudest opponents to the housing plan were the Affiliated Taxpayers Committee, a seasoned free-enterprise civic organization, and a coalition of realtors and builders associations represented by the Milwaukee Property Owners, the Milwaukee Board of Realtors and the Milwaukee Business Association. Although this emerging conservative bloc was unsuccessful at preventing the first phase of the Negro housing project, or the Hillside Project, from launching, it would work tirelessly to push back against the growth of public housing and shift public opinion away from the working class victories of the Fair Deal era.

In his 2006 *Urban Affairs Review* article “Governing the Regimeless City: The Frank Zeidler Administration 1948-1960”, Joe Rast highlights how local conservative organizations actively sought to undermine the efforts of the Zeidler administration by using a sharply tuned racial narrative. One of the loudest voices against the African American community during the era was the Milwaukee County Property Owners Association, an organization that increasingly tied the issue of public housing to

---

<sup>102</sup> “Housing Fund Moved Okayed: Council Group Acts”, *Milwaukee Journal* January 30th, 1945 section M pg 9

Milwaukee's expanding African American population, "The only thing that has kept 10,000—aye, 20,000—Negroes from coming up here is the lack of housing."

Of course, such blatant racism was not always present in the public-facing campaigns of Milwaukee's conservative movement. The anti-public housing movement persistently employed coded language, like that described by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's in *Racism without Racists*. A 1949 statement by Ronald Teseke, the president of the Milwaukee Builders Association, highlights a rhetorical tactic used by conservatives to subtly employ race to discredit Zeidler's public housing policy. "We are for slum clearance...but not for additional housing for *those* people in the slums. We can find enough temporary housing to take care of *those* people."<sup>103</sup> While a portion of a traditional Italian neighborhood in Milwaukee's Third Ward had initially been marked for slum clearance, Milwaukee's largest slum zones were in African American neighborhoods.<sup>104</sup> Teseke's statement was clearly meant to remind white readers that Milwaukee's nascent African American communities were outsiders. Although he didn't explicitly point out the race of the slum dwellers, his statement was rife with racial undertones. This kind of racist messaging would become increasingly scarce as colorblind rhetoric dominated the discourse, but the strategy of evoking race would become a staple of the conservative movement over the coming decades.

Interestingly, his quote also reveals that he might have also felt that the city's black population would only be in Milwaukee temporarily. However nothing could be

---

<sup>103</sup> Emphasis added by author

<sup>103</sup> "Housing Poll Plea Dropped Builder Quit Demand for Referendum as Public Project", Milwaukee Journal, September 20th, 1949 pg 1

<sup>104</sup> Blight Project Earth Turned Bohn Digs First Spadeful as Start of Sixth Ward Construction Milwaukee Journal, January 8th 1948, pg 1

further from the case. The black population in Milwaukee's segregated 6th ward would grow exponentially over the next thirty years.

Throughout Zeidler's tenure in office, Milwaukee's business community worked to establish a narrative that public housing unfairly burdened taxpayers, who could not financially profit from public housing even though their tax dollars helped subsidize the projects. This growing neo-liberal narrative became even easier to sell to Milwaukee's working class residents as the growing black community increasingly became the face of public housing. While Zeidler and Bohn before him understood that Milwaukee's "slum areas" were on the verge of causing huge social and economic problems, many citizens simply saw expanded public housing through a racial lens. Although the Great Depression had ended only a decade prior, the expanding American economy, combined with the shifting local political narrative around publically funded projects, convinced many working-class whites that an investment in public housing was against their economic self-interest.

By 1949, the champions of free enterprise took to the city's press arguing that voters had the right to influence the direction of Milwaukee's public housing program via a public referendum. While Zeidler and a loose coalition of public housing advocates took to the street with pamphlets and fliers stressing that the referendum would slow the expansion of housing, opponents argued that taxpayers had a right to decide how public dollars would be spent. After two years of political maneuvering by both sides, the issue was put to a vote.

During the spring election of 1951, Milwaukee voters went to the polls to decide the fate of the city's public housing program. The ballot had three somewhat



contradictory referendum questions. The first asked voters if they wanted to be given the right to approve the future building of tax-free public housing via a public referendum. The second asked whether voters supported slum clearance “irrespective of any other resolutions or act” and the third was approval of a statewide administration of emergency rent control. While all three referendums passed, the first question effectively halted the progress of Zeidler’s public housing platform. While Zeidler and his allies would have more power to clear blighted areas, requiring a public referendum to build public housing would create enough red tape to check the housing movement. Winning by 1389 votes, the city’s conservative movement had effectively slowed the expansion of public housing, and shifted the popular narrative away from public investment in the city’s most indeed citizens to private interests.<sup>105</sup>

Ultimately, even though coming into office Zeidler had the support of most of the Common Council and one of the city’s daily papers, he had underestimated the power of racial narrative to influence voters.<sup>106</sup> Perhaps if the 6th Ward hadn’t been the first site for the city’s post-WWII public housing efforts, or if Milwaukee’s black population wasn’t growing rapidly, public housing’s opponents wouldn’t have been so vocal or have worked so actively to stop the development of publicly owned housing. But they were. And Zeidler and the city of Milwaukee had lost the momentum.

Zeidler’s frequent bouts with the city’s conservative movement weakened his previously strong coalition. The anti-housing movement had reframed the narrative away

---

<sup>105</sup> “Metro Public Housing Loses; Slum Clearance Wins” *Milwaukee Journal* April 4th, 1951)

<sup>106</sup> “Housing Referendum Unwise” *Milwaukee Journal*, February 11th, 1950 pg 5

from public housing being about the public good, to one that called into question the fairness of city government serving as property manager. Part of a national trend by real estate businesses to push back against the progressive policies of the 1949 Housing Act (eventually prompting the passage of the business-friendly Housing Act of 1954), Milwaukee's conservative movement used the media to shift the popular narrative about public housing back to the bankers and real estate developers.<sup>107</sup>

Over the next decade, the city's business leaders would utilize a number of political maneuvers, including pushing for a citywide referendum and statewide bill seeking private control of low-rent housing, to try to wrestle control of the housing projects from the city of Milwaukee's Local Housing Authority. Although Zeidler was able to rally the city's labor movement and African American community leaders to his side, Wisconsin's conservative advocacy organizations had effectively undermined the most progressive elements of Truman's Fair Deal policies. It didn't help that the entrenchment of racism and red-baiting had gripped the country in the mid-1950s, as the rising conservative movement looked to suppress the growing strength of America's progressive labor and civil rights organizations.

But Milwaukee's mayor didn't give up without a fight. Zeidler linked with Milwaukee's labor movement and actively mobilized union leaders to educate their members about the economic and social benefits of public housing. By 1953, Zeidler's Human Rights Commission was promoting a semi-regular newsletter, which urged citizens to work together. Offering community organizations access to "films" and "support" to tackle the growing division, Zeidler proactively fought against racism.

---

<sup>107</sup> Flanagan, Richard "The Housing Act of 1954: The Sea Change in National Urban Policy" *Urban Affairs Review* 1997

“We encourage community organizations to come together...where neighbor white and non white came together to solve common problems.”<sup>108</sup> The newsletter would also promote racial successes and civil rights cases from across the country

The newsletter also saw other City of Milwaukee officials, including Housing Authority Executive Richard Depperin, working hard to dispel rumors that African Americans were destroying the Hillside Housing Project.

“There is three times more intensive use of the grass per square foot than in other projects because Hillside is situated in a neighborhood where there is practically no grass. Children love to play around on the grass, and for this reason, only because there is practically no grass in the neighborhood...If any person, spreading such rumors needs further proof that Negro occupancy has no deteriorated that housing, project, I should like to the opportunity take him on a tour of inspection through the Hillside project.”<sup>109</sup>

City leaders’ tone would shift after Zeidler would leave office, but it’s clear from the Human Rights Commission newsletter that the socialist mayor’s administration was working hard to squash any racial tension before it started. Part of this was because Zeidler was a progressive leader; the other reason was because the socialist mayor understood that his public housing projects would not only serve black people.

In 1957, Zeidler hoped to strengthen Milwaukee’s Housing Authority by passing a statewide housing bill, which would have given city government power to exercise eminent domain in its effort to clear blighted areas. But it would never come to pass. Members of Milwaukee’s city council would not give Zeidler’s bill the necessary votes it

---

<sup>108</sup> “Human Rights newsletter Distributed by Mayor’ Commission on Human Rights” City of Milwaukee Jan-Feb No. 1 Vol.1 1953

<sup>109</sup> “Human Rights newsletter Distributed by Mayor’ Commission on Human Rights” City of Milwaukee March-April No. 2 Vol.1 1953

needed to get off of the common council floor, a necessary first step before being drafted in Madison.

In the weeks leading up to the introduction of the bill, Zeidler defended his position on the basis that providing poor people public housing was the morally right thing to do and because it would positively impact the city's budget. "People with a conscious can't continue to tolerate slums which cost the city a great deal to service because of crime, disease and other expenses." Speaking at an urban renewal conference, the frustrated Zeidler also blasted his opponents' racism. Some people "do not want any urban renewal, do not want any improvements in housing because they only think in terms of minority groups." Zeidler's vision for the public sector saw local government protecting all citizens, regardless of race, from the capricious whims of capitalism. He also understood that the effort to solve social problems retroactively would ultimately become more expensive.<sup>110</sup> Part of his vision for the city was tied to ensuring that Milwaukee's working people had a similar quality of life, as he felt that everyone had a right to safe, clean and comfortable place to live.<sup>111</sup> Yet, even he realized his opponents on the right were out-organizing him. "It's alright for the federal government to underwrite the builder and real-estate promoters, but not the poor."<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> "Frank Zeidler Urges Pay as You Go Policy." *Milwaukee Journal*, Nov 29th 1947 pg 10.

<sup>111</sup> "Special Report. "Room 201 City Hall." March 12, 1960." Archives / Milwaukee Area Research Center. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries

<sup>112</sup> "Housing Bill Sent to the Grave: Zeidler Plan Rejected", *Milwaukee Journal*, March 12, 1957 part 1 pg 14

After his bill failed to gain momentum Zeidler used his bully pulpit to denounce Milwaukee's conservative movement and his growing list of detractors in city hall.<sup>113</sup>

Giving a 10-minute speech, Zeidler said that his proposed bill would have both strengthened the city's housing stock and built Milwaukee's tax base. The usually mild-mannered Lutheran also pointed fingers at members of the Common Council who he felt had surrendered to the city's conservative factions. Two of his opponents, perhaps worn down by constant lobbying by the anti-public housing movement, responded sternly.<sup>114</sup>

"I resent your remarks," said south side councilman Richard Nowakowski, who was first elected to city council in 1956. "For seven years this council was not responsible for any delays in urban renewal."<sup>115</sup>

The 8th Ward's alderman, Peter Hoffman, was little more to the point about his frustration with the mayor. "We objected to the statement that we were whiplashed by the Milwaukee Property Owners," said the Southside elected official. "They don't tell me how to vote. I vote how I feel."<sup>116</sup>

Just nine years after his triumphant declaration that he would build up to 10,000 public housing units, Zeidler was still fighting to get the first phase of his public housing vision completed. In fact, although leaders in local government had successfully

---

<sup>113</sup> Although historically, Milwaukee mayors do make some appointments, city government is dictated by a weak mayoral system. "The Mayor-Council System" *Wisconsin Blue Book* 1979-1980 University of Wisconsin-Extension pg 153

<sup>114</sup> "Housing Bill Sent to the Grave: Zeidler Plan Rejected", *Milwaukee Journal*, March 12, 1957 part 1 pg 14

<sup>115</sup> *ibid*

Silvers, Amy Rabideau. "Nowakowski was civic leader Former alderman, father of 7, served on key local panels." *Milwaukee Journal*, November 7th 2007

<sup>116</sup> *ibid*

partnered with the federal government to attract funding for the Hillside Housing project, the constant foot dragging by the conservative movement drastically hampered the city's ability to attract more federal resources. By 1959, Milwaukee was last amongst the nation's 15 biggest cities in public housing provisions with only 3.14 units per 1,000. And although he had promised to build 10,000 housing units, by 1959 Zeidler's administration had only build 1,128 public housing units.<sup>117</sup>

In the long run Zeidler's moral appeal would have little influence in shaping the mainstream narrative. To his credit Zeidler successfully annexed land south and northwest of Milwaukee to combat the realities of the city's density.<sup>118</sup> But the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the introduction of Section 8 housing subsidies in the 1970s and white flight would only undermine the city's racist housing policies. Additionally, much of the blight and run down housing remained intact and in use well into the 21st century.

### *Attacking His Strength*

Zeidler's progressive stances on racial issues provided a political sweet spot for his opponents. Not only did his press for equal treatment of incoming black citizens allow his conservative (mostly conservative Democrats) and business-friendly opponents an opportunity to stoke white voters' racial fear, but his racial progressivism also created an easy opening to define themselves in direct opposition of the racially tolerant German American. Most importantly, it created a political wedge between working class white voters and the elected official, who could potentially benefit from the growing political

---

<sup>117</sup> Rast pg 93

<sup>118</sup> Special Report. "Room 201 City Hall." March 12, 1960." Archives / Milwaukee Area Research Center. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries

strength of the black community. In short, by constantly bringing race into the political discourse, Zeidler's opponents were trying to force him to abandon governing from his values or risk losing his influence amongst his working class white base.

Nearly a decade prior to the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Act, and the rise of Barry Goldwater and the Johnson/Nixon presidential election, local power brokers were able to successfully employ a “Southern-strategy” styled campaign strategies to evoke racism for political gain.<sup>119</sup> It didn't matter that Zeidler was a committed humanist and a self-proclaimed “liberal in city government” who expanded the boundaries of the city of Milwaukee and helped the city's local industries become more competitive at a time in which other cities in the region started to sputter.<sup>120</sup> His opponents were able to turn his support for the African American community into a political liability.

While scholars have frequently noted how national Republicans used race baiting to lure working class whites away from the Democratic party in the mid-to-late-1960s, Zeidler's opponents employed the strategy prior to the rise of the era's national conservative movement. The success of Zeidler's opponents, while not immediately felt in the ballot box, was in setting precedent for future political campaigns. By the 1980s, both Republicans and Democratic politicians at the local and state levels used racial fear to win political victories over their opponents.

But even though the city's conservative movement would help create a polarizing political narrative and fight to restrict the options for the city's rapidly growing black

---

<sup>119</sup> Schafer, Byron and Johnson, Richard, *The End of Southern Exceptionalism* Harvard University Press 2006

<sup>120</sup> Zeidler, Frank. *Liberal in City Government: My Time in City Government*. Milwaukee Publishers 2005

community, Milwaukee needed black workers to man the expanded shifts at manufacturing plants like Allis Chalmers and A.O. Smith if the city was going compete with other Midwestern industrial hubs like Detroit and Chicago. City leaders might have been worried that the black population's growth could disrupt local hegemony, but at the end of the day, black workers increased the local tax base and, most importantly, expanded revenues at the local manufacturing firms. The city had a relatively small African American population during Zeidler's battle with the conservative movement, but the post-wartime increased demand for heavy manufacturing, coupled with the pending expansion of America's interstate highway project as spurred by the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, created huge opportunities for Milwaukee's machine shops in the decades following WWII. By 1956 the black population's growth saw the African American community electing its first alderperson, Vel Phillips, to city council.

Over the years, the growth of Milwaukee's black population not only provided area factories with a pool of surplus labor to man its assembly lines, but also a reinvigorated the tax base and subsequently expanded the city's and state's revenue. But for many whites, the expansion of Milwaukee's black neighborhoods challenged their socially democratic principles. Prior to the rapid growth of the black community in the 1950s, Joe William Trotter noted that the African Americans were often ignored by the white community, as their number were too small to truly impact the popular narrative. This was certainly not the case after the 1950s.

Despite the increased tax base, local conservatives who strove to maintain the cultural and political dominance of the city's white residents constantly buffered the



growing strength of the local African American community. Milwaukee may have been a city with a rich history of political pragmatism and strong working class activism, but the size of the rapidly growing black community, combined with the growing political power of the black electorate, challenged the socially democratic underpinnings of the blue-collar town.

Zeidler's tenure in office provided a strong vision for the city that was not driven by racial politics. Even though he was not an integrationist, Zeidler's pragmatic approach to racial relations was forward thinking.<sup>121</sup> The black community was rapidly outgrowing beyond the boundaries of the traditional black neighborhoods, and the growing demand for housing was constrained by the racially restrictive housing covenants that prevented African Americans from moving into traditionally white neighborhoods. Zeidler's platform created new housing opportunities and relieved pressure in integrating neighborhoods, all while increasing revenue. A humanist who understood that the city and its white residents were on a collision course with change, Zeidler also advanced policy, in addition to the aforementioned public housing and annexation, that sought to relieve the racial pressure. For example, in 1949, long before the multicultural movements of the 1980s and 1990s, Zeidler advocated that the city of Milwaukee recognize "Negro History Week", which was started by Carter G Woodson in 1926.<sup>122</sup> Yet, the pressures of this balancing act grew tiresome for Zeidler. Especially as racial tensions began to explode.

---

<sup>121</sup> While in office, Zeidler never supported open-housing.

<sup>122</sup> "Observances of Weeks Requested by Mayor" Milwaukee Journal, February 2, 1949 section L pg 3

In 1959, an African American man killed a 30-year-old white woman. Foreshadowing a growing tension between the community and the police, the African American man was subsequently killed by the Milwaukee Police Department upon his apprehension the next day. Sensing the impending racial blowback, Zeidler ensured the local press that he would work with the African American community to address some of the “social pressures” in the “inner-core.” But he was also quick to note that his government would not seek to profile the African American community because of one individual actor. “No group deserves mass condemnation by another group of citizens because of the Fink Murder,” said the Mayor at a press conference following the headline-stealing crime.<sup>123</sup> But, while Zeidler would not advance racially discriminatory policing, the MPD, managed by the Police and Fire Commission rather than city hall, was supplying the press with statistics that indicated that many of the city’s major crimes were being committed by African Americans, further intensifying the polarizing narrative that was driving the housing debate.

In fact, the louder that Zeidler spoke out against racism, the more entrenched his opposition became. His 1956 election against Common Council President Milton McGuire became a showdown for the future of the city. During the campaign the mayor continued to press for a progressive and racially inclusive vision, but the alderman from Milwaukee’s Third Ward sought to alienate Zeidler from his working class white base, and even actively promoted rumors that he had paid for billboards in the American South

---

<sup>123</sup> “Zeidler: Same Enforcement of Laws For All.” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 25th 1959 part 1 page 9

to attract black workers.<sup>124</sup> Zeidler noted to *Time* magazine “if my opponent leaves any heritage in Milwaukee, whether he wins or loses, it will be racial tension where none previously existed.”<sup>125</sup> In the end, the tactics may have tainted the field, but Zeidler beat his opponent by nearly 20,000 votes. Yet, the forward thinking mayor would never again run for public office.

Rather than continuing to push back against his opposition’s racism, he opted not to run for a fourth term in 1960. He initially stated that he was too fatigued to run, but years after leaving office, Zeidler revealed that the growing racial animus was one of the primary reasons he chose not to seek reelection.<sup>126</sup> The socialist mayor may have been ready to live his values, but he knew that many of his working class brethren were not.<sup>127</sup> In 1960, after he already announced he was leaving city hall, Zeidler gave a speech before the United Auto Worker Human Rights Conference that reflected a progressive stance on race relations that would immediately disappear once he left office. “This program on civil rights is but a minor phase of a total wave of programming that ought to be carried throughout all of the nations of the world. What madness must possess the human race that we cannot dissolve our difficulties and we cannot learn to live together as God intended us to live together... in peace and harmony with equal rights and equal opportunities.”<sup>128</sup> With Zeidler leaving, local government shifted the way it handled race

---

<sup>124</sup> Miner, Barbara, *Lesson from the Heartland: A Turbulent of Half-Century of Public Education in Milwaukee*, New Press New York 2013

<sup>125</sup> “Races: The Shame of Milwaukee.” *Time*, April 2nd, 1956

<sup>126</sup> “Zeidler Won’t Run Again: Surprises Friends and Foes” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 31st 1959 page 2 part 1

<sup>127</sup> “Special Report. "Room 201 City Hall." March 12, 1960.” Archives / Milwaukee Area Research Center. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries

relations. The progressive and forward-thinking policies adopted by the Zeidler administration would quickly be overshadowed by white political actors who saw the African American community as source of problems, as opposed to a source of potential opportunity. For the next forty years, race would be an underlying factor in local and state politics.<sup>129</sup>

A more racist political climate was not the only outcome of Zeidler's opponent's conservative attacks. Even though several neighborhoods in the 6th Ward were razed throughout the 1960s to make way for Interstate-94, by 1968, Milwaukee's inner city was starting to see an increase in lead poisoning cases. Plagued with many of the same dilapidated buildings that first inspired city leaders to lead the public housing crusade, black children were getting sick from eating peeling lead paint found in houses that had been built prior to the 1940s. In 1970, Dr. Frederic Blodgett, director of outpatient clinic at Milwaukee Children's Hospital, stated that lead poisoning was directly related to inferior housing. "Lead poisoning knows no difference between black and white. But it has become the disease of the Blacks because they have inherited dilapidated housing." Ironically, by the turn of the century lead poisoning had become such a problem in Milwaukee's inner city that elected officials actively sought out millions of dollars from the Federal government to remove lead paint from its still-dilapidated housing stock. By 2003, Milwaukee's leaders estimated that nearly 40% of inner city children suffered from

---

<sup>129</sup> Smith, Kevin D. "From Socialism to Racism: The Politics of Class and Identity in Postwar Milwaukee" *Michigan Historical Review* Vol 29, No.1 2003

<sup>129</sup>Kevin D. Smith

lead poisoning.<sup>130</sup> The problem would cost the city tens of millions of dollars to fix, but would have likely been solved had Zeidler had his way while in office.

While this study will continue to assess the ways in which white political actors used race to maintain power, it is important to note that the city of Milwaukee was also responsible for producing a number of notable anti-racist white leaders who sought to undermine the racist grip that the business elite used to control the local political economy and suppress political opposition. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and then again in the late twentieth century, activists like James Barrett, a radical professor at Marquette, and Father James Groppi, a white Catholic priest who helped black youth take to the streets to end racially segregated housing, pushed back against the political narrative. Often fueled and sponsored by the strong activist churches, many working-class whites did not see the world monolithically and stood up against racism. Even as the rise of Black Nationalism created a new language of black political empowerment, white anti-racist leaders continued to champion black causes.

However, the successful attempts by Zeidler's political opponents opened the door for a new brand of local politics. And while color-blindness and institutional racism were consistent strategies, the threat of physical violence was also present as the Milwaukee Police Department worked to enforce the spatial distance between white working-class neighborhoods and the growing black community. Perhaps no one was more polarizing, and more committed to maintaining the racial status quo, than long-time Milwaukee Police Chief Harold Breier.

---

<sup>130</sup> "City's lead paint lawsuit dismissed" The Business Journal of Greater Milwaukee July 29th, 2003

## CHAPTER THREE

### FRONTLINES: THE WAR ON DRUGS EXACERBATES THE TENSIONS BETWEEN COMMUNITY & POLICE

In her recent text *The New Jim Crow*, legal scholar Michelle Alexander explores the many ways in which the 30-year-old War on Drugs became the harbinger of a new racial caste system. Her analysis, aided in part by 30 years of criminal justice research by legal scholars and advocates like Marc Mauer, has inspired scholars and activists to revisit the War on Drugs.<sup>131</sup> Starting in the early 1980s, Alexander argued that local police departments, the courts, and the federal government worked collaboratively to intentionally advance high levels of incarceration in black communities. Driven by racial motivations and exacerbated by intense levels of black joblessness, federal policy and harsh mandatory minimum sentencing worked to create an intense system of racial oppression. The conservative movement had undermined the success of the 1960s activism. For Alexander, the War on Drugs was part of an explicit strategy to weaken the growing Civil Rights movement and proactively limit the advances that came as a result of community organizing.

By the mid-1980s, local crime fighting was increasingly paid for in part by large federal grants. The large investment produced results. By 1994 over a million people a year were incarcerated, about a quarter of them for marijuana possession. More than just crime fighting, Alexander skillfully argues that the War on Drugs created a multilayered

---

<sup>131</sup> Mauer, Marc. *Race to Incarcerate*. The New Press, 2006

system of oppression that weakened the socio-economic strength of the black community and reinforced traditional American narratives about race and exclusion.<sup>132</sup>

Using Michelle Alexander’s lens as a frame, this chapter will examine the institutionally racist practices fostered in local government between 1964 and 1996. By critically analyzing annual reports, political biography, news reports, crime statistics and public policy, this chapter will assess the ways that a shifting political discourse helped contribute to a culture of “criminalization” and second-class citizenship. Between the 1960s and the 1990s the once-welcoming city of Milwaukee, known for its “good will” and festive attitude, became an increasingly harsh place for poor people of color to live.<sup>133</sup> As the city’s local economy shrank, the concurrent rise of increased policing and adoption of anti-drug efforts created a new layer of oppression that had not been previously present in Milwaukee. As crime-fighting and anti-drug programs began to take up bigger portions of local government agencies’ budgets in the late 1980s, the criminalization of the African American community began to take on new economic and political incentives.

The Milwaukee Police Department would serve as the buffer between local government, the city’s fleeing white community and African Americans. Driven by an extremely conservative leader, between 1964 and 1984 the MPD earned a reputation

---

<sup>132</sup> Lester Grinspoon, M.D.& James B. Bakalar, J.D. *The War on Drugs—A Peace Proposal* New England Journal of Medicine. pp. 357–360.(February 3, 1994).  
“Federal Bureau of Investigation. Crime in the United States” : Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.1991.

<sup>133</sup> Maier, Henry. *“The Mayor Who Made Milwaukee Famous.* Madison Books 1998 pg 100

from the black newspapers for being quite oppressive.<sup>134</sup> Although black leaders challenged police brutality, they could not prevent—and at times supported—the federal government’s rapid increase in funding for the MPD’s anti-crime efforts. Black leaders were unable to provide a prevailing counter narrative about the overwhelming social disorganization that was taking place as joblessness prevailed. Poverty was intense, crime was up, and there were more drugs on the street than ever before. African American leaders couldn’t ignore the problems, nor could they afford not to become active participants in the War on Drugs. Despite being at odds with the police, the increased violence forced leaders to advocate often for policy that increased police presence in the black community.

This chapter will reveal how in a post-Zeidler Milwaukee, institutional racism, combined with the Milwaukee Police Department’s growing strength and budget, created a new layer of oppression social, economic and, most importantly for this study, political oppression. Although the 1980s were a time of great political empowerment, Milwaukee’s African American community was beset by a social economic crisis. No longer working explicitly to challenge racial discrimination and inequality, the problems in the African American community forced elected officials to work with local law enforcement agencies and bureaucracies to challenge the effects of the War on Drugs and the prevailing narrative being driven by conservative political leaders.

---

<sup>134</sup> “Harold Breier 1964-1984” *City of Milwaukee* Accessed April 1, 2011 <http://city.milwaukee.gov/Police/Breier.htm>



*Before the Storm*

In summer 1981, 22-year-old Ernest Lacy was standing at the corner of N. 23rd Street and W. Wisconsin Ave when three members of the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) approached him. Lacy was wrestled down and pinned to the ground because he matched the description of a rape suspect. With his face planted in the concrete, Lacy passed out due to the lack of oxygen. Although the rape victim would hours later implicate another suspect, the officers manhandled Lacy so badly—afterward refusing to administer aid—that he eventually died of his wounds in the back of a police van.<sup>135</sup>

Over the coming months a coalition of community activists would mobilize thousands of African Americans to march in the streets for justice for Lacy. Milwaukee experienced multiple notable police brutality cases prior to the Lacy killing.<sup>136</sup> But until the 1980s the black community had been ineffective in challenging the institutional and individual racism within the MPD. The black community was too weak politically to shift the culture of the MPD or press for increased prosecution of bad individual actors on the police force. At one point, the *Milwaukee Courier*, one of the city's African

---

<sup>135</sup> “The Case of Ernest Lacy Still Unresolved.” *The Dispatch AP* July 8th, 1982  
Beach, Bennett “Law: Accidents or Police Brutality?” *Time* Oct. 26, 1981

<sup>136</sup> BELL v. CITY OF MILWAUKEE 498 F.Supp. 1339 (1980)

“Bell, Daniel (Shooting of) March on Milwaukee” *Key Terms* Civil Rights Project  
Accessed April 1, 2013 <http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/keyterms/collection/march>

“Negroes Subpoena Breier.” *Milwaukee Journal* Feb 1, 1965 pg 1

American newspapers, called the relationship between the community and the MPD an “Unmatched Prize Fight.”

Led by longtime Police Chief Harold Breier, the MPD effectively served as a buffer between the expanding black community, white neighborhoods, and the suburbs. The city had been a racial hot bed since Mayor Frank Zeidler’s last term in office, and the MPD’s treatment of Blacks reflected a decades-old popular narrative that African Americans were outsiders and needed to be monitored heavily by police. The racist institutional culture was pervasive.

By the early 1980s, Milwaukee’s mayor and district attorney were deferential to Breier’s heavy-handed treatment of the black community. But as the black community grew, so did its political power. Besides electing leaders to city council and to the Wisconsin Legislature, by the time Lacy was killed, African Americans were also vying for positions of power in local bureaucracies. Blacks were emerging as a powerful voting bloc as the 1984 and 1988 campaign by Jesse Jackson reflected the growing political power of the African American community. In his text, *Social Change and the Empowerment of the Poor*, Mark Eduard Braud highlights how African American leaders and organizations used state funding for Community Action Programs (CAP) like the Social Development Commission (SDC) and Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) to help strengthen African American stakeholdership in the local political economy and ultimately help the community garner more influence in the local political discourse.<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>137</sup> *Social Change and the Empowerment of the Poor: Poverty Representation in Milwaukee's Community Action Programs 1964-1972*. Lexington Books, 2001

Responding to the murder of Lacy, African American activists organized members of a United States Congressional subcommittee represented by the Congressional Black Caucuses' John Conyers (Michigan) to monitor the Lacy investigation. Flexing their political muscle and showing growing sophistication, within weeks the black community saw the three police officers involved with the Lacy case charged with homicide and suspended from duty. Although the officers were suspended with pay, the federal magnifying glass on Milwaukee's District Attorney Michael McCann's case forced the city of Milwaukee to address community leaders' growing concerns that the MPD was using excessive force when dealing with African Americans.<sup>138</sup>

This was not lost on white Wisconsin Congressman Henry Reuss, who represented the district in which Ernest Lacy was brutally attacked. "The stark fact is that a substantial number of Milwaukeeans believe that police action toward blacks is unjust," said Reuss in support of Congress' investigation into the Lacy killing. "An inquiry by your subcommittee dedicated to putting the facts on the table, may prove to be a serviceable way of discovering causes and recommending solutions to the problem of criminal justice in Milwaukee."<sup>139</sup> Reuss had been an active proponent for public housing in the 1940s, and with a growing African American electorate he could not ignore the issue of police brutality.

---

<sup>138</sup> "US Panel Will Monitor Lacy Investigation." *Milwaukee Journal*, July 29th, 1981 part 2 page 1

<sup>139</sup> "Reuss Will Get Things Done." *Milwaukee Journal* April 1, 1948 pg 20

Despite the federal microscope, the Milwaukee Police Association (MPA), the MPD union, fired back at Michael McCann by organizing a petition to recall him from office. Although they never gathered the 80,000 signatures to get on the ballot, the union effectively used their political muscle both to shape the public narrative and influence the culture of the local political system. This redemptive action, like those taken by power brokers in the Reconstruction South and subsequently when African Americans moved north during Great Migrations I and II, was a political response to the black community's growing power, and the shifting political narrative that was growing more tolerant of explicit racial bias. The police union was demonstrating it would push back against elected officials like McCann who attempted to challenge the department's institutionally racist practices.

In the end, although the case garnered national attention and the officers were punished by the MPD, none of the officers involved in the Lacy killing were ever convicted of criminal charges.<sup>140</sup> And while Milwaukee prosecutors would increasingly take on criminal members of the force throughout McCann's tenure as district attorney, members of the police force would continue to brutalize innocent African Americans and increase the patrolling of black neighborhoods in the years following Lacy's death. Fostered by racist organizational culture and a political climate that supported the harsh treatment of north side residents, the relationship between Milwaukee's black community and the MPD would turn increasingly sour as the department became more entrenched in the federal government's War on Drugs.

---

<sup>140</sup> "McCann Election Could Prove Expensive." *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 17th, 1982 page 16 part 1

*The War on Drugs Meets Institutional Racism*

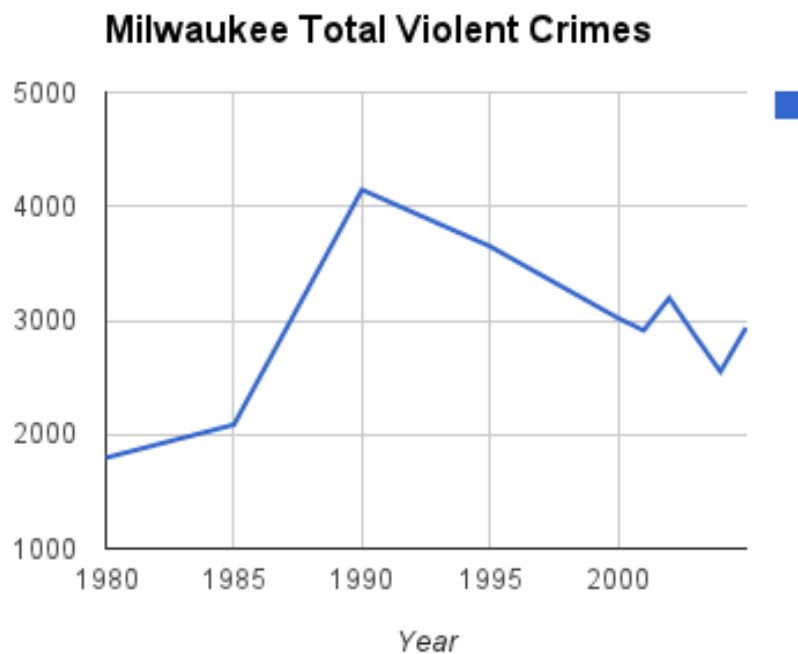
In his 1988 ethnography, *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City*, John Hagedorn wrote about young blacks living in Milwaukee's most impoverished neighborhoods who struggled against poverty and joblessness. Far from the bloodthirsty predators depicted in the media, Hagedorn revealed how young African Americans growing up in Milwaukee's most violent areas, like the Hillside Housing Projects, dealt with the day-to-day realities of ghetto life by joining gangs to survive. Without joblessness and the cuts to social services so thoroughly impacting their lives, Hagedorn posited that young blacks who ended up drug dealers and gang members might otherwise have been productive members of society. But instead, the young adults Hagedorn interviewed overwhelmingly faced poverty, poor education, and broken family units. Local elected officials critiqued Hagedorn for his "soft and idealistic" stance; nevertheless, *Folks and Peoples* revealed how impactful joblessness had become in shaping the worldview of the city's young African Americans.

Notwithstanding Hagedorn's nuanced analysis of the rise of Milwaukee's street gangs, the crime statistics revealed the city of Milwaukee was becoming a more dangerous place to live in the 1980s. Between 1983 and 1993 homicides in Milwaukee increased by nearly 150%.<sup>141</sup> Other violent crimes exploded between 1980 and 1990, growing by 68%. According to the FBI, by the turn of the century Milwaukee had become one of the nation's most violent cities. Much of this violence was attributed to Chicago-based street gangs like the Gangster Disciples, Black Disciples, Vice Lords and

---

<sup>141</sup> "Uniform Crime Reports and Index of Crime in Milwaukee in the State of Wisconsin enforced by Milwaukee Police from 1985 to 2005" UCR Crime Statistics prepared by the: The Disaster Center

the Brothers of Struggle expanding their territory to the Milwaukee area in the 1980s and 1990s as the demand for drugs increased throughout the region. And like other street gangs that “were all about the money,” by the 1990s many of Milwaukee’s black neighborhoods felt the pressures of the very real impact of drugs use and the growing underground economy.<sup>142</sup>



---

<sup>142</sup> “Buzz: Milwaukee’s murder rate fell by 32 percent in 2008.” *OnMilwaukee.com - Milwaukee’s Daily Magazine*. <http://onmilwaukee.com/politics/articles/mkemurders2008.html> (accessed September 23, 2011)



In 1991, State Representative Gwendolyn Moore challenged Milwaukee County Judge Francis T Wasielewski’s ruling that tenants at a 12-unit apartment at 620 N. 26th Street were to be evicted. Although Wasielewski was following the language of a “nuisance property bill” that Moore introduced in the Wisconsin Legislature, the Milwaukee politician argued that Wasielewski was acting outside the spirit of the bill.<sup>143</sup> Wasielewski made the ruling after police testified that undercover officers purchased drugs from the apartment over 30 times. Although the landlord learned weeks earlier that the state was seizing the apartment, the tenants had never been informed and were given two weeks to find new housing. Seeking help, they contacted the fiery state representative who would eventually become the state’s first African American Congressperson.<sup>144</sup> In the end, although the bill was designed to give the city power to

---

<sup>143</sup> Norman, Jack “Activists Played Role :Artisan’s Claim Lacks Data” *Milwaukee Journal* January 13 1996

<sup>144</sup> Elected in 2004

force action against bad landlords and drug dealers, the law ended up hurting poor black women and children who never took part in the drug trade. Ironically the landlord stated that Wasielewski's decision to close the property was more about politics than stopping crime and keeping the neighborhood safe. "They pulled a real stunt on us and made the inspection of the building a big media event with the Mayor there and everything." The apartment was the first building closed as a result of the 1989 law. Either way, this example highlights how the War on Drugs and local public policy negatively impacted members of the black community, even those not involved in the drug trade.<sup>145</sup>

Although crime worsened as jobs decreased, by the early 1980s the MPD was initially slow to admit the city had a gang problem, partially because Milwaukee continued to be safer than other regional cities with large African American populations. Gangs were capturing the media's attention in other urban areas such as Los Angeles and Chicago, but city leaders might have been resistant to talking about their own gang problem because the MPD's boss may have been reluctant to admit that his iron grip on the black community had not prevented crime.<sup>146</sup> For years MPD Chief Harold Breier had proudly boasted that his tough-nosed relationship with the black community, often

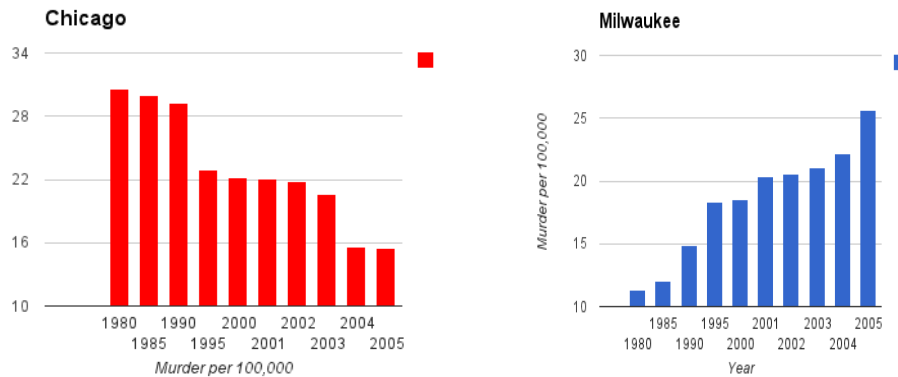
---

<sup>145</sup> Cuprsin, Tim. Shanahan, Bill "Drug Law Sponsor Seeks Eviction Halt" Milwaukee Journal Sept 17 1991  
<http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=4aIaAAAIBAJ&sjid=QCwEAAAIBAJ&pg=4935%2C625612>

<sup>146</sup> Uniform Crime Reports and Index of Crime in Chicago in the State of Illinois enforced by Chicago Police from 1985 to 2005  
Uniform Crime Reports and Index of Crime in Milwaukee in the State of Illinois enforced by Chicago Police from 1985 to 2005



times marked by coded and sometimes not-so-coded racialized rhetoric, was the solution to keeping the black community in check.



Harold Breier was the first police chief hired in post-Zeidler Milwaukee. Taking the reins as the city’s top cop as race relations began sour, Breier’s approach to policing would be a significant departure from Zeidler’s attempt to look beyond a criminal’s race. The tough-minded cop was hired in late 1964 when Howard O. Johnson announced he was quitting his post.<sup>147</sup> The department had come under fire after a prostitute and brothel owner “blew the whistle on a number of cops in the department” and Milwaukee’s Fire and Police Commission (MFPC) was looking to make statement. Since an 1885 state law passed to curb corruption, the MFPC had been “the sole body charged with the responsibility for setting employment standards, examining candidates for positions in the two public safety services, appointing the respective chiefs, and removing the Chiefs of the Fire or Police Departments from office.”<sup>148</sup> Since its inception, the mayor has appointed MFPC members. When it was time to replace Johnson, the civil body

<sup>147</sup> “Johnson Demotes Detective Charged by Police Probers.” *Milwaukee Journal* August 19th, 1963

<sup>148</sup> Chronology of Significant Events Milwaukee Fire Department, Police Department, and Fire and Police Commission Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission 21 125th Anniversary Report pg 7

interviewed 21 applicants, and ended up choosing the longtime local detective. Hired for his strict “disciplinarian code” and high integrity, new Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier praised his new police chief, proud that a local candidate was hired to replace Johnson. When Breier finally retired in 1984, African American Assemblywoman Marcia Coggins co-sponsored a bill (S-56) which ended the Fire and Police Commission ‘Chief for Life’ hiring policy. Subsequent chiefs have been hired for seven-year terms.<sup>149</sup>

Breier immediately became an adversary in the black community. At the time of the burly former detective’s hiring, the black community was having increasing success pressing public institutions to hire African Americans. While Breier was taking the reins as chief, by University of Wisconsin Law grad Lloyd Barbee and a growing collective of activists called Milwaukee United School Integration Committee (MUSIC) pressed MPS Superintendent Harold S. Vincent for the integration of the district. Barbee for years fought against the school board’s resistance to both hire black teachers and comply with the *Brown v. Board* decision, but, ultimately, the Milwaukee Public School system was light years ahead of the MPD when it came to equitable hiring.<sup>150</sup> The Fire and Police Commission would wait until 1989 to start taking serious steps to diversify its staff.<sup>151</sup>

---

<sup>149</sup> Forjan, Dennis. “Repeal Breier Bill, Give Chief Full Authority” *Milwaukee Sentinel* page 8 part

Elving, Ron. “Battle of Breier Bill is Not Finished” *Milwaukee Journal* May 9th, 1984

Fyfe, Skolnick. *Above the Law: Police and the Excessive Use of Force* Simon and Schuster, New York May 11, 2010

*Chronology of Significant Events Milwaukee Fire Department, Police Department, and Fire and Police Commission* Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission 21 125th Anniversary Report pg 21

<sup>150</sup> “2000 Annual Report” *Milwaukee Police Department City Of Milwaukee*

<sup>151</sup> “2000 Annual Report” *Milwaukee Police Department City Of Milwaukee* 2001

Without a precedent-setting case like the *Brown v. Board* pushing his department, Breier did not have external pressure to make changes inside his organization. If the African American community had hopes that Brier would adopt integrationist hiring policies, they were dimmed immediately in 1967 when Chief Brier hosted a closed-door meeting with 13 African American pastors in the chief's conference room in the MPD Public Safety Building. Although the ministers came to discuss potentially hiring African Americans to fill slots for 100 patrolmen openings, the meeting quickly turned into a shouting match.<sup>152</sup>

“You wouldn't want me to promote a man just cause he is a Negro, would you?” Breier said to the spiritual leaders who urged the chief to hire black officers to defuse racial discrimination and brutality. Although the brazen chief called the meeting to encourage his guests to preach sermons about the virtues of police work, he was tone deaf when it came to the possibility that his officers might have been harassing black community.<sup>153</sup> The meeting was probably a staged press event aimed at cooling simmering tensions that would later explode that summer. Breier's stance reflected a personal belief that African Americans were not up for the task of maintaining the “law and order” culture of his department.<sup>154</sup>

During the meeting, Rev Charles Upchurch, assistant pastor at El-Shaddai Church of God in Christ, stated that officers patrolling African American neighborhoods stereotyped the black residents as “sexually immoral, carry knives, drive fancy cars and

---

<sup>152</sup> “Breier Negro Minster Exchange Pleas.” *Milwaukee Journal* May 12, 1967

<sup>153</sup> “Breier Seeks Help to Hire Negroes.” *Milwaukee Journal* May 11th, 1967

<sup>154</sup> Dopish, Alex P “A Farewell to the Good people”. *Milwaukee Journal* May 1st, 1984

live on a diet of pork and watermelon.”<sup>155</sup> Rev. Kenneth a Bowen, pastor of Mount Moriah, simply stated “They figure all Negroes are stupid.”<sup>156</sup>

Three months later, black neighborhoods throughout the city were policed by patrolmen and members of the National Guard as Mayor Maier enacted a weeklong curfew to prevent rioting. Prompted by a patrolman's killing on the north side, Breier would later be credited by the mayor for helping prevent more destruction of property. Unlike other urban centers engulfed in flames in the 1960s, Milwaukee’s urban riot was relatively small.<sup>157</sup>

Even though Breier promised to “modernize” the department, his vision for the future of the MPD had very little to do with hiring African Americans or adapting to the race-neutral values of a post-Jim Crow world. Breier’s philosophy on the city’s growing community of color was similar to that of many Northern whites who perceived the migrating groups of Southern African Americans to be culturally inferior and in need of social improvement. While Breier’s brand of social conservatism was certainly not only reserved for the African American community—unmarried police officers who had sex outside of marriage faced firing during his tenure—his vision for Milwaukee’s black community stood in stark contrast with the expanding Civil Rights movement.<sup>158</sup>

---

<sup>155</sup>“Breier, Minsters Exchange Pleas” Milwaukee Journal May 12th, 1967 part 1 pg

<sup>156</sup> “Breier, Minsters Exchange Pleas” Milwaukee Journal May 12th, 1967 part 1 pg

<sup>157</sup> “City’s Riot Stands as Mayor’s Rallying Point.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* March 27th 1972

“Mayor Henry Maier Addresses Rumors” WTMJ Footage August, 2<sup>nd</sup> 1967, segment 1  
March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project

<sup>158</sup> “Police Rules Seen Costly To Enforce.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* July 26th, 1978

By the 1960s, the *Milwaukee Courier*, one of the city's three black papers at the time, started printing frequent editorials lambasting the MPD's treatment of the black community. Some pointed to the lack of African American presence on the force as the source of the problem. But rather than adjusting to the shifting political winds, Breier proudly stuck to his guns. Squaring off with Rev. Lucius Walker, the executive director of Northcott Neighborhood Center, a community-based organization that serviced one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in the state, Breier was once again belittling the black community in a public meeting. The meeting, which took place in Breier's office, ended abruptly, and was described by the *Milwaukee Sentinel* as the "Swap[ing] of sharp words." Walker called Breier "a bigot" and was turned off by the chief's and the department's philosophy that Northern African Americans were responsible for teaching newly migrating southerners the "respect for law and order."<sup>159</sup> This juxtaposition of old and newly arriving African Americans was not a new theme in the political discourse, and was a consistent message throughout Breier's 20-year career as chief.

By the early 1980s, Breier had been unable to earn the respect of the black community. He was also probably reluctant to admit that his effort to curb crime in the black community had failed. While black leaders repeatedly urged him to hire African American officers, the local police force continued to be overwhelmingly white and disconnected from the cultural winds of Milwaukee's Black Community. The 1981 killing of Ernest Lacy would inspire the graying activists of the 1960s to strengthen their resolve and get more involved in the civic process.

---

<sup>159</sup> "Police Chief Negro Swap Sharp Word." *Milwaukee Journal* August 11th, 1965

No longer on the margins in the local political discourse, two leaders in the Justice for Ernest Lacy Coalition, Michael McGee Jr. and Howard Fuller, would go on to top positions in the local political landscape. McGee would later become a controversial and grassroots-minded alderman and Howard Fuller would later serve as the Superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools. Yet, Breier, never one to back down to black political pressure, dismissed the black community's charges of racism and, in 1982, even blasted Fuller in the press for being a Marxist.<sup>160</sup> But the African American community remained vigilant. In 1983, African American State Representative Spencer Coggs introduced a bill that would force local law enforcement agencies to write guidelines and policies for the use of force, and mandated departments to develop policy to take citizens' complaints.<sup>161</sup> The bill would also make it illegal for members of law enforcement not to provide medical help to detainees who sought medical help. The law would not pass until 1987, three years after Breier retired.

One could imagine another historical narrative that saw Breier working closely with the African American community leaders to improve community police relations. But Breier's tough-nosed approach, and willingness to suppress and intimidate his opponents, worked against him as the local economy shrank and joblessness began to foster a growing underground economy. Often more concerned with dictating the public narrative versus shifting cultural norms, Breier was out of touch as Milwaukee's population grew blacker and browner.

---

<sup>160</sup> Elving, Ron "Breier Rips Activists Fuller For His Marxist Fuller" *Milwaukee Journal*, March 18, 1982 page 1 part 1

<sup>161</sup> Mulvey, Mike "New Law Should End Lacy Case, 2 Say" *Milwaukee Sentinel* Say November 30th, 1987

With crime rates growing, in 1984 Breier was still assuring the public that his city's gang problem was small. In less than two years since it had started, Milwaukee's gang squad arrested 6,500 people; 1,600 of the arrests were for curfew, the more than any other type of arrests made by the gang squad. Yet Breier argued there were only seven to 10 gangs in the city of Milwaukee and at most 300 gang members, while a leader from the Social Development Coalition (SDC) told a *Milwaukee Journal* reporter there were up to 4,000 gang members in Milwaukee.<sup>162</sup>

Despite the dissonance, the press still portrayed the gang issues as “youth problems” and young blacks had yet to be portrayed by the local media as the scary predators that would dominate the gangsta rap narrative of the early 1990s. While both of the city's daily papers frequently tried to offer nuanced and balanced descriptions of the growing black community's problems, by the early 1980s the exploding crime rate became an increasing point of interest for the white media.<sup>163</sup>

### *Blame it on the Youth*

In 1983, the *Milwaukee Journal* published an article, “Uneasy Truce Often Prevails -Black Gangs: Smoke or Fire.” Written by staff writer Gregory Stanford, the article highlights how employees at the city's leading black youth recreation destination, the Palace Roller Skating Rink, countered the negative activity of local youth gangs that frequented the rink. Located at the corner of East Capitol Drive and Port Washington

---

<sup>162</sup> Bauer, Fran. “Breier Say Hagedorn is A Revolutionary” *Milwaukee Journal* February 11th, 1984

<sup>163</sup> Collins, Thomas. “Skate Kings Queens Frolic At the Palace.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* December 20th 1982

Drive, the Palace had become the city's prime destination for those looking to skate, hang out and participate in the emerging hip-hop movement.<sup>164</sup>

“Most of ‘em, they ain’t bad at all,” said Sam Wells, manager of the Palace.

“You got one or two in any one gang that’s bad - that’s about it.”

Not surprisingly, neighbors frequently called the police on the Palace’s young patrons. Yet, for the most part until the mid-1980s, the city’s two daily papers framed the growing gang problem as solvable kid problems. This reflected the attitude taken by an unnamed member of the MPD who stated that the problems at the Palace weren’t that big of deals, about what one would expect when a large number of youth hung out in one location.

Of course, black youth as “problems” had become a recurring theme in the mainstream popular discourse since the mid-1960s when African American youth organizations like the NAACP Youth Committee’s Commandos begun agitating community members to protest the city’s racially restrictive housing laws. These organizing efforts, which included frequent moments of civil disobedience and large marches, came to a head in 1967 after Milwaukee experienced an urban rebellion/riot.

### *Marketplace for Crime*

---

<sup>164</sup> “Youth Hangouts Tell Story of a Fragile, Uneasy Truce With Gangs.” *Milwaukee Journal* May 9th 1983 part 1 page6



Although he would be criticized by the activist community throughout his tenure, Mayor Henry Maier was a hardworking liberal who sought to balance the city's growing racial problems with the need to create revenue from government sponsored programs. Although Breier's department reflected an entrenched conservatism, Maier was a nationally respected leader and even attended Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral.<sup>165</sup> During his tenure as mayor, he served as the president of the United States Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities. Maier had been a prominent advocate for the Federal Revenue Sharing program, which at one time provided half the budget for municipal governments. The program ran between 1972 and 1987 and "distributed \$4.5 billion to 39,000 municipalities in the fiscal year 1986" alone.<sup>166</sup> As the federal government increasingly divested from Great Society-style programs like the Federal Revenue Sharing Program, Maier along with his counterparts in local government looked to bring resources to their cash-strapped departments through state and federal funding from Ronald Reagan's expanding War on Drugs.<sup>167</sup> Local funding from the Federal Revenue Sharing program dropped \$12 million in 1985 to less than 10 million in 1986. The

---

<sup>165</sup> "1- Dr. Martin Luther King Funeral Statement" Maier Administration, Box 171, Folder 15, Speeches, 1968 April (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

<sup>166</sup> Gruson, Lindsey. "End Of Federal Revenue Sharing Creating Financial Crisis In Many Cities". *New York Times* January 31, 1987

<sup>167</sup> "1986 Budget in Brief" City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin SEPT 20TH, 1985 pg

traditional “big spending liberal” would present an austerity budget in 1987 to attempt to fill in the gap from the lost revenue.<sup>168</sup>

If Maier and his contemporaries had any reservations about promoting Milwaukee’s growing crime problem, they were tempered by the economic boom that erupted after Congress passed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, which established mandatory minimums for drug offenders.<sup>169</sup> Although the War on Drugs started in the Richard Nixon administration, during the Reagan administration funding to state and local governments began to increase dramatically. The shifting tough-on-drugs narrative, spurred by the death of top NBA draft pick Len Bias, would open new financial opportunities for law enforcement and drug treatment agencies. Cash-strapped cities prepped to become stronger financial partners with the federal government. The economic incentive was just too influential. Cities with high African American unemployment rates like Milwaukee embraced the financial opportunity that was associated with the Reagan administration’s tough-nosed stance on ending the underground economy.

“War is good for business for those who sell weapons,” read the first line of a November 1986 *Milwaukee Journal* article written just weeks after the passing of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act. “[A]nd the war on drugs in industry is no exception.”<sup>170</sup> The

---

<sup>168</sup> “1987 Budget in Brief” City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin September 24th, 1987 1986 pg 5

<sup>169</sup> H.R. 5729 (99<sup>th</sup>): Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986

<sup>170</sup> “Labs Helping to Arm Firms in the War on Drugs.” *Milwaukee Journal* November 9th, 1986

article highlighted potential economic opportunities as the nation's economy adjusted to the increased police presence in urban communities. By 1986, the local economy was shifting to make way for massive investments that would begin to take place, as the city became a stronger partner in the Drug War

By 1988, Reagan doubled down on his War on Drugs by passing the 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, a \$2.8 billion bill which would enact stiffer penalties for violent drug crimes and provided local governments millions of dollars for drug prevention and treatment programs.<sup>171</sup> 1980s rap artists might have poked fun at the Gipper's "Just Say No Campaign" PSAs, but the amount of money that was being invested in the War on Drugs was no laughing matter. With an explicit goal of creating a "drug free America", the federal government's zero tolerance programs provided huge opportunities for local governments.<sup>172</sup>

### *Blame it on The Youth*

In his inaugural budget speech in fall 1988, newly elected Milwaukee mayor John Norquist barely mentions the growing crime in the city's streets.<sup>173</sup> In fact, he actually put forth a budget narrative that cut the MPD's budget. But by 1989, as it was time to unveil his 1990 budget, he was taking a substantially different tone.

"Much of the violence we see is born of drug use, particularly the use of

---

<sup>171</sup> H.R. 5210 (100<sup>th</sup>): Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988

<sup>172</sup> See "Gangsta, Gangsta" by trailblazing rap group N.W.A.

<sup>173</sup> 1989 Budget in Brief" City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1987

cocaine... We should also resolve to get the message out to the entire drug trade - selling drugs, and using drugs --- constitutes simply another form of violence. Cocaine kills babies. It poisons children. Drugs tear apart neighborhoods and rend the fabric of the entire community.<sup>174</sup>

In the 1990 City Budget, he continued about the problems of guns, drugs and crime, taking nearly five pages to address the city's growing problems. He outlined a number of tough-on-crime solutions in his budget, including:

- Tougher penalties for selling cocaine
- State ban on semi-automatic assault weapons
- Lengthening the waiting period required to buy a gun
- Tougher penalties for parents or guardian who fail to take adequate care to keep loaded guns out of the reach of children
- Creation of a special prosecutor for drug cases in the Milwaukee County District Attorney's office
- Creation of a special Milwaukee Circuit Drug Court
- Construction of more prisons
- Modifying state law so that state and local law enforcement agencies may retain assets and property forfeited by drug dealers under the state uniform Controlled Substance Act
- Allowing confiscated drug dealer's property to be used for restitution to crime victims
- Expansion of victims' rights and the community's right to be notified about certain crimes

Yet, the mayor's 1990 budget provided only limited spending on explicit programs to prevent youth drug use, compared to \$111,737,775 for the MPD. While local community agencies like SDC received funding from local government to stop drug use, the mayor's 1990 budget only lists a "\$100,000" challenge grant for the creation of the Milwaukee Youth Service Corp and increased policing as his explicit strategy to keep youth from getting involved in the drug trade.

---

<sup>174</sup> "1990 Budget in Brief" City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1989 pg 14-19

Norquist's tough-on-crime approach reflected the growing trend by state leaders to investment in law enforcement programs to stop growing drug use. In 1986, candidate Tommy Thompson defeated Democratic governor Anthony Earl. Thompson's policy platform, discussed in greater depth in the next chapter, altered the local economy and shifted the state's funding priorities. Ramping up the state's investment in law enforcement, Thompson's 1986 policy papers on "drugs" and "prison" reveal the extent to which he was willing to fight crime. His position papers were especially harsh on juvenile criminals. "Our current juvenile system is dominated by the "Leave it Beaver" school of thought, which hold that there is no such things as a bad kid". His proposals included:

- Giving judges the right to waive juvenile offenders as young as 14 to adult court
- Extending court jurisdiction for juvenile offenders from 19 to 21
- Lowering from 12 to 10 the age at which to consider a juvenile to be delinquent
- Placing special attention to chronic offenders and child abusers<sup>175</sup>

Of course, Thompson's tough-on-crime approach didn't end with children.

Thompson saw gangs and drugs as interrelated problems and his attempts to squash the drug trade represented a shift in approach from the previous administration. "We need to adopt the mystique of drug use and create a social climate in which drug use

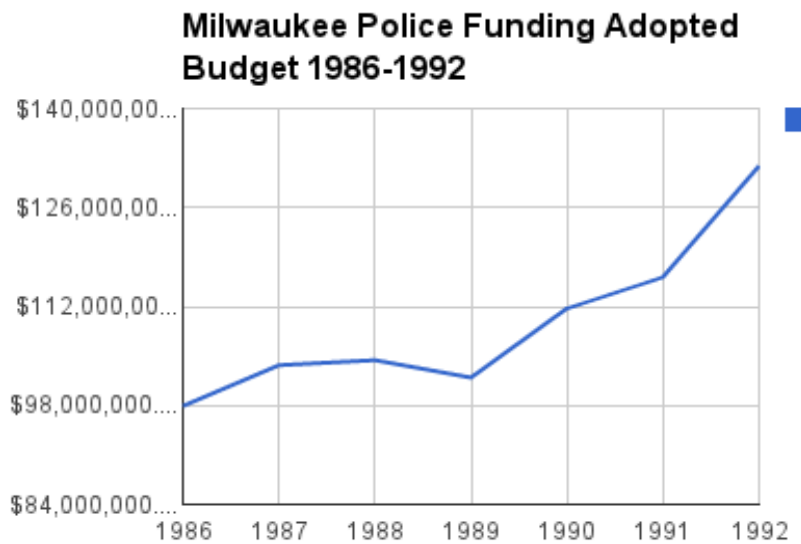
---

<sup>175</sup> "Prison" *Position Papers* Series 3-2 Box 10 File 7 Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Campaign Papers, 1986 Gubernatorial Election Special Collections and Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

is seen as suicidal and unfashionable.”<sup>176</sup> The Wisconsin governor advocated for a similar approach to stopping drugs as President Ronald Reagan, and stated “that Wisconsin should pass the proposed ‘Len Bias Bill’, which allowed judges to charge drug dealers whose products killed users with second-degree homicide. Thompson’s policies were aimed squarely at Wisconsin’s urban areas, with Milwaukee being the largest.

“We are at a crossroad in terms of urban crime, especially gang related crime. In recent months, the character of the criminal behavior in cities has been rapidly changing. Gangs are becoming institutionalized, permanent structures, often dominated by older leaders. Gangs have moved from being vehicles of expression of macho attitude to becoming permanent and ruthless criminal enterprises.”<sup>177</sup>

Thompson’s “tough-on-crime” crime narrative would see the state making bigger investments in law enforcement throughout the state.



---

<sup>176</sup> “Drugs” *Position Papers* Series 3-2 Box 10 File 7 Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Campaign Papers, 1986 Gubernatorial Election Special Collections and Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*

Norquist did not enter City Hall as a tough-on-crime politician. A moderate Democrat, Norquist's budget narratives reflect a tension between his attempts to cut property taxes while at the same time providing quality service. Although the charts above highlight increasing crime levels, Norquist also hoped to fill huge budget gaps left by the shifting priorities of the federal government. He did this by making friends with the new Republican governor who was chumming up with the Reagan administration. "Improving our relationship with the state is itself one of the challenges we need to meet if we are to succeed in meeting the other challenges we face. We must never forget, as we embark on passage of another city budget, that the single, largest source of the city's revenue is the state of Wisconsin"<sup>178</sup>

Norquist's 1992 MPD budget, which jumped by \$30 million in four years, was in line with the governor's spending priorities. And the Democratic mayor was sounding more like Tommy Thompson than he might have imagined. "This budget is bad news for gangs. My message to gang members is quit, and for anyone wanting to joining a gang - don't. There are better things to do with your life. If you need help with a problem we will try to help you but if you are the problem, we will separate you from society."<sup>179</sup>

Like Thompson, Norquist's policies hit young people of color hard and even created an environment that saw African Americans not involved with the drug trade targeted by the police. Perhaps the best example of this anti-youth policy comes from his political biography *The Wealth of Cities*. "Like many cities, Milwaukee recently had a problem with teenagers congregating in downtown streets after school. The merchants

---

<sup>178</sup> "1990 Budget in Brief" City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin. September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1989 pg 12

<sup>179</sup> "1991 Budget in Brief" City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin No Date, 1990 pg 5

didn't like kids hanging out downtown. They thought the teenagers would intimidate shoppers and drive away potential customers.”<sup>180</sup> Although Norquist would side with the community on a number of progressive causes, including posthumously renaming the 16th Street Viaduct after local activist hero Father Groppi, he clearly saw nothing wrong with further intensifying the city's racial division, mostly because he labeled the youth by their age, not their race. “Although most of these kids behaved themselves, the merchants had a hard time convincing shoppers that dozens of loud and very visible teenagers were nothing to be concerned about.”<sup>181</sup>

Of course, in the passage above, Norquist never highlights that the rowdy teenagers were African Americans who attended the public high schools near the downtown area. Yet, race was clearly an underlying factor in Norquist's analysis. Ironically, in their attempt to revitalize the downtown area, Norquist and the city's common council not only forgot that young people were often the labor force driving commercial businesses, but also that they were consumers who spent much of their (and their parent's) disposable income at the many shoe and clothing stores that populated the central business district. Sadly, instead of developing public policy that embraced youth, Norquist advocated for a policy that criminalized youth activity.

Captain Jeff Bialk of the Milwaukee Police Department found an answer. He reinstated the post officers-the traffic officers-who were made obsolete years ago by the sophisticated signals at busy intersections. Captain Bialk figured out that safety is never obsolete. These traffic officers make downtown shoppers, commuters and office workers feel secure, even though their ostensible duty is to direct traffic. Today's traffic officers on downtown corners keep an eye on the teenagers more than on the traffic, but the teens don't know this.<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>180</sup> Norquist, John. *Wealth of Cities: Revitalizing the Centers of Urban Life*. Da Capo Press 1998 pg 26

<sup>181</sup> *ibid* pg 48

<sup>182</sup> *ibid* pg 53



His attempt to keep young blacks from going downtown reflected the same oppositional approach that saw the state's leadership attempting to keep African Americans from moving to the state during Zeidler's tenure in office. Yet, Milwaukee's black population continued to grow until Norquist left office in 2004. Of course, despite his passage above, it is not hard to imagine that the increased attempt to police and "watch over" young people of color was noticed by African Americans frequenting downtown businesses.

*Political Ramifications.*

Norquist's, like Maier's and Thompson's, highest priority was to serve taxpayers, not the struggling working class black community in Milwaukee's north side neighborhoods. Although black precincts would overwhelmingly vote for Democrats in statewide elections, white politicians from both political parties propagated programs and policy platforms that chose to suppress the black community's movement, increased interaction with the state via criminalization, and permanently position the African American community as outsiders.

Yet the irony was that taxpayers undoubtedly paid for the cost of the rising incarceration rate and unemployment rates of the African American community. The 1993-1995 biennial state budget allocated more than \$300 million to the state's Department of Corrections/ (DOC) bottom line, adding to the additional \$145 million

allocated in 1991-1993 to build new prisons.<sup>183</sup> And, as mentioned above, an unequal policing of black neighborhoods led to the state's high black incarceration rate.

As scholars continue to assess the impact that cuts in social program like AFDC had on families, and revisit the impact that the War on Drugs had in worsening the social problems caused by joblessness and economic instability, there will likely be greater attention paid to the political motivations behind such policy shifts. The shifting political landscape catapulted a new generation of conservative leaders into office, and the implementation of welfare reforms, intense criminalization of black communities and the ending of the social safety net had not saved taxpayers money nor ended the social problems.

As the local War on Drugs ramped up, Milwaukee District Attorney Michael McCann welcomed federal government resources. But he also recognized that increased funding opportunities were not without consequences. "We would promptly jeopardize [the federal resources] if used excessively."<sup>184</sup>

Yet, while McCann warned that an increased reliance on federal money to run the local War on Drugs could become problematic, by 1989 it did not stop the city's elected leaders from highlighting Milwaukee's growing drug crime statistics for increased funding to fight drug dealers. To city leaders, like County Executive David Schulz, Milwaukee's drug problem "is going to get worse and ultimately bring down all of us...even those responsible citizens who would never even consider using drugs

---

<sup>183</sup> Fielder, Patrick "The Wisconsin Department of Corrections an Expensive Proposition. *Marquette Law Review*", Vol 76, Issue 3 Spring 1993

<sup>184</sup> "US Goes After Casual Drug Users." *Milwaukee Journal* June 13, 1989.

themselves.”<sup>185</sup> Schulz, who served as the leader of Milwaukee County government from 1988 to 1992 and as Chicago Mayor Harold Washington’s budget director in 1983, even said the drug abuse problem was “the worst domestic crisis since the Great Depression.”<sup>186</sup> Of the \$900 million allocated for his 1990 budget, nearly \$100 million went fighting drug use in Milwaukee County.

Of course, these funding requests would not only go towards local law government and law enforcement agencies; community-based service organizations also received aid from the War on Drugs. As Milwaukee’s inner city economy began to sputter, local community agencies sought public funding to fight the consequences of the War on Drugs. In fact, black leaders who represented parts of the city most impacted by drugs, often advocated for increased funding for drug treatment and law enforcement.

These large federal and state investments in the drug war revealed the local political demand for such programs. Just years earlier, young drug dealers weren’t seen as a threat. But as the funding for anti-drug efforts became a driving factor in the policing of black communities, city leaders sought to strengthen its media campaign against young African Americans. The narrative increasingly moved away from the racial overtones that once defined the Breier regime, but the over-policing of the black community and racist organizational culture established after mayor Zeidler left office would prevail.

*More Money, More Problems.*

---

<sup>185</sup> “Drug War Strains Quality of Life.” *Times Daily* November 5th, 1989

<sup>186</sup> Trevor, Jason. “David F Shulz 1949-1997” *Chicago Tribune*, October 10th, 1997

Throughout his tenure as chief, Breier continued to play up his nonchalant attitude towards the black community's growing list of demands. He was perhaps most callous when dealing with police brutality.<sup>187</sup> With an unapologetic attitude toward the repeated requests by African American leaders to curb police brutality, Breier established a company line that was unrepentant and unbending, further infuriating the African American community and emboldening bad actors inside his department. Despite the black community's growing political stature, Breier looked the other way as his officers often harassed, beat and increasingly killed African Americans.

While Breier retired in 1984 under a hailstorm of controversy and criticism, his influence would be felt on the force for years to come.<sup>188</sup> Successive police chiefs may have been less hostile towards black residents, but the MPD's culture had forever been shaped by Breier's hard-nosed attitudes. Throughout his tenure, Brier established an organizational culture that reflected the larger community's desire to maintain strict social order in Milwaukee's rapidly shifting inner city neighborhoods. The expanding black community challenged working class whites for resources, whether in the housing market, in classrooms or on the work site. While Milwaukee's progressive movements were led and often organized by white allies, there was a large population of working class whites that simply weren't ready for change. For many, perhaps even subconsciously, Breier represented a line of protection from the shifting social and political realities of the day. Tough rhetoric and strict departmental policies became even more important in maintaining the status quo after passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act,

---

<sup>187</sup> "A Look at Police" *Milwaukee Journal* Sept 14, 1964

<sup>188</sup> Dopish, Alex P.

which intensified growing fear that crime and social problems that plagued black neighborhoods would impact the white working class way of life.

The intolerant approach to policing would not retire with Breier. Over the coming years Milwaukee would receive increased levels of federal funding to combat the local drug problem. While department leaders would no longer actively engage in publicly organized press conferences to disparage the black community, Breier's leadership would help establish discriminatory organization culture that would shape MPD interactions with community members for years to come. As the MPD's budget grew, so did the number of interactions with African American residents. Between 1980 and 2000, the MPD's budget grew from \$94 million to \$150 million as large increases in funding came from federal programs like the National Office of Drug Control Policy.<sup>189</sup>

Yet, if both federal and local government had taken an active stance on eliminating drugs, local budgets in Milwaukee reflected very limited investment in explicit prevention amongst youth who, as stated above, were having increasing runs-in with the police. In 1995, the Milwaukee County budget only allocated \$107,000 for the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program. The youth-focused program was modeled off the program developed by former Los Angeles Police Chief Darryl Gates in 1983.<sup>190</sup>

After Breier retired in 1984, the Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission once again hired another longtime member of the force, Robert Ziarnik, to be chief.<sup>191</sup> Under

---

<sup>189</sup> "2000 Plan and Budget Summary" City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin. 1999

<sup>190</sup> "Milwaukee County Executive Budget" David F Sculz Milwaukee County 1995 Pg 4000-14

<sup>191</sup> *Chronology of Significant Events Milwaukee Fire Department, Police Department, and Fire and Police Commission*

Ziarnik, the MPD began to make strides towards hiring minority members to the force. Yet the racist culture would continue to dominate the interactions between members of the MPD and the black community. Nothing personified this better than the way the MPD handled the case of Milwaukee's most notorious criminal, Jeffrey Dahmer.

On May 27, 1991, members of the MPD stopped Jeffrey Dahmer after residents from the Westside neighborhood where he lived complained he was chasing a heavily drugged 14 year-old named Konerak Sinthasomphon, a Laotian immigrant. Although Dahmer had been convicted of sexually abusing Sinthasomphon's brother a year earlier, MPD members refused to detain Dahmer after he told them the naked child was his 19 year-old lover. Months later, MPD would find in Dahmer's apartment human remains from 11 of the 17 serial killer's victims. Most of the victims were young black men from the neighborhood.<sup>192</sup>

Two years before the notorious serial killer's arrest, the Fire and Police Commission hired an outsider from Detroit, Chief Phillip Arreola, the nation's first Latino to head a large urban police force, to replace Ziarnik in 1989.<sup>193</sup> Even with a person of color in charge, there were many in the African American community who argued that the MPD's racist organizational culture had failed to protect the black community from the serial killer. In 1991 Mike McGee Sr. joined other black elected officials including Alderman Marvin Pratt, State Representative Annette Polly Williams, and County Supervisor Elizabeth Coggs-Jones in demanding that Arreola fire the three police officers involved in the Sinthasomphon incident. While they noted that they didn't

---

<sup>192</sup> "Family Sought New Lift Only to Find New Pain." *New York Times* July 31, 1991

<sup>193</sup> Phillip Arreola (1989-1996)" <http://city.milwaukee.gov/Police/Arreola.htm> (accessed 11.13.11)

think the entire department was racist or homophobic, they believed that racism influenced the MPD members to acquiesce when they first met Dahmer.

“We lost 17 young men in the community,” said State Rep Polly Williams of the Dahmer’s victims. “Somebody is responsible. Somebody has to pay for it.”<sup>194</sup>

Chief Arreola would relieve the anger in the black community by eventually firing two officers involved in the Dahmer incident. However, the pressures involved in being a big-city police chief would eventually become too much for the plain spoken Arreola. His decision to fire the officers would create a rift between him and the between him and MPA. This issue would remain unresolved during his tenure as Milwaukee’s top cop and ultimately was one of the reasons why Milwaukee Mayor Norquist pressured him to leave before his first term was completed. At the time of his resignation in 1995, police union boss Bradley Debraska celebrated that Arreola was leaving the department. “I’ve received numerous calls from the ranks and file, and the majority of the membership is elated that Arreola is leaving.” According to Debraska, Arreola’s “greatest legacy” of firing the two officers in the Dahmer case pitted him against MPD’s traditional culture.<sup>195</sup>

The Fire and Police Commission eventually hired a local black cop, Arthur Jones, to replace Arreola, but Jones too found himself at odds with MPD’s racialized culture. Jones’ hiring might have appeased the black community that saw the chief taking a more holistic approach to fighting crime and curtailing drug problems, but his attempt to hire

---

<sup>194</sup> To Fire Police Officers Or Prepare For Civil Disobedience” *Milwaukee Journal* Sept 3rd 1991 page B7.

Schanen, Bill. “Group Gives Police Chief Ultimatum on the Three Officers: Areola Told

<sup>195</sup> Cano, Julio V “Police Chief’s Smooth Beginning Gave Way to Rocky Times.”

*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* August 17th, 1996

black police would anger white members of the force who charged the chief with practicing reverse discrimination. Despite seeing violent crime decrease during his tenure, Jones left the department in 2003, and would eventually be sued by members of the MPD in a class-action discrimination suit for reverse racism.<sup>196</sup>

---

<sup>196</sup> “Award Overturned in Discrimination Case/” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* July 19th .2007

385 F.3d 1043: Joseph R. Anderer, Jr. v. Police Chief Arthur Jones, et al.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### PUSH BACK: THE RISE OF “TOUGH LOVE POLICES”

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the state’s most powerful political actors from both the Democratic and Republican parties sought to limit programs such as AFDC, while subsequently passing policy that intensified that state’s influence on the lives of poor families. Often using not-so-subtly racially coded language, the progressive advances garnered by the Labor and Civil Rights movements in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s were undermined as the public discourse about the role of government shifted. While scholars have discussed this era from a racial, cultural or economic lens, closer investigation reveals how this prevailing message was intrinsically tied to the rise of conservative political strategy. Much like the period of white redemption following Reconstruction, a strain of conservatism sought to weaken the political advances of the African American community, while undermining the social programs that supported poor people. This brand of conservatism, practiced by leaders from both sides of the aisle, was an attempt to counter the African American community’s population growth and weaken the advances of Milwaukee’s strong progressive activism.

This chapter aims to continue the nuanced discussion set forth in the previous chapter about the role that the War on Drugs and institutional racism played in limiting social mobility of African Americans in the late twentieth century. Continuing to use Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* as a lens, this chapter discusses how conservative public policy weakened the political and economic strength of the black

community. As the African American community grew more powerful electorally, a racialized rhetoric, cloaked in the language of “tough love” conservatism and neo liberalism, undermined the black community’s political potential by rapidly altering the state’s social safety network. Although the following chapters will highlight the ways African Americans organized politically, the successful causes of the 1960s reinvigorated the conservative movement as local leaders attempted to weaken the community’s political power, limit their influence in the political economy, and permanently brand black residents as outsiders.

In recent years, scholars have revisited the rise of the conservative movement after Barry Goldwater’s 1964 loss to Lyndon Johnson.<sup>197</sup> Mobilized to action by the nation’s shifting cultural values and political landscape, Goldwater Republicans, marked by their pro-state’s-rights stances, socially conservative beliefs and grassroots organizing, would shift the nation’s political landscape throughout the 1980s and 1990s. This chapter aims to survey how conservative activists, under the leadership of Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, shifted the local popular and political discourse. Promoting dramatic changes to welfare policy and a series of reactionary responses aimed at stifling the growing electoral strength of the black community, Wisconsin conservatives were engaged in an intentional political strategy. By limiting the political advances of the black community and by altering the government’s role in fixing social problems, conservative actors were able to shift the local political landscape and alter the role the

---

<sup>197</sup> Perlstein, Rick. *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* Nation Books. New York, 2009

federal government played in protecting the African Americans from discrimination and oppression. While scholars have often times described the entrenchment of conservative political power as the “culture wars”, this inquiry assesses the implications of the political war that was waged as conservatives sought to regain power at all levels of government.<sup>198</sup> This analysis suggests that this racial political discourse, and traditional “Southern Strategy”, were also applied in the north as conservative elected officials sought to push against the progressive victories of the mid-twentieth century by redefining the African American community’s relationship to the state.<sup>199</sup> Just as they had during Frank Zeidler’s tenure as mayor, conservatives used profit motive and a racially tinged political narrative to alter local policy and its impact on poor people.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, structural racism was further intensified by the War on Drugs. But, perhaps most importantly, this chapter looks back on this era and uncovers how the shifting political dialogue was used to permanently redefine poor communities’ relationship with the state and weaken black political power. As blacks became the face of the media’s popular depiction of poverty, the shift in public policy opened the city to a wave of neoliberalism politics that radically altered the role local government played in solving community problems. No longer committed to the New Deal, Fair Deal, or even the Great Society programs of the previous era, by the end of the 1990s elected officials were blaming poor people for their socio-economic problems, and often demonized and criminalized those at the bottom for seeking public support.

---

<sup>198</sup> Davidson, James, *Culture Wars: The Struggle To Define America* Hunter Basic Books NY 1992

<sup>199</sup> Brown, Frank “ Nixon’s Southern Strategy and the Forces Against Brown” *Journal of Negro Education* Vol 73 no 3 191 -208

### *Conservatives Strike Back*

“The welfare system is a perfect example of what I refer to as government sense. When you pay people not to work, not to get married, and to have children out of wedlock, guess what happens? People do not work, they do not get married, and they have more children out of wedlock. Handing out a welfare check and expecting nothing in return is not public assistance, it is public apathy. Here is your check, see you next month.”<sup>200</sup>

While Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson’s 1995 speech at the United We Stand America Conference lacked any mention of African Americans, his audience definitely understood the racial cues.<sup>201</sup> Bolstered by public intellectuals and thought leaders who set the context for the public discourse, welfare and other anti-poverty programs that had emerged through the result of progressive political organizing were undermined as poor black people became the public image of poverty. As a result, Thompson became one of the Wisconsin’s most popular governors by championing an anti-welfare platform that “stuck it” to poor people of color. Eventually his reform policies won him a cabinet level position in President George W. Bush’s administration.

The image promoted by Tommy Thompson fit perfectly with the prevailing racial stereotype that first emerged during Frank Zeidler’s tenure as Milwaukee mayor. Throughout the era, African Americans were depicted in the political discourse as outsiders, culturally inferior and in need of tough love. Although in the 1940s and

---

<sup>200</sup> Thompson, Tommy “United We Stand Conference” Aug 12, 1995

<sup>201</sup> Domke, Davide. *Racial Cues and Political Ideology An Examination of Associative Priming* University of Pennsylvania 2001

1950s local elected leaders sought to create a welcoming environment for the influx of African Americans, by the 1980s elected officials created reactionary public policy which would further limit the African American community's chances for social mobility. However, the cuts did not necessarily mean the end of government investment in the black community. Even though the rising costs of public programs were often cited for the transformation and cutting back of social programming, the shifting public discourse opened the door for a wave of neoliberal shifts in the local political economy which saw public dollars being managed by publicly traded private corporations and prisons.

During his 1986 campaign to replace Governor Anthony Earl, Thompson released a position paper that described his perspective of the role of government, "The most important thing the state government can do is to encourage economic growth to provide job opportunities and hope for the future of its citizens, especially its poorest."<sup>202</sup> Once elected he rapidly divested from the state's welfare programs and increased spending on prisons and crime prevention. His reforms transformed the way the state provided services to poor people and fundamentally altered the role of government. Months before his death in 2006, Frank Zeidler looked back on Thompson's tenure in government and stated that he "devastated the social security net of Wisconsin."<sup>203</sup>

David Mastran, founder and CEO of Maximus, a nationally publicly traded company that would dominate the Wisconsin landscape after Thompson led an effort to

---

<sup>202</sup> "Role of Government" *Position Papers* Series 2-3 Box 10 File 6 Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Campaign Papers, 1986 Gubernatorial Election Special Collections and Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

<sup>203</sup> "Frank Zeidler." *In Wisconsin*. Wisconsin Public Television, Thursday, June 25, 2009

privatize Aid For Dependent Children (AFDC), proudly described how his company took advantage of the shifting welfare laws which gave private corporations a bigger share of the public resources. His focus on profit was clear. “For twenty-nine years while I was CEO, Maximus revenue grew at the astonishing rate of 36.5 percent per year. *This growth was achieved without ever going into debt. Maximus was profitable every year for twenty-nine years - never a loss.* I was the only employee in the beginning; when I retired, there were over 5,500. Today there are over 9,000. “Of course, Mastran never mentions how his organization’s ability to respond to growing demand was tied to a racist political narrative.”<sup>204</sup>

But the political rhetoric wasn’t always coded. In fact, while elected officials like Thompson were able to code their conversation, many thought leaders in the Milwaukee area during this era were staunchly and unapologetically racist. Mark Belling, a radio personality who first took to the air in 1989, frequently used his daily talk radio show as a platform to push anti-youth and anti-person-of-color rhetoric. “Whether it's blacks, Mexican-Americans, whatever, people who live in a neighborhood should not have to put up with newcomer deciding that that neighborhood is going to be 'Crimeville.' Belling continued: "You wonder why racism occurs. Why people fear 'look what's happening to the neighborhood' when some -- when a minority person moves in. The answer is because sometimes it does mean an increase in crime.”<sup>205</sup>

---

<sup>204</sup> Mastaran, David , *Privateer: Building a Business; Reforming Government Self* Published 2013

<sup>205</sup> Cuprisin, Tim “Media Matters & Belling” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Dec 15 2008 <http://www.jsonline.com/blogs/entertainment/36174639.html>

“Views on Race Were Shaped Subtly.” *Milwaukee Journal* May 13th, 1991

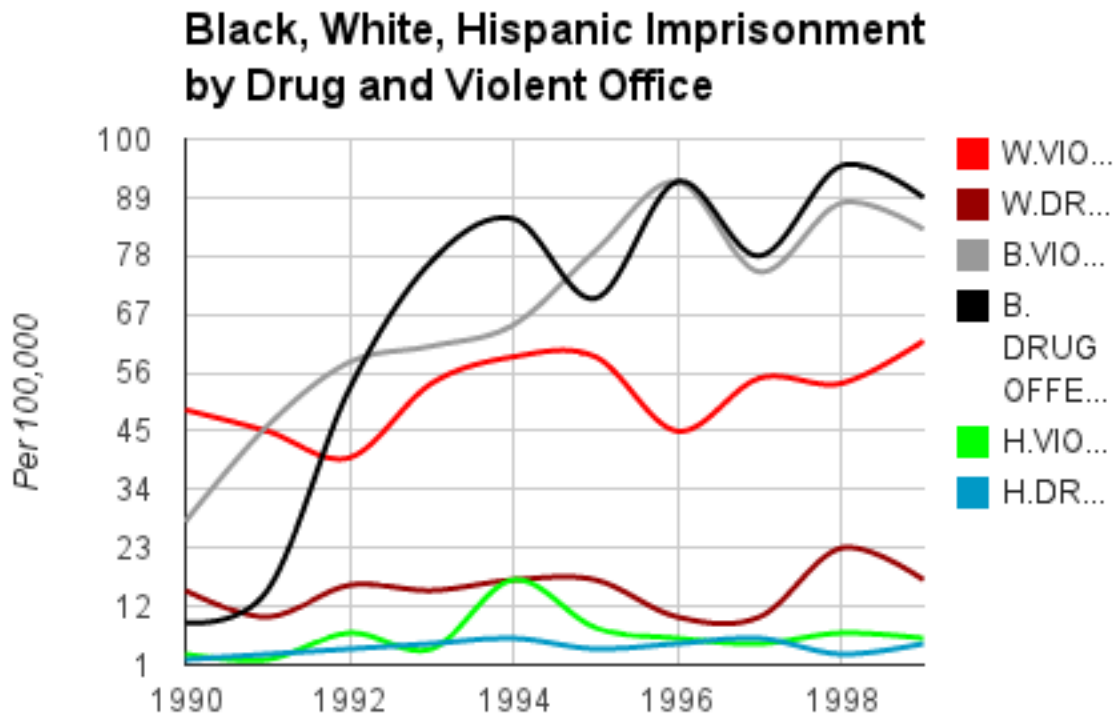
This tough racial rhetoric, coupled with the federal government's War on Drugs, justified an increased police presence in many north side neighborhoods. By the close of the century, Wisconsin had the highest black incarceration rate in the country. By 2000, an average black person was "11.6 times more likely than a white person to be incarcerated in this state." While there is no escaping the violence the crack epidemic had on the city during the 1980s and 1990s, the largest increase in sentences were due to drug crime. The popular image of drug users was poor African Americans, but there is a growing body of literature that highlights that whites used drugs at much higher rates than black communities. Yet blacks were criminalized at much higher rates and, in Wisconsin particularly, had much longer prison sentences than white offenders. At the turn of the century, the shockingly high racial disparities prompted University of Wisconsin Sociology Professor Pamela Oliver to state: "I have become convinced that the high incarceration rates of African Americans is itself one of the great evils of our time. I believe members of the white majority need to take the trouble to educate themselves about what is going on and then speak up and stop supporting politicians who try to win our votes with "tough on crime" rhetoric."<sup>206</sup>

This project uses "Department of Corrections data file of persons who were in Wisconsin state prison system any time between January 1, 1990 and April 30, 2000", a data set found at Professor Pam Oliver's University of Wisconsin webpage titled "Prison Admissions in Wisconsin 1990-1999" to provide further insight into how the shifting

---

<sup>206</sup> Oliver, Pamela "Some Facts About Race and Prison in Wisconsin" Wisconsin State Journal May 26, 2002

political landscape influenced incarceration.<sup>207</sup>



The data reveals that prior to local government signing on to be partners in the War on Drugs, black violent offenses and drug offenses were below that of whites. Much like the argument found in *The New Jim Crow*, the data in Wisconsin reveals how law enforcement policy in the 1980s and 1990s could be perceived as racially motivated. The rest of this chapter aims to uncover the political roots of the era's rapid criminalization of the black community.

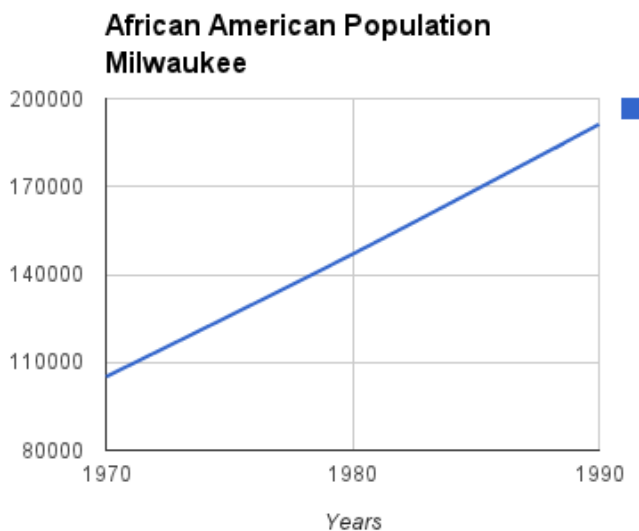
---

<sup>207</sup> <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~oliver/RACIAL/DOCdata2001/WiscPrisonAdmissions.htm> (accessed 11.17.11)



*Outsiders*

As the black population’s economic standing continued to falter, the popular and political discourse about the problems in Milwaukee’s inner city community became increasingly reactionary. Unlike Detroit or Chicago, which started to encounter deindustrialization in the 1960s, Milwaukee’s economy was still relatively strong until the early 1980s. “In 1970, Milwaukee led the nation in factory employment for black laborers with nearly three in four holding a job (a 73.4% employment rate).”<sup>208</sup> Thus blacks from throughout the country that sought a better life continued to migrate to Milwaukee’s north side. Between 1980 and 1990, the African American population grew by 30%.<sup>209</sup>



---

<sup>208</sup> Schmid, John “Employment of black men drops drastically: UWM study of 2010 Census Data Finds Record Low in Milwaukee” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Jan. 23, 2012

<sup>209</sup> “Milwaukee Atlas 1970-2000” City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin March 2003 Table 50. Wisconsin - Race and Hispanic Origin for Selected Large Cities and Other Places: Earliest Census to 1990

But as unemployment and poverty increased in the black community, the tone of the local debate around black migrants shifted from welcoming, but apprehensive, to downright isolationist. By the early 1980s, local firms no longer demanded surplus labor, and consequently the local political and business elite worried the city was becoming a prime destination for impoverished African Americans migrants. Many blamed the state's welfare subsidy that was larger than those offered by other states in the region for pulling so many poor blacks from other parts of the country.

It did not help that the largest percentage of new migrants came from Chicago, less than 90 miles from Milwaukee. According to researchers from the conservative Wisconsin Public Research Institute (WPRI), between 1985 and 1988, 10,809 new non-resident AFDC applications were submitted. Nearly 6,000 of them came from Illinois. Nearly 3,000 of the applicants were on the AFDC rolls within three months of applying.<sup>210</sup> At first glance, Milwaukee provided a safer and less expensive alternative to Chicago's jam-packed Southside and Westside neighborhoods.

In 1986, Wisconsin's Democratic Governor, Tony Earl (1983-1987) convened a special bipartisan committee called the Wisconsin Expenditure Commission (WEC) that was tasked with studying the impact of in-migration on the state's welfare rolls. By the 1970s, Wisconsin's AFDC subsidy "exceeded the median by almost one-half and, more important, exceeded what neighboring states were offering impoverished families." The WEC's research, based on a representative phone survey of Wisconsin's AFDC recipients, revealed that nearly 30% of all recent migrants to Wisconsin were influenced

---

<sup>210</sup> Wahner, James H and Stepaniak, Jerome "Welfare In Migration A Four County Report" WPRI 1988 Vol No 5 pg 6

to move to the state to receive the bigger welfare subsidy. Although the authors were slow to point out the racial makeup of the migrants, their research did indicate “The welfare magnet argument is not without support.”<sup>211</sup>

In his 1986 campaign for governor, Tommy Thompson would make his stance on welfare one of the centerpieces of his platform. His incumbent opponent would criticize the “Republican welfare proposal as unconstitutional and 'old-time religion”, but Thompson only scoffed by replying “Tony Earl is scrambling...he is on the defensive.” Running on a platform to transform completely the state’s social subsidies, Thompson connected to outstate voters by arguing that welfare programs were destroying the Wisconsin “work ethic.” “Current welfare programs, however well intended, have not worked,” said the Republican maverick. “At worst they have contributed to the trend toward the destruction of individual and community values and...placed no demand on the clients they serve and have cast beneficiaries into a permanent and growing underclass.”<sup>212</sup>

Regardless of whether or not Milwaukee’s welfare rolls were populated by freeloaders trying to cheat the system or just poor families looking to survive unemployment, it was an expensive program. In 1990, Milwaukee County, the largest local governmental institution servicing AFDC recipients in the state, distributed \$6.4

---

<sup>211</sup> Corbett, Thomas: “Wisconsin Welfare Magnet Debate What is An Ordinary Member of the Tribe to Do When Witch Doctors Disagree.” Division of University Outreach, Department of Governmental Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison. pg 21

<sup>212</sup> “Welfare” *Position Papers* Series 3-2 Box 10 File 16 Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Campaign Papers, 1986 Gubernatorial Election Special Collections and Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

million per month in food stamps and \$16.6 million in AFDC benefits.<sup>213</sup> The large price tag became a source of contestation and debate for individuals from both sides of aisle who sought to make changes to the program to advance their political careers.

### *Politicians & Researchers Build A Case*

By 1988, the debate became more pointed as researchers of the welfare magnet argument developed a stronger case against the in-migration of welfare recipients. During the first years of Tommy Thompson's tenure as Wisconsin's governor (1987-2001), a series of reports were released that reexamined the impact of the state's growing AFDC caseloads. One, entitled *The Financial Impact of Out-of-State-Based Welfare In-Migration on Wisconsin Taxpayers*, spelled out the financial consequences of the expanded AFDC rolls. According to the document, in-migration cost the state \$129 million in 1988 alone. Another, entitled *Welfare in Migration: A Four-County Report*, "looked at the counties that were likely destinations for any welfare-motivated in-migrant because of their urban character and proximity to Chicago." The authors concluded that 254 cases were added to the AFDC rolls each month as a result of in-migration and nearly 70% percent of all new students in the Milwaukee Public School and 33% of all juvenile offenders were born outside of the state of Wisconsin. Left-leaning scholars, policy makers, and activists continued to debate the prevailing narrative, but the welfare magnet proponents out-messaged progressives as they framed the discussion of social

---

<sup>213</sup> Joya, Wesley. "Milwaukee County Mulls 'Cashless Welfare' System" *Associated Press* August 31, 1990

service programs as a negative cost to taxpayers rather than an investment in the public good.<sup>214</sup>

Researchers rarely mentioned race in their findings, but the way debate had been framed—focusing on in-migration to and from urban areas, specifically Milwaukee—had perpetuated a stereotype that the typical recipient of welfare was a single black woman. But according to Kathleen Mulligan-Hansel and Pamela Fendt, prior to the welfare reforms of the mid 1990s, “white families comprised the largest single racial category in Wisconsin’s welfare caseload.”<sup>215</sup> However, talking heads and policy makers continued to point to the influx of blacks leaving Chicago as the source of the state’s problems. Rather than attempt to adapt public policy to preempt the problems associated with joblessness, city and state lawmakers began to clamp down and point fingers at impoverished families receiving public aid.

Once elected, Thompson did not stop working to change the state’s subsidy program. In 1989, with his next election a little less than two years away, Thompson announced a plan to curb in-migration. The plan would eventually become the basis for his attempt to completely reform welfare over the coming years. His plan attempted to transform the program by:

- Paying migrating families at their state’s welfare rate, even if it was higher than Wisconsin

---

<sup>214</sup> Johnson, Geeta Sharma. “Advocate: Bravo Never Hesitates to Jump in the Fray.” *Milwaukee Journal* March 18th, 1992 b1

<sup>215</sup> Mulligan-Hansel, Kathleen and Fendt, Pamela “Unfair Sanctions: Does W-2 Punish People of Color?” *Institute for Wisconsin’s Future* 2002

- Asking workers to verify six months of residence history of jobs applicants, not just those out of state
- Provide emergency help on an in-kind basis if an emergency or harsh-aid arises for a family from a very low benefit state

Thompson noted that his initial attempt to change the state’s welfare program “eliminated a taxpayer finance incentive to move. And we are proposing to make the benefit a level-neutral factor in the decision to move.” Thompson also told listeners that even though the courts stopped previous states that tried to prevent welfare migration, the Wisconsin program was in line with the law as it did not restrict AFDC recipients’ mobility. “Our welfare system is a model of excellence and compassion, aimed at caring for their needs while also helping individuals break the cycle of dependency and become self-supporting citizens.”<sup>216</sup>

Working communities pushed back. In 1991, State Rep. Gwen Moore, a former welfare recipient herself, spoke out against Governor Thompson’s attempt to enact stricter welfare fraud protections. The “welfare queen” image, which first rose to the national consciousness after Ronald Reagan used the term in the 1976 Presidential race, had dominated the mainstream media, and Thompson used the federal government’s shifting stance on anti-poverty policies to push for tougher local welfare reforms. Moore, however, painted another picture. “I’m very concerned, in our desire to

---

<sup>216</sup> “Welfare In-Migration Plan Announcement” Kenosha, WI Gubernatorial Papers, Speeches Governor, 1987 (Paper) *Position Papers* Series 2-2-1 Box 12 File 4 Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

be vengeful that we are afflicting the wrong people...we are pushing people into abusive, negative situations.” Of course, Thompson would only work harder to end AFDC.<sup>217</sup>

Although Thompson did not create the “welfare queen” narrative, he used it effectively as a trailblazer in the welfare reform movement. He understood how to capitalize on the prevailing myth that African Americans were freeloading off the government. Rarely mentioning race, Thompson was able to rally white voters to the polls by advancing a policy platform that sought to limit social programs. His message was consistent with the political activity of the local conservative movements of the 1950s and 1960s which sought to limit public housing options for African Americans. As the public image of poverty became poor blacks living in Milwaukee, Thompson was able to play off a three-decade-old narrative, which painted blacks as unworthy of public investment.<sup>218</sup>

To be fair, Thompson wasn’t alone in this effort. At the federal level, President Bill Clinton would defeat incumbent George Bush in 1992 with a welfare reform narrative. Both Republicans and Democrats at all levels of government were responding to the increasing bad press about AFDC. In 1991, the federal government overpaid state agencies nearly a billion dollars because of welfare fraud, and conservative officials like Thompson used the welfare fraud narrative to garner political support from white voters across the political perspective.<sup>219</sup> It was an effective way to distance himself from

---

<sup>217</sup> “Thompson Warns of Threat to AFDC.” *Milwaukee Journal* Dec 17th, 1991

<sup>218</sup> Bert Zein “Tony Earl’s Class Act Will Be Tough to Follow” *Milwaukee Journal* Dec 11, 1986

<sup>219</sup> Dixon, Jennifer. “Welfare Fraud Drops, Government Survey Finds -- \$1 Billion In Waste Found In Children's Benefits Program.” Associated Press

progressive opponents like Tony Earl who, although he had begun to make steps to reform welfare, was painted by Thompson as big-spending liberal.<sup>220</sup> While running against Earl, Thompson invoked Goldwater, stating that his campaign was an example of how the former Arizona Senator's ideas had "become part of the political dialog." Like Goldwater, Thompson argued that a return to family values, not social experimentation, would solve Wisconsin problems.

Welfare reform would not be the only "tough-love" approach adopted by Thompson, who helped lead a national trend that saw elected officials from all across the country moving away from the Great Society programs of the previous era. In 1988, he championed a program called Learnfare, which required children ages 13 and 14 from welfare families, as well as teenage parents on welfare, to attend school regularly or risk losing part of their cash welfare benefits.<sup>221</sup> Thompson, first elected to the Assembly from his Central Wisconsin district in 1966, received flak from community-based organizations, including the Milwaukee Urban League and the NAACP, who argued that the program could potentially have adverse effects on the lives of children.<sup>222</sup> But it didn't matter. By 1990, the governor was seeking permission from the federal government to expand the program.

---

April 11, 1994

<sup>220</sup> Katz, Jeffery. "Thompson Says Earl is Being Hypocritical." *Milwaukee Journal* September 29th, 1989 pg 2b

<sup>221</sup> "Wisconsin Governor Calls Welfare Program 'Tough Love'" *Associate Press* February 2, 1988,

<sup>222</sup> "Wisconsin's 'Learnfare' Program Meets Resistance; Governor Seeks Expansion." *The Associated Press* April 12, 1990,



Although independent researchers frequently noted that Learnfare was having little impact on attendance, Thompson continued to experiment with cutting the social safety net, and his reforms became a notable feather in his political hat.<sup>223</sup> Both Republicans and Democrats supported his tough approach, and his high approval ratings, coupled with support from conservative funders, encouraged him to continue to whittle away at the welfare system.<sup>224</sup> In less than six years in office, he had become a national leader for his controversial policies and, by 1995, he had completely revamped the system nearly a year before the federal government enacted the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. By 2001, Thompson's groundbreaking reforms, the most notable program called Wisconsin Works, or W2, had done very little to decelerate poverty, but that did not stop President George W. Bush from tapping him as the federal government's Health and Human Services Secretary and the nation's top welfare official.<sup>225</sup> Thompson's greatest asset for the administration was his deep rolodex of privately run social agency firms like Maximus that would continue to get a bigger share of state budgets as governments across the country moved to a welfare-to-work model. Just like in the public housing battle that took place during Frank Zeidler's tenure in office, profit often became the principal driving public investment.

*Thompson's Strategy Pays off Politically.*

---

223 "An Evaluation of Effects of the Learnfare Program, 1993-1996" State of Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau 1997. Madison, WI: 1997;(22 September 2011)

224 And African American legislators, in 1993 African American Democrat Antonio Riley proposed the total abolishment of AFDC. Of course, others like State Senators Gwen Moore and Gary George adamantly opposed the cuts to welfare programs. /

225 Smith, Demetra & Mikelson, Nightingale Kelly S. "An Overview of Research Related to Wisconsin Works (W-2)" The Urban Institute March 20001

Thompson's strategy reflected a longstanding political narrative that sought to depict the African American community as lazy and unwilling to work. Thompson's "stick-it to Milwaukee" narrative resonated with white voters from throughout the state, and with traditional fiscal conservatives who decades earlier sought to undermine the progressive advances to propel publicly owned housing projects. Throughout his tenure in office, Thompson was able to develop a diverse voting bloc and rally both working-class whites and fiscal conservatives to his side.

In 1986, Tommy Thompson ran for governor on a tough-on-crime, anti-tax, and welfare reform narrative. He garnered support from the Coalition of Correctional Institution and local State Employees Union Local 18 by advocating that a new prison be built in Waupun, a small city in central Wisconsin. Although Waupun already had two prisons, Thompson argued that neither the comfort of inmates nor their loved ones, who overwhelmingly would come from Milwaukee, should be considered, even though a new site had been proposed in Milwaukee's Menomonee Valley. Calling the site "undesirable", Thompson would further detail his explanation for blocking the Milwaukee prison. "It would be easier for urban gangs to increase their access and influence with an urban prison. Gang members outside the walls would seek to intimidate guards by harassing them and their family outside the prison." Thompson, apparently, did not have the same fear of white biker or white separatist gang members influencing prison leaders. Thompson also once again pointed to Chicago. "To a large extent gang structures in Wisconsin have been imported in our state from Chicago and

other large cities.”<sup>226</sup> And even though his opponent Tony Early criticized him for making prisons a political issue, Thompson also advocated that the Department of Corrections should become an autonomous department and no longer be housed inside of the state’s Health and Family Services division. On Election Day, Thompson won the county in which Waupun is located with 65% of the vote.<sup>227</sup>

Advocating for Waupun, and for the building of another prison in Oshkosh, undoubtedly helped him win support of central and northern Wisconsin’s working-class white community. But it also weakened Milwaukee’s economic standing and sent millions of tax dollars out of the city because the U.S. Census counts prisoners in the towns of their prison beds rather than their hometowns, allocating dollars based on population. Thompson had both strengthened the political representation of Waupun, whose inflated black prison population would be represented by Republicans at all levels of government.

Throughout his tenure as governor, Thompson advanced the building of prisons to economically empower working-class white communities. “It’s a great day for Boscobel and great day for Wisconsin. The long-awaited super max prison will be constructed on this site and all of us can take pride that we all worked hard to ensure the project got

---

<sup>226</sup> “Prisons” *Campaign Papers 1986 Gubernatorial Collection Series 3-2 Box 10 File 6 Tommy G Thompson G Collection*, Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

<sup>227</sup> “Thompson Backs Prison in Waupun” *Telegraph Herald* March 10, 1985  
“Races” Candidate Details: Tommy Thompson” *Our Campaigns* Accessed 1.12.13  
<http://www.ourcampaigns.com/CandidateDetail.html?CandidateID=520>  
“Waupun Union Backs Thompson,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Sept 27th, 1986

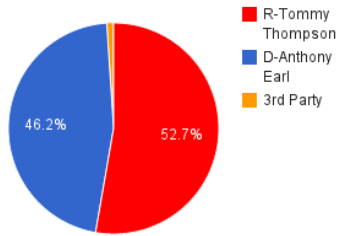
underway and will be completed in the summer of 1999.” By 1997, Thompson was diversifying his political playbook, and had even started to make strides amongst African American voters after supporting a failed effort to infuse MPS with a \$300 million loan and championing school voucher programs. But Thompson understood that his base voters were his most loyal. “The Boscobel economy will grow because of this prison. The state will be hiring an estimated 350 employees to staff the supermax, many of them from this community and surrounding areas.” Thompson’s effort to get local leaders in Wisconsin to buy into his tough-on-crime vision had paid off in the small town in the Southwestern part of the state. “The annual payroll for the facility will be more than \$7 million and it will have increased effect throughout the area as employees from the supermax max make their homes, patronize the businesses and recreate here.”<sup>228</sup>

Thompson won four campaigns to become Wisconsin’s governor and defended his office superbly as an incumbent. His 1986 race against one-term governor Tony Earl was the closest his opponents ever came to beating him, with Thompson winning by 7%. Thompson lost only 15 of Wisconsin’s 72 counties to his Democrat opponent. During his next three campaigns, Thompson never won by less than 16% of the electorate, and in 1996 managed to win every single county, including Democratic strongholds Milwaukee and Madison. Thompson’s direct political rhetoric and anti-welfare stances had propelled him to becoming one of the nation’s most powerful governors.

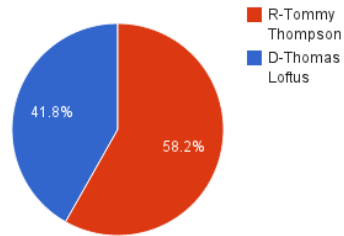
---

<sup>228</sup> “Supermax Prison Groundbreaking” *Gubernatorial Papers Speeches Governor, 1991-2001* Series 2-2-1 Box 16 File 7Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

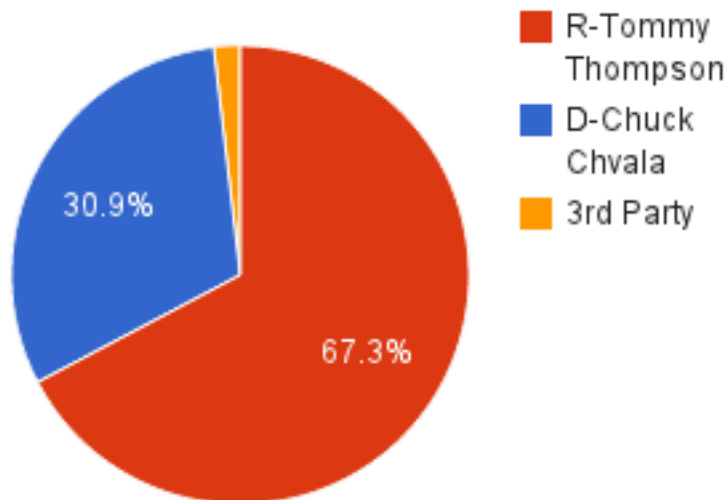
1986 WI-Governor's Race



1990 WI-Governor's Race



1994 WI-Governor's Race



His tough-love narrative was not original, but it was the first time it had been implemented on such a large scale. During a talk at the 1964 Thursday Youngmen's Organization, a business-minded organization for young entrepreneurs and "industrialists", Milwaukee Circuit Court Judge Leander Foley Jr. argued that whites needed to play an active role in helping African Americans achieve social mobility by "eras[ing] thoughts in their children's heads, that Negroes are the tramps, bums and the

bearers of illegitimate children.”<sup>229</sup> Although Judge Foley was expressing anti-racist sentiments, his statements reflected a common lens by which Wisconsin’s white decision makers perceived the black community. Foley, who had spent two years working in juvenile court, was pushing back against a prevailing theme that would take root in the 1950s and 1960s and blossom in the 1980s and 1990s. In the popular white imagination, blacks were lazy, culturally backward and perhaps incapable of becoming full partners in Milwaukee.

Looking back on the period, it’s not hard to believe the tough-on-crime and anti-welfare narrative was never about saving money, or attempting to solve the problems of the black community. This message resonated with white voters as the racially redemptive undertones of campaign rhetoric helped elected officials differentiate themselves from the New Deal, Fair Deal and Great Society-era elected officials holding positions of power in the 1980s. While the political rhetoric was meant to inspire white voters, the policy implemented by elected officials also weakened the African American community’s share of the electorate. Wisconsin’s high prison disparity rates and especially long sentences took thousands of African American voters off of the street every year, prevented black workers from competing for jobs with white workers, and ultimately created jobs for thousands of white voters. During his second run for governor, Thompson began making inroads in the black community by championing the innovative School Choice education reform movement. The program would align African American voters with a growing wave of freemarket reforms. He also won

---

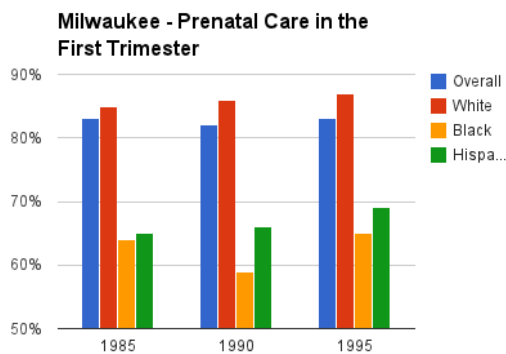
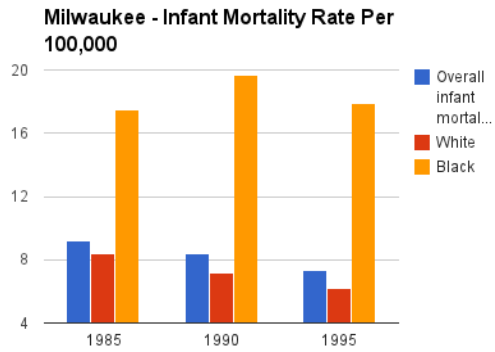
<sup>229</sup> “Need More Judges For Youth” *Milwaukee Sentinel* May, 13th 1964

strides with urban voter by advocating for a large long-term borrowing plan to kick off a failed Milwaukee Public School's capital campaign.

*Other Side of the Coin/Black Family in Trouble*

During the 1980s and 1990s, black families were experiencing unprecedented pressures. The community had been rocked by joblessness, and the bonds of black families and institutions were hampered by a growing set of social problems. It could be argued that an increased investment in social aid programs might have alleviated some of the pressures. But the truth is that the solutions to the black community's late twentieth century woes were not easily diagnosable as the problems impacting the black Milwaukee were complex, intertwined and intensified by deindustrialization, joblessness, the War on Drugs, and the subsequent retrenchment of conservative politics.

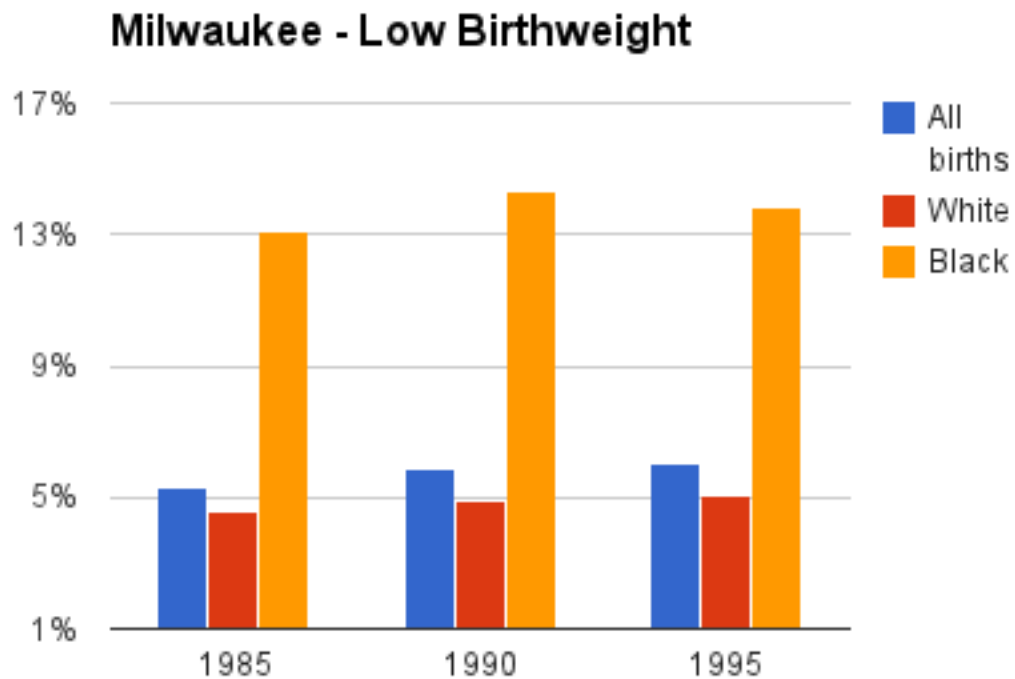
For example, a 1997 report by the Wisconsin Development of Health Service revealed that African American mothers were feeling the effects of poverty. By 1990, the black infant mortality rate was nearly three times that of whites, in part because African American expecting mothers were less likely to receive prenatal care in the first trimester.



Of course, the growing economic crisis played a role in compounding black families. By the turn of the century, nearly 30% of youth under age 18 were living in poverty. The number had dropped slightly by the turn of the century, but in Milwaukee's inner core, young mothers continued to have babies and, unfortunately, nearly 15% of all black children born had low birth-weight. Of course, the young mothers did not make the babies themselves. If Governor Thompson's strategies were meant to fix the state's social problems, the state of Wisconsin's Department of Health Services revealed that



things were getting worse by his second run for governor.<sup>230</sup>



Historians have yet to tackle the topic of the black family in the late twentieth century. However, social scientists from both sides of the political spectrum have focused a tremendous amount of time studying the black experience during this period. Schools, families and movements have been researched and documented. This project only touches on the surface of the rich political history of the 1980 and 1990s. As liberal political leaders and the Democratic Party lost standing at the state and federal levels, starting in 1980s conservative politicians were able to weaken the coalition that African

---

<sup>230</sup> "Wisconsin Health Counts - Infant Health 1995." Wisconsin Department of Health Services. <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/births/95INFANT.htm> (accessed September 23, 2011).

American leaders built with the federal government starting with FDR. With the wind behind their backs, conservatives were able to whittle away and remix the political narrative that once saw elected officials fighting for government investment in programs and proactively fighting against poverty and social problems. In the 1980s and 1990s, color-blind policy was developed to shift the political discourse away from social investments to a tough-love narrative that blamed poor people for their economic problems. Pointing to incidents of fraud and bureaucratic inefficiency and evoking racial cues, the conservative movement was able to forever alter the local landscape.

While the permanent loss of manufacturing jobs and the criminalization of the black community were rarely cited as the source of the black community's problems, the data demonstrates a rapidly shifting socio-economic landscape. Female-headed households jumped from 27% in 1980 and to 38% in 1990. While scholars have long pointed out how, since slavery, the black family structure has been fluid and often non-nuclear, the composition of black families was changing.<sup>231</sup>

A generation prior, elected officials were using Patrick Moynihan's "The Negro Family: The Case For National Action" to justify the implementation of liberal policy priorities to counteract the problems of poverty and win black voters. While the document was meant to be a catalyst for investment in social improvement and anti-

---

<sup>231</sup> "Percentage of Children in Single-Parent "Families in Wisconsin Counties 1980-1990", *Wisconsin Family Impact Seminars*

Levine, Marc V."The Crisis of Black Male Joblessness in Milwaukee: Trends, Explanations, and Policy Options" University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development Working Paper March 2007

poverty programs, the overarching narrative offered a political opportunity for Republican leaders in the 1980s to shift the political landscape. With the myth of the welfare fraud having a black face, elected officials were able to shift the discourse on government's role in fixing the social problems caused by poverty.

In Wisconsin, policy makers intervened in the lives of black families and sought to cut growing state expenses by adopting legislation that aimed to recoup the cost of the welfare tab. Through a series of policy initiatives that started to take root in the early 1980s, policy makers implemented programs that placed both the parents and grandparents on court-mandated repayment plans. Many of these policy initiatives were overwhelmingly supported by bipartisan coalitions; some were even championed by Democrats. On their face, they were passed to ensure the state got a return on its investment in welfare recipients and saved money, but many of these programs also implemented potentially harsh sanctions on social programs' participants.

In 1985, "the grandparent liability clause" that was aimed at reducing teen pregnancies and abortions passed in Wisconsin State Legislature.<sup>232</sup> The program was part of Wisconsin's Abortion Prevention and Family Responsibility Act and deemed that parents of teen mothers and fathers could be held liable for financially supporting their grandchildren. "The law required parents, according to their ability to pay, to support any grandchildren until the unwed minor parents are 18" and, if they didn't, they faced up to two years in jail and a fine of \$10,000. The bill also set aside \$1 million for pregnancy counseling and asked service providers to encourage young women to inform their

---

<sup>232</sup> Mouat, Lucia. "A New Approach to Child-Support Law", *The Christian Science Monitor* November 27, 1985, Pg. 3

parents when they were having an abortion. The bill was hailed as a national model and lawmakers were proud of their efforts to curb the cost of teen pregnancy. "Boys' parents are going to have to start paying attention to what junior is doing on Friday and Saturday night," said Wisconsin Democratic Rep. Marlin Schneider, the bill's author. #

While it seems reasonable that the state should not have to pay for black children, the way the programs were set up ignored the very real reality that large segments of the African American population, especially males, would never participate in the formal economy. As jobs became scarcer, 1980s lawmakers sought to counter the costs of welfare programs by mandating that fathers help subsidize the cost of the state's welfare program. In 1982, a study conducted at the University of Wisconsin's Institute for Research on Poverty showed that "57 percent of the children in the state with absent fathers get no support. Full support payments were received by only 21 percent of the children. No support was paid in 70 percent of the families receiving AFDC". Looking to recoup costs, the Wisconsin Legislature proposed a system requiring fathers to support their children. The program, called Wisconsin Child Support Assurance System, was fully enacted in 1987, and had a three tier system that:

- Required the payment of 17% of gross income for one child, 25% for two, 29% for three and 31% for four or more
- Forced payments to be withheld from payrolls whenever possible

- Ensured each mother (or father) would receive an assured benefit, no matter how little the father (or mother) paid. The state would pick up the rest of the tab if the child support payments were less than the benefit guaranteed. # <sup>233</sup>

Proponents of the law argued that it brought families together and cut the cost of the state's welfare program, but the forced payments brought the courts into the inner workings of black families. While the system brought relief to struggling parents (and the state) who were financially strapped, it also put parents who were unable or refused to pay their child support at risk of going to jail. The system ultimately forced many individuals who sought ways to dodge the system into the underground economy.

---

<sup>233</sup> Garfinkel and Melli. "Child Support: Weaknesses of the Old and Features of a Proposed New System", Institute for Research on Poverty SR 32A. 1982.

"IRP Research in Child Support Policy: The Child Support Assurance Proposal, 1982-1992." Institute for Research on Poverty.

## CHAPER SIX

### OPPORTUNITY: GRASSROOTS STRUGGLE LEAVES LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE

#### *Part I. Struggling With The Past*

Throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century, a conservative political narrative that strove to maintain the cultural and political dominance of the city's white leadership constantly countered the growing strength of the local African American community. Whether through the oppressive relationship between the Milwaukee Police Department and African Americans, the adoption of local policies like those that aggressively sought to keep young blacks from shopping at a mall in the central business district, or a trendsetting aggressive anti-welfare agenda that scapegoated black women and children, the local political discourse was often centered around a prevailing popular narrative that consistently depicted the African American community as outsiders, freeloaders and criminals.

Milwaukee is a city with a rich of history political pragmatism and strong cross-racial, working class activism. But in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the size of the rapidly growing black community, combined with the expanding political power of the black electorate, repeatedly challenged the socially democratic underpinnings of the blue-collar town. First mobilized by the Double V campaign and then the desegregation of federal institutions, an emerging socio-political movement sought to delegitimize overt racial discrimination and the legal constraints of Jim Crow. Bolstered by a string of federal legal victories and policy advances, during the 1950s and 1960s the nation's progressive

activist community had, for the first time since Reconstruction, created a new national political discourse that forced America's institutions to come to grips with its racist contradictions. While vestiges of intense structural racism would not be undone overnight, mid-twentieth-century America was a time of great transition and empowerment for blacks in communities like Milwaukee.

Though they would face a reactionary political discourse and shifting political landscape, leaders and activists in Milwaukee's community continued to push for equality and stakeholderhood as the Civil Rights and Black Power movements waned. This chapter aims to survey the tactics the African American community took to shape their environments after the key victories of the Civil Rights Act (1964), Voting Rights Act (1965) and the Federal Housing Act (1968). The black community faced tremendous obstacles—and opportunities—as they continued to seek a bigger share of the controlling power in the local political economy in the late twentieth century.

For the first time, African Americans in Milwaukee were able to become stronger civic stakeholders through the democratic process as the courts increasingly protected African Americans from explicit discrimination in public institutions. During the mid-to-late twentieth century, African Americans forged a new political narrative while shifting the city's cultural identity. While one successful black bureaucrat argued that the glass ceiling would be a formidable obstacle to African Americans getting more positions of power within public institutions, never before had the black community been so

powerful.<sup>234</sup> At the onset of the late twentieth century, the African American community's chances for social and economic improvement looked strong.

Patrick Jones' *Selma of the North* and Jack Dougherty's *More than One Struggle* have given future scholars studying urban movements a strong lens by which to uncover new research. Pointing to the active role of white leaders like Catholic priest Father Groppi in the Black Power movement, the effort to win succinct policy demands using direct action protest, and campaigns to actively work inside the traditional civic process to solve community problems, Jones' text reveals that the Milwaukee movement has a unique place in the history of the Black Power movement. But while Jones aimed to place activism in Milwaukee in context within the larger narrative of 1960s African American organizing, which has traditionally been viewed as Southern phenomena, this chapter aims to place the activism of the late 1960s in a larger conversation about political power, and the redemptive/reactionary policy associated with the growing conservative movement of the late twentieth century. Instead of book-ending the activities of the Civil Rights movement in late 1960s and early 1970s, as is traditionally done in Civil Rights/Black Power historiography, the rest of this text aims to illuminate evidence that the struggle for black political advancement, culture empowerment and racially driven policy solutions did not simply end, but were transformed and adapted to the local political climate of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Even though the heroic

---

<sup>234</sup> "From the Civil Rights Trenches to City Hall." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Aug 1, 2007



grassroots strategies of the 1960s were undermined by a color-blind and reactionary political rhetoric, a discussion of post-Civil Rights history in Milwaukee reveals that many activists continued to be motivated to build black political power and fight for economic empowerment long after historians consider the era to be over. While scholars like Jones and Dougherty mention the role of race, racial pride, and even black empowerment as motivators for black activists, this text aims to place the work of African American activists from 1970 to 1995 in context of the longer historical struggle for black political and economic power. Previous studies have highlighted how Milwaukee's activist movement developed cross-racial alliances with whites, however this text aims to point out that these strategies did not preclude African Americans fighting for racial or economic empowerment, that is black power. Milwaukee's unique history of ethnic pluralism provided a fertile training ground for Black Power campaigns that would be fostered long after the movement was thought to be over.<sup>235</sup>

Building off Michelle Alexander's thesis in *The New Jim Crow*, this chapter aims to juxtapose the growing political power of the black community with the racially redemptive action of Milwaukee's citizens and most powerful white institutions and organizations. From the perspective of this study, Milwaukee's Black Power movement was not the end of African American activism, but the beginning of an era in which grassroots activists responded to a deep-seated reactionary political strategy which sought to limit the black community's growing political strength.

---

<sup>235</sup> Peniel, Joseph. *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama*

Basic Civitas; January 5, 2010. Joseph opens the door for this argument with his text

More importantly, a look back on this era reveals the roots of the activist struggles of the 1980s and 1990s. After all, if we are to truly understand the successes and failures of the Black Power and Civil Rights movements, we must assess the role the shifting political landscape and rising conservative movement played in altering black activism. The momentum of the grassroots movements of the 1960s started to wane in the 1970s as local governments began adopting color-blind policies and blacks were hired and elected to positions of leadership. But the political consequences set forth by direct-action protests of the 1960s would continue to unravel throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century. In short, while conservatives sought to limit black political power, Milwaukee's African Americans continued to advocate for a bigger and more representative share of publicly controlled resources. The blueprint for their struggle would be first crafted in the 1960s.

### *Shifting Landscape*

On February 25, 1968, 20 parents of white children attending Hawley Elementary stormed into School Superintendent Richard Gousha's office. Angered that their children were being bussed to schools with black students from the "inner core" while Hawley was being remodeled, the parents showed up to MPS administration offices to protest. Stealing a tactic from local civil rights groups that had been increasingly using direct action to force the attention of decision makers, the parents were so angry, their shouting voices could be heard through the doors of the private meeting of local press members.<sup>236</sup>

---

<sup>236</sup> "Parents Challenge Gousha." *Milwaukee Sentinel* February 27th, 1968 pg 4 part 1

Since 1957, MPS had been bussing students to different schools while their schools were remodeled. Although the students would be in separate classrooms and taught by their Hawley teachers, parents were angry their children were being bussed every morning to MacDowell elementary, a newly built school on North 17th street and Highland Ave, a black neighborhood. In *More than One Struggle*, Daugherty highlights how this form of “intact bussing” was also used with African Americans as MPS rolled out its response to *Brown v. Board*. The thought was that by sending black students to white schools, even while still keeping them in their own classrooms, they would receive an equal education under the law.<sup>237</sup>

The decision to implement the MacDowell busing program immediately polarized the Hawley campus when it was announced at a public meeting in January 1968. Nearly 100 parents threatened to break state law and keep their children out of school rather than let them be bussed to the inner city campus.<sup>238</sup> A month later, the angry parents showed up to administration offices to inform the superintendent that they intended to follow up on their promise.

Although the Hawley children were kept in all-white classes while at MacDowell, the parents raised concerns over their children’s safety while on the school’s playground during recess and in the lunchroom. One young mother complained that young people

---

<sup>237</sup> Kindle pg 1331

<sup>238</sup> “Speakers defend Hawley Busing Plan.” *Milwaukee Journal*, January 30th 1968

“Approved by Board on Long List” *Milwaukee Sentinel* January 25th, 1968 part 1 page

“Pupils Ask to Get Out Of Hawley” *Milwaukee Journal* February 1st, 1968

“run like animals.”<sup>239</sup> Although the group proclaimed they were not racist, their comments definitely reflected a persistent fear by parents who worried that attending school with black students would disadvantage white students. Ironically, African American activists from CORE and MUSIC protested the school’s “site selection”, as they felt that building it on N. 17th Street and Highland Ave was an intentional attempt to maintain and extend segregation.”<sup>240</sup>

White parents in Milwaukee weren’t unique. Throughout the United States, local districts responded to the implementation of *Brown v. Board* through acts of civil disobedience, violence and political activism.<sup>241</sup> Scholars like Matthew Lassiter have highlighted how middle class white activists continued to push back against busing movements in cities like Charlotte.<sup>242</sup> Often using a color-blind political rhetoric, white communities would, by the late 1960s, sometimes through violent protest, mobilize delay and deny integration.

Protests by white parents garnered the attention of the national media; locally the Hawley activists were likely motivated by a growing local political discourse which was set ablaze by the previous summer’s riot and subsequent equal housing marches. During summer 1967, Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier declared martial law after a handful of

---

<sup>239</sup> “Parents Challenge Gousha.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* February 27th, 1968 pg 4 part 1

<sup>240</sup> News film clip of demonstration against school construction at the site of MacDowell School in Milwaukee on December 8, 1965 (with sound) March On Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

<sup>241</sup> “School Desegregation in Boston 1974” *Eyes on the Prize*, America’s Civil Rights Movement 1974-1985

<sup>242</sup> Lassiter, Matthew D. “The Suburban Origins of “Color-Blind” Conservatism Middle-Class Consciousness in the Charlotte Busing Crisis” *Journal of Urban History* May 2004 vol. 30 no. 4 549-582

spontaneous and unrelated violent disturbances on the city's north side left four people dead, including one MPD member. Local activists would later complain that Maier's weeklong campaign to simmer further outbreaks by enacting a curfew and limiting the African American community's mobility was an overreaction.<sup>243</sup> But the mayor took no chances. In comparison with the Detroit Riot (43 dead, 467 injured, over 7,200 arrests) and the Newark Riot (26 people dead, 725 people injured, and close to 1,500 arrested), which took place weeks earlier, the Milwaukee Riot was far less costly both in terms of property and casualties (4 people dead, 100 hurt, 1,740 arrested).<sup>244</sup> From Maier's perspective, he prevented more deaths and destruction. Community activists felt he blew things out of proportion.

If Maier's curfew had not ignited racial antagonism in the white community, the open housing marches held during the months following the riot would certainly take them to their apex. In *Selma of the North*, Jones highlights how Alderwoman Vel Phillips and youth leaders from the NAACP immediately went on the offensive once Maier ended curfew. Pressing on with 145 straight days of action and protest, Milwaukee's young black activist community seized the political moment and the media's imagination by shifting the local debate around race. Frequently marching in large numbers across the

---

<sup>243</sup> Jones, Patrick. "WTMJ Footage Fr. James Groppi and the Historic 1967-68 Open Housing Campaign" Youtube Feb 24, 2011 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-78E\\_Ggm\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-78E_Ggm_o)

History Comes To Live "Father Groppi leads Milwaukee Blacks 1967 May 24, 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRBmuqy3pso>

<sup>244</sup> "Newark Riots" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967\\_Newark\\_riots](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967_Newark_riots)

"Detroit Riot" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967\\_Detroit\\_riot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967_Detroit_riot)

16th Street Bridge to white neighborhoods on the South Side, Milwaukee's young activist community used the window of opportunity the riot provided to further push decision-makers to tackle the city's explicitly segregated housing laws. While the community had outgrown its traditional boundaries, racial housing covenants for the most part prevented African Americans from moving out of the traditional segregated boundaries. With all the city's media focusing on the black community, activists started marching.

Calling the movement an insurgency, Jones uncovers how activists from the African American community challenged the city leaders to act on the explicitly discriminatory policy. Noting the uniqueness of the Milwaukee movement, Jones crafts a new lens by which to view future studies of the Black Power movement. Adopting strategies from both black power and the traditional civil rights stalwarts, community organizations often worked with white allies from the spiritual and labor communities to great effect. More nuanced and tied to building political power within traditional democratic institutions than traditional nationalist strategies, Milwaukee's most militant leaders adopted a pragmatic approach to winning by working with inside the state. Often using a legislative strategy, Milwaukee's history of grassroots political struggle stands out from leaders in other cities who advocated for a more culturally nationalist or separatist approach, like those emanating from the Western Nationalist Movement outlined in Scot Brown's seminal text on the U.S. organization, or the black arts in Komozi Woodard's *A Nation within a Nation*.<sup>245</sup> As the turbulent decade of the 1960s closed, the unique convergence of the faith community, leaders from the traditional Civil

---

<sup>245</sup> *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism*. New York: New York University Press, 2003. *Taking A Seat At The Table of Power*

Rights movement, and youthful activists continued to challenge Milwaukee's institutional racism. Through years of coalition and trust building, and a moment of intergenerational unity, Milwaukee's activist community was able to successfully develop a pathway for the next generation of activists.

Alderman Vel Phillips, who would later become a judge and serve as Wisconsin's secretary of state, was a key African American legislator fighting to end discriminatory housing. Elected in 1956 to Alderman of the 2nd district, Phillips was the first African American and first woman elected to the office. Phillips had earned a reputation as a hard-working leader and although she was only 32, she had won the respect of Milwaukee's growing black electorate.<sup>246</sup> Four years into office she introduced the Phillips' Housing Ordinance, a legislative attempt to end housing discrimination. Her opposition was strong, and her most powerful opponent was Mayor Maier. She would introduce the legislation three times, finally seeing it become law after the Fair Housing Act of 1968 passed through the US Congress. Of course, the Fair Housing Act was fast-tracked through Congress only after the death of Martin Luther King Jr.

After the 1967 riot, Mayor Maier increasingly blamed black youth organizations for the growing resentment between Milwaukee's black community and the surrounding white areas. Maier wasn't alone in that assessment; in 1967, the Milwaukee Urban

---

<sup>246</sup> Phillips was also an active member of the Democratic Party Nationally. Democratic Parlay "Rebuffs Southerners." *Milwaukee Journal* December 6th, 1958

"Key Terms: Vel Phillips." March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

Gibson, Ellen. "Councilman Phillips Twice Blessed." *Milwaukee Journal* April 4th, 1956

League along with researchers at the University of Wisconsin, sponsored a 60-page survey that aimed to poll Milwaukee residents of all backgrounds about their perceptions of the causes of the riot. The results were split down racial lines with many pointing fingers at the African American community's youngest members.<sup>247</sup>

Maier, throughout his 1988 political biography, *The Mayor Who Made Milwaukee Famous*, showed a repeated disinterest in debating the nuances of the political stances held by the city's civil rights leaders. The man who spent 28 years behind the mayor's desk believed the increased political demonstrations by black community organizations stoked Milwaukee's racial embers. His reflection on the important moment in Milwaukee's civil rights history is entitled "The Metropolitan Hypocrisy: More on Open Housing." In it, Maier outlines why, as a liberal, he refused to support an open-housing law in Milwaukee before the state enacted stronger anti-discrimination stances.<sup>248</sup>

Hoping to prevent white flight, the seven-term mayor took the stance that caving to the demands of the city's civil right movement and ending racially discriminatory housing practices would open the door for a huge mass exodus of white residents. Like many white liberals of his time, Maier was tasked with both appeasing white constituents while also being sensitive to the nation's political winds.<sup>249</sup> On September 22, 1967, he

---

<sup>247</sup> "119 Arrested in Riot Here Give Their Voice." *Milwaukee Journal* November 8th, 1968

<sup>248</sup> Maier, Henry pg 100

<sup>249</sup> Zeidler, Frank. "Some Conditions in Milwaukee at the time of Brown v. Board" *Marquette Law Review* 2005 pg 75-82

For an interesting take on how white flight influence the political narrative in a Southern city see:

Kruse, Kevin Michael. *White Flight: Atlanta And The Making Of Modern*. Princeton University Press, 2005



told reporters that he was “seriously considering asking the Common Council to put the open housing issue to a referendum.”<sup>250</sup> Although the African American community lacked the votes to win, the use of referendum to solve racial political problems was a tactic used by local elected officials since the 1950s. Maier might have told reporters that he was personally for ending the discriminatory practice, but he stated he would not bring up the issue in City Hall until 14 of the 26 communities surrounding Milwaukee adopted an anti-discriminatory housing law.

The mayor also used the media attention over the Open Housing Marches of 1967 to advocate for increased consolidation of city and county services, a trend that would continue well into the next century. His vision for a unified metropolis would aid other municipalities in the metropolitan area in the effort to stamp out the many problems caused by the growing urban crisis. Although he doesn’t mention race in an open letter to the common council dated September, 5 1967, it reveals a growing tendency by local officials to embrace color-blind and fiscally conservative strategies to mend Milwaukee’s growing social and economic problems. The main points of the letter included:

- County Wide Open Housing Law
- County Aid For Urban Renewal Projects
- A County Wide Acculturation Program to Help Immigrants Avoid Becoming Relief Citizens<sup>251</sup>

---

<sup>250</sup> “Daily Footage September 22, 1967” March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

<sup>251</sup> “2-1 Letter to Council” Maier Administration, Box 148, Folder 5, Press Releases and Statements, 1967 September (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

The mayor felt the city government had a lot to offer suburban leaders on how to best deal with the growing communities of color.

When young African Americans took to the street to protest Milwaukee's segregated housing immediately following the riot, the mayor took steps to protect the city's image amongst citizens who were uncomfortable with the thought of having black neighbors. "I encourage all citizens to stay away from the provocative marches--or at least not to publicize the advance plan on the march as though it were the Fourth of July parade." The civil rights community, Maier argued, was wrong for challenging the status quo and shaking things up by marching to Milwaukee's mostly white south side. "Milwaukee is undergoing great trials during these days and weeks. Unfortunately the voices in the mass media are the voices of dissent, of discord. Hidden are the efforts of those citizens who are at work to weld our community together again-- to make our community a place where people of goodwill can work for the common good. What we want is harmony within our community. We are the original city of *gemultechkeit*, the city of good will. And we want to stay that way."<sup>252</sup> Breier's stance reflected that his efforts were justified, not the activists who, under the threat of mob violence, peacefully marched through the streets. Much like the civil rights showdown in Birmingham and Selma, AL, grassroots organizing took to the streets for decision makers to finally kill Jim Crow.

Meier's attempt to prevent whites from leaving Milwaukee was ultimately undermined after the passing of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 which ended formalized

---

<sup>252</sup> Maier, Henry pg 109

"1-1 TV and Press" Maier Administration, Box 148, Folder 5, Press Releases and Statements, 1967 September (selections) *March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project* University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archives

segregationist practices like racial housing covenants.<sup>253</sup> Maier's statement reflects a backward-looking assessment of the city's trajectory. By his last year in office African Americans would make up over 30% of the city's population.

On the morning after the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act, Maier released a statement. The two-page document was written in a triumphant tone. "There Must Be Nowhere to Run From Metropolitan Responsibilities. The Federal Housing Law Can Strike A Blow At Apartheid Between Central City and Suburb As Well As Marking Advance in Human Dignity." Once again not mentioning race, the longtime mayor also calls for the city of Milwaukee to honor the federal housing law. The political pressure was gone; Maier would not be held politically liable by local voters for African Americans moving into their neighborhoods.<sup>254</sup>

Maier, who took the opposite approach of his predecessor, Frank Zeidler, when dealing with race relations, was on the wrong side of history. The victories of the Civil Rights movement, starting with the integration of war-time industries and the military after Executive Orders 9981 and 8802, had shifted the political discourse. By not working to actively educate white residents about the ignorance of racism and discrimination, Maier, despite being a proud liberal, worked to calcify the institutional racism that would define the late twentieth century.

To his credit, Maier, who often distanced himself from Zeidler and at times even blamed the inner city's problems on his predecessor, did not shy away from trying to solve the black community's woes. A frequent advocate for social programs, including

---

<sup>253</sup> Fair Housing Act of 1968 (FHA) (42U.S.C.A. §§ 3601-3631)

<sup>254</sup> "2-2 Open Housing Statement" Maier Administration, Box 171, Folder 15, Speeches, 1968 April (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

the development of the Social Development Commission (SDC), a multimillion-dollar anti-poverty social service organization—a large, “Great Society” era-styled program—Maier was a typical liberal. During the Housing Marches he offered a solution called “Project Negro Achievement” to try to end prevailing racial stereotypes. He even hoped to use the momentum from the riot to enact a “39 Point” action plan which “was formulated to help alleviate racial and social problems in Milwaukee” on the sixth day of Maier’s curfew, Saturday, August 5. 58 members of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, an African American clergy organization, helped developed the plan. The “39 Points” included the following ideas:

- The Mayor initiate ways and means to increase Negro employment opportunities
- The Mayor approve a Negro assistant in the Mayor’s Office
- A program be initiated to increase park and recreational facilities
- The Mayor seek whatever federal-state aids are needed to place industrial plants and commercial enterprises in the inner city
- The Mayor seek federal-state aid for pilot programs encouraging Negro-owned manufacturing businesses
- The Mayor work to increase anti-poverty funding with a top priority for programs like Head Start and youth employment
- The state revise insurance laws so denials of coverage are not made on geography, but equity
- County leadership, in coordinating the attack on problems of welfare clients, help those clients back in full partnership in our society<sup>255</sup>

---

<sup>255</sup> “Maier List 39 Point Foundation For Bias Fight.” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 7th 1967

Ultimately, the social and antipoverty programs of the late 1960s and early 1970s could not quell the growing problems that resulted as Milwaukee's black community continued to wrestle with rapidly growing joblessness rates. Nor could these Band-Aid-styled solutions compete with the institutional racism that often prevented African Americans from getting ahead in Milwaukee in the 1980s. A 1990 lawsuit against American Family Insurance would later highlight the extent to which African Americans were prevented from becoming big financial stakeholders in the local economy. American Family and the NAACP's plaintiffs would settle for "\$9.5 million (\$9,500,000) in community-based programs to address the effects described above and \$5 million (\$5,000,000) in monetary compensation for aggrieved persons." The NAACP's evidence in the case revealed the extent to which business and political leaders worked to actively promote a white vision of the city, despite the rapid growth of the black community. "Your persistency went down the shitter...Very honestly, I think you write too many blacks. You gotta sell good, solid premium-paying white people...they own their homes. The white works" said a sales manager for the American Family Insurance Company who was admonishing an agent in a tape-recorded conversation in 1988. "Very honestly, black people will buy anything that looks good right now...but when it comes to pay for it next time...you're not going to get your money out of them...the only way you're going to correct your persistency is get away from the blacks."<sup>256</sup>

---

<sup>256</sup> Gregory D. Squires "Insurance Redlining: Still Fact, Not Fiction" *Shelter Force* Issue #79, January/February 1995

*NAACP v. American Family Mutual Insurance*. 978 F.2d 287 (7th Cir. 1992)

*Part Two: Black Community Show its muscle*

The black community's growing size threatened the city's traditional segregated boundaries and bureaucracies. As the black community grew, it challenged institutions like MPS that were forced to adjust to the nation's shifting political winds and the increasing pressure by the black community. Although white civic groups like the Milwaukee Taxpayers Association would fight school integration, a multiracial coalition of community organizations, led by University of Wisconsin Law grad and member of the Wisconsin State Assembly Lloyd Barbee, successfully developed a number of key strategies to push back against MPS' foot dragging. Barbee successfully introduced the Wisconsin Fair Housing Act of 1965, which, although it had very little enforcement power prior to the passage of the Federal Housing Act of 1968 because "the law was limited to buildings of five or more units, or only 30 percent of total housing units in the State", would ultimately be a lynchpin in completely transforming the state's civil rights law, and would later be extended to protect people with disabilities.<sup>257</sup> Barbee, who was a year younger than Phillips, was a staunch integrationist and the lead strategist on the NAACP legal team's effort to end school segregation; he would fight for integration on multiple fronts.

In a 1965 edition of *Countdown*, an official publication of MUSIC, Lloyd Barbee is quoted as saying that MPS' attempt to adjust to the *Brown* decision caused serious harm on students of color who:

---

<sup>257</sup> Open Housing Section 106.50 of the Wisconsin Statutes  
"Adoption of a Fair Housing Ordinance by the City of Milwaukee." The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Appendix G 3/11/11

- lose valuable learning time
- are harmed psychologically
- are objects of curiosity in host schools
- are denied the constitutional right to free, equal education<sup>258</sup>

Like plaintiffs in *Brown v. Board*, Barbee would point to the injury caused by segregation.

### *Bigger Than Integration*

Bigger than just integration, Barbee and Phillips—and Isaac Coggs before them—used Milwaukee’s shifting political landscape to influence the political narrative in new ways.<sup>259</sup> The precedent established by *Brown v. Board* helped black elected leaders transform the way the local government and local institutions interacted with and invested in black students, parents and teachers. Using the courts, direct action, legislative lobbying, and the power of the ballot, organizations like MUSIC applied the black community’s growing political might to strengthen African Americans’ stake in public schools. “We will have picketing, sit-ins, layins, chain-ins and any other kind of ins until the board caves in [to integration]” noted Barbee about his organization's use of

---

<sup>258</sup> “Countdown” Vol 1 no 3 May, 1965 Barnhill Papers, Box 1, Folder 6, School Curricula, Schedules, and Records of MUSIC (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Library Archive

<sup>259</sup> “Term: Coggs, Isaac N. 1920” *Dictionary of Wisconsin History* Wisconsin Historical Society  
[http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term\\_id=2863&search\\_term=coggs](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term_id=2863&search_term=coggs) Accessed 1.12.13

direct action.<sup>260</sup> The movement was connected to the national Civil Rights movement. Veteran civil rights activist James Farmer came to Milwaukee on a cold day in December 1965 to participate in an action to protest the “site selection” of MacDowell Elementary.<sup>261</sup>

The demonstrations and actions by MUSIC and other organizations like CORE during the integration fights of the mid-1960s have been described through a traditional civil rights/power lens by both Jones and Daughtery. Their studies have broadened the field and opened up opportunities for new scholarship, but by ending their inquiries in the 1960s and 1970s, they unintentionally killed Milwaukee’s grassroots movement. Both reveal that the movement’s objective and strategies were fluid, and that there were ideological differences between leaders. However, both studies mostly examined the organizing through a racial or equality lens. While Barbee and others fought for integration and equality, there was also a clear sense that the movement was distinctly fighting for power, that is “to consolidate the dissipated strength of Black people to the end of their survival as a people, whose capacities, capabilities, and potentiality are developed to their fullest.”<sup>262</sup>

---

<sup>260</sup> MUSIC Records, Box 1, Folder 1, Correspondence and Memos, 1965-1966

3 Lloyd A Barbee letter, 1965 May March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Library Archive

<sup>261</sup> News film clip of demonstration against school construction at the site of MacDowell School in Milwaukee on December 8, 1965 (with sound) *March On Milwaukee* Civil Rights Project (Footage C/O WTMJ Daily footage. December 8, 1965, segment 2. March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Library Archive

<sup>262</sup> Vanhorne, Winston. “Relevance of Black Power: Sustaining Black Studies ” *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3,(Jan., 2007), pp. 37



By reassessing the actions of the 1960s through a longer historical arc that extends through the late twentieth century, as suggested by Peniel Joseph and hinted at by Daugherty, we see that the reform campaigns of the 1960s laid the roots for a Black Power framework that would influence local activists well into the 1990s. The struggle for the political, economic and cultural empowerment started by leaders like Lloyd Barbee would provide younger activists training grounds on which to deepen and broaden their political sophistication. Many advocated that the black community take a bigger role in the state and have more influence on how to use public monies.

In a 1995 interview conducted by Dougherty with Lauri Wynn, a teacher and activist with United Community Action Group (UCAG), Wynn reveals how the Barbee-led activism would help significantly shift the way the Wisconsin Legislature interacted with African Americans.

Barbee, who was doing all of his preparation and what not, and his information...the stage was set for them to do something. The State Legislature was talking about, “What does Milwaukee need and whatnot?” ...Given all of that, the money, it was really being used as Black people said they wanted it used, which was the first time for that.<sup>263</sup>

Daugherty also mentions that the “abandonment narrative”, which argues that movements like the fight for the integration and civil rights are simply abandoned, doesn’t reflect the rich history of Milwaukee’s movements.

Barbee, who was first elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly in 1965 at age 40 , utilized his position inside government to help radically alter the way the state allocated

---

<sup>263</sup> “Oral History Interview with Lauri Wynn”, interview with Jack Dougherty June 9, 1995, part pg 7 March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive.

resources for educating black students.<sup>264</sup> While Wynn mentions that the movement made sure to talk about how integration empowered all people, including the poor, she also highlights that their use of a color-blind political message would lead them to their ultimate goal of empowering black people. “There is a lot to be learned other than sitting beside someone. And those are social and economic levers, you know, which I don’t think people recognize or understand,” said the veteran teacher and activist reflecting on her time in the streets. “Know we talk about integration, and it is integration, but the racial integration offers exposure for social and economic integration, and as far as I’m concerned, that is what is more frightening to the majority community than a black here, a white here, a black here, and a white here.”<sup>265</sup>

Wynn wasn’t alone in her analysis that the struggle to change the school district was larger than just integration. In a 1995 oral history interview, Juanita Adams, an activist in the struggle to integrate MPS in the mid-60s, stated, “[I don’t care] what the white man thinks, or what anybody else thinks, as long as that child come out of there educated. That’s our main goal, where they can compete. [My daughter] went to a Black college, and she can stand in front of anybody, believe me, she don’t let nobody intimidate her.”<sup>266</sup>

---

<sup>264</sup> “Key Terms: Lloyd Barbee”. March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project accessed 1.13.13

<http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/assistedsearchvelphillips/collection/march>

<sup>265</sup> Wynn Interview

<sup>266</sup> Adams, Juanita and Johnson, Arlen, interview with Jack Dougherty, June 15, 1995 (at Ms. Johnson’s home, 7225 N. 86th Street, Milwaukee) University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee UWM Libraries Archive

The multilayered fight to improve black children's chances at competing with whites, end housing discrimination and economically empower African Americans wasn't easy. Parents like those from Hawley Elementary would also push back against the rising influence of African Americans through their own activism.<sup>267</sup> In *More than One Struggle*, Jack Dougherty highlights how MPS' leadership used a number of delay tactics to slow the progress of integration. While *Brown v. Board* mandated public schools across the country integrate, it did not outline a blueprint for implementation. From busing black students to white schools while maintaining segregated classes, to stalling on fully integrating classes until inner-ring suburban schools like Wauwatosa and Shorewood were also required to integrate, MPS leaders sought to delay the inevitable and appease a growing tension that existed amongst white parents. MPS would only really tackle the challenge of integration after a 1976 court case mandated county-wide integration, and after the state of Wisconsin passed legislation funding a city-suburban transfer program involving several school districts.<sup>268</sup> In fact, the leaders of the MPS school board filed a lawsuit against 24 suburban school districts and the state, charging "that the public schools within the

---

<sup>267</sup> Donald Sykes. "Integration Opposed as Use of School Aid" *Milwaukee Journal* February 19th, 1968

Gustafson, Paul. "Segregation Preferred, Says Poll." *Milwaukee Sentinel* October 19, 1957

<sup>268</sup> *Amos et al. v. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee*, 408 F. Supp. 765 (1976)

metropolitan Milwaukee area were segregated. The parties involved in the action, commonly referred to as the Milwaukee School Desegregation Case, eventually reached a settlement.”<sup>269</sup>

But in the end, neither white parents nor MPS officials could prevent the inevitable. Even though several of the conservative groups originally opposing public housing plans for African Americans, like the Milwaukee County Property Association and the Milwaukee Citizen’s Civic Voice, protested integration, as the African American community grew, so did the number of seats held by black students in public schools. By 1990, African Americans would make up nearly 58% of the district’s population (whites 24%) and over 30% of the city’s population.<sup>270</sup>

These demographic changes, combined with the passage of key civil rights legislation including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and later followed by the Fair Housing Act of 1968, offered huge opportunities for Milwaukee’s grassroots community. The shifting political landscape created a window of action for local leaders to demand that local institutions transform the way they dealt with people of color. Over the next several decades, community activists would continue to expand their efforts to influence the direction of the local educational systems. However, it is important to note that any effort to understand the strategy to change MPS or the fight for improved housing options is incomplete if it is seen simply as an effort to obtain racial justice and/or equality/integration. The strategy outlined by Milwaukee’s activist

---

<sup>269</sup> Quinn, Lois M. Michael G. Barndt, Diane S. Pollard “Relationships between school desegregation and government housing programs a Milwaukee Case Study.” by National Institute of Education 1980

<sup>270</sup> “Chart: Milwaukee Public Schools Enrollment By Ethnicity” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* December 21st, 2001

community outlined a pragmatic approach to ensuring African Americans had a bigger stake in the local political economy.

Milwaukee's early school reform activists might not have framed their work as "black power," but it's clear the movement sought to stake a claim in the local political economy in order to build political and economic power by controlling a representative share of the state. Through concise campaigns, which pushed toward tangible victories, the activist community was able to assert power and agency and transform the city. In *More than One Struggle*, Dougherty highlights how the black community's early efforts to transform the Milwaukee Public School system starting in the 1930s were just as much about improving the quality of black education as they were about making sure African American teachers were hired. And while the subsequent campaign to integrate the schools in the 1950s and 1960s focused on ending the separate-and-equal practices forbidden by the *Brown v. Board* decision, the goals of the multifaceted and multigenerational movement was bigger than integrated classrooms. The black community fought to insert itself in the decision-making of the school system, while also seeking to tear down the racial barriers inside the district.

The transcripts of Dougherty's oral history interviews with activists from the era point out that even though the leaders never truly agreed on a unified strategy, the community's collective action was able to transform one of the state's largest institutions. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, African Americans used their growing numbers to shape local policy in their interest, redefine MPS' organizational culture and become bigger stakeholders in the local political economy. Perhaps most importantly for this text, a generation of leaders was inspired to continue to press for equality.

Launching—not ending—their careers in the last 1960s, the Black Power movement was the beginning of a 30-year struggle by African Americans to gain greater control of their cultural, political and social destinies. While the study of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements has advanced African American history, it is important to note that many of the nation’s strongest black leaders started their career trajectories during this extremely transformational movement in history. Perhaps, as Peneil Joseph highlights in “Darker Days”, it is time for historians to begin looking backwards with the lens that the Black Power movement was not ending, but perhaps just beginning. While the concept of black power captured the nation’s public imagination after Stokely Carmichael and Willie Ricks popularized the phrase in the summer of 1966, black leaders in places like Milwaukee had struggled for black economic, political and cultural self-interest for years. Bolstered by the activism of their parents and grandparents in the immediate post-WWII era, young blacks during the 1960s and 1970s continued to struggle for a louder voice in the American body politic.

### *Young People at the forefront*

The activism happening in and around Milwaukee schools and across the country inspired black students attending college to seek institutional changes across the state. In 1968, student activists at Oshkosh State University organized their fellow students to become bigger stakeholders on campus. Through direct action and spontaneous acts of civil disobedience, including taking over university buildings and breaking windows, around 100 students attending the public university transformed their institution by

presenting University President Roger E. Guiles with a list of key demands.<sup>271</sup> The demands reflected a desire for African Americans to have a larger share of the institution's resources to express and reflect the black experience.

“Blacks have been excluded from the educational system, especially at the Oshkosh State University. What we want is to be a bigger part of the educational system at the Oshkosh State University,” said 20-year-old Michael Gordon to reporters days after the struggle, which started after Guiles refused to entertain their complaints.<sup>272</sup> Gordon, the group's spokesperson, was entertaining questions at St. Boniface in Milwaukee despite attending school nearly 90 miles away in Oshkosh. Like many of the students in the struggle, Gordon was from Milwaukee, and the Catholic Church had been home base for young activists for several years. The student's demands were clear. They wanted: a) a black cultural center b) more history courses c) more blacks on the faculty. Although students said the acts of disobedience started spontaneously, they quickly coalesced around a core set of demands. Their action reflected a growing movement by black students across the country to get a bigger share of control of their universities' resources

---

<sup>271</sup> “Classes Suspended, 100 Held At Oshkosh.” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 22nd 1968

<sup>272</sup> “Blacks Want to Be Part of the University.” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 23rd 1968 pg 10 part 2

Behrndt, David. “Black Student Cite Racism at Oshkosh.” *Milwaukee Journal* January

“Term: Black Thursday (November 21, 1968)” *Dictionary of Wisconsin History* Wisconsin Historical Society

Stein, Sara. “Oshkosh Black Student Union Remembers Black Thursday.” *The Advance Titan* November 29, 2012

for black curricula and culture programming. The students, many from Milwaukee, engaged in the struggle for the entire school year; several were expelled.<sup>273</sup>

“You may call us radical, militant or revolutionaries,” said Milton Coleman, an undergraduate leader attending the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee, a campus where black students were also struggling for increased funding for black-related programs. “But we are all in agreement on one thing, we are going to get our liberation. We want freedom, we don’t want civil rights.” While University officials stated that the growing militancy of African American students could prevent resources from being allocated, the activism by youthful black leaders was having an impact. The 1969-1971 state budget allocated nearly \$10 million for “disadvantaged” and minority students.<sup>274</sup> The University of Wisconsin’s administration might have warned against militancy, but the rapid adoption of black studies and Africology departments at Oshkosh State and UWM demonstrated activists’ ability to win concessions and a bigger share of the state’s budget.

But public institutions were not the only ones in the crosshairs of Milwaukee’s activist community. In 1967, as the holiday season kicked off, the NAACP Youth Division’s Commandos kicked off a direct action campaign to press white businesses in downtown to hire African Americans. The Commandos had earned a reputation two years earlier for challenging the racially exclusive Eagles Club, and had quickly captured the local press’ attention as their frequent marches and protests challenged the racial status quo. Challenging racially discriminatory institutions and their leaders through

---

<sup>273</sup> “Militants Stopped in Wisconsin”, *Ellensburg Daily Record*, February 12th, 1969

<sup>274</sup> Hinkley, Gerry. “Protests are Called Threat to Funding,” *Milwaukee Sentinel* Nov 23 1968



direct-action protest, the Commandos were unique in the national activist landscape in that they used both black power rhetoric while also utilizing direct-action tactics adopted by more traditional civil rights organizations. Like their elders, they sought tangible demands and were willing to work with integrated allies.<sup>275</sup>

The Commandos were also controversial. Their Christmas 1967 action angered the local Deacons of Defense chapter leader who felt that activities potentially harmed interracial business opportunities. But the Commandos leadership was crystal clear about their objectives. Pushing for a “Black Christmas”, the young leaders stated they wanted more downtown businesses to hire African Americans. The holiday marches coincided with the Commandos’ press to end the city’s racially discriminatory housing laws.<sup>276</sup> While the Christmas action proved ineffective in immediately changing the hiring practices of downtown retail shops, it did prepare the youth led organization to take on bigger targets over the coming year.

#### *Using national pressure to challenge local racism*

While there were a number of organizations engaged in the effort to empower the black community, the NAACP’s youth chapter received perhaps the most attention from the local press.<sup>277</sup> Based out of St. Boniface, a Catholic Church on North 11th Street and Center Street, the NAACP’s youth leaders were in the midst of the struggles at both

---

<sup>275</sup> “Black Christmas Backers, Foes Meet While By Marching.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* Dec 19th 1967

<sup>276</sup> “Three Christmas Marches Held Without Incident”, *Milwaukee Journal* Dec 26th, 1967.

<sup>277</sup> The national NAACP first organized a national commandos effort in 1963. The local effort started in 1965

“NAACP Commandos Will Be Organized,” *Times Daily*, July 6th 1963

UWM and Oshkosh State. Aided by a radical white priest named Father James Groppi, the Commandos' effective use of the media through public demonstrations had garnered the support of large segments of the black community and was an effective incubator of youth leadership. Demonstrating a sense of fearlessness and an understanding of the law, the Commandos forced Milwaukee's leadership to have a conversation about racial discrimination in the way that was often uncomfortable.

They were also unabashedly fighting for black power. Groppi, who faced tremendous backlash from America's Black Nationalist leaders as his star grew, was particularly militant on the cause. His civil disobedience arrest record was so high that in 1969 he had to serve six months in prison for resisting arrest, charges he said were trumped up after he was arrested during the 1967 riot.<sup>278</sup> Although Father Groppi had only started at St. Boniface in 1963, his commitment to empowering African Americans fit squarely in Milwaukee's radical tradition and ethnic pluralism, which saw whites historically advocating for minority groups to get their representative share of the pie. As the consultant to the Commandos, he helped the young black activists stake a claim in the city of Milwaukee in the same way other immigrant groups had in the past.<sup>279</sup> By marching through white neighborhoods while chanting "Sock it to me; Sock it to me; black power!" young African Americans were letting Milwaukee's residents know they had come to claim their share. Not surprisingly, Groppi's passionate stances drew criticism from other whites:

---

<sup>278</sup> . "Marches Arrests Mark Career" *Milwaukee Journal* Oct 24th 1968 pg 5

<sup>279</sup> A very recent texts about Father Groppi was recently released. Stotts, Stuart. *Father Groppi Marching For Civil* Wisconsin Historical Society 2013

- “Why are you making the colored people, some of them more disliked, every day by your actions.”<sup>280</sup>
- “You better not try to come to the South Side or we’ll make things HOT for you if you cross that gully. We don’t want any nigger down here. The South Side is for Whites Only.”<sup>281</sup>
- All your (sic) doing is arousing more resentment between the white and black people. I’ll let you in on a secret, there are a lot of black people that hate you more than the white people do.<sup>282</sup>
- Do you - as a MEMBER of the CAUCASIAN RACE of your forefathers for sake that privilege BESTOWED UP YOU IN YOUR birthright?...For SHAME FATHER GROPPi, Forever may your path be roughened.<sup>283</sup>
- You holler when a dirty nigger gets shot, but what of the policeman...your name among the decent people is mud.<sup>284</sup>

Scholars have continued to dissect the role the growing militancy played in shaping the social, political and cultural landscape of America since the late 1960s and early 1970s. It’s clear from the amount of hate mail delivered to Groppi’s St. Boniface

---

<sup>280</sup> “ 1 Anonymous Letter 1967” Groppi Papers, Box 8, Folders 3-6, Correspondence, Hate Mail, 1967 (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

<sup>281</sup> 2 Anonymous Letter 1967” June 26th 1967

<sup>282</sup> “3-1 Anonymous Letter” 1967

<sup>283</sup> “4 Anonymous Letter” August 1967

<sup>284</sup> “3 Anonymous Letter, Box 6” Groppi Papers, Boxes 5-7, Correspondence, Criticism Mail, 1965-1967 (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

office that many whites were turned off by the Catholic priest's style of activism. In fact, it wasn't just anonymous citizens who were angry with Groppi. Leaders in local government like Mayor Maier were frustrated with the white activist for taking such an active role in helping mobilize Milwaukee's young grassroots community. The anger never subsided.

In 1985, Groppi attended a ceremony at city hall honoring his years of activism. Although he squared off with opponents in the council chambers many times before, this time Groppi was 54 years old, sitting in a wheelchair and dying of brain cancer. Most attending the ceremony gave the former priest, who left the Church after his activism was scrutinized by Catholic officials, a standing ovation. However, Mayor Maier and Alderpersons Richard L Spaulding, Annette E. Sherbert and Daniel J Ziolkowski refused to attend the ceremony and Alderpersons Howard R. Tietz and Robert Anderson walked out as the event started. Of course, despite his imminent death, the persistent activist used the opportunity to slam the conservatism of President Ronald Reagan.<sup>285</sup>

While Groppi never mentioned his former opponents, African American alderman Michael McGee Sr. immediately came to his defense. Standing in the city hall council chambers, the founder of Milwaukee's Black Panther Party and avid supporter of Black Nationalism stated, "For them to use the ploy that they used when a man is on his deathbed says a lot about the certain mentality of people who sink to that level. Speaking for the people of my district...I'd like to say that we are definitely appalled by this kind

---

<sup>285</sup> Gill, Bruce. "Alderman Ribbed After Groppi Snubs." *Milwaukee Sentinel* April 20th, 1985

of conduct. “Two years after Groppi’s death, the former youthful activists of the 1960s took to the streets to try to force Mayor Maier and the common council to name the 16th Street Viaduct, the same bridge that young protesters marched across to stand up against racism, after Groppi. Leading the way was Michael McGee Sr., who was quickly earning a reputation inside city government for using publicity stunts and grassroots activism to shape the public narrative. Also marching with McGee was Vel Phillips, whose efforts in the common council chambers first kicked off the open housing march.”<sup>286</sup>

*Getting Specific/Leveraging the Power of the Federal Government: The Uniqueness of Milwaukee’s Movement*

In many of the Black Power movements sparking up across the country, an individual like Groppi could not have been at the forefront of an effort to fight for increased stakeholder-ship of black people in the local economy. Yet in Milwaukee, Groppi, the son of Italian Immigrants, was able to use his whiteness to help young blacks step to the forefront in a city that was unabashedly racist. By 1965, Groppi was making headlines as the second vice chairman of MUSIC.<sup>287</sup> Two years later he was persona-non-grata as his movements and daily activities were monitored by the MPD and Chief Breier.<sup>288</sup>

The increased attention on Milwaukee’s Civil Rights/Black Power movements has uncovered many new threads for scholars interested in learning how effective

---

<sup>286</sup> Gill, Bruce. “Marchers Recall Groppi, Seek to Rename Bridge After Him.” *Milwaukee Journal* August 25th, 1987

<sup>287</sup> “Key Terms: Father Groppi”

<sup>288</sup> “Father Groppi Given Fine in Traffic Case.” *Milwaukee Journal* May 29th, 1967 part 3 page 5

grassroots organizing could effectively challenge the local political status quo. Father Groppi had overwhelmingly won tremendous respect from African American activists, both locally and nationally. Although the U.S. organization's Maulana Karenga would publicly blast Groppi and his white privilege at a UWM speaking engagement in 1968, throughout his career as an activist, Groppi had repeatedly committed what Dr. Huey P Newton once described as "revolutionary suicide."<sup>289</sup> Despite repeated arrests, frequent episodes of violence, and public shaming by the city, political and Catholic leaders, Groppi repeatedly fought for black political and economic empowerment.

While his work has overshadowed the work of other leaders like Prentice McKinney, Duane Toliver and even Vel Phillips who worked side by side with the Catholic priest, the truth is the Commandos might have been ignored by the local white press had Groppi not been at the forefront of the struggle.<sup>290</sup> His whiteness, combined with his commitment to challenging racism, bedazzled the local press and inspired young African Americans to action. He was also a seasoned organizer, having worked closely with MUSIC and attended the historic Bloody Sunday march in Selma, Al.<sup>291</sup> Much like Barbee, Groppi's connection to the national Civil Rights movement saw him increasingly seeking to use grassroots pressure to seek specific policy demands

---

<sup>289</sup> "Groppi Denounced by Militant" *Milwaukee Journal* Oct 2nd 1968

"Daily Footage: Ron Karenga Says No White Person Can Lead Black People" October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1968 March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library Archive

<sup>290</sup> Knoche, Eldon "Toliver Start Southside Marches." *Milwaukee Journal* April 26th, 1995

"Local Chapter of Angeles Urged." *Milwaukee Sentinel* September 20th 1982

<sup>291</sup> "Key Terms: Father Groppi" March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project, University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee Library Archive.

In summer 1968, just months after the death of Martin Luther King Jr., the Commandos took on one of the city's wealthiest businesses, the Allen Bradley Corporation.<sup>292</sup> With only 25 African Americans on a staff of nearly 6,000, since 1964, African American leaders sought to have the federal government intervene to prod Allen Bradley to hire more African Americans. "We feel that the number of Negroes hired reveals the viciousness of discriminatory practices," said Calvin T Sherard, local director of the Milwaukee chapter of the Negro American Labor Committee (NALC) to a *Milwaukee Journal* reporter in 1964. But although the federal government had made increased efforts to police private corporations receiving federal contracts, unlike A.O. Smith and Allis Chalmers, Allen Bradley remained vigilant in the face of growing scrutiny, despite having up to 25% of its revenue come from government contracts.

Allen Bradley's blatant discrimination of African Americans would likely have not received national attention if not for an impromptu moment of bravery and truth telling. In March 1967, Ken Coulter, the publisher of the Milwaukee-based African American newspaper *The Star*, confronted President Lyndon B. Johnson at convening of black newspaper publishers. Coulter challenged LBJ to investigate Allen Bradley. Caught off guard, and not wanting to fall out of political favor with the black press, Johnson jumped on the case immediately and sent a young African American lawyer, James Jones from the Department of Justice, to investigate.<sup>293</sup> The Allen Bradley

---

<sup>292</sup> "US Accuses AB of Bias in Hiring." *Milwaukee Journal* May 25th 1968 pg 1

<sup>293</sup> "Complaint Made to LBJ." *Milwaukee Journal* May 25th, 1968 pg 4

Corporation, along with four other companies, was pressured by the federal government to hire more African Americans or face losing federal contracts.<sup>294</sup>

The Commandos held several rallies at the Allen Bradley Corporation, located on Milwaukee's mostly white south side. The corporation defended their hiring practices, and stated that the company's traditional hiring practices, which gave preference to friends and family members of employees, was not intentionally racist. In fact, for nearly two year the Allen Bradley Corporation resisted federal scrutiny by stating that implementing affirmative action hiring policies would be "reverse discrimination."<sup>295</sup>

The Commandos sought the support of United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Local 1111, which represented 4,000 Allen Bradley employees. While Patrick Jones opens his text with a gripping tale about white union workers in Milwaukee opening fire on sleeping African American workers who had been hired by their company, Local 1111 members feared the federal government would cut contracts, which accounted for funding of around 1,500 of their workers. Since FDR signed Executive Order 8802 , the federal government had been working to end employment discrimination in publicly subsidized corporations, and James Jones, combined with African American grassroots activism, had influenced union leadership to side with the black community. The workers decided to stand in solidarity with the African American activists, despite losing preferential hiring preference. In the long run, the stated goal of increasing African American hiring to 12% would prevent large-scale cutbacks.<sup>296</sup>

---

<sup>294</sup> "Allen Bradley Get US Warning on Bias." *Milwaukee Journal* August 6th, 1968

<sup>295</sup> "The Allen Bradley Case." *Milwaukee Journal* Jan 15th 1969

<sup>296</sup> "Allen Bradley Union Ok Minority Drive." *Milwaukee Journal* 1968



Even though it took nearly two years, the NAACP's youth organization along with the NALC, which had been joined on the picket line by Latino and white labor allies, prevailed. Their militant direct action helped the DOJ's case, as the local and national press covered their constant demonstrations. Allen Bradley dragged its feet, but the company eventually came to an agreement with the federal government in April 1969.<sup>297</sup> While the activist community argued that Richard Nixon's administration had been soft on Allen Bradley, Milwaukee's activists proved a formidable foe for one of the state's biggest companies.

### *Black Power Deferred*

At the heart of the activity of organizations like the Commandos was the African American community's desire to become a bigger stakeholder in the political economy. While Allen Bradley began taking fewer federal contracts, the African American community was able to stake claim to a portion of the company long before the young activists ever started marching. While union members might have wanted to keep the work in the family, they also reluctantly recognized that the African American community had built a strong alliance with the federal government, a result of leaders like A. Phillip Randolph organizing a generation earlier.

For years, scholars have debated the difference between the Civil Rights and the Black Power movements, the origins/endings of the movement and the role that ideology has played in aligning different movements. Milwaukee's movement uncovers a nuanced example of how African American activists used traditional civil rights protest

---

<sup>297</sup> Jones, Patrick pg 246

politics and black empowerment narrative to great effect. In the end, the 1968 Fair Housing Act might have been the ultimate catalyst for the demise of Milwaukee's explicitly segregated housing, but the successes of Milwaukee's Black Power movement undoubtedly influenced the young activists to continue their struggle and grow as leaders.

Through the creative use of confrontation, speaking truth to power and demanding tangible policy changes, Milwaukee's activist community forged a new narrative in a city that was resistant to change.<sup>298</sup> With the federal government on their side, African American organizations were able to capitalize on their "greater concentration of power" and shift the local discourse about the role of African Americans in the workforce.

While the window of opportunity would close—the Nixon Administration was less proactive in ending discrimination as its Democratic predecessors—the rest of this study aims to highlight how the movement in Milwaukee adapted to the shifting political narrative as conservatives took control of local, state and federal governments. Although Milwaukee's black community once enjoyed one of the strongest local economies in the country, the suppressive nature of local segregation, combined with extreme racism, created nearly three decades of political, social and economic instability. But, despite the economic or social problems, African Americans continued their struggle for power in new and innovative ways. Reflecting lessons learned during this early period of struggle, Milwaukee's educational system would once again be a battleground for organizing activity as African Americans continued to shift the narrative and public resources to shape the investment in their leaders. Yet, as the political landscape became more

---

<sup>298</sup> "Confrontation Produces Results for Minorities, Says 3 Activists." *Milwaukee Journal* April 22nd, 1969

defined by neoliberal policy, black leaders sought to continue the quest for black power by building black institutions.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### HOWARD FULLER AND THE FUTURE OF BLACK POWER

The rest of this text aims to reexamine the ways in which the strategies developed during the organizing campaigns of the 1960s continued to help black leaders shape the local political landscape in the 1980s and 1990s. As the War on Drugs and a racialized popular discourse transformed the political landscape, black leaders continued to challenge the economic and political status quo. Using the work of one leader, Howard Fuller, as a lens through which to look back on the period, this chapter argues that activists faced tremendous obstacles in successfully influencing the local landscape, but racially focused community organizing continued to drive African American activism in the post-Civil Rights era. Although the political narrative was shifting, with affirmative action and racially focused policies becoming less impactful as the Supreme Court and federal government grew conservative, local grassroots leaders continued to redefine and reshape the post-Civil Rights political environment. First by working as a grassroots activist, then consolidating power inside traditional public institutions and subsequently leading the Milwaukee Public School system, former 1960s activists like Howard Fuller would build off of the successes of the previous era and help develop new campaigns to advance African American political and economic empowerment,

Consistent with the goals of the Black Power strategies of the late 1960s, Howard Fuller sought to help transform public education and increase public investment in black institutions, all while working inside traditional bureaucracies. Some scholars have looked at Fuller's embrace of traditional participatory politics, and his later attempt to

reform local systems, as a new brand of black neo-liberalism or an advance of black Republicanism, but this paper argues the organic leader's later attempt to work inside the system represented a logical continuation and extension of the local Black Power movement and the Milwaukee strategy outlined in previous chapters.<sup>299</sup> The method may have looked different than the youthful organizers of the 1960s might have imagined, but black leaders in Milwaukee were able to successfully mobilize a political strategy that sought to economically and culturally empower the African American community.

Although there are a number of effective black leaders on which this paper could have focused, Howard Fuller's innovative-yet-programmatic approach to problem solving and power building, combined with his uncompromising truth telling, for this writer represents the starkest example of how Black Power movement leaders continued to shape the local discourse and pushed back against the rising tide of conservatism and neoliberalism. Howard Fuller was able to help continue the black community's effort to use the civic process, grassroots organizing and legislative advocacy to shift the local landscape. While his contemporaries from the 1960s would engage in a more radical opposition politics, Fuller's sharp intellect, ability to garner support from non-traditional allies, and willingness to promote controversial ideas would see him becoming one of the nation's most influential and transformative black leaders. His engaging political strategies were rooted in a belief that society was improved when African Americans became bigger stakeholders in the decision-making process and earned a larger share of

---

<sup>299</sup> See: Steve Tiles, "Compassionate Conservative, Domestic Policy and the Politics of Ideational Changes" in *Crisis of Conservatism, the Republican Party and the Conservative Movement After Bush* Joel D. Aberbach, Gillian Peele Oxford University Press 2011 pg 197

decision-making power in their local institutions. By putting resources into the hands of African Americans and creating black institutions, Fuller's ideology reflected a long tradition by the black community of carving out black-controlled spaces and resources.

Throughout his career in Milwaukee, Fuller took a pragmatic and often-nonpartisan approach to problem solving, which was rooted in the tradition of the activism and legacy of MUSIC, St. Boniface, and the Milwaukee Commandos.<sup>300</sup> Fuller's work as the state's leading black bureaucrat, first as Wisconsin's state secretary of employee relations, then as dean of general education at the Milwaukee Area Technical College, then as Milwaukee County's director of Health and Family services, and finally as Milwaukee Public Schools' superintendent, continued to advance the banner of black social justice as the public sector became a battleground for black empowerment. Much like Vel Phillips, Lloyd Barbee, and even Father Groppi, Fuller used grassroots organizing to influence and shift the political discourse, while also adopting a pragmatic approach to building power. Never truly embracing or abandoning the system, Fuller sought to transform the way the state engaged with Milwaukee's black community.

This penultimate chapter looks to further uncover how Fuller's work should be viewed as a continuation of the transformational struggles of the 1960s and the immediate post-war era, not as a break. Additionally, Fuller's activism after leaving Durham, NC, was neither the product of white liberal institutions, nor funded by traditional white progressive allies as has been stated by some scholars. Fuller's attempt

---

<sup>300</sup> "2 Groups Seek Clout at Grassroots" *Milwaukee Journal* January 17, 1983

to transform, and then later develop, new institutions through the Milwaukee Choice movement represented an innovative approach at actualizing black power. Supported by Milwaukee's most radical leaders, including the racial firebrand and alderman Michael McGee Sr. and conservative Republicans, Fuller adapted his ideological and political philosophy to meet the rapidly changing landscape that was growing increasingly color-blind and unreceptive to racial-driven policy solutions.

### *Historiographical Acknowledgement*

In her 2012 thesis, Sarah Barber examined the life and activism of Howard Fuller. The text highlights the work of Fuller going back to his days as a student organizer in the Durham, NC. Barber places Fuller squarely in the longer historical discussion of the shifting legal precedent, color-blindness and rise conservatism played in adjusting the strategies of black groups.<sup>301</sup> Yet through an urban planning lens and not focused on the longer historical narrative, Barber's study only acknowledges that Fuller was motivated by race and "was a race man", but failed to connect his work to the much larger narrative of black power and the decades-old struggle for African Americans to become bigger stakeholders in the local political economy. Her insider/outsider frame does an excellent job of laying the framework for a more nuanced discussion about the leader's work, yet it perhaps unintentionally lifts Fuller up as a sole or exceptional actor. However, it is clear from Fuller's own dissertation acknowledgements in which he thanks several

---

<sup>301</sup> Barber, Sarah, "Never Stop Working: Examining the Life and Activism of Howard Fuller" (2012). *MA Thesis*. University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI. pg 6  
Eugene Kane The Crisis "Voice for School Choice Sep-Oct 2001

organizational leaders, nationally and locally, that he was a coalition builder. In fact, it's not surprising that the Milwaukee-based educator lists the father of Critical Race Theory, Derek Bell, as an advisor. Although he would throughout his career be criticized by allies for stealing the spotlight, it's clear that Fuller's success was tied to black-led grassroots organizing and specific, tangible policy asks based on the black community's representative share of the local political economy.

While this project was conceived and nearly finished by the time Barber's thesis was made public, this text offers a more nuanced portrayal of Fuller's activism as a natural offspring of Milwaukee's rich history of African American activism, not as a disconnected break. More importantly, it aims to revisit Fuller's role as a continuing practitioner of black power. Fuller never fully adopted a strictly partisan or ideological approach to his activism. Focused on programmatic outcomes and policy fights that increased public investment in black organizations, Fuller's work reflected the shifting political landscape. While it did not completely align with Lloyd Barbee's traditional integrationist approach, Fuller's focus on building black-led institutions was a pragmatic approach at forcing the Milwaukee Public School system and the state of Wisconsin to make financial investments in the African American community. After all, the district only reluctantly integrated after Lloyd Barbee and the NAACP filed a lawsuit in 1965. By the 1980s, white flight had been so dramatic that even Barbee was beginning to state that it was going to be difficult to fully implement integration. While the Chapter 220 program and in-district busing would be official solutions for the problem, Fuller argued that the intensive busing program disadvantaged black students and sent public



resources to white administrators and students.<sup>302</sup> In a previous era of school reform, Jack Dougherty highlights how civil rights activists fought for greater career opportunities inside MPS; Fuller's approach sought to both empower students and teachers as well, and, most importantly, shift control of resources to the black community.

Difficult to place his work on the traditional political ideological spectrum, Fuller adapted his own political praxis to the rising wave of neoliberalism and was able to challenge traditional power brokers on the left (Milwaukee's mayor and the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association) and the right (Chief Harold Breier & Tommy Thompson), as well as influential leaders in the African American community. Neither left nor right, Fuller's career reflected the fact that, in the late twentieth century, black politics and cultural empowerment were intrinsically tied to public investment and racially driven legislation. As the federal government would alter the way it invested in local communities, and local economies would concurrently be decimated by the loss of manufacturing jobs, African Americans would have to find new ways to influence traditional politics and drive economic investment to urban communities. While the partisan politics worked at the national level, the nonpartisan nature of the local landscape saw African Americans challenging traditional partisan alliances and relationships.<sup>303</sup>

---

<sup>302</sup> Fuller, Howard L. "The Impact of the Milwaukee Public School System's Desegregation on Black Students and the Black Community(1976 - 1982) Ph.D Dissertation Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (January 1, 1985).

<sup>303</sup> Local elected officials run for office on nonpartisan ballots.

Throughout the late twentieth century, the city's black leadership, bolstered by 1960s youth activists who grew to become seasoned political operatives in the 1980s and 1990s, continued to press for change in many of Milwaukee's largest bureaucracies. The efforts of the local movement to end segregated housing and K-12 schools have been outlined in several scholarly texts including *Selma of the North* and *More than One Struggle*. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, young African American activists also successfully challenged the University of Wisconsin system to establish Black Studies programs and ensured black workers rights in local industries. But the nation's increased conservatism, reflected in the 1968 and 1972 elections of Richard Nixon, would represent a retraction of the progressive policies of the previous decade. America was growing much more intolerant of racial justice organizing.

Critical Race theorists have highlighted how, by the 1978 Supreme Court case *Regents of California v. Allan Bakke*, legislative decision makers and the courts began to reflect an increasing tendency to redefine the role of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment in fixing America's racial problems.<sup>304</sup> Although many scholars connote the 1954's *Brown v Board* decision as the beginning of the Civil Rights movement, by the late 1980s ideological shifts on the nation's highest court reflected America's growing political conservatism and racial color-blindness. Activists of the era took to the street to demonstrate racial discrimination was still very much a problem, but the political will for race-based policy and legislative solutions had begun to subside.

---

<sup>304</sup> Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefanic *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* Temple University Press, 2000

As mentioned in previous chapters, this rising conservatism was also reflected at the local level. Even though civil rights organizations like MUSIC, CORE, NAACP and the Urban League pushed back against the tide of social and economic problems, local government was growing less welcoming of the black community. By 1964, the city that had once established a Human Rights Commission in the 1950s to help welcome black migrants, had hired an openly racist police chief named Harold Breier. Breier, often described as Milwaukee's J. Edgar Hoover, pridefully tolerated brutality and helped foster an organizational culture that protected bad, and often killer, police.

Howard Fuller left Milwaukee in 1963 before the local rebellion of 1967, but the racial fire that would later engulf the city was kindling before he departed. And even though the post-war economic boom provided ample opportunities for newly arriving blacks, by the 1960s, Milwaukee was a racial tinderbox on the verge of exploding. He probably never expected he would one day return to become one of the city's "most respected...effective" and controversial leaders in the city's history.<sup>305</sup>

Fuller was born in Louisiana in 1941. When he was six, his mother moved to the Hillside Housing Projects, the same housing project that white conservative groups attempted to block the city from expanding during the Zeidler's administration. Although a bustling cultural hub on Walnut St. anchored the black community, the stark segregation in the tight-knit black community once referred to as "nigger alley" must have been confining for the former high school basketball all-

---

<sup>305</sup> Merida, Keven "Howard Fuller: 60s Activists Still Active" *The Milwaukee Journal* March 21st, 1982

star.<sup>306</sup> Local landlords and homeowners strictly adhered to racially discriminatory housing covenants that made it extremely difficult for blacks to move to other parts of the city. And even though the demand for new housing skyrocketed as the black community continued to grow throughout the 1950s and 1960s, black families lived in the oldest and most dilapidated neighborhoods in the city's inner core.

Milwaukee had once prided itself on its socially democratic institutions and racial tolerance, but the growing size of the black community was a source of concern for the city's political elite. And it didn't help that the Midwestern manufacturing hub was going through an intense political transition. Three years prior to Fuller's departure for graduate school, Mayor Frank Zeidler left office to avoid further blowback from the growing local conservative movement. A socialist and a self-proclaimed "liberal in city government", Zeidler expanded the boundaries of the city and helped Milwaukee's local industries become more competitive at a time when other metropolises in the region started to sputter. Although his critics frequently argued that Zeidler's radical political leanings would prevent him from being an effective administrator, by end of the 1956 election, Zeidler had prevailed against a growing trend of red-baiting and anti-socialist propaganda. Yet despite his success at helping expand Milwaukee's once-stumbling economy, there was a growing group of opponents who argued that the mayor was too friendly to the city's black community. The anti-tax and fiscal conservatives took a hard stance against the socialist mayor and even helped perpetuate false rumors that Zeidler had paid for billboards throughout the south encouraging African Americans to move to

---

<sup>306</sup> "Black Community Grew Slowly" *Milwaukee Journal* February 9th, 1979

Milwaukee.<sup>307</sup> His opponents frequently attacked him for his forward-thinking policies on poverty, race relations and housing. Although he had incredibly strong support from the working class community and was relatively young, the mayor opted not to run for a fourth term in 1960, citing a growing racial animus as a primary reason he chose not to seek reelection.

Young people like Fuller grew into adulthood in an era in which Milwaukee's black population was both rapidly expanding and growing in political power. By end of the 1960s, most of the black community was represented by African American elected officials in city, county and state government.<sup>308</sup> No longer a quiet minority as described in Trotter's *Black Milwaukee*, the black community was flexing its political and economic muscles. But this new-found political power came at a cost.

Like in other communities throughout the region that experienced a rapid upswell of black residents, racial tension was palpable as the growing numbers of blacks challenged the cultural and economic hegemony of the local landscape. By the 1970 Census, the boundaries of the black community expanded into areas of Milwaukee's north and northwestern neighborhoods, setting the stage for a massive exodus of white residents over the next two decades. Although the city's closed housing practices didn't end officially until the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the subsequent passing of the city of Milwaukee's Opening Housing Act, by the early 1960s the sheer size and strength of the black community was offering an unprecedented challenge to the racial status quo. With racial tensions simmering, by the early 1960s, the black community, especially young black males, were having more frequent and more violent

---

<sup>307</sup> "The Shame of Milwaukee" *Milwaukee Journal* March 31, 1956

<sup>308</sup> *Wisconsin Blue Book*, Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau pg 50 1962

run-ins with law enforcement. But despite the deep and growing racial divisions of the era, Howard Fuller was able to succeed as a leader, even at a young age.

After being one of the few black faces attending St. Boniface elementary, Fuller attended North Division High School, one of the city's two predominantly black high schools. By his senior year, the sharp-witted young man was North's student government president and a leader of the successful Blue Duke's basketball team. During his final season, Fuller and his teammates broke Wisconsin's racial boundaries as it competed in Madison for the 1958 state championship against white boys from throughout the mostly rural Wisconsin. The trailblazing team eventually lost in the final round, but Milwaukee's black basketball programs were growing a strong reputation across the state, and several of Fuller's teammates went on to have successful college careers.<sup>309</sup>

After graduation, Fuller moved on to become a collegiate basketball star at Carroll College, a small liberal arts college in Waukesha, an industrial suburb about 20 miles west of Milwaukee. Although Fuller's mother worried that the stark racial segregation of the community would present obstacles, her son was so popular on and off campus that his high school basketball coach once joked that Fuller could have run for mayor of Waukesha. While his coach only half-kidded about his prodigy's popularity, Fuller's leadership skills were apparent to all those who encountered the young African American. He was one of the "good kids" and a testament to the growing sophistication of the black community.<sup>310</sup>

---

<sup>309</sup> "Howard Fuller." *Milwaukee Journal* March 21, 1982

<sup>310</sup> Merida, Kevin. "'Howard Fuller: 60s Activists Still Active'" *The Milwaukee Journal* March 21st, 1982

The popular college graduate could have returned to Milwaukee and immediately enjoyed middle class mobility. While Milwaukee was still very much segregated due to closed housing, the city's growing economic strength saw black workers and administrators achieving unprecedented success. And while the public sector was still hampered by overt and structural racism, Fuller had a growing knack for navigating white bureaucracies and would likely have had a tremendous amount of success had he returned to Milwaukee. But he didn't. He left and enrolled in the African liberation movement.<sup>311</sup>

After graduating from Carroll, Fuller briefly moved to Chicago for a year to work for the Urban League, but by 1964, the ambitious young man had moved to Ohio to attend Western Reserve University to pursue a master's degree in applied social science. While he continued to do well academically, by 1965 Fuller was fully active in the Civil Rights movement and was participating in nonviolent disobedience demonstrations to end segregated schools. While he was initially an ideological proponent of nonviolent struggle, his commitment to the "Kingian philosophy" wavered after seeing a fellow protester run over and killed by a bulldozer.<sup>312</sup> And while his love for the African American community motivated him to action, like many young leaders of the time, Fuller was connecting his personal experiences with racism with the liberation movements in Africa. No longer confined by Milwaukee's strict racial boundaries, Fuller was blossoming into one of the nation's most respected young black leaders.

---

<sup>311</sup> "Middle Class Negroes Now Struggle to Link To Race" *Sarasota Journal*, January 17th. 1968

<sup>312</sup> Dr. Howard Fuller "March On Milwaukee: More than One Struggle," Oral History Interview Interview conducted by Matt Blessing, Marquette University Archivist Conducted in the Raynor Memorial Libraries, January 22, 2008

Growing more political by the day, Fuller's penchant for leading his peers continued to extend off the basketball court, and his stature amongst a growing activist community continued to grow. In 1965, Fuller moved to Durham, NC, to become a community organizer with the newly started Operation Breakthrough, a community development organization established to tackle poverty. The state's Office of Economic Opportunity, the Ford Foundation and a progressive community foundation called the North Carolina Fund financed the new program.<sup>313</sup> Although he was an outsider from the north, Fuller was hired to help raise the political consciousness of area youth and inspire them to get involved in community organizing. The young leader immediately immersed himself into the fabric of the local community, quickly developing a gift for mobilizing poor people to advocate for themselves. He was also honing his gift for strategically mobilizing grassroots activists to speak out. Much like the leaders of the MPS reform movement, Fuller would increasingly combined grassroots pressures to help ensure his political success.<sup>314</sup>

By 1966, Fuller had become one of the North Carolina's most recognized black leaders and one of the earliest and most outspoken advocates for Black Power. Unafraid to publicly challenge the local political elite, Fuller's ideological leanings reflected a growing trend by black activists to advance a political philosophy of economic and

---

<sup>313</sup> Bradley Anderson, *Jeah Durham County: A History of Durham County, North Carolina* Duke University Press, 1990 357

<sup>314</sup> Oral History Interview with George Esser, June-August 1990. Interview L-0035. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



cultural self-determination. Although it made him a political target, Fuller's fiery rhetoric urged blacks to become bigger stakeholders in financial decision-making and prodded whites leaders to invest in the self-sufficiency of the black community.<sup>315</sup> At the forefront of the Black Studies and cultural nationalist movements of the late 1960s, Fuller was one of the loudest voices in a growing cacophony of young black activists demanding the state not only invest in the establishment of independent black institutions, but that these independent institutions help build economic self-sufficiency in the black community.

Although it was short lived, Fuller attempted to bring his beliefs to life while running Malcolm X Liberation University, a small college with fewer than 100 students focused on empowering students to improve their community through self-determination. Devin Fergis in *Liberalism Black Power and the Making of American Politics* talks about white liberals' and charitable foundations' connections to the Black Power movement, and the contradictions of activists seeking white philanthropy while at the same time advocating for black people to maintain more control. But this, of course, is a limited understanding of black power. Africology Professor Winston VanHorne highlights that "Black Power never has been opposed to bona fide friendships between Black and Whites."<sup>316</sup> Throughout his career, Fuller understood that black empowerment was good for white people and thus good for the state, and, regardless of whether decision makers wanted to hear it or not, throughout his career advocated for blacks to control a bigger share of community resource.

---

<sup>315</sup> Belvin, Brent H. *Malcolm X Liberation University: An Experiment in Independent Black Education*. Ph.D dissertation North Carolina State, 1994

<sup>316</sup> Vanhorne, Winston pg 341

On the surface, Fuller's activism in North Carolina might have been surprising to his classmates back in Waukesha. A product of white-led educational institutions like St. Boniface and Carroll College, Fuller benefited from—and succeeded in—integrated institutions. Fuller's charm and engaging personality even won over his white opponents who frequently noted that although he was motivated by race, he was a highly principled leader. He was even credited by his detractors for being one of the principals preventing large-scale rioting and urban unrest in Durham the night of Martin Luther King Jr.'s death. Having successfully navigated white institutions in college, Fuller understood that, many times, black poor people were disenfranchised and disempowered by unfamiliarity with bureaucratic processes.<sup>317</sup> “You learn the process because you don't want [the bureaucrats] to jam you [by saying], ‘Oh you didn't fill out the right form.’ That's one thing I learned as an organizer. You have to first understand how the system is supposed to work so that when you follow all of those steps and it doesn't work you can't get jammed on.”<sup>318</sup>

By 1971, Fuller had become an internationally respected activist. His passion and commitment to African Americans' cultural and economic liberation struggles saw him starting a liberation school in North Carolina, helping rebels in Mozambique, and then later working as an AFSCME organizer with non-faculty workers on Duke's campus. And, like many of the movement's most committed activists who changed their

---

<sup>317</sup> Oral History Interview with George Esser, June-August 1990. Interview L-0035. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>318</sup> *The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America*: University of North Carolina Press 2010 pg 185

names during the era, Fuller informally took on the name Owusu Sadaukai “one who clears the way for others” and “one who gathers strength from his ancestors to lead his people” as a testament to growing cultural connections to his African ancestry.<sup>319</sup> To Sadaukai, like many young leaders from his generation, the world was becoming much bigger than the segregated boundaries of Milwaukee’s north side.

While he was able to navigate institutions, he was also able to recognize the inherent inequalities that undergirded systems and question the contradictions inherent in trying to tackle the vestiges of racism. “I remember asking the question once, when I was down at Breakthrough, “I understand that this is the War on Poverty... Well how is it, that if you are fighting a war, you have the enemy sitting on the board.”<sup>320</sup> Fuller might have tempered his rhetoric a little as he grew older, but throughout his career he showed an ability to articulate how structural inequality prevented African Americans from truly achieving large-scale social mobility. He also had a strong class analysis.

“We do need people of color working with kids of color. It is critical for those kids to see people who look like them who can help them become what we want them to be. But anybody who says that merely because you’re black or Latino, you can teach black or Latino kids better, that’s insane. This is not only about race, it’s about class. Just because you are the same color doesn’t mean you can relate to all kids, especially if you don’t want to be with them, and you’re ashamed of them.”<sup>321</sup>

---

<sup>319</sup> Fuller, Howard. “Winner of the 2004 Fordham Prize of Valor” Fordham Prizes for Excellence in Education Thomas B Fordham Foundation pg 15

<sup>320</sup> Oral History Interview with Howard Fuller, December 14, 1996. Interview O-0034. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>321</sup> Fuller, Howard “Education, Choice and Change” Interview by Larry Rosenstock Unboxed A Journal of Adult Learning in Schools , Issue 6, Fall 2010

In the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans in Milwaukee may have experienced a higher standard of living compared to other urban areas in the region, but the intersectionality of race and class limited one's options.

Much has been written about Fuller's work in North Carolina. Please see Charles W. McKinney Jr.'s *Greater Freedom: The Evolution of the Civil Rights Struggle in Wilson, North Carolina*, Robert R. Korstad's and James L. Leloudis's *To Right These Wrongs*, and *The Best of Enemies: Race and Redemption in the New South* by Osha G. Davidson. However, the rest of this text seeks to focus on Fuller's work in Milwaukee prior to becoming one of the nation's leading school choice advocates. While some have seen his work in his hometown as a departure from his earlier struggle as radical activist, the rest of the chapter hopes to provide a more nuanced discussion of his work. After all, looking back on his time as leader in the movement in the south, Fuller stated:

“What we saw as our mission was to empower poor people. To give them levels and levels of power that were previously unavailable to them. We were never struggling for integration per se. Y'all gotta understand that, because our part of this was not the Civil Rights Movement. We weren't on that. We was on somethin' else. We were in that part when the Black Power movement came along.. When we were fighting, we were fighting to get things, like streets paved.”<sup>322</sup>

Fuller's reflection above took place as the activist/educator-turned-administer had become one of the nation's leading voices for choice. Clearly, from Fuller's perspective, he and the youthful leaders from Milwaukee's Black Power movement had always fought to grapple more control of resources from the state.

---

<sup>322</sup> Interview Howard Fuller

## *Back Home*

If Milwaukee had changed while the young activist was in North Carolina, so had he. No longer self-identifying as Saduwki, Fuller had tempered his revolutionary urges, at least so it seemed. While his first gig back home, a short-lived attempt in insurance, had been successful, Fuller eventually found himself working as a bureaucrat in the very same white-led institutions that he once rallied against.<sup>323</sup> Given the revolutionary spirit of the era that saw the Black Arts Movement, the growth of Black Studies programs and the continued militancy of groups like the M.O.V.E. organization, it might have surprised some that Fuller wound up working inside Wisconsin's government and serving as an administrator for several of the state's largest institutions. On the surface it might appear as if Fuller had abandoned his ideological principles. Yet a deeper assessment of his career reveals that Fuller had an uncanny gift for navigating systems and leading institutions. But it often came at a cost. "I've been called a sell-out, an Uncle Tom, a right-wing opportunist, the white man's dupe, all kinds of names," said Fuller in a 2004 interview. "But you have a responsibility to stand up and fight for what you believe."<sup>324</sup> Contemporary progressive scholars and activists criticize Fuller for championing school choice and helping usher in the privatization of public schools, but a look at his brief stint as the Milwaukee Public Schools' superintendent reveals a much deeper commitment to black economic empowerment and building black institutions. Reflecting on his time in Durham, Fuller noted, "We weren't struggling to only create better services—that was a part of it. We wanted to control the services". While done in

---

<sup>323</sup> Merida, Kevin "Howard Fuller 60s Activist Still Active"

<sup>324</sup> Fuller, Howard "Winner of the 2004 Fordham Prize of Valor"

the context of local bureaucracies, Fuller put forth a strong policy vision that would seek to radically alter the way the school district educated and employed African Americans.<sup>325</sup>

After his brief stint as an insurance salesman, Fuller became the Equal Opportunities Program director at Marquette University. The program aimed to increase diversity and minority retention. Marquette was a natural fit for the St. Boniface graduate. While the Jesuit-led university is socially conservative, Milwaukee's Catholic intuitions have a unique history of racial justice activism in the African American community going back to the early twentieth century. During the 1960s, Milwaukee Catholic institutions often aligned themselves with the black grassroots community. Fuller was working for the powerful Catholic university but he was extremely active in the causes most relevant to the black community. A strong-willed leader, Fuller often took to the street fighting against a number of issues, including police brutality, while working for Marquette.<sup>326</sup> But it was a nearly decade-long campaign to shift policy at MPS that ultimately put him in a position of power to implement his vision as a transformational leader.

In her recent thesis, Sarah Barber uncovers Fuller's career path as he shifted from grassroots activist to institutional leader. Continuing to engage in the fight for racial equality, Fuller was a leader in the Justice for Ernest Lacy Coalition in 1981 and was the

---

<sup>325</sup> Oral History Interview with Howard Fuller, December 14, 1996. Interview O-0034. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>326</sup> "Speakers Lambaste Breier" *Milwaukee Journal* August 31, 1981 pg 4

spokesperson for the effort to turn North Division High School and other black neighborhood schools into a black school district. Never abandoning his belief that African Americans had to fight to control a bigger share of the public resources and decision making power, Fuller saw himself influencing impoverished inner city residents and state policy makers to action.

Fuller was not alone, local community leaders were increasingly working to influence traditional institutions to ensure that African Americans became bigger stakeholders in the local political economy. Given that blacks were becoming bigger players in the city, state and federal governments as a result of Voting Rights Act of 1965, taking positions inside the state as administrators and bureaucrats only made sense. “I have always taken the position that when black people get in various positions that should not mean they have to lose sight of their community or lose sight of the problems that continue to exist in society for black people.”<sup>327</sup>

Although black elected officials and institutional leaders have been criticized by contemporary black activists, Fuller and many in Milwaukee’s black community began holding more influential positions in the public sector. Often these positions were earned through years of dedicated struggle as the young activists of 1960s had, by the 1980s, learned to use the political system to assert a louder voice in local government. Despite the fact that in 1982 Fuller noted in 1982 that, “Anybody with any sense knows that people in Milwaukee are politically, impotent, period,” Milwaukee’s African American

---

<sup>327</sup> “Earl Nominee Anticipates New Role” *Milwaukee Journal* Dec 12th, 1982

community was taking bigger strides to empower themselves politically.<sup>328</sup> Fuller sought to help empower black folks by joining Democratic Governor Tony Earl's administration as the state secretary of employee relations where he was tasked with developing, "innovative programs to ensure attainment of affirmative action's goals."<sup>329</sup> He also built power for the black community by serving on the statewide planning committee for the 1984 Wisconsin Black Political Convention.

Hosted February 24-26, 1984, at the Marc Plaza in Milwaukee, the Wisconsin Black Political Convention's program, workshop schedule, committee papers, and accompanying "State of Black Wisconsin" report reveals a unique look into Milwaukee's political past.<sup>330</sup> With a deep understanding of the social political and economic landscape of Wisconsin's black communities, Fuller and the rest of the steering committee sought to:

1. Develop and ratify a Black Agenda which will be presented to political candidates and be used as a guide for legislation and community action in the future

---

<sup>328</sup> Merida, Kevin

<sup>329</sup> Elving, Ron. "Earl Signs Affirmative Action Order" Milwaukee Journal Oct 26, 1983

<sup>330</sup> Wisconsin Black Political Convention Documents, Howard Fuller Personal Archive

WPBC Workshop Documents February 24-16 8 pages

WPBC Criminal Justice 10 pages

WPBC Education 24 pages

WPBC Health 10 pages

WPBC Economic 10 pages

WPBC Women Issues 24 pages

WPBC Workshops 2 pages

WPBC Participants in Black Agenda Committee 2 page

Grigsby, Eugene and Perry Messy "State of Black Wisconsin" Thea preliminary report



2. Establish statewide black unity that will be the basis for the development of a Black political force in Wisconsin
3. Provide a forum for Black people to discuss issues and concerns relating to the condition of black people in Wisconsin
4. Develop and organized, systematic approach to the political education for our children
5. Develop courses of action that will guide an effort to establish and solidify voter registration and get out the vote efforts<sup>331</sup>

Held 12 years after the 1972 Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, by bringing black leaders from across the state to the Wisconsin Black Political Convention, organizers demonstrated their ability to black build political power throughout the dairy state, not just the urban areas.<sup>332</sup> Although the local and federal landscape saw racially driven strategies gaining less traction as leaders like Harold Washington and Jesse Jackson rallied voters on a “Rainbow Push” banner, Fuller and the 300 leaders and activists attending the convention demonstrated their ability to continue to develop concise policy strategies that both acknowledged the African American community’s large role in the state, and sought to recognize the African American community’s unique history. The convention’s “The State of Black Wisconsin”, a preliminary report compiled by Eugene Grigsby Ph.D and Perry Messy Ph.D, is a social, economic, and political statistical snapshot of early 1980s Black Wisconsin. The document reveals that

---

<sup>331</sup> WPBC Program

<sup>332</sup> Stafford, Gary. “State Black Political Convention Set For Next Weekend Here” February 19th, 1984 part 2 pg 7

the African American community was facing an uphill battle against the prevailing trend of joblessness and growing underground economy.

The Wisconsin Black Political Convention is just one example of how black leaders, including Lloyd Barbee, Donald Sykes, Martha Love, Vincent Knox, and Cynthia Pitts would continue to see black political unity as a source of strength to solve problems. The Wisconsin Black Health Planning Council, later known as the Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin, was a tangible outcome of the convention.<sup>333</sup> Operating informally as a citywide coalition before incorporating as a statewide organization in 1988, BHCW started with twelve organizations:

- Black Health Planning Council
- Black Nurses' Association
- Milwaukee Comprehensive Community Health
- Metro Home Health Services
- Wisconsin Association of Black Social Workers
- Career Youth Development
- Cream City Medical Society
- Milwaukee Urban League
- Black Pharmacist Association
- New Concept Self Development Center
- Black Lawyers Association
- Human Services Triangle

As of 2013, the organization had grown to over 20 members.

---

<sup>333</sup> “History” <http://www.bhcw.org/> accessed 4.2.12

Although Fuller would continue to work in local coalitions like the Black Health Care Coalition, he had increasingly earned a reputation while working for Governor Tony's Earl's administration for consolidating power inside bureaucracies and then working hard to ensure his pet projects received public investment. Later in his career he would receive criticism from the local labor movement for his attempts to weaken the teacher's union's hegemonic influence in MPS, but Fuller continued to be a strong advocate for black workers while working for Governor Earl. Although he was a lightning rod for controversy, the former all-star basketball player continued to assert the importance of black-led institutions while working for the state.<sup>334</sup>

In her dissertation, Barber highlights how the essence of Fuller's political ideology is best captured in his 1985 dissertation. Desegregation implies "that anything that is all-black is inferior. I don't think that in order for black people to be successful, you have to be with whites." However, while Barber and several scholars have talked about Fuller's stance on racial empowerment and his disciplined organizing, few have written about his stances on the importance of financially empowering black communities. Moreover, Barber all but ignores Fuller's class consciousness. But both were key to his political ideology.

The only people in America who would tell you that money is not important are people with money. Don't hear no poor people standing up and talking about how wonderful this is. I mean, it's always interesting.

---

<sup>334</sup> Trebach, Susan. "Earl Dumped Fuller as Liability, Lawmaker Claims." *Milwaukee Sentinel* August 29th, 1986

Riley, Robin. "Earl Criticized For Considering Activist." *Milwaukee Journal*, Nov 30th, 1982

People say that throwing money at poverty won't end the problem. How does one end poverty without money? And so the reality of it is, if you're poor in America, you're in the vicious cycle. Because in America you need resources to have influence. If you're poor, you don't have resources, so how do you have influence? Long term, it's always been my view, that the way you get people out of poverty is to put them in a position where they can have relative economic self-sufficiency.<sup>335</sup>

But by the 1980s, Fuller, who organized people as a young organizer, began to place a bigger role on controlling the state's resources to ameliorate the problems of the past.

### *Head Nigger in Charge*

In 1975, months before federal courts declared that MPS was systematically discriminating against black students, ending the decades-long school integration court case *Amos et al v. the Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee*, the state of Wisconsin passed Assembly Bill 1040, also known as Chapter 220. Chapter 220 would give state monies to suburban school districts that were willing to educate minority students from Wisconsin's segregated schools. 10 years prior, Lloyd Barbee filed a lawsuit that claimed that even though MPS had not officially endorsed segregation, the pattern of segregation in Milwaukee prevented African Americans from having equal protection under the law.<sup>336</sup> Although Lois M. Quinn, Michael G. Barndt and Diane S. Pollard would in 1980 argue that Milwaukee's intense segregation and subsequent white flight would make integration difficult, school reform activists and the Wisconsin Legislature felt that the effort to send African Americans to white schools, sometimes 25

---

<sup>335</sup> Interview with Howard Fuller,

<sup>336</sup> Wisconsin Lawyer: "Lloyd Barbee: Fighting Segregation Roots and Branch" Vol. 77, No. 4, [April 2004](#)

to 30 miles away, would create opportunities to level the playing field for black students.<sup>337</sup> The passing of Chapter 220 would open the door for future free market transactions between districts and schools and parents.<sup>338</sup> Setting the precedent for the School Choice Bill, which passed in 1990, the suburban busing program and its growing expenses would later give Howard Fuller an opportunity to continue to make racial demands of the state despite the color-blindness of the era.

Before the 1976 decision, which the school district refused to honor until a judge approved a consent decree in 1979, MPS' administration had begun implementing a variety of strategies, including developing innovative magnet and specialty schools, to entice white parents to let their children attend schools with black children and, most important, stay in the district. African American students were also given the option to bus to integrated schools inside of the district, often times to schools on the far south and northwest sides of the city. But the rapid rate of white flight, combined with the growing black population, made it difficult for the district to integrate inside of MPS' traditional boundaries. The Chapter 220 program was an attempt to fix the problem and also gave white students in suburban districts an opportunity to attend MPS. The program was voluntary for both districts and students, and was funded by state dollars.

In his dissertation, Fuller highlighted how white students continued to get special treatment in terms of school selection. Administrators placed a premium on trying to

---

<sup>337</sup> A Milwaukee Case Study: Relationship Between School Desegregation and Government Housing Programs 1980 National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.

<sup>338</sup> 1975 Assembly Bill 1040 Chapter 220 3 May. 1975

keep white students in the district, a futile attempt as white flight and Milwaukee's intense segregation continued to impact the district well into the 2000s.<sup>339</sup>

Fuller, who wrote his dissertation at Marquette University in 1985 about the failures of MPS' integration program, argued that the district's integration plan unfairly disadvantaged black children by forcing too many black kids to bus out of their neighborhoods and by denying them access to their neighborhood schools. Alternatively, Fuller envisioned a new strategy, which saw African American educators and administrators in control of black children's education. First by advocating for an all-black district, then by empowering principals to make budget decisions and have more control over hiring, and finally by advocating for school choice programs, Fuller sought to wrestle resources from the state and give them to black educators and black institutions. The strategy offered a different solution than that designed by Barbee two decades prior, but it reflected a continuing use of the civic process to seek public investment in the black community, and the mobilization of the grassroots community to influence decision makers. It also represents a brief case study on the role race-driven policy played in shaping late twentieth century institutions.

In 1984, growing increasingly influential in state government, Fuller was able to help convince Governor Earl to convene a commission that would study "the Quality of Education for the Metropolitan Milwaukee Schools." The Governor directed the commission to:

1. Assess the quality of education in Metropolitan Milwaukee Schools, including education programs, pupil services, personnel policies, staffing and staff

---

<sup>339</sup> Budget Briefs from the Legislative Reference Bureau Budget Brief 01-2 Wisconsin Legislative Bureau September 2001

development, resource allocation to and within districts and racial balance where racial balance affects the quality of education.

2. Propose objectives for public schools and criteria for evaluating progress toward those objectives.

3. Make specific recommendations to improve the quality of education in metropolitan Milwaukee Public schools.<sup>340</sup>

An influential member in Earl's cabinet, the former resident of Milwaukee's infamous Hillside Housing project was learning how the state's resources were allocated and distributed; he was also building relationships with political operatives and members of the Wisconsin Legislature including Assembly Speaker-turned-Governor Tommy Thompson. Critical Race theorists like Devon Carbado, Kimberlee Crenshaw and Derrick Bell have highlighted how decision makers became less interested in passing race-based policy. But by working inside state government Fuller was developing a nomenclature and analysis that would aid him as he grew in stature in the local landscape and sought to financially empower families. Although Fuller left the state government in 1986 to serve as the dean of General Education at the Milwaukee Area Technical College, he departed Madison with an intimate knowledge of MPS' problems.<sup>341</sup> By 1987, Fuller was taking a more active role in the local debate around MPS's continuing attempts to integrate. Despite repeated attempts to provide equal access and improve educational outcomes, African Americans students were failing. To Fuller, integration,

---

<sup>340</sup> "Executive Department, Executive Order 61" Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau August 1984

"Better Public Schools Study": Commission on the Quality of Education in the Metropolitan Milwaukee Public Schools". Madison, Wis. : Dept. of Public Instruction, 1985

<sup>341</sup> "Fuller Quits State Job for MATC Position." *Milwaukee Sentinel* August 28th, 1986

once seen as a strategy to help eliminate the vestiges of historical discrimination, was simply not working.<sup>342</sup>

Fuller believed that an all-African American public school district could solve the black community's educational problems, and helped advance a plan entitled a "Manifesto for New Directions in the Education of Black Children" which sought to create a separate district for African American students. Continuing with the legacy of bold and pragmatic activism, the manifesto stated that the black district could strengthen the black community in the following ways:

- 1) a dramatic increase in the students' level of academic achievement
- 2) a substantial reduction in the drop-out rate
- 3) increased parent and community involvement in the schools
- 4) increased excellence through the parent choice.<sup>343</sup>

Although the Manifesto was flexible on how to implement the program, the authors of the document, of which Fuller was the principal architect, sought to create a district that was black-led, and allowed black parents to opt-in or out of the district. They also protected themselves from equal protection backlash by saving space for white children who might want to buck the trend that saw blacks fleeing Milwaukee and opt into the black district.

---

<sup>342</sup> Fuller, Howard "The Struggle Continues Brown v. Board of Education Ended Legally Sanctioned Segregation, But the Decision's Promise Awaits Fulfillment" *Educaion Next* FALL 2004 / VOL. 4, NO. 4

<sup>343</sup> DeMarcell, Willy Smith and Eva W. Chunn. *Black Education: A Quest for Equality and Excellence*. Transaction Publishers, 1988



Although the Milwaukee city attorney and the NAACP would immediately call the attempt to create a black district “unconstitutional,” and MPS superintendent Cullen noted he would not seek to implement the solution, Fuller had a political ally in the Wisconsin governor’s mansion in Tommy Thompson, who stated that he was interested in looking at the proposal.<sup>344</sup> While MPS’s leadership used *Brown v. Board* to point out the unconstitutionality of the all-black district, Fuller would use the manifesto to transform the public debate about the role the African American community played in controlling educational resources. The all-black school district fight also demonstrated Fuller’s and Milwaukee grassroots community’s continuing ability to fight for nationalistic-tinged policy throughout the state.

Fuller’s plan was not framed by the national media through the traditional oppositional frame that has historically marked interactions between the press and black leaders who have advanced racially separate ideas. “I’m here talking to this crazy man,” wrote journalist William Raspberry in 1987. “This throwback to the separatist ‘60s who has been issuing manifestos and calling for the establishment of a black school district in the heart of Milwaukee. But Howard Fuller refuses to act crazy.”<sup>345</sup> The graying Fuller’s sophistication and deep understanding of MPS’ problems had made a racially driven policy solution feasible at a time when color-blindness dominated both the local and federal landscape. Had Fuller not developed a broad and fluid coalition to advance his

---

<sup>344</sup> Worthington, Rogers. “Black School District Plan Is Challenged” September 29, 1987

<sup>345</sup> Raspberry, William. “A ‘Crazy’ Idea For Teaching Black Kids.” Washington Post November 18, 1987

racial driven idea, his black district concept idea might have been ignored. However, MPS's history of discrimination and failing black students had opened an opportunity for Fuller to take his youthful goals of developing a black-led educational institution to the next level.<sup>346</sup>

Fuller was getting better at building cross-partisan coalitions. Even though the black district was eventually halted in the Wisconsin senate, the bill made it through the assembly and had the support of Governor Tommy Thompson, and Assembly Speaker Tom Loftus. Although Rep. Williams would continue to be a persistent opponent in future campaigns, Fuller was definitely a proponent of the Lord Palmerson "no permanent friends, just permanent interests" style of participatory politics.<sup>347</sup>

The attempt to establish an all-black school district eventually failed; but Fuller persisted. In fact, the manifesto was not his first foray into ensuring black students were at the center of the political discourse. In 1979, as MPS was seeking to implement a magnet system to further comply with the federal government's pressure to integrate the district, Fuller served as the spokesperson for the Coalition to Save North Division High School. Although the district had invested millions of dollars into a new building on 10th and North Center St, MPS officials faced the difficult task of recruiting white students to attend schools in black neighborhoods. Milwaukee's intense segregation proved to be a huge obstacle in the district complying with federal integration guidelines, so the MPS

---

<sup>346</sup> Hicks, Kathrine. "Fuller Says Black District No More Separate Than Suburban Schools" *Milwaukee Sentinel* Dec 14, 1987

<sup>347</sup> David Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 1846-1855* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 82-83

school board proposed shutting North Division down for a year and then reopening it to become a citywide technical school specializing in health and science. Although traditionally a neighborhood school and not one of the schools marked for integration, North and its brand new facilities would, according to the school board's plan, by the 1981 school year be open to all students. Existing North Students would be bussed to other schools throughout the district. Consistent with the previous 20 years of struggle for integration, the school board's vision for North represented a strategy by older African Americans who insisted that black students attending all-black institutions were inherently at a disadvantage. Integration programs, like those advanced by Lloyd Barbee, sought to aggressively mandate that African Americans and whites students be taught in the same classroom. Yet Fuller and a strong grassroots contingency of leaders such as Annette Polly Williams, Brian Verdin and others, engaged in grassroots organizing for nearly two years to stop the integration of North Division.<sup>348</sup> They eventually won.

In *More than One Struggle*, Daugherty shows how Fuller and the grassroots activists inspired fellow North alumni to believe that North was "our" school, i.e. a black school, and deserved to be led and used by African Americans. While Fuller's advocacy for black-led institutions was a departure from older black leaders like Lloyd Barbee, it is important to note that neither Barbee nor Fuller saw each other's strategy as diametrically opposed to each other, at least not publicly. Dougherty acknowledges that even though the white media tried to pit Fuller against the integrationist stalwart, in 1990 Barbee

---

<sup>348</sup> "Howard Fuller" *Milwaukee Journal* March 21, 1982

Bednareck, David. "Foes in North High Disagreement Talk It Out." *Milwaukee Journal* Sept 27<sup>th</sup>, 1979

Janaka, Rick & Karen Roethe. "North Division is Last Straw: Blacks." *Milwaukee Sentinel* July 31, 1979

noted that “My enemy is not Howard Fuller, my enemy is segregationists and people who want to keep minorities ignorant.”<sup>349</sup> While in function Barbee and Fuller disagreed on the best way to empower younger blacks to become bigger stakeholders in the local political economy, both agreed that young blacks deserved a bigger share of the state’s resources. Both had, throughout their careers, demonstrated an intense commitment to understanding the MPS’ policies, processes, and budget.<sup>350</sup>

While scholars and fellow activists have contended that Fuller’s strategy represented a break in the traditional Civil Rights and Black Power movements’ attempts to transform MPS, it is this writer’s argument that Fuller’s approach represented a natural extension of the spirit that first motivated activists like Barbee to the picket lines. Not only had MPS continued to fail on its attempts to integrate, but the efforts to bus black students to integrated schools throughout the district and to suburban schools in the metropolitan area had, according to the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, produced spotted results. 12 years after the NAACP’s and MPS’s consent decree, WPRI encouraged lawmakers to “overhaul” the costs of the suburban busing program to avoid “spiraling” costs. From Fuller’s perspective these substantial resources could have been invested in neighborhood schools. The report concluded:

- Average grades for African Americans attending MPS’ integrated high schools were Between Ds and D+
- Between 26% and 43% of black students were averaging Fs
- The number of black students receiving above average scores on nationalized tests was between 8% and 21%
- Significant gaps existed between white and black students.

---

<sup>349</sup> pg 85

<sup>350</sup> Parks, Dan. “Barbee Had A Ten Year Fight With Segregation” *Milwaukee Sentinel* January 2nd 1992

The report also found that the integration program failed to promote academic achievement amongst blacks, prevented other strategies such as neighborhood schools from taking roots and placed a huge transportation burden on black students. Of course, many of these points were raised in Fuller's 1985 dissertation.<sup>351</sup>

While Barbee stated that the early attempts at integration would be difficult, often comparing MPS students' struggle with the Little Rock Nine's efforts in the south, he probably did not anticipate such poor academic achievement or the ballooning costs of Chapter 220, which grew by 190% between 1976 and 1988 while overall inflation was only at 114%. Fuller's approach of keeping blacks in neighborhoods schools might have been a tactical break from Barbee's approach, but the effort to empower more black teachers and improve young African Americans' education quality, certainly was not. Throughout the decades-long effort to make African Americans bigger stakeholders, black activists would consistently emphasize the importance of resources. Fuller's embrace of a black district represented an actualization of black power that had not been possible in a previous era.

In a 1995 oral history interview with Jack Daugherty, the Urban League's Wesley Scott explains how his support of the Coalition to Save North was less a break with the traditional integrationist organizing as it was a natural outcome of the 30 years of struggle for grateful African American influence in the system.

“Integration became an abstraction. Nobody had a plan per se, in the minds of most Black individuals in the community at that time, we just felt, rightly or wrongly that over here were white schools that were getting all the resources and those were predominantly Black were being deprived, and we, it was felt that if

---

<sup>351</sup> “An Evaluation of State Financed School Integration In Metropolitan Milwaukee”  
*Wisconsin Public Research Report* June 1989 Vol 2 no 5

we integrated, then we could take advantage of the some these resources. This was kind of generic kind of thing, but in terms of details of how to do it, there wasn't any plan.”<sup>352</sup>

Of course, Barbee had developed a series of detailed plans to offer MPS in integrating the district. But to Scott the process of integrating public schools was less about implementation than the control of resources. Fuller's black district plan resonated with the black community's urges to be in greater control of community resources, and tapped into the very urges that first inspired activists to march with Barbee in the 1960s. It's also clear from other oral history interviews conducted by Jack Dougherty that his fellow activists perceived Barbee to be the wizard of the MPS integration strategy. The UW Law grad might have been passionate about his solution, but his peers in the school integration movement were less ideologically committed to the strategy.

Although scholars will undoubtedly continue to study Fuller's influence on the national educational reform movement after he left MPS to become a school choice advocate, the rest of this inquiry will look at his short tenure as superintendent. Many will probably look at his close connection with George W. Bush's administration and assume that Fuller had become a “black Republican”, however that would be an uncritical reading of history. Fuller was undoubtedly aided by his close connections to Republican Governor Tommy Thompson, who, like other conservative leaders of the day including Jack Kemp, saw school choice as an opportunity to weaken his political opponents, like the MTEA. Yet electoral politics aside, conservative policy experts like Carl Horowitz, who entitled his 1996 article in *the Free Market* “Vouchers as Reparations” argued that school choice was just as expensive as public schools and

---

<sup>352</sup> Oral History Interview with Wesley L. Scott, July 25, 1995, part II At His Office Chamber of Conference with Wesley Scott July 25th 1995 part II

ultimately put the control of public money in the hands of African American families, who he perceived to be non-taxpayers.

But contrary to the advocate's slogans, vouchers do not create authentic market competition, but only the pretense. Like public schools, voucher programs are funded by government money, paid to people and institutions because they fit a politically driven eligibility criterion. Vouchers no more create free-market competition than double-entry bookkeeping makes the post office private.

Another indication the program is defective is the civil-rights analogy propagated by conservatives to defend it. Pro-voucher activists have yet to shake the notion that urban black and Hispanic parents have a *right* to a voucher made of other people's money.<sup>353</sup>

Of course, getting black people to control other people's money was the explicit goal of Fuller's campaign. Although Howard Fuller would later be called "Uncle Tom" for his close association with Republicans, the unique nature of Milwaukee's nonpartisan political system, persistent institutional racism by MPS, and Fuller's familiarity with the state government saw him having increased leverage to influence the local political economy.

By focusing on his year-long fight to advance a \$321 million dollar facilities project, a program which increased local taxes and required voter approval, and the details of his 1992-1993 budget, the rest of this chapter will highlight how Howard Fuller's work at MPS should be also be seen through a Black Power lens and hopefully lead future studies to interpret his later work not as "Black Republicanism" but as the natural extension of the 1960s Black Power movements, especially Milwaukee's version, which focused on interracial cooperation, winning tangle policy victories and seeking

---

<sup>353</sup> Horowitz, Carl R. "Vouchers as Reparations" *The Freemarket* September 1996 Volume 14, Number 9

greater control of public resources. While municipalities and institutions across the nation would increasingly adopt anti-affirmative action measures, Milwaukee's unique segregation and legacy of racial struggle continued to prompt African American leaders like Fuller to engage in organizing campaigns that would specifically empower black people through a racial justice lens. While the rhetoric was increasingly shifting from black power to "choice", which many have described as a free market concept, the goals of early 1990s leaders looked very similar to the grassroots activists of the 1960s. Because the landscape was defined by Milwaukee's intense segregation and institutional racism, racially driven participatory politics continued to be effective long after many considered the Black Power movement to be over, further leading to the framework raised by Peniel Joseph's *In the Midnight Hour* that Black Power didn't simply end in the 1960s. Fuller would increasingly adopt a color-blind rhetoric to mobilize his policy demands, but the goals of his projects remained the same.

Howard Fuller did not have the credentials to become Milwaukee Public School superintendent. But he did have the backing of the *Milwaukee Journal* and Tommy Thompson and, in 1991, the Wisconsin Legislature passed S-121, an emergency bill that gave MPS authority to waive a requirement that superintendents needed K-12 teaching experience to become the district's top boss. Feeling a sense of urgency after MPS' outgoing leader, Robert Peterkin, announced he was leaving in November 1990 to take a job at Harvard, Fuller's hiring united Democrats and Republicans in Madison with a vote 73-23.<sup>354</sup> It was clear that lawmakers felt hiring Fuller offered the district a unique

---

<sup>354</sup> Schuldt, Gretchen. "Peterkin Quitting To Take Job At Harvard." *Milwaukee Sentinel* November 20th 1990



opportunity, and thusly members of the assembly immediately introduced a “sunset bill” to S-121 which prevented “the Milwaukee School Board until July 1, 1995, from hiring a superintendent who does not have licensing or certification from the state Department of Public Instruction.” With the backing of most of the state’s decision makers in May 1991, Fuller became the chief executive of one of the nation’s largest school systems.

With an unprecedented amount of political support, Fuller began selling his vision for MPS’ future just months into the job. As usual, Fuller was dreaming big. By February 1992, the former “Header Nigger In Charge” of Malcolm X Liberation University announced he was seeking to raise property taxes to support a long-term building that plan that included a loan for \$321 million. The “\$474.3 million plan called for building 15 new schools, renovating 14 others and tackling \$54 million in deferred maintenance.” While the number was large, Milwaukee County Executive Tom Ament who, unlike Norquist, supported the tax increase stated, "To those who would say we can't afford it, I respond: We can't afford not to do it." Ament also stated, "It's a matter of pay now or pay later. We either build the facilities, reduce the class sizes and provide the support services today, or we will build the prisons and hire the caseworkers tomorrow."<sup>355</sup> Fuller also had the support of the conservative power brokers

---

Fuller Bill on Fast Track to Passage,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 12, 1991.

Richard P. Jones, “Hurdle to Fuller’s Candidacy About to Fall: Thompson Confirms He Will Sign Bill,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 19, 1991.

Richard P. Jones, “Senate Approves Waiver for Fuller,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 18, 1991. “Board Chooses Fuller as Superintendent,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 18,

<sup>355</sup> Ahlgren, Priscilla, Ament Backs Public Schools Plan, *Milwaukee Journal* January 21, 1993

Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, who undoubtedly saw such an infusion of cash into the local as benefit to its member.

To get the loan, Fuller had to convince voters to agree to the property tax increase via a public referendum slated for spring 1993. A rare moment in Milwaukee's history in which the interests of MPS' overwhelming black student population aligned with the city conservative business interests, Fuller had swung the popular discourse in his favor. The man that former Police Chief Harold Breier had labeled a Marxist had convinced the city's business-friendly daily paper the *Milwaukee Sentinel* to advocate for the proposal. After years of blocking public investments in the African American community, the business community had finally come to the same realization that Frank Zeidler had years prior: the African American community's problems were the entire city's problems and the lack of investment would undoubtedly be more expensive in the long run. Ironically this fact was not lost on the *Milwaukee Sentinel* editorial staff: "The simple fact is that Fuller's plan are so basic that we either pay for them now or we pay for them later, at higher cost."<sup>356</sup>

### *Creating the Echo Chamber for Big Ideas*

Fuller, whose initial foray into MPS activism, the fight to save North Division, centered on a new school facility, felt that winning the long-term borrowing authority would help alleviate pressure on MPS. But Fuller wasn't relying solely on Milwaukee voters to pass his property tax referendum. He also asked the Wisconsin Legislature to approve \$35 million in short-term borrowing authority to build a new school in the Clark

---

356 356

Street area.<sup>357</sup> He also aimed to build a new middle school on Milwaukee's near south side and make improvements to Lincoln Middle School of the Arts. Taking his case to the very same people who helped him get hired a year earlier, Fuller was exercising the political capital he earned from years of working inside of the system.

Barber's dissertation gives an excellent description of the steps Fuller took to build his resume prior to becoming superintendent, but does little to assess his work in the role. But it was clear that less than a year on the job and ready to burn political capital on controversial ideas, Fuller was not going to be satisfied with the status quo. The homegrown educator built a very strong coalition in Madison and amongst the business community to advance his attempts to bring cash into the district. But he also had not won over the entire black community. On-again-off-again ally State Representative Polly Williams was one of the main obstacles, as was the NAACP, which believed that Fuller's vision for improving black schools challenged the integrationist vision of older African American leaders like Barbee. In fact, the NAACP had unsuccessfully attempted to block his hiring in 1991.<sup>358</sup> The African American community's growing political power did not preclude unity, even if many were working towards the same goals. Despite the lack of disciplined unity, Milwaukee's black leaders were growing more effective at using the civic process to try to address the community's problems. A poll of around 500 voter showed that black voters overwhelming supported

---

<sup>357</sup> Walters, Steven. "Lawmakers are asked to Aid MPS" May 15th, 1992 Milwaukee Sentinel

<sup>358</sup> "Fuller's Bid Denounced By Coalition NAACP, 5 Church Groups Attack His Candidacy For Superintendent." *Milwaukee Journal* March 14, 1991

the referendum, but 37% of whites still did not believe in investing in black children.<sup>359</sup>

Fuller would look to allies to sure up the vote.

Since being elected to the common council in 1984, former Black Panther and longtime community organizer Mike McGee Sr. used public spectacle and direct action protest to force Milwaukee's mainstream media to pay attention to the community's compounding socio-economic problems. His tactics included disrupting a taping of *Good Morning America* that was being filmed on Lake Michigan by blowing whistles, threatening to throw burning tires on the freeway if the local officials didn't tackle black unemployment, and calling for snipers to fire on voters if he wasn't elected after his district was gerrymandered.<sup>360</sup> While scholars will undoubtedly continue to assess McGee's fiery brand activism, it's clear that the agitation aided the common council's other two black aldermen, Marlene Johnson and Marvin Pratt.

McGee's actions made national news and, although the local white press treated him like a black anti-hero, he wasn't the only black elected official frustrated with Milwaukee's continued institutional racism.<sup>361</sup> Alderwoman Marlene Johnson, who served her district between 1980 and 2004, was a champion for affirmative-action hiring within city government, and by 1983 was using grassroots organizing to shape a narrative about the role of affirmative action in public institutions.<sup>362</sup> The 1989 U.S. Supreme Court case

---

<sup>359</sup> Herzon, Karen. "Poll Show Most Blacks Back Plan. Only 37% of White Support Referendum" *Milwaukee Journal* January 23, 1993

<sup>360</sup> Alderman Tries to Shame City On ABC" *Record Dailey* Associated Press May 15 1991

Held, Tom. "McGee Burns Tires in Streets Warns of Tires of in Streets: Warns of Blockade This Year." *Milwaukee Sentinel* October 7th, 1992

<sup>361</sup> Howlett, Debbie. "Alderman Vows Snipers If Voters Snub Him Today" USA

<sup>362</sup> Blackwell, Mi "City Ripped on Minority Contracts Milwaukee Journal July 21st 1983

*City of Richmond v. Croson* would force local governments to demonstrate compelling interest in order to implement race-based hiring programs, thereby increasing the scrutiny on local agencies that used affirmative action programs to ameliorate the effects of historical discrimination.<sup>363</sup> After *Croson*, Johnson continued to advocate for the importance of race-based policy decisions to end decades of inequality, and she wasn't alone.

Johnson's fellow alderperson Marvin Pratt would seek to use his growing stature in local government and his reputation amongst the white press for being "reasonable," to become a louder voice for the economic interests of the African American community. Milwaukee's African American elected leaders at the city level were able to win concessions that attempted to improve the struggling black community's chances for getting hired on publically funded projects. Although discrimination in the workplace was outlawed by the Voting Rights Act's equal protection clause, African Americans often complained about there not being enough African Americans on public works projects. McGee's publicity stunts created cover for Johnson and Pratt, who used their positions to influence the political narrative and advocate for resources.

Alderman Pratt, unlike Fuller, found his way into public leadership first through the military and then as a graduate intern with Mayor Meier. Although he participated in the open housing marches of 1967, he was often "measured" with McGee and was not perceived to be a grassroots activist. Yet Pratt too would use his position of influence to

---

"Legends Taylor, Johnson-Odom & Buck" Milwaukee Community Journal, May 17th 2011

<sup>363</sup> Wysocky, Ken. "City's Minority Hiring Goals to Reflect Area Labor Market." *Milwaukee Sentinel* March 21st, 1989

fight for racial justice throughout his career and was even a complainant of the 1990 NAACP redlining suit against American Family Insurance.<sup>364</sup> When he was elected in a 1986 special election, he was immediately nominated to the Finance and Personnel committee, and would eventually serve as chair of the prestigious committee.<sup>365</sup> In 1996, Pratt used his position to once again advocate for African Americans to get increased access to public dollars when the city's Major League Baseball team, the Milwaukee Brewers, were seeking public financing from the city. "I would like to think that if we can have \$15 million to float a loan to the Brewers, then we can come up with a loan program for central city businesses. I am going to link them. I think we can do both."<sup>366</sup>

But none of the strategies to develop policy solutions addressing the growing financial problems in the black community matched the scope of the plan outlined during Fuller's short term as superintendent. The school facilities plan outline included plans for:

- Total of 331 new classrooms which capped size of between 19 and 24 students depending on grade
- Providing \$100 million or increased investments in computers, science, bilingual education and art

---

<sup>364</sup> "US Backs American Family Suit" *Milwaukee Sentinel* - Sep 12, 1990 NAACP v. American Family Mutual Insurance. 978 F.2d 287 (7th Cir. 1992)

<sup>365</sup> Sykes, Leonard "Kalwitz Picks Norquist Foes to Head Committees." *Milwaukee Journal* April 27 1992

<sup>366</sup> "Council Plan Put Condition on Stadium Loan." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Jul 16, 1996

- 297 new kindergarten classrooms, creating enough room to serve all eligible four and five year-olds

Additionally, a closer look at Fuller's 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 budgets also reveals bigger investments in the city's nascent alternative school program, which included funding for community organizations like Commandos I and Project Respect to educate nontraditional students. Fuller, who adopted a color-blind frame to position his plans, didn't have to use race to advance his projects. As the leader of the district, his budget priorities reflected his consistent political ideology.<sup>367</sup>

During Fuller's tenure as MPS superintendent gave more decision-making power to principals, advanced options for parent involvement, and also attempted to deal with growing district violence by implementing strong safety protocols like metal detectors at areas high schools. He would be constantly criticized for challenging teachers' authority and for encouraging greater accountability.<sup>368</sup> But the attempt to increase Milwaukee's property taxes was undoubtedly his biggest idea, as it could potentially impact the city in other ways.

Fuller's plan to build new school buildings would coincide with a policy cosponsored by Marvin Pratt in 1991 which mandated "that 14% of worker hours on most city-financed public works projects include unemployed residents from the areas of

---

<sup>367</sup> "1992-1993 Superintendent's Recommended Budget" Milwaukee Public Schools 1992

"1993-1994 Superintendent's Recommended Budget" Milwaukee Public School 1993

<sup>368</sup> Hooker, Daynel "Don't Condemn School, Fuller Says" Milwaukee Sentinel January 31st 1995

the city with the highest unemployment rates.”<sup>369</sup> Fuller’s building program didn’t specifically mention race, but his budget definitely set up African Americans to benefit strongly from the financial allotment allocated in MPS’ budget. African American political leaders had helped create an environment which saw them using public policy to advance increased investment of the black community. Fuller’s program would not only help African American students get better equipped to compete in the twenty-first century economy, but it would immediately hire black workers to work on the projects.

Attacking Fuller’s plan put Mayor Norquist in an uncomfortable position. Although MPS was facing financial shortages, Norquist saw the potential tax increases caused by Fuller’s budget as both a political liability and a ticking financial time bomb; he also might have feared that a successful program could have catapulted Fuller to run for mayor. Although his initial public statements about the budget ranged from reserved to politically charged, by fall 1992, Norquist and his team had developed a strong message campaign which would unite voters and make it difficult for Fuller’s budget to pass the necessary citywide referendum. Prior to Fuller getting the job at MPS, Norquist made a point to speak out against MPS’ rising taxes. In his inaugural budget address, the mayor came into office proclaiming his effort to reduce Milwaukee property taxes: “First, it is not enough to reduce—and hold—the city of Milwaukee’s tax rate if the Milwaukee Public School tax rate continue to spiral upward,” said Norquist in 1988. “The residents and businesses of Milwaukee frankly don’t care which level of

---

<sup>369</sup> Sykes, Leonard. “Panel OKs Law to Boost Minority Hires.” *Milwaukee Journal*: June 17, 1991



government is lowering or raising their taxes.” In the end, Milwaukee voters voted down Fuller’s budget.

Fuller would eventually leave his post at MPS in June 1995 citing his growing opposition with the MTEA as a source of frustration. Barber also highlights how the budget fight played a big role in his resigning.<sup>370</sup> He would later describe his tenure at MPS “as the most difficult job I’ve ever had in my life. Also, the best. I was running on adrenalin for four straight years...I felt so deeply about trying to help those kids.”<sup>371</sup> But Fuller butted heads with the teachers union from the beginning. The former Marxist, who sought to empower principals to fire poor-performing teachers, and challenged the union’s hegemonic influence at times by advocating to freeze teacher wages, felt that MTEA helped create a culture of failure in MPS. Less interested in fighting the tenets for neoliberalism than fixing MPS, the referendum loss, combined with the emergence of MTEA-backed political opponents on the school board, saw Fuller leaving his post. Looking back on the period, the still-active leader in 2007 stated: “I refused to die a death of a thousand cuts.” Unfortunately, it seems MPS might have befallen a tragic death.<sup>372</sup> By 1995, MPS’ next superintendent had begun discussing closing schools to improve district services and although black unemployment was so high in the 1990s that a sociologist described the period as a “Stealth Depression”, the plan was little more than

---

<sup>370</sup> “Milwaukee School Superintendent Is Resigning”: New York Times April 20, 1995

<sup>371</sup> Schubert, Sunny “Howard Fuller’s Allies Have Changed Over the Years But Not His Commitment To Poor People.” Wisconsin Interest Volume 21, No. 3

<sup>372</sup> Payne, Charles *So Much reform, So Little change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools* Harvard Education Press, 2008

a reorganization of the problem.<sup>373</sup> Scholars like Diane Ravitch and Charles Payne have noted that the intense, and interlocking problems impacting America's school reform movements have hampered districts like Milwaukee from truly turning a new leaf. From No Child Left Behind, to the increasing levels of corporate investment in public and private schools, few reform strategies have been able to combat the immense social problems impacting urban children.<sup>374</sup>

But despite the city's failure to advance the referendum, Fuller and African American leaders like Pratt, McGee and Johnson were able to shift the narrative locally. In Norquist's 1993 budget, the mayor outlined a \$3.9 million jobs bill aimed at increasing African American hiring in public jobs. It's hard not to imagine that the positioning by black leaders over the previous years hadn't influenced the fiscal conservative to advance the program.<sup>375</sup>

Fuller did not stop his attempts to transform MPS. By 1995, Fuller was working with his former political opponents, Norquist and Polly Williams, to advance school choice and voucher programs at the state level. He would also go on to become a national voice in the choice movement. The MTEA and many of his former activist allies would remain vocal opponents of Fuller's efforts to promote school choice programs, but

---

<sup>373</sup> Schubert, Sunny

Levine, Marc "Stealth Depression: Joblessness in the City of Milwaukee Since 1990" University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Center for Economic Development 2003

<sup>374</sup> Diane Ravitch, *Death and Life of Great American School System* Basic Books 2011

<sup>375</sup> Sykes, Leonard. "Council Expected to Back Jobs Plan." *Milwaukee Journal* January 26, 1993

the aging activist maintained his belief that black students were best served by community-based schools led by black leaders. Even though critics would argue that choice produced mixed results in improving African American educational success, the reform measure created pathways for a rapid growth of black-led institutions, and black educators to have a bigger share of public resources. Unfortunately, the Milwaukee Public School system was unable to make rapid transformations. Although initiatives like Chapter 220 and the choice program would be legislative attempts at fixing the troubled school system, they were not enough. The failing local economy, continued social problems and the lingering effects of institutional racism would continue to undermine student achievement in the district. According to a 2001 Manhattan Institute study, only 34% of African Americans attending MPS graduated.<sup>376</sup>

### *Conclusions*

Working from inside local and state government, Fuller was able to radically shift the way public resources were allocated to black communities. Fuller might not have been the originator of the Milwaukee choice idea, but his knack at building coalitions and his keen understanding of the MPS system undoubtedly helped make it become a reality. While his approach would anger traditional allies, especially those associated with the labor movement, Fuller's approach reflected the historical reality that African Americans had not, at least since the era of Frank Zeidler, had strong relationships with the city's white political leadership. Partially because of local government nonpartisan politics—

---

<sup>376</sup> Greene, Jay P “High School Graduation Rates in the United States” APRIL 2002 The Manhattan Institute for Policy Research Table 6

and mostly because of intense segregation—Milwaukee’s political landscape continued to be marked by racial politics. MPS’s board of supervisor and the teacher’s union would be some of his primary opponents later in his career, and on several occasions he noted that both institutions continued to engage in discriminatory practices in the 1980s and 1990s.

Fuller’s approach challenged traditional civil rights narratives, as he debated the effectiveness of integration and busing. Employing grassroots organizing tactics like civil disobedience and protest, Fuller also capitalized on his ability to navigate government and bureaucracies to push for radical policy changes long after he stopped identifying as a Marxist Pan-Africanist. While his political opponents would see his later effort as an embrace of conservative neoliberalism, the strategy reflected a continuation of Black Power struggle.

Fuller’s tough-nosed leadership at MPS wasn’t only reflected in budget fights. Much like Joe Clark in the semi-autobiographical 1989 film *Lean on Me*, the North Division graduate would also seek to improve student discipline at MPS while reflecting the cultural values of the African American community. Critics may argue that his attempt to advance such a big idea was premature so early in his tenure, but Fuller’s tactics reflected an understanding of MPS’ problems while also embracing the historical moment and incredible amount of political clout his position gave him. Rather than getting immersed in the organizational inertia of MPS, the innovative thinker sought to advance bold ideas that challenged the status quo. While leading the school district, Fuller adopted a color-blind rhetoric. But it’s clear that, while superintendent, Fuller was attempting to provide a framework for transactional politics that economically

empowered African American stakeholders. It would not be his last attempt at transforming the system. And although he may be been the most visible activist-turned-local institutional leader, Howard Fuller's work in MPS was a culmination of years of struggle by the black community. In fact, if it had not been for the concurrent struggle by his fellow black leaders, there is a good possibility that Fuller would not have been as successful.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### BLACK MILWAUKEE REVISITED

In *Black Milwaukee: The Making of the Industrial Proletariat 1915-1945*, Joe William Trotter Jr. argued that, despite their living and workplace conditions, African American workers living in the first half of the twentieth century were able to use their skills as industrial workers and artisans to forge a new political and economic identity for themselves. Working in the hot and dirty jobs in Milwaukee's tanneries and blast furnaces, black workers were able to develop a new standard of blue-collar happiness. However, in the late twentieth century, the momentum that Trotter described in Milwaukee's nascent black community was disappearing. The low-wage work was harder to find in the local economy as the surplus black labor force increasingly joined the rolls of public assistance programs. Moreover, because black workers were overwhelmingly clustered in industries that required heavy labor, Milwaukee's black community was ill-prepared to compete in the technology and communication booms of the 1990s. By the end of the century, as the manufacturing sector rapidly disappeared, many black Milwaukee's neighborhoods, once described as one of the best places to live for black folks, were mired in the socio-cultural and political consequences of permanent poverty and disempowerment.

This chapter will reassess African Americans' relationship to work, community and culture. While many blacks were cut off from mainstream employment opportunities, the streets and hip-hop provided African Americans an avenue to build their own "workplace" culture. Not only did Milwaukee drug dealers from this era call their drugs

“work,” but the resulting influx of drug money helped create a new street culture, complete with music, clothing, and old muscle cars, developed during the 1980s and 1990s. While the proletarian ethic shifted and waned during the era, urban blacks continued to forge for community and create cultural sensibilities that empowered the next generation of leaders to assert themselves in the socio-economic structures of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries.

### *Personal Conclusions*

When I was 17 years old, my cousin Lynn was murdered. Although Lynn was from Chicago, he and his brothers often came north to Milwaukee to stay with my uncle. Although Lynn was a loveable dude, he was a street kid. The last memory I have of my cousin is him memorizing the words of Outkast's "Players Ball." It was 7:00 a.m. and he was sitting on my bed, pressing rewind on my CD player. I got up and went to school. He probably didn't.

Lynn wasn't the first person I knew who had been murdered. Even though my parents moved to Milwaukee's working-class northwest side, formerly part of the unincorporated town of Granville, annexed by Frank Zeidler in 1956, when I was in the first grade, the harsh economic realities of the 1980s and 1990s had spread beyond what was once called the “inner-core.” By the time I was in middle school, kids from my neighborhood were getting jacked for Starter coats and my working-class teenaged friends and I were driving around in our big-body Cutlass Supremes and Caprice Classics with 9mms and shotguns. By the time I was in high school, the drug trade was booming and the quest to "stay fresh" was pulling everyone, from street kids like Lynn to blue-

collar mama's boys, into the "game." Thankfully, I had sports, a keen sense for leaving the scene before things got too hot and super-engaged parents, so I never really saw the streets or drug dealing as a viable option.

But many did. A recent article by *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* writer James Causey states that nearly 50% of all African American men in Milwaukee are either in prison, or have at one time been incarcerated.<sup>377</sup> It's staggering to consider that so many African Americans have been incarcerated and disenfranchised since Howard Fuller once took the reins at MPS. Of course, while I and young acquaintances prepared to be gangsters in our teens, by the turn of the century, the persistence of African American joblessness left nearly every other black man without a job. The jobs that had once prompted most of our elders and ancestors to move to Milwaukee in the 1950s and 1960s had disappeared, and, for many, the effort to continue with the blue-collar dream was futile. Many of my friends have left, some have stayed home and been successful, others not so much.

Despite the reform battles of the last several decades, local schools have still not shifted away from the outdated curricula which see students getting prepped to work in industries and sectors that will never come back. Things in Milwaukee have undoubtedly gotten worse as the city has seen a continued decline of the once-strong socio-economic climate. With the social safety nets cut, and the school system never receiving funding for the necessary jump to restart local education, it's probably hard for anyone living in Milwaukee's inner city to believe that things will get better anytime soon. Even though

---

<sup>377</sup> Causey, James. *Report: Over Half of Black Men in Their 30s in Milwaukee County Have Been Incarcerated* Milwaukee Journal April 18, 2013



President Obama mobilized millions of African Americans to the polls, with the more than 87% of the city of Milwaukee turning out to vote in the 2012 presidential election, the local political system is dominated by powerful conservatives like Scott Walker who have intensified the destruction of the safety net.<sup>378</sup> Wisconsin's labor movement, strengthened by its strong public sector unions, has been undermined as neoliberalism has dominated the landscape since Governor Tony Earl lost to Tommy Thompson in 1986. It also doesn't help laborers'—or poor people's—causes that many unions are still very much clinging to the organizing strategies of the twentieth century. Investing pension fund monies in many of the very industries and companies that crashed Wall Street in 2008, the labor movement has not had many innovative ideas, and has not worked well with leaders like Howard Fuller who have adopted outside-of-the-box approaches.

In many ways, post-Civil Rights Milwaukee is the perfect city for a case study about race and politics in the late twentieth century. Depicted by Hollywood as the prototypical American manufacturing town in 1970s TV shows like *Laverne and Shirley* and *Happy Days*, the city's rich manufacturing sector provided an unprecedentedly stable working-class lifestyle for its blue-collar residents. Decades after other regional manufacturing towns were beginning to experience the growing pains of the urban crisis, Milwaukee's local economy was relatively strong. But the celluloid images of happy, hardworking Midwesterners only represented one perspective of Brew City.

While the strength of the local economy provided unprecedented economic growth, the exploding, and ultimately unsustainable, demand for blue-collar labor forced local businesses to hire thousands of black workers from the south. While the cheap

---

<sup>378</sup> FALL GENERAL ELECTION” City of Milwaukee Election Commission November 6, 2012 City of Milwaukee. Run Date:11/07/12 03:31 AM

labor produced profits, it also attracted more outsiders. By 1953, the growing size of the black community alarmed conservative power brokers, and the close proximity of outsiders worried white working class residents who were unfamiliar with newly arriving blacks and their southern customs.<sup>379</sup>

In her text, *Warmth of Other Suns*, Isabel Wilkerson retells the story of how African American migrants often experienced unprecedented pushback from white working-class communities as they arrived in urban areas in the industrial north during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Mob attacks often prevailed as angry white residents frequently maimed and murdered black migrants in fits of public violence. But unlike early migration periods, which saw whites fighting to maintain local hegemony through individual and institutional violence, in Milwaukee, decision makers worked to establish a stiff political and cultural environment that sought to suppress the growing size and electoral strength of the African American community, while also maintaining strict control of the local political economy.

By the end of the 1990s, despite making up over a third of the city's population, African Americans continued to be on the margins of the local economy as redlining, employment discrimination and police brutality were consistent features of the local landscape. Much like African Americans living in other urban areas across the country, the promises and victories of the Civil Rights movement often did not translate to improved living conditions. Scholars like William Julius Wilson have argued how the rapid collapse of the domestic manufacturing sector created a permanent underclass, but

---

<sup>379</sup> We Refute Rumors” “Human Rights Commission Newsletter City of Milwaukee vol 1 no2 March-April 1953

the absence of work was not the only obstacle preventing the African American community from expanding its political and economic power during the era. After all, poverty, displaced families and oppressive institutions have been common themes throughout the African American experience.

A more nuanced historical narrative is needed if we are to truly understand the African American experience in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Although the economic indicators reveal that large segments of working-class black communities suffered from bouts of permanent joblessness, a deeper analysis of local policy reveals that white lawmakers and local business elite established and reinforced an economic and political climate that made it more difficult for African American working-class communities. *The New Jim Crow* lays the foundation for an entryway into a discussion about the persistent and punitive impact the criminal justice system has had on the black community. Alexander also acknowledges that much more research is needed if we are to truly understand why the outcomes of the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s have not resulted in a lasting positive transformative change for black communities.

### *Sooner than Later*

Gun violence has been the leading cause of death for African Americans between the ages of 15 and 19 since 1969. Today, this legacy of inner city violence is increasingly reflected in hip-hop culture.<sup>380</sup> While elected officials debate debt ceilings and ideological tomfoolery, our nation's youth are still suffering from the hopelessness that

---

<sup>380</sup> H. Snyder and M. Sickmund, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: A National Report*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1995.

was first set aflame in the riots of the 1960s. Without a solid investment (youth jobs, quality education and youth recreation) in their futures, we will lose this generation of young African Americans in the same way we lost many of the youth in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the early 2000s, hip-hop was still on guard from losing Biggie and Pac to the East Coast/West Coast war. Cultural tastemakers battled each other for supremacy. On one hand, we there were culturally conscious heroes: Common, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, and The Roots. On the other hand were Cash Money Records and the Hot Boys, comprised of Lil Wayne, Turk, BG, and Juvenile. For the most part, the city of Milwaukee was down with Cash Money.

Their influence on inner-city Milwaukee was amazing and complete. Street culture shucked off Jheri curl, wave nouveau and Philly Afros and replaced them with braids, gold teeth, Reeboks, and Girbaud jeans. At heart, I was on the side of the culturally conscious movement, but I understood the Cash Money message. Old enough to have seen “Beat Street” at the now-razed Capital Court theater, I knew that hip-hop was bigger than “bling bling”, but frequently getting pulled over by the police and working two jobs to pay for college, I also understood the need to stunt. The city’s violent crime rate was itching closer to Chicago’s. Nihilism was becoming a permanent fixture of the inner city existence.

Between shootouts in the streets and Wisconsin’s record-setting incarceration rate among black males, there is a good chance that many of the harsh economic statistics outlined above will get worse. Black youth in cities like Milwaukee, just like Lil Wayne and now Chief Keef, scare mainstream America because we believe them when they say

they have nothing to lose. They force us to come to grips with the fact that inner-city America is a violent, self-cannibalizing place. Our children have been presented with a worldview that puts them on a path towards self-annihilation. In most hoods, it's easier to find weed than work, and even our brightest young minds, who face all odds and succeed, might be walking home one day and catch a bullet in the back.

*The Future is in Our Hands*

Still, despite the realities of social and economic problems, young Africans Americans are politically more powerful than ever before, despite high levels of incarceration. According to University of Chicago Professor Cathy Cohen, in 2008 and 2012, young African Americans voted in larger numbers than any youth demographic, and African Americans as a whole voted in larger percentages than whites. Helping elect a person of color to the presidency for the first time in our nation's history, the hope and belief that was displayed during those highly transactional moments has the potential to transform the nation. It is hoped that this study highlights that it is possible to write new narratives.<sup>381</sup>

Howard Fuller's work in the Milwaukee Public School system is just one case study in how African Americans have been able to navigate systems and transform society. The prevailing narrative is undoubtedly aided by institutional racist inertia, but leaders and activists have been able to consistently shape a new path when they have connected their ideas to grassroots struggle. Conservatives have never completely

---

<sup>381</sup> Cohen, Cathy. *Democracy Remixed: Black Youth and the Future of American Politics* Oxford University Press 2010

dominated the local or national landscape. And while President Obama has adopted as many—if not more—centrist positions than former President Bill Clinton, progressive movements throughout our nation’s history have been able to historically win concessions from the state and force investment in the public good.

But, if the movement for social justice in Milwaukee, or anywhere in America, takes a racially polarizing approach, the potential for transformation will undoubtedly be lost. As young Americans of all backgrounds continue to creep down the economic ladder together, an opportunity is presented to embrace the populism that once motivated activists to stand up in the 1920s and 1930s. Because, although segregated cities like Milwaukee force leaders to adopt racial strategies, the movement for social justice has never been exclusively dominated by one race, nor have the struggles of poverty. “It occurred during my lifetime...primarily in the 1930s as a result of the Great Depression.” Farms for poor people and “Potter’s Grave” cemeteries, food and coal distribution, and, “Then when in 1935 Social Security came in, that made a great difference. The WPA (Works Projects Administration) and the PWA (Public Works Administration) and the National Youth Administration and the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) provided jobs.” Frank Zeidler’s reflection in 2002 provides us incredible insight into the struggles of the past.<sup>382</sup> It’s up to us to take head.

The 2010 Census reveals that in cities like Milwaukee, young blacks, whites, Latinos and a quickly growing Asian population are experiencing same similar economic difficulties. If large-scale infrastructure projects, like those advanced during the Great Depression are not implemented, many of today’s young people will likely never be fully

---

<sup>382</sup> *Giffey David*. “Missed” *FightingBob.com* September 30, 2012

employed.<sup>383</sup> In my opinion, young activists across the county should look to the legacy of organizing in Milwaukee and seriously consider adopting racially collaborative coalitions that build political power through grassroots and electoral organizing, and make extremely specific demands of the state. The bigger the coalition, the better as an extremely focused idea, like investing \$300 million to rebuild a local school system can bring together unlikely allies who might otherwise be focused on winning political battles rather than making government work for the people. It's up to us to force the conversation.

---

<sup>383</sup> *Young America: Barriers to the Economic Dream* Demos and Young Invincibles, 2011

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *Primary*

Adams, Juanita and Arlen Johnson, interview with Jack Dougherty, June 15, 1995 (at Ms. Johnson's home, 7225 N. 86th Street, Milwaukee) University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee UWM Libraries Archive

"Adoption of a Fair Housing Ordinance by the City of Milwaukee." The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Appendix G 3/11/11

"Allen Bradley Denies Discriminating Against Blacks." *Milwaukee Journal* Milwaukee August 6th, 1968

"Allen Bradley Union Ok Minority Drive." *Milwaukee Journal* 1968  
1 Jones, Patrick pg 246

"An Evaluation of State Financed School Integration In Metropolitan Milwaukee"  
*Wisconsin Public Research Report* June 1989 Vol 2 no 5

Amos et al. v. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee, 408 F. Supp. 765 (1976)

"An Evaluation of Effects of the Learnfare Program, 1993-1996" State of Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau 1997. Madison, WI: 1997;(22 September 2011)

"Annexation Proposal Would Hit the City Very Hard" *Milwaukee Journal* June 13 1955

Ahlgren, Priscilla, Ament Backs Public Schools Plan, *Milwaukee Journal* January 21, 1993

Ahern, Tom. "Minority Cuts Noted in County Work Force." *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 30th 1982 Tom Ahern

"1 Anonymous Letter 1967" Groppi Papers, Box 8, Folders 3-6, Correspondence, Hate Mail, 1967 (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive  
Anonymous Letter 1967" June 26th 1997  
3-1 Anonymous Letter" 1967  
"4 Anonymous Letter" August 1967"

"3 Anonymous Letter, Box 6" Groppi Papers, Boxes 5-7, Correspondence, Criticism Mail, 1965-1967 (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

"A.O. Smith's Future Looks Bright" *The Milwaukee Journal* - Mar 4, 1990



"A.O. Smith Still Here and Making Motors," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. May 5, 2008, sec. Business

"A.O. Smith Workers Say No To Contract." *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 12th 1991

"Allen Bradley Get US Warning on Bias." *Milwaukee Journal* August 6th, 1968

Alderman Tries to Shame City On ABC" *Record Dailey* Associated Press May 15 1991  
Held, Tom. "McGee Burns Tires in Streets Warns of Tires of in Streets: Warns of Blockade This Year." *Milwaukee Sentinel* October 7th, 1992

"Approved by Board on Long List" *Milwaukee Sentinel* January 25th, 1968 part 1 page

"Award Overturned in Discrimination Case" *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* July 19th .2007

Bauer, Fran. "Breier Say Hagedorn is A Revolutionary" *Milwaukee Journal* February 11th ,1984

"Barbee says Disarm" *Milwaukee Courier* Sept. 21, 1968 p. 1

BELL v. CITY OF MILWAUKEE 498 F.Supp. 1339 (1980)

"Bell, Daniel (Shooting of) March on Milwaukee" *Key Terms* Civil Rights Project  
Accessed April 1, 2013 <http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/keyterms/collection/march>

Beach, Bennett "Law: Accidents or Police Brutality?" *Time* Oct. 26, 1981

Bednareck, David. "Foes in North High Disagreement Talk It Out." *Milwaukee Journal* Sept 27<sup>th</sup>, 1979

Behrndt, David. "Black Student Cite Racism at Oshkosh." *Milwaukee Journal* January

Bert Zein "Tony Earl's Class Act Will Be Tough to Follow" *Milwaukee Journal* Dec 11, 1986

"Better Public Schools Study": Commission on the Quality of Education in the Metropolitan Milwaukee Public Schools". Madison, Wis. : Dept. of Public Instruction, 1985

"Black Christmas Backers, Foes Meet While By Marching." *Milwaukee Sentinel* Dec 19th 1967

"Black Community Grew Slowly" *Milwaukee Journal* February 9th, 1979

“Black Unionists Urge Members to Speakout.” *Milwaukee Journal* March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1986  
(metro part 2)

“Blacks Want to Be Part of the University.” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 23rd  
1968 pg 10 part 2

Blackwell, Mi “City Ripped on Minority Contracts Milwaukee Journal July 21st 1983

“Blight Elimination and Prevention - Prepared for Frank Zeidler ” Budget Supervisor,  
City of Milwaukee August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1954

Blight Project Earth Turned Bohn Digs First Spadeful as Start of Sixth Ward  
Construction Milwaukee Journal, January 8th 1948, pg 1

“Bohn Requests Aldermen Be Prepared When US Lifts Curbs” *Milwaukee Journal*,  
January 15, 1945

“Bohn Supports Lynch Protest” Milwaukee Sentinel, September 6th, 1948 pg 2

“Boy, 16, Fatally Shot Sitting in Car.” *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 26, 2005

“Breier Negro Minster Exchange Pleas.” *Milwaukee Journal* May 12,1967

“Breier Seeks Help to Hire Negroes.” *Milwaukee Journal* May 11th, 1967

Budget Briefs from the Legislative Reference Bureau Budget Brief 01–2 Wisconsin  
Legislative Bureau September 2001

“Buzz: Milwaukee's murder rate fell by 32 percent in 2008.” *OnMilwaukee.com -  
Milwaukee's Daily Magazine*.  
<http://onmilwaukee.com/politics/articles/mkemurders2008.html> (accessed September 23,  
2011)

Cano, Julio V “Police Chief’s Smooth Beginning Gave Way to Rocky Times.”  
*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* August 17th, 1996

Causey, James. *Report: Over Half of Black Men in Their 30s in Milwaukee County Have  
Been Incarcerated* Milwaukee Journal April 18, 2013

Changes in Household Wealth in the 1980s and 1990s in the U.S.” in Edward N. Wolff,  
Editor, *International Perspectives on Household Wealth*, Elgar Publishing Ltd.

“Chart: Milwaukee Public Schools Enrollment By Ethnicity” *Milwaukee Journal  
Sentinel* December 21st, 2001

Chronology of Significant Events Milwaukee Fire Department, Police Department, and Fire and Police Commission Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission 21 125th Anniversary Report pg

City of Milwaukee "Arthur L. Jones 1996 – 2003"  
<http://city.milwaukee.gov/Police/ArthurJones.htm> (March 1: 2011)

City's lead paint lawsuit dismissed" The Business Journal of Greater Milwaukee July 29th, 2003

"City's Riot Stands as Mayor's Rallying Point." *Milwaukee Sentinel* March 27th 1972

"Classes Suspended, 100 Held At Oshkosh." *Milwaukee Journal*, October 22nd 1968

Collins, Thomas. "Leaders of Minority Business Cite Lack of Financing." *Milwaukee Sentinel* , March 24th 1987 pg 5 part1

----- "Skate Kings Queens Frolic At the Palace." *Milwaukee Sentinel* December 20th 1982

"Complaint Made to LBJ." *Milwaukee Journal* May 25th, 1968 pg 4

"Confrontation Produces Results for Minorities, Says 3 Activists." *Milwaukee Journal* April 22nd,

"Cooperation Replaces Labor Militancy." *Milwaukee Journal* April 18th, 1988  
<http://docs.newsbank.com/g/GooglePM/MWSB/lib00253,0EB8285E8BA6E9A6.html>

"Council Plan Put Condition on Stadium Loan." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Jul 16, 1996

" Countdown" Vol 1 no 3 May, 1965 Barnhill Papers, Box 1, Folder 6, School Curricula, Schedules, and Records of MUSIC (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Library Archive

Corbett, Thomas: "Wisconsin Welfare Magnet Debate What is An Ordinary Member of the Tribe to Do When Witch Doctors Disagree." Division of University Outreach, Department of Governmental Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Cuprsin, Tim. Shanan, Bill "Drug Law Sponsor Seeks Eviction Halt" Milwaukee Journal Sept 17 1991

----- “Media Matters & Belling” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Dec 15  
2008 <http://www.jsonline.com/blogs/entertainment/36174639.html>

“Daily Footage: Ron Karenda Says No White Person Can Lead Black People” October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1968 March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library Archive

“Daily Footage September 22, 1967” March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

Deisinger, Chris "As contractors gripe, city studies upping 21 percent 'solution'" *The Business Journal-Milwaukee*, June 12, 1993

Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefanic *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* Temple University Press, 2000

Democratic Parlay “Rebuffs Southerners.” *Milwaukee Journal* December 6th, 1958

“Detroit Riot” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967\\_Detroit\\_riot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967_Detroit_riot)

Dixon, Jennifer. “Welfare Fraud Drops, Government Survey Finds -- \$1 Billion In Waste Found In Children's Benefits Program.” Associated Press

Donald Sykes. “Integration Opposed as Use of School Aid” *Milwaukee Journal* February 19th, 1968

Dopish, Alex P “A Farewell to the Good people”. *Milwaukee Journal* May 1st, 1984

Doremus, Mark “Paul Blackman Retrospective” Youtube Interview with Blackman May 19th, 2012 <http://youtu.be/JMa-f4hnn44>

Dr. Howard Fuller “March On Milwaukee: More than One Struggle,” Oral History Interview Interview conducted by Matt Blessing, Marquette University Archivist Conducted in the Raynor Memorial Libraries, January 22, 2008

“Dr. Martin Luther King Funeral Statement” Maier Administration, Box 171, Folder 15, Speeches, 1968 April (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

Drugs” *Position Papers* Series 3-2 Box 10 File 7 Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Campaign Papers, 1986 Gubernatorial Election Special Collections and Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

“Drug War Strains Quality of Life.” *Times Daily* November 5th, 1989

“Earl Nominee Anticipates New Role” *Milwaukee Journal* Dec 12th, 1982

“Economic State of Milwaukee” University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development 1998

Economic State of Milwaukee” University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development 1998  
<http://www4.uwm.edu/ced/publications/milwecon/chap5.cfm> (accessed September 23, 2011)

Elving, Ron. “Battle of Breier Bill is Not Finished” *Milwaukee Journal* May 9th, 1984

----- “Earl Signs Affirmative Action Order” *Milwaukee Journal* Oct 26, 1983

Executive Department, Executive Order 61” Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau August 1984

Fair Housing Act of 1968 (FHA) (42U.S.C.A. §§ 3601-3631)

“Fall General Election” City of Milwaukee Election Commission November 6, 2012 City of Milwaukee. Run Date:11/07/12 03:31 AM

“Family Ties Not Enough to Keep Family.” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 4 1990

Fauber, John. “An Era Ends for Blacks at A.O. Smith *Milwaukee Journal* March 4 1990

----- “Analysts question A.O. Smith cost cuts.” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 22nd 1991

“Family Sought New Lift Only to Find New Pain.” *New York Times* July 31, 1991

“Father Groppi Given Fine in Traffic Case.” *Milwaukee Journal* May 29th, 1967 part 3 page 5

Federal Bureau of Investigation. Crime in the United States” : Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.1991.

Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Uniform Crime Reports and Index of Crime in Milwaukee in the State of Wisconsin enforced by Milwaukee Police from 1985 to 2005”

Flanagan, Richard “The Housing Act of 1954: The Sea Change in National Urban Policy” *Urban Affairs Review* 1997

“From the Civil Rights Trenches to City Hall.” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Aug 1, 2007

Forjan, Dennis. “Repeal Breier Bill, Give Cheif Full Authority” *Milwaukee Sentinel* page 8 part

“Frank Zeidler.” *In Wisconsin*. Wisconsin Public Television, Thursday, June 25, 2009

“Fuller's Bid Denounced By Coalition NAACP, 5 Church Groups Attack His Candidacy For Superintendent.” *Milwaukee Journal* March 14, 1991

“Fuller Bill on Fast Track to Passage,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 12, 1991.

Fuller, Howard “Education, Choice and Change” Interview by Larry Rosenstock *Unboxed A Journal of Adult Learning in Schools* , Issue 6, Fall 2010

Fuller, Howard L. “The Impact of the Milwaukee Public School System’s Desegregation on Black Students and the Black Community(1976 - 1982) Ph.D Dissertation Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (January 1, 1985).

Fuller, Howard “The Struggle Continues\_Brown v. Board of Education Ended Legally Sanctioned Segregation, But the Decision’s Promise Awaits Fulfillment” *Educaion Next* FALL 2004 / VOL. 4, NO. 4

Fuller, Howard. “Winner of the 2004 Fordham Prize of Valor” Fordham Prizes for Excellence in Education Thomas B Fordham Foundation

“Fuller Quits State Job for MATC Position.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* August 28th, 1986

Rosenstock *Unboxed A Journal of Adult Learning in Schools* , Issue 6, Fall 2010  
Garfinkel and Melli. “Child Support: Weaknesses of the Old and Features of a Proposed New System”, Institute for Research on Poverty SR 32A. 1982.

Gibson, Ellen. “ Councilman Phillips Twice Blessed.” *Milwaukee Journal* April 4th, 1956

Gill, Bruce. “Marchers Recall Groppi, Seek to Rename Bridge After Him.” *Milwaukee Journal* August 25th, 1987

Gustafson, Paul. “Segregation Preferred, Says Poll.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* October 19, 1957

Gunn, Erik. “A.O. Smith union oks contract.” *Milwaukee Journal*, October 31st 1991  
----- “Norquist praises the ‘partnership’ between A.O. Smith and it’s unions.”  
*Milwaukee Journal*, Oct 4th 1994

Greene, Jay P “High School Graduation Rates in the United States” APRIL 2002 The Manhattan Institute for Policy Research Table 6

“Groppi Denounced by Militant” *Milwaukee Journal* Oct 2nd 1968

Gruson, Lindsey. "End Of Federal Revenue Sharing Creating Financial Crisis In Many Cities". *New York Times* January 31, 1987

"Harold Breier 1964-1984" *City of Milwaukee* Accessed April 1, 2011 <http://city.milwaukee.gov/Police/Breier.htm>

Hissom, Doug. "Milwaukee's Suburban Apartheid: America's No. 2 Segregated City has BIG problems to solve" *Shepherd Express* December 12, 2002

Herzon, Karen. "Poll Show Most Blacks Back Plan. Only 37% of White Support Referendum" *Milwaukee Journal* January 23, 1993

Hersh, Robert "Milwaukee Community Brown Fields Workshop" Center for Public Environmental Oversight (CPEO) December, 2007

Hicks, Kathrine. "Fuller Says Black District No More Separate Than Suburban Schools" *Milwaukee Sentinel* Dec 14, 1987

"History Milestones". A. O. Smith Corporation, Milwaukee, WI  
<http://www.aosmith.com/About/Detail.aspx?id=130> (accessed January 21, 2013)

Hinkley, Gerry. "Protests are Called Threat to Funding," *Milwaukee Sentinel* Nov 23 1968

History Comes To Life "Father Groppi leads Milwaukee Blacks 1967 May 24, 2011  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRBmuqy3pso>

Hooker, Daynel "Don't Condemn School, Fuller Says" *Milwaukee Sentinel* January 31, 1995

Horowitz, Carl R. "Vouchers as Reparations" *The Freemarket* September 1996 Volume 14, Number 9

"Housing Fund Moved Okayed: Council Group Acts", *Milwaukee Journal* January 30th, 1945 section M pg 9

Housing Poll Plea Dropped Builder Quit Demand for Referendum as Public Project", *Milwaukee Journal*, September 20th, 1949 pg 1

"Housing Referendum Unwise" *Milwaukee Journal*, February 11th, 1950 pg 5

"Howard Fuller." *Milwaukee Journal* March 21, 1982

Howlett, Debbie. "Alderman Vows Snipers If Voters Snub Him Today" USA Today - Feb 18, 1992

"Human Rights newsletter Distributed by Mayor' Commission on Human Rights" City of Milwaukee Jan-Feb No. 1 Vol.1 1953

<sup>1</sup> "Human Rights newsletter Distributed by Mayor' Commission on Human Rights" City of Milwaukee March-April No. 2 Vol.1 1953

H.R. 5210 (100<sup>th</sup>): Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988

H.R. 5729 (99<sup>th</sup>): Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986

"IRP Research in Child Support Policy: The Child Support Assurance Proposal, 1982-1992." Institute for Research on Poverty.

Jackson, Jesse "1988 Democratic National Convention Address" Democratic National Convention, Omni Coliseum, Atlanta GA 1988

Janaka, Rick & Karen Roethe. "North Division is Last Straw: Blacks." *Milwaukee Sentinel* July 31, 1979

"John Bohn Served Well", *Milwaukee Journal* April 21st, 1955 part 1 pg 22

"Johnson Demotes Detective Charged by Police Probers." *Milwaukee Journal* August 19th, 1963

Johnson, Geeta Sharma. "Advocate: Bravo Never Hesitates to Jump in the Fray." *Milwaukee Journal* March 18th, 1992 b1

Jones, Patrick. "WTMJ Footage Fr. James Groppi and the Historic 1967-68 Open Housing Campaign" Youtube Feb 24, 2011 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-78E\\_Ggm\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-78E_Ggm_o)

Jones Richard P., "Hurdle to Fuller's Candidacy About to Fall: Thompson Confirms He Will Sign Bill," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 19, 1991.

----- "Senate Approves Waiver for Fuller," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 18, 1991.  
"Board Chooses Fuller as Superintendent," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 18,

"Letter to Council" Maier Administration, Box 148, Folder 5, Press Releases and Statements, 1967 September (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library

Kane, Eugene. "The Crisis" Voice for School Choice Sep-Oct 2001



Katz, Jeffery. "Thompson Says Earl is Being Hypocritical." *Milwaukee Journal* September 29th, 1989 pg 2b

Kenny, Judith. "Picturing Milwaukee's Neighborhoods" Department of Geography University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
<http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/picture/collection/mkenh/>

<sup>1</sup> "Key Terms: Father Groppi" March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project, University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee Library Archive.

"Key Terms: Lloyd Barbee". March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project accessed 1.13.13  
<http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/assistedsearchvelphillips/collection/march>

"Key Terms: Vel Phillips." March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

Kisiel, Frank. *Automotive News*, "Frame Supplier A.O. Smith Ends Century-Long Auto Link," February 3, 1997.

Knoche, Eldon "Toliver Start Southside Marches." *Milwaukee Journal* April 26th, 1995

"Labs Helping to Arm Firms in the War on Drugs." *Milwaukee Journal* November 9th, 1986

Levine, Marc "Stealth Depression: Joblessness in the City of Milwaukee Since 1990" University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Center for Economic Development 2003

-----"The Crisis of Black Male Joblessness" (Center of Milwaukee Economic Development: University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, 2007)

-----"The Economic State of Milwaukee's Inner City: 1970-2000." Milwaukee: The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development, 2002

----- "The Two Milwaukees: Separate and Unequal." The Milwaukee County Task Force on Segregation and Race Relations April 30, 2003

"Legends Taylor, Johnson-Odom & Buck" *Milwaukee Community Journal*, May 17th 2011

"Lloyd B. Smith, Former Chairman and Chief Executive of A. O. Smith Corporation Dies at Age 87" A.O. Smith Issued Press Release Accessed January 1st, 2013

"Local Chapter of Angeles Urged." *Milwaukee Sentinel* September 20th 1982

“Manufacturing Jobs Losing Out to Service” *Milwaukee Sentinel* March 8th, 1993

Masterson, Peg “Dolan Alters A.O. Smith Course.” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 24, 1988  
pg 1 part

Maier, Henry. “*The Mayor Who Made Milwaukee Famous*. Madison Books 1998 pg 100

“Maier List 39 Point Foundation For Bias Fight.” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 7th 1967

Mouat, Lucia. “A New Approach to Child-Support Law”, *The Christian Science Monitor*

“Marches Arrests Mark Career” *Milwaukee Journal* Oct 24th 1968 pg 5

“Mayor Henry Maier Addresses Rumors” WTMJ Footage August, 2<sup>nd</sup> 1967, segment 1  
March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project

“McCann Election Could Prove Expensive.” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 17th, 1982  
page 16 part 1

“Metcalf Park to Receive Grant to Fight Gangs, Violence.” *Milwaukee Journal* Sept 22nd, 2003

Metro Public Housing Loses; Slum Clearance Wins” *Milwaukee Journal* April 4th, 1951

<sup>1</sup> “Middle Class Negroes Now Struggle to Link To Race” *Sarasota Journal*, January 17th. 1968

“Militants Stopped in Wisconsin”, *Ellensburg Daily Record*, February 12th, 1969

“Milwaukee Atlas 1970-2000” City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin March 2003

A Milwaukee Case Study: Relationship Between School Desegregation and Government Housing Programs 1980 National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC

“Milwaukee County Executive Budget” David F Schulz Milwaukee County 1995

Mjageki, Nina. “Milwaukee Commission” *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Organizations* pg 291

Mulligan-Hansel, Kathleen and Fendt, Pamela “Unfair Sanctions: Does W-2 Punish People of Color?” *Institute for Wisconsin’s Future* 2002

Mulvey, Mike "New Law Should End Lacy Case, 2 Say" *Milwaukee Sentinel* Say November 30th, 1987

"NAACP Commandos Will Be Organized," *Times Daily*, July 6th 1963

MUSIC Records, Box 1, Folder 1, Correspondence and Memos, 1965-1966  
3 Lloyd A Barbee letter, 1965 May March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Library Archive

*NAACP v. American Family Mutual Insurance*. 978 F.2d 287 (7th Cir. 1992)

"Need More Judges For Youth" *Milwaukee Sentinel* May, 13th 1964

Negro Uplift Chance Seen: Defense Emergency Holds Great Opportunity, Say Urban Leader." *Milwaukee Journal*, December 18th 1940 pg 14

"Negroes Subpoena Breier." *Milwaukee Journal* Feb 1, 1965 pg 1

Nelson, James. "County Employees Could Face Layoffs." *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 15th 1992

Newark Riots" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967\\_Newark\\_riots](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967_Newark_riots)

News film clip of demonstration against school construction at the site of MacDowell School in Milwaukee on December 8, 1965 (with sound) March On Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

Nichols, Mike "2 Issues Decided Along Racial Lines in Council Voting on Stadium, Zoning Ordinance Showed a Split" *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, August 5th, 1996

Norman, Jack "Activists Played Role :Artisan's Claim Lacks Data" *Milwaukee Journal* January 13 1996

Norquist, John. *Wealth of Cities: Revitalizing the Centers of Urban Life*. Da Capo Press 1998 pg 26

Observances of Weeks Requested by Mayor" *Milwaukee Journal*, February 2, 1949 section L pg 3

Oliver, Pamela "Some Facts About Race and Prison in Wisconsin" *Wisconsin State Journal* May 26, 2002  
<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~oliver/RACIAL/DOCdata2001/WiscPrisonAdmissions.htm>

(accessed 11.17.11)

----- “Wisconsin Total Admission”

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~oliver/RACIAL/Graphics/WisconsinTotal.htm> (March: 2011)

Open Housing Section 106.50 of the Wisconsin Statutes

Open Housing Statement” Maier Administration, Box 171, Folder 15, Speeches, 1968 April (selections) March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

Oral History Interview with George Esser, June-August 1990. Interview L-0035. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Oral History Interview with Howard Fuller, December 14, 1996. Interview O-0034. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

“Oral History Interview with Lauri Wynn”, interview with Jack Dougerty June 9, 1995, part pg 7 March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive.

Oral History Interview with Wesley L. Scott, July 25, 1995, part II At His Office Chamber of Conference with Wesley Scott July 25th 1995 part II March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights Project University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archive

“Owners: A.O Smith Company Milestones” A.O. Smith Corporation, Milwaukee WI <http://www.aosmith.com/About/Detail.aspx?id=130> (accessed January 15, 2012)

“Parents Challenge Gousha.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* February 27th, 1968 pg 4 part 1

Parks, Dan. “Barbee Had A Ten Year Fight With Segregation” *Milwaukee Sentinel* January 2nd 1992

“Percentage of Children in Single-Parent “Families in Wisconsin Counties 1980-1990”, *Wisconsin Family Impact Seminars*

Phillip Arreola (1989-1996)” <http://city.milwaukee.gov/Police/Arreola.htm> (accessed 11.13.11)

“Police Rules Seen Costly To Enforce.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* July 26th, 1978

“Police Chief Negro Swap Sharp Word.” “ *Milwaukee Journal* August 11th, 1965

“Prison” *Position Papers* Series 3-2 Box 10 File 7 Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Campaign Papers, 1986 Gubernatorial Election Special Collections and Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

Prisons” *Campaign Papers 1986 Gubernatorial Collection* Series 3-2 Box 10 File 6 Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

“Pupils Ask to Get Out Of Hawley” *Milwaukee Journal* February 1st, 1968

Quinn, Lois and John Pawasarat “Racial Integration in Urban America: A Block Level Analysis of African American and White Housing Patterns” *Employment and Training Institute, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 2002, revised January 2003.*

Quinn, Lois M. Michael G. Barndt, Diane S. Pollard “Relationships between school desegregation and government housing programs a Milwaukee Case Study.” by National Institute of Education 1980

“Races” Candidate Details: Tommy Thompson” *Our Campaigns* Accessed 1.12.13  
<http://www.ourcampaigns.com/CandidateDetail.html?CandidateID=520>

“Races: The Shame of Milwaukee.” *Time*, April 2nd, 1956

Rasche, William Frank “The Need in Milwaukee for Extending Employment to Negroes” Employers Association of Milwaukee 1946 (accessed 11.22.11)  
<http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/tp/id/54229/show/54214/rec/13>

Raspberry, William. “A ‘Crazy’ Idea For Teaching Black Kids.” *Washington Post* November 18, 1987

“Remembering an Era 1921-1958: 10,000 Automobile Frames a Day.” A. O. Smith Corporation, Milwaukee, WI 1978

“Remembering McCarthy: Career Timeline” Wisconsin Historical Society  
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/feature/mccarthy/timeline.asp> (accessed January 19th, 2013)

“Residency Rule Fought by Employee” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 5th 1971 pt 2 g 8

Reuss Will Get Things Done.” *Milwaukee Journal* April 1, 1948 pg 20

Riley, Robin. "Earl Criticized For Considering Activist." *Milwaukee Journal*, Nov 30th, 1982

Role of Government" *Position Papers* Series 2-3 Box 10 File 6 Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Campaign Papers, 1986 Gubernatorial Election Special Collections and Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

Schmid, John. "Employment of black men drops drastically: UWM study of 2010 Census Data Finds Record Low in Milwaukee" *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Jan. 23, 2012

-----"Out of Steam Decline of Railroad Sidetracked Hopes of Many" *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Dec. 5, 2004

----- "Out of Steam: Hit By A Global Train—First of Three Parts." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 5, 2004.

----- . "Out of Steam: Still Separate and Unequal a Dream Deferred--Second of Three Parts." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 6, 2004

-----"Where city factories, and now babies, die" *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* Nov 11, 2011

"Sees Federal Housing Help: City May Be Aided in Slum Clearance If It Hurries, Chicagoan Says." *Milwaukee Journal*, July 25th 1944

Schanen, Bill. "Group Gives Police Chief Ultimatum on the Three Officers: Areola Told To Fire Police Officers Or Prepare For Civil Disobedience" *Milwaukee Journal* Sept 3rd 1991 page B7.

"School Desegregation in Boston 1974" *Eyes on the Prize*, America's Civil Rights Movement 1974-1985

Schubert, Sunny "Howard Fuller's Allies Have Changed Over the Years But Not His Commitment To Poor People." *Wisconsin Interest* Volume 21, No. 3

Schuldt, Gretchen. "Peterkin Quitting To Take Job At Harvard." *Milwaukee Sentinel* November 20th 1990

Silvers, Amy Rabideau. "Nowakowski was civic leader Former alderman, father of 7, served on key local panels." *Milwaukee Journal*, November 7th 2007

"Smith Plans to Issue Stock" *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 5th 196

"Speakers defend Hawley Busing Plan." *Milwaukee Journal*, January 30th 1968

“Speakers Lambaste Breier” *Milwaukee Journal* August 31, 1981 pg 4

“Special Message to the Congress Presenting a 21-Point Program for the Reconversion Period.” President Truman September 6, 1945 The American Presidency Project

“Special Report. "Room 201 City Hall." March 12, 1960.” Archives / Milwaukee Area Research Center. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries

Stafford, Gary. “State Black Political Convention Set For Next Weekend Here” February 19th, 1984 part 2 pg

Stein, Sara. “Oshkosh Black Student Union Remembers Black Thursday.” *The Advance Titan* November 29, 2012

Supermax Prison Groundbreaking” *Gubernatorial Papers Speeches Governor, 1991-2001* Series 2-2-1 Box 16 File 7Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

Sykes, Leonard. “Council Expected to Back Jobs Plan.” *Milwaukee Journal* January 26 , 1993

----- “Kalwitz Picks Norquist Foes to Head Committees.” *Milwaukee Journal* April 27 1992

“Term: Black Thursday (November 21, 1968)” *Dictionary of Wisconsin History* Wisconsin Historical Society

“Term: Coggs, Isaac N. 1920” *Dictionary of Wisconsin History* Wisconsin Historical Society  
[http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term\\_id=2863&search\\_term=coggs](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term_id=2863&search_term=coggs) Accessed 1.12.13

“The Allen Bradley Case.” “*Milwaukee Journal* January 15, 1969

“The Case of Ernest Lacy Still Unresolved.” *The Dispatch AP* July 8th, 1982

The Mayor-Council System” *Wisconsin Blue Book* 1979-1980 University of Wisconsin-Extension pg 153

The Milwaukee Newsreel Program. March 19, 1952” WTMJ News Collection. Archives / Milwaukee Area Research Center. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries.

“The Shame of Milwaukee” *Milwaukee Journal* March 31, 1956

“Thompson Backs Prison in Waupun” *Telegraph Herald* March 10, 1985

Thompson, Tommy “United We Stand Conference” Aug 12, 1995

“Thompson Warns of Threat to AFDC.” *Milwaukee Journal* Dec 17th, 1991

“Three Christmas Marches Held Without Incident”, *Milwaukee Journal* Dec 26th, 1967

Trebach, Susan. “Earl Dumped Fuller as Liability, Lawmaker Claims.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* August 29th, 1986

Trevor, Jason. “David F Shulz 1949-1997” *Chicago Tribune*, October 10th, 1997  
A Look at Police” *Milwaukee Journal* Sept 14, 1964

Truman, Harry, “Statement by the President Approving the Housing Act” August 10th, 1948 Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*

“Turning Points: Depression and Unemployment,” *Wisconsin Historical Society*  
[http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-045/?action=more\\_essay](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-045/?action=more_essay)

TV and Press” Maier Administration, Box 148, Folder 5, Press Releases and Statements, 1967 September (selections) *March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project*  
University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library Archives

“Uniform Crime Reports and Index of Crime in Milwaukee in the State of Wisconsin enforced by Milwaukee Police from 1985 to 2005” UCR Crime Statistics prepared by the: The Disaster Center

Uniform Crime Reports and Index of Crime in Chicago in the State of Illinois enforced by Chicago Police from 1985 to 2005

Uniform Crime Reports and Index of Crime in Milwaukee in the State of Illinois enforced by Chicago Police from 1985 to 2005

“Union Rejects Smith Proposal.” *Milwaukee Sentinel* August 18th 1977, part 2 pg 11

“US Accuses AB of Bias in Hiring.” *Milwaukee Journal* May 25th 1968 pg 1

US Census Bureau. *City of Milwaukee Quick Facts: 2000 Census* (Washington DC: US Census Bureau, 2011) <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/55/5553000.html>

US Census Bureau. *1970 and 2000 Milwaukee County Households Poverty by Status* Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 2011



US Census Bureau. *1970 Poverty Demographic Report, 1970 Census, Milwaukee County, WI* Washington, DC: US Census Bureau via *Social Explorer 2010*

US Census Bureau *2000 Poverty Demographic Report, 2000 Census, Milwaukee County WI,* Washington, DC: US Census Bureau via *Social Explorer 2010*

US Census Bureau. "State and County Quick Facts"  
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/55000.html> Washington DC: US Census Bureau, 2011

US Census 1960 (US, County & State), Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau Data set: Social Explorer Tables (SE) Table:t16. Race [8] Universe: Total Population

US Census 1980 Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer Data set: Social Explorer Tables (SE) Universe: Black Alone Population for whom poverty status is determined

US [Census 1990](#) Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer  
Data set: [Social Explorer Dataset \(SE\)](#). Table: T101. Poverty Status in the 1989 (Black Population) [3] Universe: Black Persons for whom poverty status is determined

"US Accuses AB of Bias in Hiring." *Milwaukee Journal* May 25th 1968

US Backs American Family Suit" *Milwaukee Sentinel* - Sep 12, 1990

"US Goes After Casual Drug Users." *Milwaukee Journal* June 13, 1989.

US Panel Will Monitor Lacy Investigation." *Milwaukee Journal*, July 29th, 1981 part 2 page 1

"Views on Race Were Shaped Subtly." *Milwaukee Journal* May 13th, 1991

Wahner, James H and Stepaniak, Jerome "Welfare In Migration A Four County Report" WPRI 1988 Vol No 5 pg 6

Walters, Steven. "Lawmakers are asked to Aid MPS" *Milwaukee Sentinel* May 15th, 1992

"Waupun Union Backs Thompson," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Sept 27th, 1986

Wisconsin Black Political Convention Documents, Howard Fuller Personal Archive

WPBC Workshop Documents February 24-16 8 pages

WPBC Criminal Justice 10 pages

WPBC Education 24 pages

WPBC Health 10 pages

WPBC Economic 10 pages

WPBC Women Issues 24 pages  
WPBC Workshops 2 pages  
WPBC Participants in Black Agenda Committee 2 page  
Grigsby, Eugene and Perry Messy "State of Black Wisconsin: A Preliminary Report"

"We Refute Rumors" *Human Rights Commission Newsletter* City of Milwaukee vol 1 no2 March-April 1953

"Welcome to the Imani Area." Milwaukee County Government Website  
<http://county.milwaukee.gov/Aging7705/ConnectingCaringCommunities/Neighborhoods/Amani.htm>

"Welfare" *Position Papers* Series 3-2 Box 10 File 16 Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Campaign Papers, 1986 Gubernatorial Election Special Collections and Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

"Welfare In-Migration Plan Announcement" Kenosha, WI Gubernatorial Papers, Speeches Governor, 1987 (Paper) *Position Papers* Series 2-2-1 Box 12 File 4 Tommy G Thompson G Collection, Archive Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library

"Who's to Blame: The Briggs Debacle." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. May 22, 1994

Wilkerson, Isabel. "How Milwaukee Has Thrived While Leaving Blacks Behind." *New York Times*, March 19, 1991

Wisconsin Cartographers' Guild, *Wisconsin's Past and Present: A Historical Atlas* Madison: University of Wisconsin p. xliii

"Wisconsin Governor Calls Welfare Program 'Tough Love'" *Associate Press* February 2, 1988

"Wisconsin Health Counts - Infant Health 1995." Wisconsin Department of Health Services. <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/births/95INFANT.htm> (accessed September 23, 2011).

"Wisconsin's 'Learnfare' Program Meets Resistance; Governor Seeks Expansion." *The Associated Press* April 12, 1990,

Worthington, Rogers. "Black School District Plan Is Challenged" September 29, 1987

Wysocky, Ken. "City's Minority Hiring Goals to Reflect Area Labor Market." *Milwaukee Sentinel* March 21st, 1989

“Youth Hangouts Tell Story of a Fragile, Uneasy Truce With Gangs.” *Milwaukee Journal* May 9th 1983 part 1 page6

“Zeidler, Carl, Frederick (1908-1942) *Dictionary of Wisconsin History* Wisconsin Historical Society

Zeidler, Frank “The Problem of Metropolitan Government in the United States and Some Answers” 194?

“Zeidler: Same Enforcement of Laws For All.” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 25th 1959 part 1 page 9

Zeidler, Frank. “Some Conditions in Milwaukee at the time of Brown v. Board” *Marquette Law Review* 2005 pg 75-82

Zeidler Urges Speed on Permanent Housing” pg two *Milwaukee Sentinel* April 21, 1948,

“Zeidler Won’t Run Again: Surprises Friends and Foes” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 31st 1959 page 2 part 1

“2 Groups Seek Clout at Grassroots” *Milwaukee Journal* January 17, 1983

“119 Arrested in Riot Here Give Their Voice.” *Milwaukee Journal* November 8th ,1968

385 F.3d 1043: Joseph R. Anderer, Jr. v. Police Chief Arthur Jones, et al.

1975 Assembly Bill 1040 Chapter 220 3 May. 1975

“1986 Budget in Brief” City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin SEPT 20TH, 1985 pg 1

“1987 Budget in Brief” City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin September 24th, 1987 1986 pg 5

1989 Budget in Brief” City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1987

“1990 Budget in Brief” City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1989 pg 14-19

“1990 Budget in Brief” City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin. September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1989 pg 12

“1991 Budget in Brief” City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin No Date, 1990 pg 5

“1992-1993 Superintendent’s Recommended Budget” Milwaukee Public Schools 1992

“1993-1994 Superintendent’s Recommended Budget” Milwaukee Public School 1993

“2000 Annual Report” *Milwaukee Police Department* City Of Milwaukee 2001

“2000 Plan and Budget Summary” City of Milwaukee State of Wisconsin. 1999

“15,000 line up for 200 jobs: Jobless brave 20 degree weather in Milwaukee”. *The Deseret News*, Jan 18 1982

“140,000 Raised in State Campaign For College Fund” *Milwaukee Sentinel* October 8th, 1982 Page 4, part 1

### ***Secondary***

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, New Press 2010

Asante, M. K. Jr. *It's Bigger Than Hip-Hop: The Rise of the Post Hip-Hop Generation*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008

Barber, Sarah, "Never Stop Working: Examining the Life and Activism of Howard Fuller" (2012). *MA Thesis*. University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI. pg 6

Bell, Derrick. *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*. Basic Books 1992

Belvin, Brent H. *Malcolm X Liberation University: An Experiment in Independent Black Education*. Ph.D dissertation North Carolina State, 1994

Bradley Anderson, Jean *Durham County: A History of Durham County*, North Carolina Duke University Press, 1990 357

Braun, Marck E *Social Change and the Empowerment of the Poor: Poverty Representation in Milwaukee's Community Action Programs 1964-1972*. Lexington Books, 2001

Brown, David *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 1846-1855* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 82-83

Brown, Frank “Nixon’s Southern Strategy and the Forces Against Brown” *Journal of Negro Education* Vol 73 no 3 191 -208

Brown, Scot. *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism*. New York: New York University Press, 2003.

Chang, Jeff, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005

----*Total Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip-Hop* New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2006

Cohen, Cathy. *Democracy Remixed Young Blacks and the Future of American Politics* Oxford Press 2010

-----*The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997

Currey, Josiah Seymour .“Migrating North for a Better Life” *University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Graduate School* Vol. 19, No. 2

Davidson, James, *Culture Wars: The Struggle To Define America* Hunter Basic Books NY 1992

DeMarcell, Willy Smith and Eva W. Chunn. *Black Education: A Quest for Equality and Excellence*. Transaction Publishers, 1988

Demkovich, Linda. "Milwaukee: Feeling the Fiscal Pinch." *The National Journal* 14, no. 23 (1983): 999.

Domke, Davide. *Racial Cues and Political Ideology An Examination of Associative Priming* University of Pennsylvania 2001

Dougherty, Jack. *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of School Reform in Milwaukee* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004

Dixon, Bruce. “Ten Worst Places to Be Black.” *Black Commentator* July, 200

Elving, Ron “Breier Rips Activists Fuller For His Marxist Fuller” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 18, 1982 page 1 part 1

Fink, Leon *Workingmen’s Democracy: the Knights of Labor and American Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983

Fielder, Patrick “The Wisconsin Department of Corrections an Expensive Proposition. *Marquette Law Review*”, Vol 76, Issue 3 Spring 1993

- Fyfe, Skolnick. *Above the Law: Police and the Excessive Use of Force* Simon and Schuster, New York May 11, 2010
- Geib, Paul. "From Mississippi to Milwaukee: A Case Study of Southern Black Migration to Milwaukee" *Journal of Negro History* v. 83, no. 4 Autumn: 1998 p. 229-
- George, Nelson *Hip Hop America* New York: Viking, 1998
- Giffey David. "Missed" *FightingBob.com* September 30, 2012
- Gutman, Herbert. *Working, Culture, & Society in Industrializing America* New York: Vintage Books, 1977
- Horne, Gerald. *Fire This Time*. DeCapo Press 1997
- "Housing Bill Sent to the Grave: Zeidler Plan Rejected", *Milwaukee Journal*, March 12, 1957 part 1 pg 14
- Howe, Neil and William Strauss' *Millennials Rising: The Next Generation* Random House 2009
- Hylton, J Gordon "The Singing Mayor from Marquette Law School" *Marquette Law School History*, September 26th, 2010
- Jennings, James "The Politics of Black Empowerment: The Transformation of Black Activism in Urban America: Wayne State University Press, 2000
- Joseph, Peniel. *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2010  
 ————— *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* New York: Owl Books, 2007
- Johnson III, Ollie A., Karin L. Stanford *Black Political Organizations in Post Civil Rights* Rutgers University Press, 2002
- Joya, Wesley. "Milwaukee County Mulls 'Cashless Welfare' System" *Associated Press* August 31, 1990
- Jones, Patrick *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009
- Kelley, Robin. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* New York; Simon and Schuster, 1996 pg 4
- Kitwana, *The Hip-Hop Generation*, p. 7 Ollie Johnson and Karin Stanford, *Black*

*Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002

Korstad, Robert R. and James L. Leloudis *The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America*: University of North Carolina Press 2010

Kruse, Kevin Michael. *White Flight: Atlanta And The Making Of Modern*. Princeton University Press, 2005

Lassiter, Matthew D. "The Suburban Origins of "Color-Blind" Conservatism Middle-Class Consciousness in the Charlotte Busing Crisis" *Journal of Urban History* May 2004 vol. 30 no. 4 549-582

Lester Grinspoon, M.D.& James B. Bakalar, J.D. *The War on Drugs—A Peace Proposal* New England Journal of Medicine. pp. 357–360.(February 3, 1994).

Lerner, Michael *Surplus Powerlessness: The Psychodynamics of Everyday Life and the Psychology of Individual and Social Transformation* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1991)

Marable, Manning. *Race, Rebellion and Reform*, University of Press Mississippi, 2007  
Mastaran, David , *Privateer: Building a Business; Reforming Government* Self Published 2013

Masterson, Peg "A.O Smith in Throes of Restructuring" A.O. Smith March 24 1988

Mauer, Marc. *Race to Incarcerate*. The New Press, 2006

McWhorter, John H. *All About the Beat: Why Hip-Hop Can't Save Black America* New York: Gotham Books, 2008

----- "Segregation Is Down. Great News, Right? But was it ever really a bad thing that black people lived together?" *The Root* January 31, 2012  
<http://www.theroot.com/views/black-residential-segregation>

Miner, Barbara, *Lesson from the Heartland: A Turbulent of Half-Century of Public Education in Milwaukee*, New Press New York 2013

Mintz, Sidney. *Worker in the Cane New Haven*: Yale Press 1974

Merida, Keven "Howard Fuller: 60s Activists Still Active" *The Milwaukee Journal* March 21st, 1982

Murray, Charles. *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Live* Free Press 1994

- Neal, Mark Anthony *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture in the Post Soul Aesthetic*, Routledge Chapman & Hall, 2002
- Neal, Steve. *Miracle of 1948: Harry S Truman Major Campaign Speeches & Selected Whistle Stops* Southern Illinois University Press 2003
- Ozzane, Robert. *The Labor Movement in Wisconsin: A History* State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1984
- Painter, Nell Irvin “New Labor History and the Historical Moment” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 2, no 3 pp 367-370 Spring 1990
- Payne, Charles *So Much reform, So Little change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools* Harvard Education Press, 2008
- Perlstein, Rick. *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* Nation Books. New York, 2009
- Rawick, George *From Sunup to Sundown the Making of a Black Community* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972
- Rose, Tricia *Black Noise* Middleton: Wesleyan Press, 1994
- Schafer, Byron and Johnson, Richard, *The End of Southern Exceptionalism* Harvard University Press 2006
- Segrue, Thomas. *Origins of Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton University Press, 1996
- Sides, Josh. *African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present*. University of California 2006
- Smith, Demetra & Mikelson, Nightingale Kelly S. “An Overview of Research Related to Wisconsin Works (W-2)” The Urban Institute March 2001
- Smith, Kevin D. “From Socialism to Racism: The Politics of Class and Identity in Postwar Milwaukee” *Michigan Historical Review* Vol 29, No.1 2003
- Snyder H. and M. Sickmund, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: A National Report*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1995.
- Squires, Gregory D “Insurance Redlining: Still Fact, Not Fiction” *Shelter Force* Issue #79, January/February 1995



- Stotts, Stuart. *Father Groppi Marching For Civil* Wisconsin Historical Society 2013
- Taylor, Jon E. *Freedom to Serve: Truman, Civil Rights and Executive Order 9981* Routledge New York, NY 2013
- Tiles, Steve “Compassionate Conservative, Domestic Policy and the Politics of Ideational Changes” in *Crisis of Conservatism, the Republican Party and the Conservative Movement After Bush* Oxford University Press 2011 pg 197
- Trotter, Joe William. “*The Making of the Industrial Proletariat 1915-1945*”
- Tyson, Timothy *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001
- Vanhorne, Winston. “Relevance of Black Power: Sustaining Black Studies ” *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3,(Jan., 2007), pp. 37
- West, Cornell. *Race Matter*. Vintage Books 1994
- William Joe Trotter, *Making of Black Milwaukee an Industrial Proletariat*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007
- Wilson, William Julius. *When Work Disappears* New York: Random House, 1996
- The Bridge over the Racial Divide: Rising Inequality and Coalition Politics* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001
- The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980
- Wisconsin Lawyer: “Lloyd Barbee: Fighting Segregation Roots and Branch” Vol. 77, No. 4, [April 2004](#)
- Woodard Komozi, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) and Black Power Politics*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999
- Zeidler, Frank *Liberal in City Government* Milwaukee: Milwaukee Publishers, 2010)