

Justice

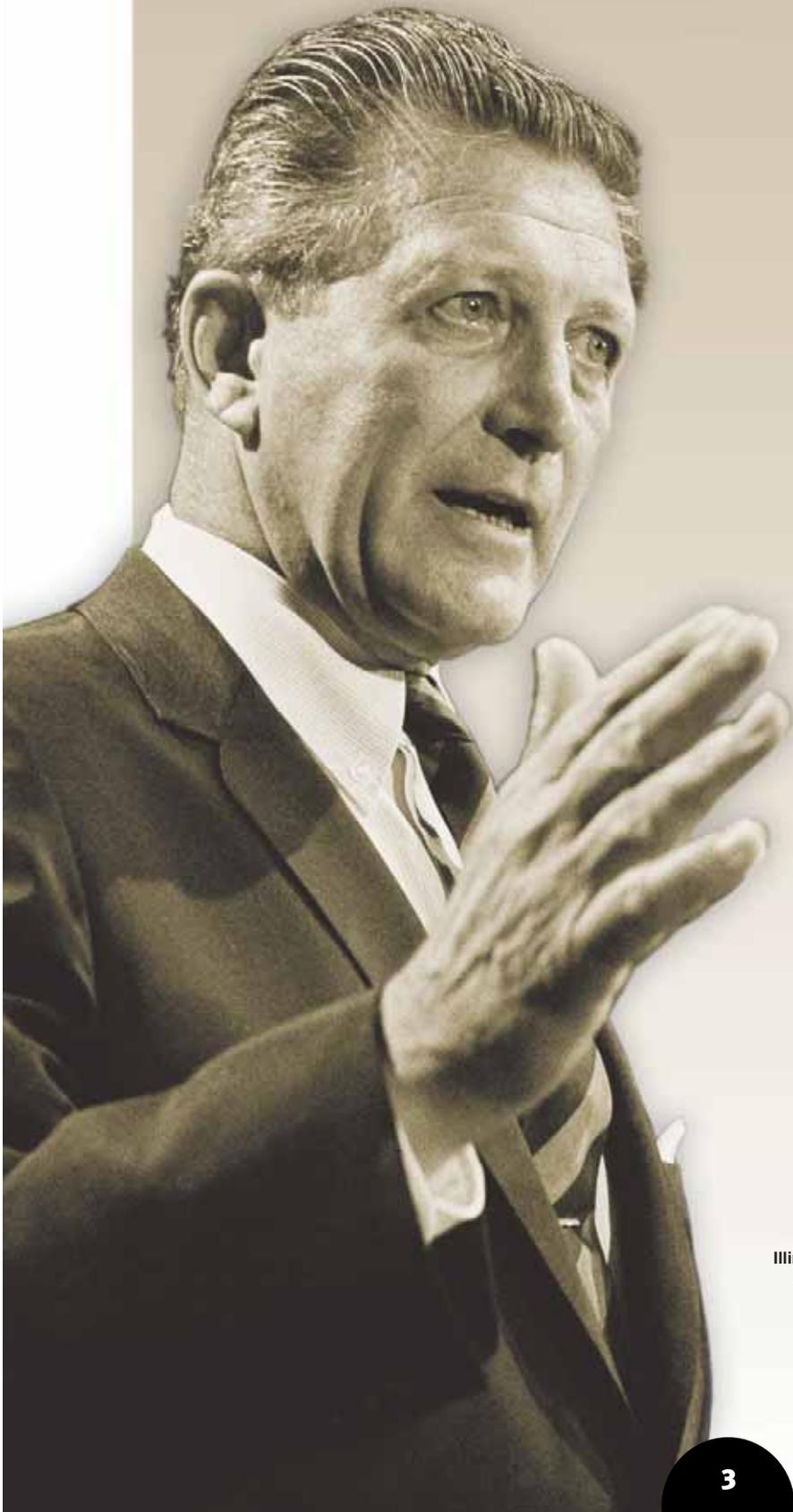
Kerner Plus 40 Report

An assessment of the nation's response to the report of the
National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder

Editors

DeWayne Wickham • Tukufu Zuberi

*“Our nation is moving toward two societies,
one black, one white – separate and unequal.”*



Illinois Governor Otto Kerner
Associated Press Photo

Kerner Plus 40 Report

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National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*

Editors

DeWayne Wickham – Tukufu Zuberi

Managing Editor

Tonyaa J. Weathersbee

Academic Editor

Camille Z. Charles

This work is a joint project of the

University of Pennsylvania's
Annenberg School for Communication

And

Center for Africana Studies

And the

Institute for Advanced Journalism Studies at
North Carolina A&T State University

North Carolina A&T State University

Dr. Stanley F. Battle, Chancellor

Dr. Janice Brewington, Provost

University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Amy Gutmann, President

Dr. Ronald J. Daniels, Provost

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Graphic/Design Editor
SHERRY POOLE CLARK

CONTRIBUTORS

KASI ADDISON
Newark Star-Ledger
KAYCE ATAIYERO
Chicago Tribune
TERESA D. BROWN
Flavour Magazine
NIKOLE HANNAH JONES
The Oregonian
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SHERREL WHEELER-STEWART
The Birmingham News
CHANDRA R. THOMAS
Atlanta Magazine
DEWAYNE WICKHAM
USA Today/Gannett News Service

Copy Editors

SONYA ROSS
The Associated Press
LEE IVORY
USA Today

Academic contributors

ANITA L. ALLEN
University of Pennsylvania
CLAUDE W. BARNES
North Carolina A&T State University
MARY FRANCES BERRY
University of Pennsylvania
LAWRENCE D. BOBO
Harvard University
CAMILLE Z. CHARLES
University of Pennsylvania
DARNELL M. HUNT
University of California, Los Angeles
JAMES STEELE
North Carolina A&T State University
TUKUFU ZUBERI
University of Pennsylvania

Photos contributed by:

The Associated Press
The Baltimore Sun
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The Tampa Tribune
Kayce Ataiyero
Nikole Hannah Jones
Gregory P. Kane
Anika Myers-Palm
Afi Odelia Scruggs
Sherrel Wheeler Stewart

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KERNER PLUS 40 STAFF

SEAN VEREEN | *Associate Director* | Center for Africana Studies | University of Pennsylvania
CAROL L. DAVIS | *Administrative Assistant* | Center for Africana Studies | University of Pennsylvania
TERRI D. LONG | *Executive Assistant* | Institute for Advanced Journalism Studies | North Carolina A&T State University



This year marks the 40th anniversary of the landmark report issued by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. Known as the Kerner Commission

report, it assessed the causes of the race rebellions that occurred in this country during the 1960s and concluded that there was a link between these rebellions and the media's failure to report fully on the concerns of African Americans.

This Kerner Plus-40 project is a collaboration between the academy and journalism. The complexity of addressing the limitations of racial dynamics on Democracy requires a new approach that allows for an exploration of issues raised in both the academic and public spaces. We accomplished this goal by giving scholars and journalists the infrastructure and public platform to collaborate and communicate their perspectives and recommendations in the context of this project.

On this 40th anniversary of the Kerner Commission report, we think it is time to consider how to avoid the occurrence of future racial conflicts.

In this context, it is time to seriously consider the more recent battles over affirmative action, the over-imprisonment of African Americans, and the reparations movement, because the next storm could be just around the corner.

Tukufu Zuberi

Director, Center for Africana Studies
University of Pennsylvania

“Along with the country” the Kerner Commission concluded, “the press has too long basked in a white world, looking out of it, if at all, with white men's eyes and a white perspective. That is no longer good enough.”

Forty years later, what if anything has changed?

Even a cursory look at the evidence suggests that the answer is equivocal. The news media can be applauded for raising issues of race and class in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, but the dearth of coverage of these issues before that catastrophic event and, more ominously, in the years since, suggest that our applause for the press should be muted. As I write this a black man is among the frontrunners for the Democratic nomination for president of the United States, but candidates and the journalists who cover them still struggle to find a way, a language, to talk about race honestly and productively.

The media shows less tolerance for overt racism, but white talk show hosts like Don Imus and white sportscasters like Kelly Tilghman demonstrate how close to the surface racial stereotypes still linger.

As recently as 2000 communication scholar Robert Entman concluded that “[t]he news presents a face of Black disruption, of criminal victimizing and victimization, that compares unfavorably with Whites.”

The Kerner Plus-40 project is an effort to assess the progress that has been made in racial equality, race relations, and the coverage of these issues by the press. Whether one concludes that the glass is half empty or half full, however, one thing remains clear – it is still “not good enough.”

Michael X. Delli Carpini

Dean

The Annenberg School for Communication
University of Pennsylvania

Journalists, it has been said, are the scouts of future historians. And in many ways this is true. The work we do often proves valuable to academics. But reporters and researchers usually, and understandably, travel on different roads.

This project was conceived and executed by journalists and academics who share a common interest in understanding the causes and results of the racial disturbances that wracked this country during the 1960s.

To this end, we sent teams of black journalists to seven cities that erupted in racial violence during that troubled decade to answer the very questions that

President Lyndon Johnson put to the Kerner Commission: “What happened; why did it happen, and what can be done to prevent it from happening again? Our reporters used the historical record, the fruits of their independent research and interviews,



and their interactions with the academics that collaborated with us to produce the stories in this book. Their work is illuminating and revealing journalism.

Like the unique partnership that was forged in this effort between an Ivy League school and a historically-black college and university, the contributions of academics and journalists to this work plow new ground – and offers readers a compelling look at this nation's most intractable problem – the color line.

DeWayne Wickham

Director, Institute for Advanced Journalism Studies
North Carolina A&T State University



Degree of damage undetermined

1 person dead

Birmingham 1963

Birmingham: Where civil disobedience and black anger clashed

By Sherrel Wheeler-Stewart

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. - A set of railroad tracks ran between two distinctly different worlds of 1963 Birmingham.

On the north side of the tracks in southwest Birmingham, the Tudor-styled homes of some of the city's aristocracy surrounded a former plantation called Arlington. Its white palatial mansion with tall columns and a neatly manicured lawn centered the landscape on Cotton Avenue. Whites would put on their finest for teas and weddings there.

For blacks, a trip to Arlington meant going to work.

Many of those black workers lived just over the tracks on the south side in Loveman Village. That federal housing project was home to more than 2,000 African Americans.

Like Arlington, the Village also was a world of its own. The recreation center was one of few places in that community where blacks could play basketball. Many of the city's working poor made their homes there, hoping one day for something more than the dark orange, brick apartments with stone walls.

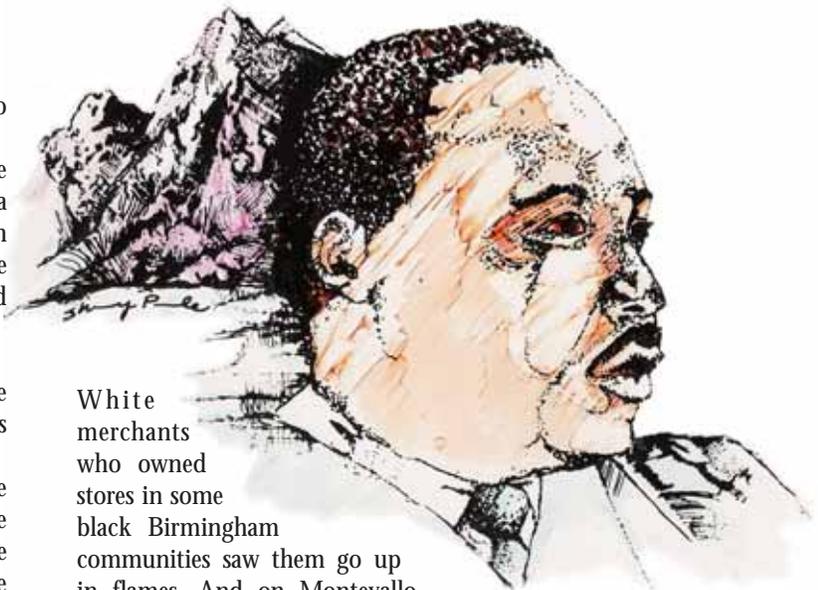
It was in 1963 that those two worlds collided.

The collision course began on May 11, when bombs ripped through the black-owned A.G. Gaston Hotel. King frequently stayed there and sometimes used the hotel as a headquarters. A few miles away bombs tore up the home of his brother, A.D. King – and incited rebellion in blacks who the civil rights leader had been trying to persuade to choose a path of peace.

Then came Sept. 15.

Earlier that Sunday morning, Ku Klux Klan members set off a bomb at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, killing four black girls as they prepared for a youth service. Several others were injured. One side of the church was destroyed. America was shocked.

Blacks in Birmingham were angry – and that night they unleashed that anger on the whites who lived on the other side of the tracks.



White merchants who owned stores in some black Birmingham

communities saw them go up in flames. And on Montevallo Road, the street that runs past Loveman Village and into Arlington, whites became the targets.

"We were mad. Mad as hell. Not all of us were Martin Luther Kings," says Wash Booker, 58, a Birmingham political consultant who proudly calls Loveman Village his home.

"We took rocks from around railroad tracks and stoned every car passing by driven by a white person," he says. "Most of the stores in the neighborhood had either burned already or were on fire."

COUNTDOWN TO CONFLICT

Before the hotel bombing and before the four young girls were killed in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing, blacks in Birmingham and Jefferson County already had a lot to be angry about.



▲ A man fends off a dog with a pocket knife - Photo by Bill Hudson/Associated Press

While Birmingham was considered the center of black social and economic life in Alabama in the 1960s, black people still lived each day in poverty.

While the median income for the city's 634,864 residents was \$5,103 a year, the median income for its 219,542 black residents was \$2,944 – a difference of more than 40 percent. And one of the basic indicators of economic stability – home ownership – show that only 24,301 blacks in 1960 Jefferson County owned homes compared with 87,840 whites.

Then there were the ongoing indignities of segregation – and the police brutality that went along with it.

“It was nothing for a police officer to call you over to the car and tell you to stick your head in the window, then roll the window up choking your neck,” Booker says. “It happened to me. It was nothing for the police to kick in your door and abuse you, your family and your mama, too.”

Those problems seethed even as Birmingham became the epicenter of the civil rights movement via the nonviolent protests led by King.

But in 1963, that rage would boil over.

THE BOILING POINT

It was the Saturday night before Mother's Day when bombs ripped through the black-owned A.G. Gaston Hotel, which King used as a headquarters and lodging place.

A few miles away in a community called Ensley in west Birmingham, bombs exploded at the home of King's brother, A.D.

No one was killed in either explosion, but the aftermath revealed a side of black Birmingham that for generations had been virtually silent. Blacks took to the streets around the hotel and in communities throughout the city.

Yvonne K. Willie, an 80-year-old businesswoman-turned-writer, remembers that night.

At the time, her husband, the late Lou Willie II, directed the business affairs for Birmingham millionaire A.G. Gaston. The hotel was a part of Gaston's empire and a centerpiece of black life in the 1960s. When they heard that hotel had been bombed, the Willies immediately went downtown. They arrived around midnight and stayed at least until 3 a.m.

The crowd was so thick around Fifth Avenue North that they couldn't park near the hotel. They parked more than three blocks away and walked.

“There were people milling around the streets everywhere, crowds of people. I heard one man stumble up and say, ‘They done took all we had,’ ” Willie says.

“Hundreds of blacks took the streets, setting fires, throwing rocks, anything they could do express their anger.

“I've seen some accounts where people said there were guns being fired. I didn't see a lot of guns. People had wooden planks. They had bricks and rocks,” she says.

“As we were leaving to return to our car, it looked like every other store was on fire. There was a cab that had been flipped over and it was burning too.”



▲ Jackie Robinson and Floyd Patterson inspect ruins of Gaston Hotel - Associated Press photo

One police officer was stabbed near the hotel and warrants for attempted murder were sworn out for two “Negroes,” according to a front page story in *The Birmingham News* two days after the riot.

Across town in the West End, a white cab driver had a story to tell after surviving an attack. In an article published May 15, 1963, in *The Birmingham News*, the cabbie, W. A. Bowman, said a Negro civil defense worker helped him to safety after he was stabbed.

“I wish I knew who he was so I could thank him,” Bowman said.

The bombs at the hotel were meant to target civil rights leader King.

“If Dr. King had been at the hotel that night, he would have been injured or killed,” Willie says.

But King was a couple of miles away in a neighborhood known as “Dynamite Hill” because of previous bombings there. Joe Dickson, a lieutenant in the movement, was one of three on guard as King visited the home of John Drew, a local civil rights leader.

“From where we were, we could see the fires downtown. We knew what was happening,” says Dickson, now 74 and head of the Alabama State Personnel Board.

“They had done so much to us already, and now they had tried to kill our leader,” he says. “Blacks were not going to take it any more.”

Dickson says friends later told him about the scene downtown.

“They brought in what looked like an armored personnel carrier,” Dickson says.

Willie says the vehicle resembled a big steel tank.

“Some said (Police Commissioner) Bull Conner was in the tank. People beat on it and threw rocks,” she says.

The rioting ended after pleading from James Lay, Dickson says. Lay, who is now dead, was captain of the auxiliary police. There

were no blacks in the Birmingham Police Department at the time. The auxiliary police were charged with keeping the peace.

According to a page one story in *The Birmingham News* on May 12: “Dynamite explosions within 20 minutes of each other Saturday night heavily damaged the home of the Rev. A.D. King, 721 12th Avenue Ensley, and the Gaston Motel, 1510 Fifth Avenue North. ... Three persons were injured in the Gaston Motel explosion. The family of A.D. King escaped injury.”

That same Sunday, the newspaper carried an ironic twist. Next to the classifieds, was a newspaper column on black life.

The title? “*What Negroes are doing.*”

SEPT. 15, 1963

Birmingham’s black citizenry was already angry and tense well before the deadly blast at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Eleven days earlier, a bomb exploded at the Dynamite Hill home of Arthur D. Shores, one of the first black lawyers to practice in Alabama.

Shores’ house was no stranger to bombings. It had been bombed in August, and Shores – known as a calm, low-key man – took to standing patrol on his porch with a shotgun. Ironically, Shores was inside on Sept. 4 when dynamite planted outside his house blew out virtually all the windows, rocked his wife out of bed and sent his neighborhood over the edge.

The blast came on the same day that Shores had successfully helped two black children enroll in a previously all-white elementary school. According to *The New York Times*, black residents “rushed into the streets” when police cars arrived at Shores’ middle-class community in response to the latest bombing.

Rocks and bottles were hurled at the police. Officers equipped with riot guns and carbines were brought in, and the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth appealed for the crowd to disperse.

By the time things calmed down two hours later, a 20-year-old black man was dead from a bullet wound to the neck, and at least 18 people were injured – eight of them police officers.

Violence flared up again Sept. 15 with the explosion at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church that killed 11-year-old Denise McNair, and 14-year-olds Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson and Cynthia Wesley.

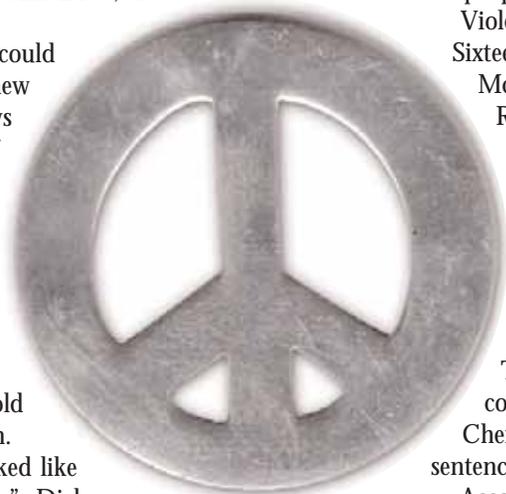
“We were angry. We could not look to the police for help. We couldn’t trust the police,” Booker says.

(It was not until 1977 that the ringleader in the bombing, Robert Chambliss, was convicted of one count of murder in the death of McNair. He died in prison in 1985. Suspect Herman Cash died in 1994 before he ever went to trial. The other suspects, Bobby Frank Cherry and Thomas Blanton, were indicted in 2000. Blanton was convicted of murder in 2001 and sentenced to life in prison.

Cherry was convicted of four counts of murder in 2002 and sentenced to life in prison; he died there in 2004.)

According to a United Press International story, at least five fires broke out in Birmingham’s black business district that night, and reinforced police units patrolled the city as 500 battle-dressed National Guards members stood by at an armory. Blacks began stoning cars, and scores confronted police in the area around the church.

The Birmingham Public Library Archives Department has no



record of damage reports from 1963 riots. *The Birmingham News* said three people were injured in the Saturday night riots.

DEMONSTRATIONS VERSUS STONE-THROWING

The riots of 1963 Birmingham were “more of an act of political expression, driven by defiance,” says Diane McWhorter, author of *Carry Me Home*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning story of Birmingham and the civil rights era.

McWhorter’s book talks about the dissension in the movement. There were some who wanted to distance themselves from those who rioted; there were others who believed that many of the rioters were marching alongside them.

McWhorter, who is white, was 10 years old in 1963. She grew up in Mountain Brook, an affluent suburb of Birmingham, where little white children lived in a segregated world and were shielded from the civil rights protests.

That wasn’t the case for youths in inner city Birmingham and the surrounding bedroom communities.

For Richard Finley, a black 59-year-old businessman, the 1963 civil rights movement brought excitement and fear.

“The mood of defiance was not unusual, especially for the youths in the movement,” he says.

Finley says he was not in a fight or riot, but each time he marched, he was prepared to defend himself.

“You hear about the dogs, but what you don’t hear about is all the dogs that were wounded,” Finley says.

“In those days, most of us had access to a little yellow case,” he says, referring to his pocket knife. “We would often say, ‘I have no lawyer, but I can handle my case.’ I never pulled it on anyone, but I had it in my pocket. It was mostly for the dogs.”

Finley was a student at Westfield High School the first time he marched. The school principal had told the students not to leave school for the marches.

But Joe Louis Clemmon, the brother of current federal District Judge U.W. Clemmon, locked the principal in his office, and, Finley says, “We took off.”

Finley and his classmates went to Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. It was too crowded and they couldn’t get inside.

“But I was on the steps,” he says. “I heard Dr. King for the first time. It sounded like God to me.”

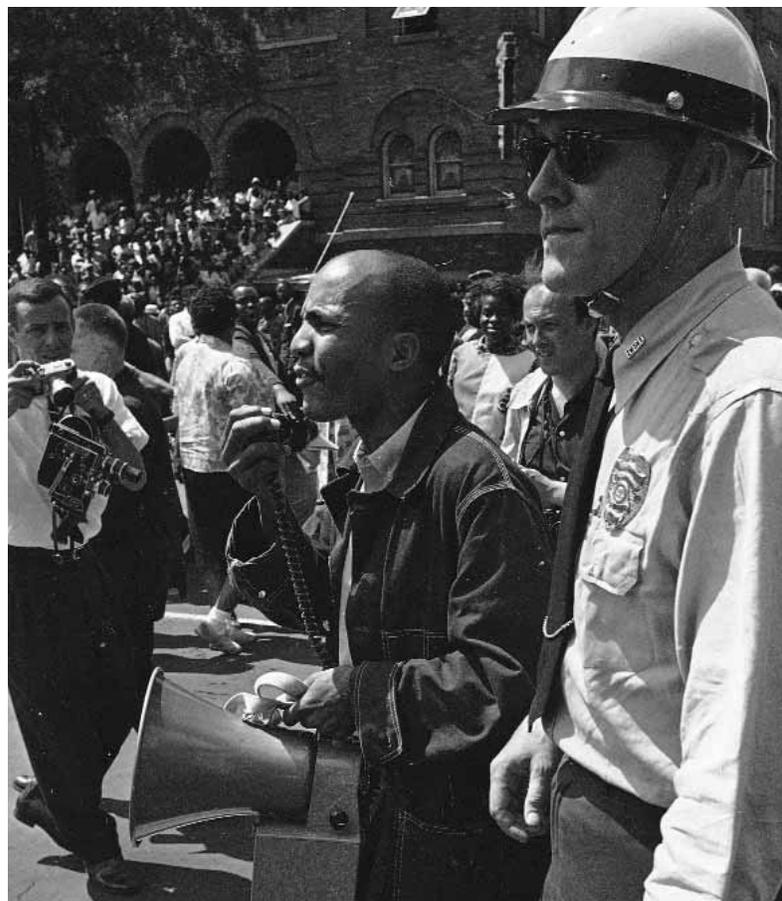
BIRMINGHAM’S IMPRINT

When Horace Huntley, who is now a professor of African-American history at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), was a teen, he too took action – although it wasn’t by marching.

He recalls one night standing out around Park Avenue and 40th Street when the Klan rode through his neighborhood. The Riley neighborhood was a place for the working class. A lot of the people worked either in the factories or in the homes of whites who lived over the mountain in places like Mountain Brook.

There were regular reports of blacks being abused by whites – people who were chased, caught and beaten for no apparent reason.

“We decided we were going to take action. We threw rocks and ran home,” Huntley says. “That meant that we were awake all night after throwing the rocks. We felt that almost every car that passed could be the Klan.”



▲ The Rev. James Bevel pleads for calm- Photo by Bill Hudson/Associated Press

What happened in Birmingham in 1963 and the riots and movements that followed throughout the country for the rest the decade were linked, Huntley says.

In Birmingham, the world saw, for the first time, the dogs and the hoses used on black children as they marched, he says. Blacks across the country were offended.

“They were saying, ‘We will not accept the same things happening in Birmingham happening in their town,’ ” Huntley says.

“In 1966, you had the development of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, Calif. They had determined collectively that they would protect their community.

“People were simply changing the idea of black people simply accepting the indiscriminate use of violence against the community and take the offensive,” he says.

The assassination of King in 1968 was the ultimate attack against black people who were attempting to gain freedom and independence, Huntley says.

“Places like (Washington) D.C. and Chicago would go up in flames, now that the leader who consistently talked about nonviolence had been slain,” Huntley says. “The whole idea of nonviolence was out the window.

“That was not totally isolated from what it happened in 1963 in Birmingham. It’s the same principle, but on a larger scale and much more organized.

“We were not necessarily turning the other cheek,” Huntley says. “We were not in awe of the power of white supremacy.” ■

THE KERNER GENERATION

Birmingham in black and white

On the 40th anniversary of the Kerner Report, residents representing five generations weigh in on the state of race relations then and now in the city known for its tumultuous past

By Chandra R. Thomas

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – Civil rights icon the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once famously told President John F. Kennedy that this city was by far the worst big city in the United States when it came to race relations.

It's a distinction that's been hard for the Southern city best known for being on the frontlines of the civil rights movement to shake. Ironically, King was killed the year that the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, more commonly known as the Kerner Commission, made its famous observation that America was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal."

In Birmingham, at least, blacks seemed committed to fighting against that prospect. Compared with some of the other riot-stricken cities that the commission studied in the late 1960s, such as Los Angeles, Newark, N.J., and Detroit, black people here were mobilized and actively working at tearing down, brick-by-brick, the rigid wall of systematic racial inequality that had so deeply divided much of the country along color lines.

"Birmingham has long been considered the birthplace of the civil rights movement and the fact that black people were taking a formal stand against segregation through marches and sit-ins has always been a great source of pride for African Americans here," says lifelong resident Yvas Witherspoon, a 40-something substance-abuse counselor. "People here were on the front lines of the movement that helped make important changes in this country."

The city's segregationist past doesn't appear to have hurt its ability to draw business and industry. It is home to major banks Regions Financial Corporation and Compass Bancshares and several steelmakers such as U.S. Steel. However, anecdotal sentiment at least suggests that antiquated perceptions of the city has allowed other cities with considerable black populations, such as Atlanta, Houston and Charlotte, N.C., to lure away many potential workers, particularly black professionals.

"There's a lot more opportunity here than people think, but a lot of professionals who aren't from here, particularly young black professionals, won't even entertain the idea of living and working here because they still associate it with those images of fire hoses and police dogs," says advertising executive Satina Richardson, 32, a Birmingham native.

"A lot of young professionals from here actually move away after they finish school because they feel they have better opportunities away from Birmingham," she says. "They usually realize later that it was better than they'd thought."

A major earnings gap between blacks and whites in Jefferson County, where the city of Birmingham is located, might feed the

perception Richardson described. Blacks make up 41 percent of the 656,700 people who live there, and, according to a 2006 U.S. Census American Communities Survey, blacks in Jefferson County earn \$34,723 a year compared with \$68,970 for whites. That's a 49 percent gap, up from 42 percent in 1960.

Now, blacks account for 32 percent of Jefferson County's 180,978 homeowners, compared with 21 percent in 1960.

There also has been considerable political progress. In 1979, two-term City Council member Richard Arrington Jr. was elected Birmingham's first black mayor, a post he held for 20 years.

During his tenure, blacks gradually dominated city government, including the council and school board. He also was credited with revitalizing the city's economy and for helping to create an historic Civil Rights District that includes the internationally acclaimed Birmingham Civil Rights Institute museum and research center, which opened in 1992. In recent years, two more black men have been elected mayor, including Larry Langford who took office in late 2007.

Still, it remains to be seen how far the city once nicknamed "Bombingham" for its prevalence of racially motivated bombings has progressed beyond the deep-seated attitudes and beliefs that sparked the racial unrest.

In commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Kerner Report, a diverse mix of Birminghamians – from a black District Court judge who was barely out of kindergarten when the report was released to a pair of women expecting children in this anniversary year– offer their thoughts about the evolution of race relations in the city so clearly haunted by its tumultuous past.

1960s Generation **Katrina Ross, 46**

Few people managed to grow up in Birmingham unaware of the racial tension that seemed forever etched into the minds of Americans across the country. But federal District Judge Katrina Ross, who one year ago became the first black woman to be elected to that post in Birmingham, is among that minority.

Her close-knit middle-class neighborhood, church, and the halls of her Catholic elementary school and, later, all-black A.H. Parker High School, were packed with people who looked like her. Race just wasn't an issue to her or her black friends, even the ones who attended majority-white schools.

"We only dealt with black people," says Ross, who doesn't recall



having any close friends of another race while growing up.

That comfort zone was shattered years later during her transition from all-black Fisk University in Nashville to the predominately white University of Alabama.

"I had come from an environment where there was this sense of pride about being black to going to a school where I was just another student," says Ross, who ultimately graduated from the slightly more diverse University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB).

"For the first time, I was very aware of being a minority."

For the first time in her life, she was not living in a predominately black environment, where her culture was the standard or even celebrated, for that matter.

The reality of racism and injustice became clearer as Ross progressed through law school and established her career as a private practice attorney. Nowadays, she feels that the divide in Birmingham has evolved largely into that of economic class, noting that the inner city remains disproportionately black and poor.

"After hundreds of years of slavery, I don't think we'll ever catch up," says Ross, who admits that support from white women was critical in her election victory. "Racism is still alive and well in America, and in Birmingham, people are still very separated by race, but black people now have more of an opportunity to improve their lives - if they have the strong will to do so. People have just gotten more tolerant because it's not politically correct to be overtly racist."

Jim Jager, 44

Jim Jager travels the country every week for work. No matter where he is - from California to New York - when he mentions that he's from Birmingham, the reaction is the same.

"They look at me funny," says Jager, president of New South, a marketing research firm. "As recently as five years ago I had a guy ask me, 'So are y'all still hanging people out there?'"

Jager, who grew up in the exclusive Mountain Brook community, says he's seen racial attitudes shift for the better. One of the major issues facing Birmingham now, says Jager, is the growing rift between black and Hispanic communities.

"I've done a lot of research with the Hispanic community and I have heard straight from a Hispanic that some of them feel like they're being treated like the black people were treated by whites in the '60s, only they feel it's the blacks doing it now," he says. "It's a brewing problem that's going to have to get dealt with."

There have been improvements in race relations in Birmingham with each generational shift, Jager says.

"We're not past it completely, but Birmingham has definitely progressed more than it gets credit for," he says. "I think it's going to continue to get better as those old feelings erode."

1970s Generation

Brad Kachelhofer, 39

Homewood High School was no bastion of racial harmony, but with a black population of between 25 percent to 30



percent, the suburban school just outside of the city limits offered a more diverse environment than the wealthier, all-white "over the mountain" communities of Vestavia Hills and Mountain Brook.

Brad Kachelhofer, 39, and co-owner of The Modern Brand marketing firm, says she sat next to black students in class and even swapped peanut butter and jelly sandwiches with some at lunchtime, but it wasn't until her 20th high school reunion that she actually became aware of the challenges that some of her classmates of color had faced.

For example, there was the handsome and popular black jock she admired from afar.

"At the reunion, he told me that some of the white girls would stick notes in his locker saying, 'I would do you after school if you weren't black.' And they thought that was a compliment," says Kachelhofer. "I was just so oblivious, I remember everyone being polite but basically sticking with their own."

Kachelhofer, who proudly boasts of her racially diverse mix of friends, says the difference now is that legal segregation in Birmingham has largely been replaced with self-segregation, mostly along economic lines.

"Now when people move to a certain neighborhood or send their kids to a certain school they say it's because I feel they need 'a Christian education,'" she says. "They just say that so that their true motivations are not as obvious to the outside observer."

The black community, she contends, is no exception.

"The powerful and influential members of the African-American community send their kids to EPIC, considered one of the better elementary schools, then they go to the Alabama School of Fine Arts," she says. "They get credit for having their child in a Birmingham Public School, but they'd never send their kids to the schools that the poor kids attend."

Mustafa Ali, 39

As if growing up black in Birmingham were not challenging enough, native Mustafa Ali, 39, and his 12 (yes, 12) brothers and sisters faced an even bigger hurdle. They grew up black and poor in the city's historically white and wealthy Norwood community at a time when the demographics were shifting to middle- and working-class blacks.

The "separate and unequal" distinction that Kerner emphasized in the report eerily mirrors Ali's childhood experiences.

"I remember whites throwing soap at us with the words, 'Wash up, nigger' scribbled on it," says Ali, who works as a martial arts instructor and security guard. "Whites made sure blacks knew their place. Right across the tracks, there was a white area called Tarrant. As a black person, you didn't want to get caught in Tarrant unless you were working."

Ali says the Birmingham of his childhood is quite different from the one his daughters, Miniya, 8, and Ayanna, 5, are experiencing.

"Things have changed but they have also stayed the same. My daughter goes to a school with all kinds of children in her class together: black, Asian, Arab, Chinese, something I could never have dreamed of as a child," he says. "On the other hand, when black people started moving into white areas like Tarrant and Centerpoint, the whites started moving away. People really aren't



coming together in Birmingham.”

Ali says the biggest disappointment 40 years later is not white racism, but the dwindling black community.

“Back in the day, we all lived in the same neighborhood no matter what we did for a living,” he says. “The only difference was that if you were doing better, you just fixed up your home more. Nowadays, when we get a little money in our pocket, we want to move away like we’re better.”

1980s Generation

Erin Williams, 23

Erin Williams isn’t originally from Birmingham. She grew up just a two-hour drive away in the rural community of Fayetteville, Ga., just outside of Atlanta. She was vaguely familiar with Birmingham’s volatile racial history (it was discussed briefly in school) when she decided to move there to attend virtually all-white Samford University.



Thoughts of racism never invaded her early life, but her first rude awakening occurred when volunteer work sent her to mostly black, rural Perry County, Ala., one of the poorest counties in the country.

“A lot of times we talk about going out of the country to help people, but for the first time I realized how severe the poverty is in this country,” Williams says. “Race and poverty don’t necessarily go hand-in-hand, but there are definitely some disparities.”

Now as a graduate student studying occupational therapy at UAB and as a volunteer at Olivia’s House, a drug-treatment facility for women, Williams says she feels more keenly aware of racial issues.

“There’s been some progress in the city, but nowadays there’s still a lot of segregation in the area of education,” she says. “A lot of the people in the poorer areas aren’t getting equal access to a quality education.”

Dale Thornton Jr., 26

Race, namely his blackness, had an impact on every aspect of 26-year-old Dale Thornton Jr.’s experiences growing up – especially when he and his family moved to Chelsea, a tiny all-white, rural community outside Birmingham. Many of his classmates sported the stereotypical redneck uniform of overalls and cowboy boots. Some even sported T-shirts emblazoned with the Confederate flag.



Still, Thornton admits he was caught off guard during his freshman year when a white classmate yelled out to him, in front of a teacher, “Boy, I will hang you.”

Stunned, Thornton stood paralyzed by the sting of the hateful words.

“It was shocking, like somebody punching you in the stomach,” he says.

Over the years, such comments became old hat, but Thornton made friends, even some white ones. He now chalks up his early experiences as important life lessons.

It doesn’t hurt that he appears to have gotten the last laugh. Last

year, not long after graduating from historically black Miles College, Thornton purchased one of his father’s five McDonald’s restaurants, located in the suburb of Homewood. The deal made Thornton the fast food chain’s youngest franchisee in the Southeast.

“In a way, I was scared to put it out there that I am the owner, like maybe if people saw my black face they wouldn’t want to go there,” he says, “but I’ve made it so that the experience at my place is such that you don’t care who owns it. I still get some looks when people know that I’m the owner, but I think we’ve come a long way.”

1990s Generation

Kamaria Nelson, 17

Kamaria Nelson is young, privileged and black – and so are most of her close friends. The daughter of a psychiatrist and a dermatologist, she lives in an exclusive neighborhood and attends predominately white John Carroll Catholic High School. Nelson spends most of her free time, however, with the black kids she’s known all her life from Jack and Jill of America, Inc., known as the quintessential social group for the offspring of wealthy blacks.



“I think things are better in terms of race relations in Birmingham, but I also think that people just feel more comfortable being around people who are like them,” says Nelson, who also has friends of different races from school.

Nelson says she has great reverence for those who fought on her behalf in the past, even as she is keenly aware that those fights were part of a bygone era.

“I see things getting better in Birmingham from, like, 40 years ago. I think now we’re viewed more as an equal. In many ways, there’s been a lot of progress,” Nelson says.

Birmingham’s growing number of black professionals, such as her parents, are proof of that progress, she adds.

Haley Lloyd, 17

Haley Lloyd says racial issues in Birmingham have progressed beyond black and white.



“From what I can tell, the blacks and the whites where I live get along fine. It’s the illegal immigrants that are getting it hard,” says Lloyd, 17, of Columbiana, a quaint Birmingham suburb.

“I don’t hear people saying racist things about black people, but I have heard people say stuff about they need to go back to Mexico and they’ll be talking about a person who is actually from Spain,” she says. “A lot of people are not cultured.”

Lloyd, who attends an all-white private school, says she feels that blacks and whites generally get along well in her community, a sign, she contends, that race relations are improving.

“I know around here it used to be really bad, but it’s gotten a lot better,” she says. “I don’t feel that there is any racism in my neighborhood. People interact with each other like we’re all the same and equal.”

Dreams for the 2000 Generation

Laura Anderson, 36, white and expecting

As a child growing up in Rome, Ga., Laura Anderson never really questioned the fact that all of the students in her advanced placement classes were white like her.

“I have a close black friend from high school who ended up becoming a very successful attorney in Atlanta,” says Anderson, who moved to Birmingham in 1989 to attend Montevallo College. “Obviously, she was very smart, but no one ever encouraged her to join our classes. I didn’t think about it at the time.”

Now, as she and her husband await the birth of their first child this spring, she admits that they’re concerned about the impact that Birmingham’s racial climate and growing economic segregation will have on their offspring.

“Racism is huge, but so is the division among classes,” says Anderson, who works as an assistant archivist for the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.

“We are all taught to be afraid of the poor, like poor automatically means bad,” she says. “It’s something that we think about and it’s a challenge to overcome, but if you’re personally committed to not raising your child in a bubble, you can turn that around in Birmingham or anywhere else.”

Dafina Ward, 30, black and expecting

Dafina Ward fits neatly into the cookie-cutter profile to which Kachelhofer (whom she doesn’t know) alluded. She attended EPIC School and graduated from the School of Fine Arts, but now as a mother of a 2-year-old and with another child due in May, she wonders if she and her husband will enroll their children in Birmingham’s public school system.

“I’ve always been an advocate for public schools, they were phenomenal when I was growing up, but not anymore,” Ward

says. “So many people have left the city. We also don’t want to send her to a private school where she’s the only (black) one; she has to have the best.”

Even in her comfortable middle-class upbringing in the suburban community of Huffman, Ward, a lawyer, vividly remembers the day a white classmate called her a nigger while on the Jungle Gym.

“I knocked him off,” recalls Ward, laughing at the memory.

Ward says she has contemplated moving her family out of state as Birmingham increasingly stratifies along racial and economic lines.

“There’s always a lot of talk about how Birmingham could have been Atlanta and it’s true,” she says. “Birmingham is still very much caught up in race and it has kept it from progressing. I have a great group of friends of all races and we want to make sure our children are exposed to that. We’ve all decided together that we’ll have to create the Birmingham that we want to experience.”

Just as media images of racially charged civil rights clashes might be forever tied to Birmingham’s image, so is Vulcan. The 56-foot statue, named for the Roman god of fire and the forge, overlooks the heart of downtown Birmingham from atop Red Mountain.

Although the verdict is still out about whether it’s a metaphor for the Birmingham of today, many remain optimistic that this city can transcend its incendiary past and magically forge anew. ■



Kerner Generations-Photo by Sherrel Wheeler-Stewart

Healing the racial divide: Caught between race progress and enduring tensions

By Lawrence D. Bobo and Camille Z. Charles

Today most Americans tell themselves that we as a nation are finally beyond race (or at the least, nearly so). Wake-up! All the hope and self-delusion aside, racism runs much deeper than most Americans realize.

Indeed, a sign of the depth of this fissure emerged in response to Hillary Clinton's ill-considered remarks implying that a white politician like President Lyndon Johnson deserved the real credit for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, not a speechifying black activist like Martin Luther King.

The remarks had the desired effect of mobilizing race into the campaign at a point when she desperately needed it. But it also brought to the surface some remarkably ugly tensions and enduring problems that neither she, nor Barack Obama, or the American people really want to see.

Talk of race and racism tends to end conversations – even among people of good will.

This is unfortunate. It is not possible to solve a problem that one refuses to put into words. That is why this nation remains suspended between a hopeful trajectory of racial progress and an endless number of eruptions of bitter racial tensions.

To say that racism still matters, however, is not to say that nothing about it has or can change. When it comes to race, we are much better off than we were in 1968. That's when a bipartisan Presidential Commission appointed by Lyndon Johnson declared that "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal." The so-called Kerner Commission pulled no punches as to the key source of the problem either, declaring: "white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions

created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."

We are not as segregated or polarized a nation today as we were then. In 1968 the average level of segregation was 85. This means 85 percent of the black (or white) population would have had to move to achieve a completely random and integrated mixture of people.

In that same year some 56 percent of whites in national surveys agreed with the statement that "White people have a right to keep Negroes out of their neighborhoods if they want to, and Negroes should respect that right." The most recent national data show the average level of segregation is 62 percent, a 23-point decline. And the number of whites who agree with the statement about keeping blacks out their neighborhoods fell below 20 percent as long ago as 1993 and has continued to edge downward.

A similar story could be told about the once great bugaboo of racial intermarriage.

In 1968, 56 percent of whites in national surveys supported laws against racial intermarriage (a much higher percentage of Southern whites said so than whites living outside the South). This happened even though in 1967 the Supreme Court overturned all such laws which still existed in 17 states at the time of the High Court's *Loving v. Virginia* ruling. The number of whites supporting such anti-miscegenation laws plummeted to less than 20 percent by 1990 and stood at 12 percent in 2000.

Racism is a more complicated and elusive thing today. But the first hurdle we have to get over is the naïve and unhelpful assumption that we somehow solved all of that "in the sixties."

We did not and have not resolved this problem. Every few months America rediscovers its “race problem.” From the Jena Six, to comedian Michael Richard’s flame-out; from Don Imus’s sad tirade, to the noose on the cover of *Golfweek* magazine that got its editor fired, there is a steady stream of evidence that a real “problem” remains. It is deep and it can easily get ugly.

The durability of this problem stems from the intertwining of our day-to-day living conditions and our larger cultural ways of understanding. Although segregation has lessened, we remain a deeply racially segregated people, especially along the traditional black-white divide.

Currently, blacks in 29 U.S. metropolitan areas – home to 40 percent of the total black population – are experiencing extreme levels of residential segregation on multiple dimensions. This is nearly double the number of hypersegregated cities on record in 1980.

We are, furthermore, sliding backward with respect to school segregation after having made much progress in the seventies and eighties. To be sure, discrimination in access to jobs is not the blanket sort of exclusion it once was. But social science test after test yields evidence of substantial and persistent bias. Indeed, one study found that a white male with an admitted criminal record had a better chance of getting a job interview than a black man with no such record.

We have not cleansed our culture – the deep stuff of our most basic assumptions and

taken-for-granted ideas – of the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, and anti-black racism. The successes of the civil rights movement made overt discrimination and segregationist practices illegal. It also cast open bigotry into public disrepute. However, these strides forward do not amount to a new cultural make-up and way of understanding or seeing the world. When an entire society has always “seen” race, been “organized” around race divisions, and “allocated” material resources and social esteem on the basis for race for nearly 400 years, even 25 very intense years of struggle and progress do not a full revolution make.

We cannot let our hopes for the nation stand in the way of doing the work to truly defeat the racism that remains. The dreadful frisson that washed over us as the Clinton v. Obama fight for the Democratic presidential nomination threatened to become a race war is a warning to be heeded. There are real injuries and grave wounds that still attach to race in this country. We ignore them at our peril.

Most important, this episode reminds us that color-blindness is an aspiration for this nation, not a settled achievement. The Kerner Commission got the broad social trend wrong – we did not become a more polarized and segregated nation: we already were one.

But, it set the right tone on the depth and fundamental nature of the American race problem.

Lawrence D. Bobo is the W.E.B DuBois Professor of Sociology and African-American Studies at Harvard University.

Camille Z. Charles is Associate Professor of Sociology and Education and Faculty Associate Director of the Center for Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

\$3 million in property damage
1 person dead

Philadelphia 1964

Philadelphia: A traffic stop ignites black rage

By Elmer Smith

PHILADELPHIA - You won't find Odessa Bradford's name in the annals of the civil rights movement. But like the late Rosa Parks, she altered the course of history by refusing to give up her seat.

It happened on a sweltering Friday night in August 1964. Odessa Bradford and her husband, Rush, were headed east on Columbia Avenue when their maroon Buick stalled at the 23rd Street intersection. Traffic along the avenue quickly backed up, setting off a cacophony of honking horns and shouted curses on North Philadelphia's main commercial artery.

Within minutes a red ace, as the city's crimson-colored police cruisers were once known, screeched to a stop and officers Robert Wells, who is black, and John Hoff, his white partner, got out. By then, Odessa and Rush Bradford were literally at each others'

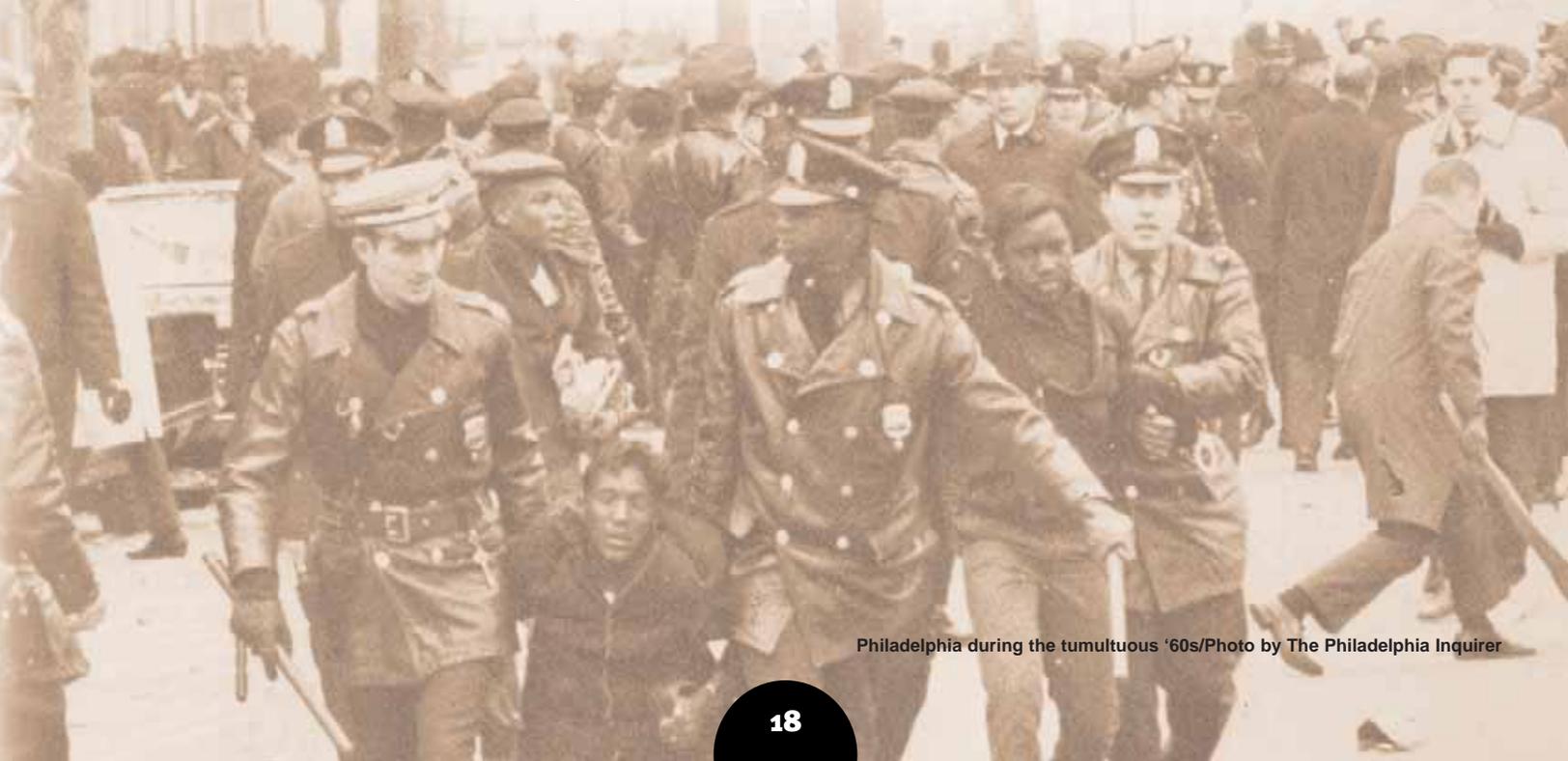
throats, but Bradford managed to free himself from his wife's grasp and get out of the car.

Odessa Bradford, however, refused Wells' order for her to move. A scuffle ensued between her and Wells, who eventually forced her out of the car and into a waiting police van.

For the increasingly agitated crowd that gathered during the scuffle, Odessa Bradford's arrest was one more example of police brutality in a town that had seen more than its share.

It was one more than they would take.

An enraged James Mettles ran from the crowd and punched Hoff in the face, flooring the white officer. Police cruisers converged on the area. Mettles was arrested after a brief scuffle and the chaos subsided.



Philadelphia during the tumultuous '60s/Photo by The Philadelphia Inquirer

But the calm was short-lived.

A rumor quickly spread through the neighborhood that police had beaten a pregnant woman to death. That sparked an outbreak of looting, at first by a group of teenagers who had been milling about near Ridge and Columbia avenues.

Within hours the “Ave” was alive with looters, some using shopping carts to clean out the contents of stores in a frenzied scene illuminated by the flames of burning cars and trash that had been set ablaze in empty lots.

Some 1,400 police officers were dispatched that night to the two-mile stretch of Columbia Avenue from Ridge Avenue to Broad Street, according to published accounts.

They were outnumbered 2-1 by the looters.

Police Commissioner Howard Leary, in a move that would be repeated 28 years later during the Los Angeles riots, ordered his forces to keep a close watch but to avoid confronting looters.

The looting and vandalism touched off by Bradford’s Aug. 28 arrest raged for two days and nights. When it finally sputtered out, 600 businesses on the “Ave” and several other North Philadelphia shopping strips had been damaged or destroyed.

City officials estimated the damage at \$3 million. About 300 people reportedly were injured, including scores of policemen. Police arrested more than 600 people, and charged 308 of them with burglary and other offenses.

Robert Green, 21, who was shot after allegedly attacking police with a knife in an incident that may not have been riot related, was the only fatality. That is unless you count the sudden death of what had been a bustling commercial strip and the rapid decline of a densely-populated residential area that was then the home to two-thirds of Philadelphia’s 600,000 black residents.

FIRST THE RIOT, THEN THE REVELATION

By 1980, nearly 40 percent of the population in North Philadelphia had moved out, according to the city’s planning commission. More than half the stores along the commercial corridors of Columbia Avenue, Ridge Avenue, 22nd Street and 31st Street were gone.

But in truth, the conflagration on Columbia Avenue just accelerated the demise of a community that had been slowly succumbing to the relentless advance of blight and decay. It was an old neighborhood that had been abandoned by white flight and left to an impoverished black population.

But what happened in North Philadelphia was hardly inevitable.

It followed a history of unheeded warnings and public policies that reflected the growing sense among the city’s power brokers that places like North Philadelphia, and even the people who lived in them, weren’t worth the effort it would take to save them.

North Philadelphia and inner-city neighborhoods like it had been left for dead long before the riot of ‘64.

A year after that disturbance, what started out as a routine car stop by police in the Watts section of Los Angeles sparked six days of looting and violence. Thirty-four people died, and 1,072 were injured. The Los Angeles Times estimated the property damage at more than \$40 million.

From 1964 through the spring of 1968, spontaneous outbreaks



▲ Frank Rizzo mural-Photo by Afi Odelia Scruggs

of looting and violence erupted in nearly 200 black communities, almost always ignited by confrontations with police. In July of 1967, 26 people died in six days of rioting in Newark, N.J. Two weeks later rioting broke out along 12th street in Detroit, killing 43 people.

By then, the death and destruction had reached proportions that could no longer be dismissed as aberrations. President Lyndon Johnson, who was just 60 miles away at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City when the Philadelphia riot broke out, was starting to feel the pressure.

As Detroit seethed, Johnson formed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in July 1967 to explore the causes of the riots. The panel, which was led by Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner, gathered evidence for seven months.

Its 426-page report recommended sweeping social policy initiatives in impoverished inner-city communities. It called for immediate federal action to create two million new jobs and to “reorient federal open housing policies to place more low and moderate income housing outside ghettos.” The report became an instant best seller. Within weeks, more than two million copies were sold.

But the report’s recommendations were far too radical for the president and Congress.

In recalling the searing images of civil rights protestors in the South who were attacked by police dogs and fire hoses, the report said those scenes spawned “a climate that tends toward approval and encouragement of violence ... created by white terrorism directed against nonviolent protestors.” The riots were, as Malcolm X said of the Kennedy assassination four years earlier, a case of the chickens coming home to roost.

Their ominous warning that America was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal” led the Kerner Commission to believe that racial integration “is essential to the future of American society.”

“If we are heedless,” the commission concluded, “None of us shall escape the consequences.”

None of us has escaped the consequences. Philadelphia is a case in point.

THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE' SINCE KERNER

Philadelphia is more segregated today than it was in 1964. It has the highest degree of residential segregation and concentrated poverty of any of America's 10 most populous cities, according to data from the University of Chicago's Population Research Center and U.S. census data.

Five years ago, The Brookings Institution studied the impact of racial isolation on wealth formation in a landmark report of what it called the "segregation tax." It noted that black homeowners got 18 percent less value for every dollar spent purchasing their homes than whites. Black Philadelphians suffered a 22 percent disparity. "The only factor that explained these variations," the study said, "was the degree of racial segregation."

Philadelphia's school district is more segregated and has fewer resources in inflation-controlled dollars than in 1964. In 1970, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission stepped in and ordered the district to desegregate the city's schools by 1974. A system of voluntary busing was adopted. Black students were transported out of their neighborhoods into white sections of Northeast Philadelphia.

But by the 1974 deadline, the schools were actually more segregated, even though Philadelphia schools with white student populations as low as 10 percent were considered racially diverse.

The disparity in per-pupil spending was an even more telling example of the effects of racial segregation. Even with a state takeover seven years ago that increased state spending in Philadelphia schools, the per pupil expenditure in Philadelphia is \$7,000 a year less than in the predominantly-white public schools of Lower Merion Township, which borders Philadelphia.

Today the school district has an enrollment of 183,000 students that is about 90 percent minority. More than 80 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced rate lunches, a widely accepted index of poverty.

Philadelphia has the highest homicide rate of any America's 10 largest cities. There were 406 homicides last year, more than 300 of them involving handgun deaths in which the perpetrator, the victim or both were black. Much of this carnage was concentrated in the North Philadelphia area where the 1964 riots occurred. It is still, more than 40 years later, the section of the city with the highest degree of poverty.

None of this just happens.

These conditions are a direct outgrowth of public policy failures. Philadelphia mirrors the malaise that is affecting all of urban America to varying degrees.

THE REIGN OF RIZZO

There was an initial flurry of activity on the national level in response to the Kerner findings. But by 1968, a wave of white backlash was largely responsible for the election of Richard Nixon as president, and a hasty retreat away from policies meant to help minorities and the urban poor.

Philadelphia's political evolution was emblematic of this trend. Frank Rizzo, a police lieutenant at the time of the riots, was elevated to police commissioner by then-Mayor James H.J. Tate in 1967.

Rizzo never hid his feeling that Commissioner Leary had allowed North Philly to burn for no good reason. He was quoted in a South Philadelphia Review interview as calling Leary a "gutless bastard."

That played well with the Jewish community that fled North Philadelphia for the Oxford Circle section of Northeast Philadelphia.

It also played into the political strategy of Mayor Tate, who saw Rizzo's popularity as a counterweight against the effects of white flight on the racial balance of the city's Democrats.

"I felt that Rizzo could bring the white working class vote back into the Democratic Party," Tate wrote in his official city memoirs, explaining his decision to slate Rizzo as his successor.

In 1971, Rizzo was elected mayor by a wide margin, drawing a larger vote from Oxford Circle than from the Italian sections of South Philadelphia where he grew up.

Rizzo hadn't been in office a year before he backed a racially-exclusive development in South Philadelphia called Whitman Park. If the people of Whitman Park didn't want black neighbors, Rizzo said at the time, the city wouldn't back any actions to enforce integration.

The biggest public works program in Rizzo's eight years as mayor was the construction of the Center City commuter

tunnel, which made it easier for suburbanites to get into and out of the city. And with that White flight became an even more attractive alternative to city life.

James White, a retired Army colonel who later became Philadelphia's managing director under W. Wilson Goode, the city's first black mayor, remembers the devastating effect of Rizzo's deliberate neglect of North Philadelphia.

"I came into city government in the Rizzo administration," White says. "I was assigned to do a survey of programs run by the Office of Housing and Community Development.

"The first thing I learned was that Rizzo had embargoed the federal Community Development Block Grant Funds allocated for certain neighborhoods, including North Philadelphia.

"It was kind of a triage move. John Gallery, who was Rizzo's housing director, felt it was a waste to put public dollars in neighborhoods that were too far gone to be helped."

White stayed on to work for the mayoral administration of former congressman Bill Green. Green quickly replaced Gallery with Tom Massarro. Massarro had a law degree from Harvard but he had grown up in a public housing project in a tough section of Newark.

"North Philly looked like home to me," Massarro says. "I had had some success as housing director for Ken Gibson in Newark. They used to ask him where he got this crazy young white boy. I

Philadelphia's school district is more segregated and has fewer resources in inflation-controlled dollars than in 1964.

knew what to expect when I got here.”

“All of a sudden I had millions of dollars in my budget to spend on programs in North Philly,” White recalls. “Word spread that the money was there and people started applying for basic system repair grants and low interest loans. We started making a difference.”

REDEVELOPMENT, AT LAST

Before long, people were swinging hammers in North Philly. The steady exodus to neighboring areas like East and West Oak Lane and Germantown began to slow. By the mid ‘70s, community development corporations started tapping federal funds.

Bernard Watson was hired as executive director of The William Penn Foundation, a private philanthropy organization that directed most of its funding to inner-city programs.

Watson poured \$26 million into North Philadelphia in the late ‘70s and ‘80s and hired Floyd Alston, an insurance executive and North Philadelphia native, to oversee the foundation’s largesse.

Alston formed the Beech Interplex Corporation to provide funding for small business startups and larger commercial and non-profit building projects concentrated along Columbia Avenue.

The city later renamed Columbia Avenue for Cecil B. Moore, who represented North Central Philadelphia’s fifth district in city council. Moore had been an uncompromising militant civil rights leader. He turned the Philadelphia branch of the NAACP into an activist organization and led the fight to integrate Girard College, an all-white, private boarding school in the heart of North Philadelphia.

Girard has a majority black enrollment today.

As the Kerner Commission predicted in 1968, Philadelphia was becoming a majority black city – and the political power of blacks increased as a result.

W. Wilson Goode, who had been Bill Green’s managing director, succeeded him as mayor. The Rev. William H. Gray, a North Philly pastor, became a powerful urban advocate in the U.S. Congress. John Street, who had sold hot dogs in his brother Milton’s vending truck outside Temple University law school, got invited inside and emerged three years later with a law degree.

Street became a militant housing activist in North Philadelphia. He was elected to represent the fifth district in city council in 1979 and became city council president in 1992. Then in 1999, Street was elected mayor on a campaign pledge to revitalize the city’s crumbling neighborhood infrastructure.

REBUILDING AFTER REBELLION

Within a year, Street floated a \$250 million bond issue to fund his Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, an ambitious program of demolitions and property acquisitions designed to assemble large parcels for public and private development. He bundled the bond proceeds with \$45 million in city tax revenues to produce the largest city-financed development fund in Philadelphia history. Much of that money was earmarked for projects in North Philadelphia’s fifth district – which he had represented in council and where he still lives.

The initiative has had mixed results. But it created a critical



▲ Police grapple with demonstrator-Photo by Jerry Oppenheimer Philadelphia Daily News

mass in the Strawberry Mansion section of North Philadelphia. The land assembly strategy and a 10-year tax abatement for new residential construction lured John Westrum, a for-profit developer who has built more than 500 units of market-rate housing selling for \$150,000 to \$300,000 in the Brewerytown section of North Philadelphia.

Six years ago, Street hired Carl Greene to head the Philadelphia Housing Authority. Under Greene, the authority has demolished hundreds of units of dilapidated, high-rise housing projects and replaced them with modern single-family homes with off-street parking, air-conditioning and small lawns.

Most notably, the Richard Allen Homes, a sprawling ramshackle project where comedian Bill Cosby grew up, was transformed from an eyesore into a tree-lined village of modern housing. A similar project turned a blighted high-rise public housing project called Schuylkill Falls into a mixed development of public and market-rate single-family homes.

Along that stretch of Cecil B. Moore Avenue where the rioters wracked havoc in August of ‘64, businesses are starting to come back. From Broad Street west to Ridge Avenue, most of the stores shuttered by the riot have reopened.

Temple University students and faculty members stroll the avenue and shop beside long-term residents who stuck it out through the hard times. Bart Blatstein, a commercial developer, has opened a seven-screen multiplex and a mid-rise student housing complex in a new commercial development at Broad and Cecil B. Moore. His Pearl Theater is the first movie house to open in North Philadelphia since before the riot.

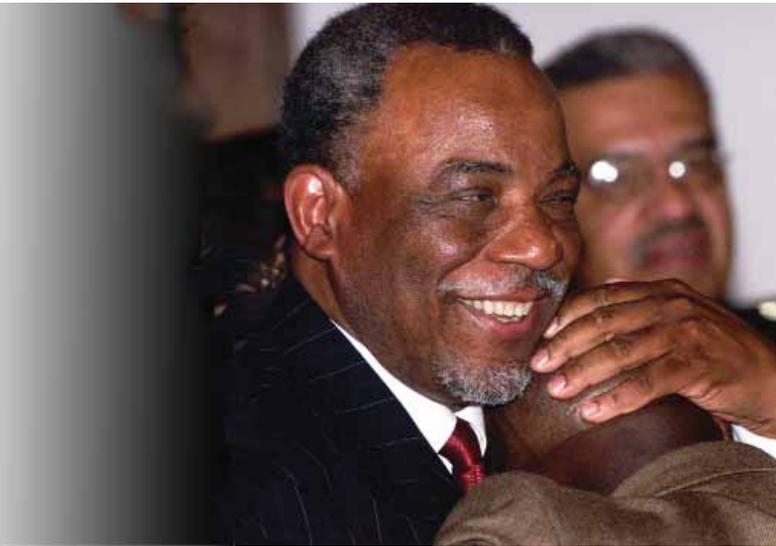
Home ownership is up in the neighborhood as new residents, drawn by the subsidies and the 10-year tax abatement, are sinking their roots in North Philadelphia.

“They’re finding they can move up without moving out,” Floyd Alston says. “We’re creating wealth for people who didn’t have any.”

And more important, the reemergence of North Central Philadelphia offers pretty convincing evidence of one of the Kerner Commission’s fundamental principles: “Government policy is the key to recovery.” ■

In Philadelphia racial gap still wide

By Afi Odelia Scruggs



▲ W. Wilson Goode-Photo by Dan Loh/Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA – On the surface, this place they call the “City of Brotherly Love” doesn’t appear to have a yawning racial gap.

Blacks and whites come and go easily. The boundaries of older, predominately white ethnic neighborhoods blur into neighborhoods heavy with Asian- and Hispanic-owned businesses. Philadelphia’s 1.4 million residents seem to mix and mingle comfortably.

But when it comes to race relations in this city, looks can be deceiving.

“I continue to attend meetings where I’m the only African-American in the room,” says W. Wilson Goode, who became Philadelphia’s first black mayor in 1983. Goode now leads Amachi, a faith-based program that provides a support system for children with incarcerated parents. He’s been one of the city’s major civic and social leaders for more than three decades.

Still Goode is careful to always wear a suit and tie when he’s out in public. Once, when he didn’t, he was mistaken for a parking lot attendant, he says.

He’d only been out of the mayor’s office a month when that happened.

“I don’t go out in a sweat suit and sneakers, the way I see my white counterparts because I recognize there is a stereotype in this city,” Goode says. “Even as a former mayor, if I’m going to be treated for whom I am, I need to look the part.”

His experiences and observations have convinced Goode that in Philadelphia at least, the conclusion of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders’ that “Our nation is moving toward two societies: one black, one white, separate and unequal”

is more than accurate. This panel, which President Lyndon Johnson created in 1967 to study the causes of the rash of racial disturbances that erupted in the 1960s, is better known as the Kerner Commission.

“From a housing point of view, there are two separate societies,” Goode says, emphasizing his point by punching his desk with his index finger. “From an economic advantage point of view, there are two separate societies. From an educational point of view, there are two levels of schooling. And in interaction on a daily basis, there are two societies.”

When it comes to grading race relations, Goode is just as adamant. He gives the city a “C” or “C-minus,” just a week after the city’s third black mayor, Michael Nutter, got 83 percent of the vote in his landslide victory.

But Nutter made history during the May 2007 primary, when he received 37 percent of the white vote. That was “the highest percentage for a black candidate since such things have been tracked,” says Acel Moore, a veteran columnist with *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Goode doesn’t deny the significance of Nutter’s achievement. But he thinks a candidate as strong as Nutter should have pulled even more white votes. That he didn’t, Goode says, speaks to the intransigence of the white electorate.

“One-third of the white population in this city will never vote for an African-American,” he says. “It’s historic in terms of ancestry on the part of people who hold this prejudice. I think that it’s experiences; in some instances they’ve had bad experiences. And I think there are some who fundamentally believe that African Americans are just inferior and treat them as such.”

Still, Goode says race relations have improved in the 24 years since he became the city’s first black mayor. If he’d had to grade the city then, he would have given it a D for race relations. And while he hoped he could have given the city a better grade by now, Goode doesn’t think Philadelphia has earned it.

“The hill that we have to climb is too high, and the internal hatred that exists on the part of so many is so deep,” he says.

...

Like other urban centers, Philadelphia has been transformed in the 40 years since the Kerner Commission investigated the racial unrest that flared during the long, hot summers of the 1960s.

The city’s population has gotten smaller, as residents leave for the suburbs. In 1970 – two years after the commission released its findings – census takers counted 1,948,609 Philadelphians. By 2000, the number had declined to 1,517, 550. The 2006 estimates place the population at 1,448,394.

As the city’s overall population has declined, its percentage of

“One-third of the white population in this city will never vote for an African-American,” he says.

blacks has grown. In 1970, only 33.6 percent of the city's inhabitants were black. In 2000, blacks were 43 percent of Philadelphia's inhabitants.

The Kerner Commission members anticipated that the complexion of the nation's cities would change.

"By 1985, the Negro population in central cities is expected to increase by 72 percent to approximately 20.8 million," they wrote in their 1968 report. "Coupled with the continued exodus of white families to the suburbs, this growth will produce majority Negro populations in many of the nation's largest cities."

What they couldn't foresee, says David Bartelt, a professor of geography and urban studies at Temple University, was the growth of other minorities in these cities. Philadelphia is, in fact, a majority-minority city. Forty-six percent of its residents are black, 11 percent of them are Hispanic and, and 5.4 percent are Asian. "The Kerner Commission had no way of adequately predicting that something like that (immigration) would be happening," Bartelt says. "Most people... saw immigration as not having a substantial effect (on race relations) over the long run."

A drive around Washington Avenue in South Philadelphia illustrates Bartelt's point. Landmarks like two-century old First African Baptist Church to the Marian Anderson Recreation Center, in the heart of the neighborhood where the famed contralto grew up, testify to the depth of Philadelphia's black roots.

The neighborhood changes, just blocks away from the city's "Italian Market." The name hints at the original owners of the stalls and shops in the streets off Washington Avenue. But the signs advertising real estate agents, carry-outs and beauty salons are just as likely to be in Vietnamese, or Cambodian, or Spanish, as in English. And the green-white-and-red banners have the Aztec eagle in the center – marking the business owners as Mexican, not Italian.

Washington Avenue served as the traditional gateway into the city for migrants and immigrants.

"One thing I find ironic is that a community that had been very mixed, became Italian and now we're watching Cambodian, Vietnamese and Mexican Americans settle in that community," he says.

The changes in South Philadelphia are an example of the way a more complex racial dynamism is playing out, as Asian and Latino communities grow on the periphery of white and black neighborhoods. And it's giving rise to political struggles that sometimes put blacks and whites on one side, and Latinos on the other, Bartelt says.

"It's really interesting to watch the African-American political structure try to make alliances with the Latino political structure, which is much more fragmented and much less established," he says, adding that black council members sometimes find themselves making deals with white council people instead of Latinos.

Still, the expansion of immigrants into established neighborhoods doesn't mean the end of segregated housing patterns, or the growth of goodwill, Bartelt says. When he went on a recent housing search, Bartelt says, race was never mentioned outright, but the steering was evident.

"You'd hear something like 'You can't be sure about which way this neighborhood is going.' They're not talking about housing

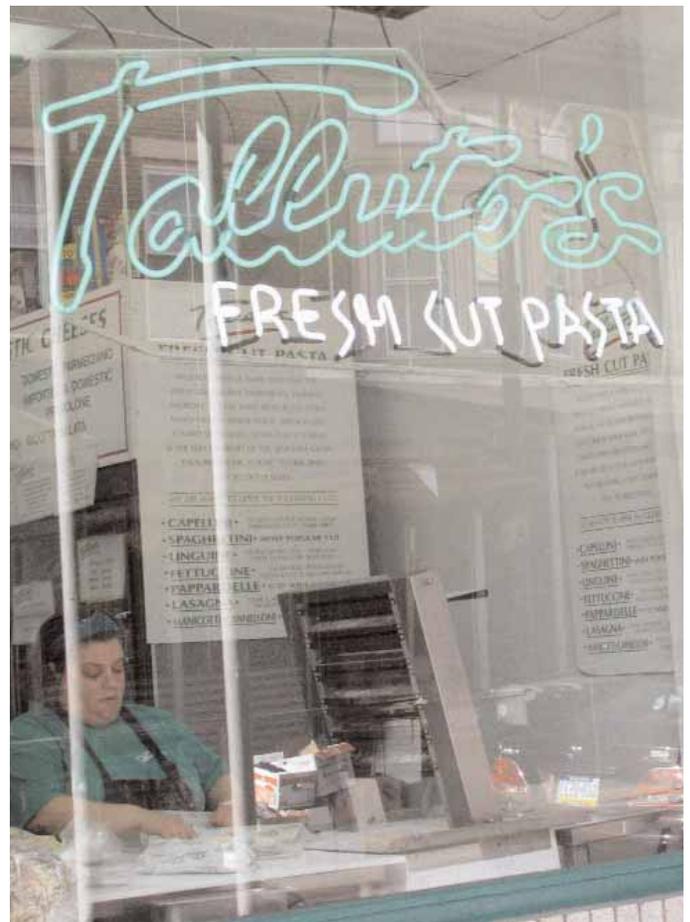
prices or stock," he said. "They also use schools and violence in schools. It's 'Do you have kids? Then you don't want to look in these neighborhoods and communities.'"

And there's another type of demographic change taking place farther south of Washington Avenue – an area where race and ethnicity aren't dividing residents. Class is.

"The Italian enclaves are farther south and the newcomers are whites who are viewed as gentrifiers who will ruin the neighborhood," Bartelt says. In fact, some experts say class is increasingly becoming a cause of the "two societies" the Kerner Commission feared.

"The future of these cities, and of their burgeoning Negro populations, is grim. Most new employment opportunities are being created in suburbs and outlying areas. This trend will continue unless important changes in public policy are made," commission members wrote.

"In prospect, therefore, is further deterioration of already



▲ Philly's melting pot-Photo by Afi Odelia Scruggs

inadequate municipal tax bases in the face of increasing demands for public services, and continuing unemployment and poverty among the urban Negro population."

That future has come to pass in Point Breeze, a community the Philadelphia City Planning Commission says contains "South Philadelphia's most significant problem areas." The neighborhood, which is 89 percent black, is riddled with abandoned and dilapidated buildings. It's lost 10 percent of its population since

1990. Twenty-seven percent of the families in the area live below the poverty line, as compared to 18 percent of families in the city as a whole.

“Long-term vacancy has become a problem of major proportions. This area has the greatest need for addressing blight and socioeconomic distress,” the planning commission reports.

In the ‘80s and ‘90s, the city lost more than 100,000 jobs, and manufacturing jobs fell by 53 percent. Point Breeze is one of the neighborhoods that have been hit hardest by the demise of the manufacturing economy.

“Philadelphia has had a tough road in the end of its manufacturing dominance. As a result, I think there’s essentially a limit to what can be done in terms of improving...equal employment in Philadelphia,” Bartelt says. “When the jobs aren’t

there, it’s hard to envision real economic opportunity and equal access. It’s equal access to a declining job market.”

Point Breeze

was not only hard hit when jobs moved to the suburbs, but by the movement of middle-class blacks outside of the city as well – redefining the meaning of “two societies” in a way the Kerner Commission didn’t anticipate. In Philadelphia, this split not only refers to the division between blacks and whites, but also between blacks who live in the poorer, inner-city neighborhoods, and their more well-to-do brethren.

“You have the development of a black middle class that is increasingly apart from the community,” says Yale University sociologist Elijah Anderson, a leading scholar in the field of urban

To music pioneer, success means staying in his own backyard

By Elmer Smith

PHILADELPHIA - Kenny Gamble was three years out of high school when the rioting began on Columbia Avenue in August of 1964. Philadelphia International Records, the hit-making factory where he and his partner Leon Huff would produce the soundtrack of the ‘70s, was still a dream.

It would be years before he realized how much impact the riot and the destruction left in its wake had on his music and on the development of his personal philosophy.

“I remember it very well,” he says. “If you asked me then, I would tell you I was just concentrating on my music. That was my total focus in 1964, I thought.

“But a few years later when I was traveling to every major city in this country trying to promote our records, I got a chance to see what had happened to Detroit and Newark and L.A. What happened here wasn’t as bad. But seeing those other cities even made me see Philadelphia differently.

“I remember thinking that we did this to our own communities.

White people had already moved out but we burned down the places where we lived. It definitely affected me. It became part of my music.”

Gamble’s music career and concern for inner-city communities developed along parallel paths. He and Huff started incorporating songs like “Wake up Everybody,” recorded in 1975 by Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes Featuring Teddy Pendergrass. That was followed in 1976 by “Message in the Music,” by the O’Jays, and “Clean Up the Ghetto” by the Philadelphia All-Stars, in 1978.

“Everyone liked the love ballads and up tempo stuff we were doing,” Gamble recalls. “But, between the love stuff, we started slipping in the messages.

“I was listening to Curtis Mayfield and James Brown and how the impact of their music soared. Their music was the backdrop; it was fueling the momentum for the civil rights movement,” Gamble recalls.

But if the destruction he saw in the riot cities was reflected in his music, it was made manifest even more in the mission that now consumes him.

Gamble runs the largest non-profit community development conglomerate in Philadelphia. His Universal Companies has built hundreds of units of market-rate and subsidized housing, and it runs two schools – including a charter owned by Universal and a Philadelphia public school that it manages.

Universal has its own job training centers and real estate management company. Most of it is centered in the South Philadelphia neighborhood he grew up in – and where he and his family live.

Gamble sold his mansion in the Philadelphia suburb of Gladwyne where many of the region’s wealthiest families have settled. He moved back to the row house block he grew up in 50 years earlier.

It was a move in the opposite direction from where the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, which came to be known as the Kerner Commission, hoped black America would be headed.

The Kerner Commission’s prescription for healing the schism that has divided America along a racial fault line was for policies “which combine ghetto enrichment with programs designed to encourage integration of substantial numbers of negroes into societies outside the ghetto.”

Integration, the Kerner Commission concluded, “is essential to the future of America.”

Gamble has a different view.

“Integration is a good thing,” he says cautiously. “But I disagree that it is essential to the work we need to do in building in our communities.

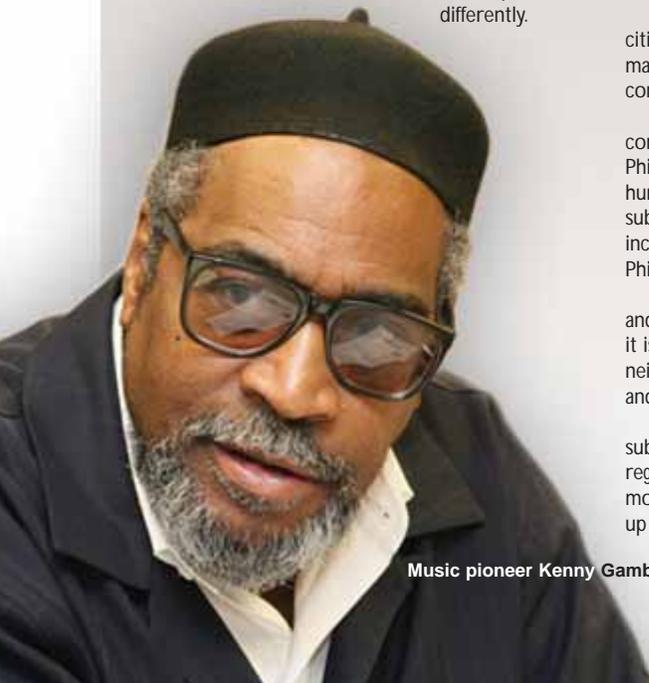
“For me, education is the first thing, then jobs and decent housing. We should be able to provide all of those things right in our own communities. That’s what I’m trying to do here.

“I believe in integration. But it has to be voluntary. I’m not in favor of policies that force people out of their areas to live somewhere where they’re not as comfortable. In the end, people aren’t happy that way,” he says.

What Gamble is doing in his old South Philly neighborhood, and what is being done to a large extent in the North Central neighborhood that was devastated by the ‘64 riots is what some would call indigenous gentrification.

Community-based developers like Gamble’s Universal Companies and the Beech Interplex Companies in North Philadelphia are transforming renters into homeowners by using mortgage subsidies, tax credits and a 10-year tax abatement the city offers new homeowners.

“The value of these communities is rising quickly,” Floyd Alston, the founder of Beech Interplex, said. “It’s like the Jeffersons. They’re moving on up, but without moving out.” ■



Music pioneer Kenny Gamble/Photo by Philadelphia Daily News



▲ Philly's melting pot-Photo by Afi Odelia Scruggs

inequities. “They have associations with the businesses, universities, government’ service and they live in the suburbs.”

He noted that in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, many institutions responded to the riots and the Kerner Commission’s report with a host of actions designed to placate black anger – and move some into the nation’s economic mainstream. Some blacks were in a better position to take advantage of this access than others. Anderson says the prime beneficiaries were working class blacks who had middle-class values and outlook. Segregation had forced those folks into poor black neighborhoods, but fair housing laws gave them a way out.

When the barriers to education and housing began to fall, these were the people who moved into newly integrated suburbs and sent their children to newly integrated schools. Anderson calls this vanguard “tokens” because they became symbolic representatives of the black community.

And while the first wave gained much from the push toward integration, their children profited more. “Their children....were able to accumulate human and social capital that allowed them to

negotiate and navigate the system, says the Yale sociologist. “You’ll find (the children) in suburban and ex-urban communities. So in many ways, they live King’s dream of integration.”

Anderson believes it is no longer accurate to talk of a single black community. He describes four classes of Philadelphia blacks: the elite, the middle class, the working class and the underclass. The working class and the underclass tend to live together, in poorer communities like Point Breeze. Most of the city’s black middle class and elite live in less troubled neighborhoods.

But physical distance from the traditional black community is no insurance against racism, however. The new black middle class are often steered towards neighborhoods in and outside of the city that foster re-segregation.

They live in a suburban “ghetto,” Anderson says, which may not be poverty-stricken, but is racially distinct. So despite their economic gains many middle class blacks in Philadelphia find themselves in the clutches of the “two societies” that the Kerner Commission’s prophesized 40 years ago. ■

Color distinctions perpetuate racial conflict

By Tukufu Zuberi

The ugly head of racial conflict again brought shock, fear, and bewilderment back to the nation. The worst was reflected in the Jena Six case involving the arrest of six African-American students in central Louisiana. This case temporarily woke the nation. All of a sudden the problem of race fell out of the closet. Once again we were left standing with our mouths open, and trying to answer three basic questions: What happened? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again? These are the same questions raised in the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, popularly known as the “Kerner Commission Report.”

Part of the reason for the secret history of race in America is the idea of race itself. Race is not a thing; it is not determined by our physical makeup. Black people rarely have black skin. Usually, black people are some shade of brown. And, white people rarely have white skin. Race is about how people are judged on the basis of their skin color. When a cab driver avoids stopping for a black man, it is not because the potential passenger is black; on the contrary, it is because of the racial attitude of the cab driver. Indeed, the cab driver could be either white or black. It is the meaning that we give skin color that matters.

Determining what race a person is does not depend on science. We determine a person's race using our political and personal prejudices. Each individual in the United States is assigned a race when they are born, when they die, and when they migrate into the country.

The enslaved African immigrants were in no position to perpetuate their own national/group identity. There was no space for an Igbo, Wolof, or Zulu. A slave was a slave, and a “Nigger” was a “Nigger.” The descendants of Africa were forced to accept their designation as blacks or Negroes. This first wave of African immigrants could not become white. It may seem strange to think of the race problem in this manner; however, it makes

no sense otherwise. Immigrants from Africa continue to be denied white racial classification. The more recent second wave of black immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean are not arriving as slaves and may not necessarily identify with the historical experiences of the first wave of African American population that traces its ancestry back to enslavement (though it is hard to understand how immigrants from the Caribbean might make this mistake).

At the time of the Kerner Commission Report, America was a racially divided nation, and all issues could be clearly seen in terms of black and white. The racial oppression of Asians and Native Americans was considered from a different point of view. Forty years after the Kerner Report the demographic situation has transformed the picture. To discuss racial issues in the 21st century without reference to the conditions of Asian, Latin American, and Native American descendant populations, is to miss the point.

More recent immigrants from Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean have conceptualizations of racial identity that are quite different from the bipolar white/black racial categories of forty years ago in the United States. For example, in Mexico the racial continuum runs from white to red, not from white to black as in Puerto Rico. Furthermore, the Puerto Rican continuum from white to black is different from the bipolar conceptualization in the United States, and may have more to do with social status than skin color.

Black immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa enter the United States as African Americans and experience the United States like other African Americans. Immigrants from Europe enter the United States as European Americans. European immigrants do not have a problem of shifting from foreigner to white privilege.

Forty years after the Kerner Report was released, the nation feels compelled to continue to categorize the

population by race. The 2000 census allowed multiple responses to the race question. In this way, the census could count the “multiracial” population. This political act has important implications for the racial composition of the population. But while the number of people identifying as two or more races is actually very low—about 2 percent of the entire population—the media still gets very excited about race, although not to an extent that anyone really grasps the significance of race and self-identification.

We do not talk about fundamental questions: What is race? Is it political? Is it social? Or is it psychological? In some ways the census questions about race may be misleading, and they probably led to a great deal of confusion inside people’s heads: How do I identify myself within these limiting categories? However, these problems with racial classification should not be confused with the need for racial statistics to solve racial problems. It is important that we know that the prisons population is disproportionately African American or that infant mortality rates for African Americans and Native Americans is much higher than that of other populations.

Racial classification is the government’s way of assigning individuals a social place. How race is and has been classified in the census is an important indicator of the conflict over racial identification. The ideas of the “Latino and Asian,” “black and white,” are formulations of racial thinking. Before 1980, the majority of Latinos considered themselves white. In the 1940s, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) protested against Mexicans in Texas being classified as “colored,” pressuring politicians and government enumerators to classify them as white. The reasons for this consideration must be understood in the historical context of racial classification in the United States. These distinctions remain important because of social differences and exclusion, and help

reconfirm social inequality of different populations within the society. To be a “black,” an “Asian” or a “Latino” is not without its own valuation. When social differences exist along racial lines, as they do in the United States, the degree of difference between racial characteristics is an important element in establishing racial boundaries and in creating racial conflict. It is rare in the United States for an individual to be judged as an individual member of society on the basis of their character; even in the most successful case an individual is judged as a member of his or her racial group. This distinguishing characteristic of the color line helps maintain interracial struggle.

The Kerner Commission Report was not the most important event to happen in 1968. On April 4, of this year Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Urban rebellions, in the form of rioting, erupted in major cities throughout America. On June 6, 1968 Robert Francis Kennedy was assassinated. However, the Kerner Commission Report represents a moment in which the nation paused to consider the issue of race and the impact of race on democracy. The report may have been commissioned by President Johnson to consider other issues; however, the underlying causes of racial conflict became the essence of the report.

The original report was a pause for rational consideration before the storm of racial unrest hit America like never before. Maybe it is time we take pause and consider how to avoid such conflict in the future.

Maybe it is time to seriously consider the more recent battles over affirmative action, the over-imprisonment of African Americans, and the reparations movement. The storm could be just around the corner.

Tukufu Zuberi is the Lasry Family Professor of Race Relations and Chair and Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania

\$40 million in property damage
34 people dead

Watts 1965

In 1965, Watts burned – and the people cheered

By Nikole Hannah Jones

LOS ANGELES - The boy couldn't have been more than seven, his tiny hand clasped tightly inside his mother's. But as he watched the chaos from the smoldering street, the words he hissed weren't those of a babe.

"Burn," the boy said into the smoke-filled night. "Burn, baby, burn."

The image of that little black boy still haunts Roger Wilkins. Forty-three years ago, Wilkins, who was assistant director of the U.S. Community Relations Service, was dispatched to California by President Lyndon B. Johnson to find out what caused a 47-mile area of South Central Los Angeles to combust into what would become known as the Watts riot.

What does it say when a child would rather see the place he calls home burned to the ground?

"I was not unaware of the nature of black poverty; I spent part of my childhood in Harlem," says Wilkins, now a professor of history and culture at George Mason University in Virginia. "I knew what isolation, lack of services, and mean cops meant. But I'd never been in a city where little kids called for destruction. To see a great city immobilized, I found it absolutely astonishing."

By the time the embers cooled, the Watts uprising in August 1965 would leave 34 people dead, 1,032 injured and \$40 million in property damage. More than 600 buildings were burned or destroyed.

Two years later, after riots ripped through Newark, N.J., and Detroit, a bewildered President Johnson convened the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders – which has come to be

known as the Kerner Commission – to study what caused some 200 civil disturbances to thunder across a nation that was still congratulating itself for its newly passed civil rights laws.

Watts, it turned out, was the warning shot the nation ignored.

TRAPPED BY COLOR LINES

From its founding by a group of Spanish, black and Indian pobladores in the 1700s, Los Angeles has been a multiracial city. But for many blacks, the City of Angels did not live up to its egalitarian roots.

Drawn by jobs in shipyards and munitions plants during World

War II, hundreds of thousands of blacks flocked to Los Angeles to escape the oppressive and often-violent South. Between 1940 and 1965, Los Angeles County's black population grew from 75,000 to 650,000.

But the welcome wagons wouldn't greet them, and the black migrants soon learned that California had its own color line.

While they found themselves gaining access to the ballot box and the vote, they also encountered "the massive resistance of white folk," says Devin Fergus, history and African-American studies professor at Vanderbilt University.

As black migrants moved into Watts and South Central Los Angeles, whites moved out. Then, Fergus says, whites started to quarantine black people in Watts and its surrounding areas.

Eric Priestly grew up in Watts and still lives there. He says his father stole away to California in the deep of the night after a Louisiana lynch mob burned a cross in his yard and the police



▲ Rioters revel near a police car/ Associated Press photo

“The police were always intimidating you as a black male,” Ojenke says with a shake of his head. “The police were like rabid dogs.”

arrested him and beat him nearly to death.

The rest of Priestly's family quickly followed.

“When they got here,” Priestley says, “they couldn't live where they wanted to live.” He says his aunt managed to purchase the house she wanted because she could pass for white.

“I remember that damn deed,” Priestly says bitterly. “It said you couldn't sell that house to blacks or Mexicans.”

In the '50s, racial covenants and discriminatory practices put about 95 percent of the housing supply off-limits to black renters and home buyers. By the time the flames tore through Los Angeles, two-thirds of the county's black residents lived in Watts and its surrounding neighborhoods.

Nine of 10 of black residents lived in segregated sections of this city.

Blossom Powe, a 78-year-old former Watts resident, remembers that even famed crooner Nat King Cole ran into trouble when he tried to move into a white area. “We were black people in this country - wherever we came from,” she says.

WATTS' WRETCHED REALITIES

Powe sits in her palatial Pasadena home, surrounded by shelves of dusty books and knick-knacks gathered from a long, well-lived life. Prim with her wavy, still mostly black hair tucked neatly under a scarf and sharp eyes peering through thick glasses, it's hard to imagine her struggling to make ends meet in a small house in the center of Watts in the 1960s.

But Powe keeps those memories close, in the volumes of poetry she wrote in the months and years after the riots that tore her community apart.

She considers herself lucky.

Her husband, a former Navy man and engineer, earned a decent living. But many around her did not. At the time blacks in Watts were concentrated in three public housing units, Nickerson Gardens, Jordan Downs and Imperial Courts. The fancy names did nothing to mask the wretched conditions inside the walls of the compact, cinder-block buildings that made up these projects.

Poverty ran rampant in South Central Los Angeles. Black unemployment was two to three times that of whites, with up to 41 percent of people in the Watts area jobless in 1965. Black workers were often barred from anything other than menial jobs such as housekeepers, janitors and garbage men, Fergus says.

Often, no one would hire them at all. As a result, more

than half of Watts' residents received some type of public assistance.

David Jordan, the only high school in Watts, was the poorest high school in the county. The alabaster fortress that housed grades seven through 12 backed up to the Jordan Downs housing project.

At night, many students didn't feel safe walking home because they had to walk through the projects.

Several South Central schools didn't have libraries, while every school outside of South Central did. Many schools in South Central didn't even operate cafeterias because the students were



Raspoet Ojenke
Photo by Nikole Hannah Jones



Blossom Powe
Photo by Nikole Hannah Jones

too poor to pay for the 20-cent lunches.

Powe remembers watching kids who lived near her munching potato chips nearly every meal.

Their mother, a single mom, worked at a potato chip factory. That was often the only food they had.

Sometimes at night, Powe would hear leaves rustling in her backyard. It would be neighborhood

children grabbing berries from her tree to quell the hunger in their stomachs.

“That’s what Watts was,” Powe says. “The frustration and the hunger.”

Watts residents had few services in their community, yet found it hard to travel beyond its borders. The same attitudes that forced black people to reside in Los Angeles’ black areas also prevented them from venturing too far out of them.

Public transportation in South Central was woefully inadequate, often requiring several transfers and several hours of travel to get to other places in the city. Yet according to the McCone Commission – which was created by California Gov. Pat Brown in 1965 to study the conditions leading to the riot – Watts residents depended heavily upon it.

Just 14 percent of people in Watts owned cars, compared with 50 percent elsewhere in Los Angeles, it found. The McCone panel also found that not a single hospital operated in the riot area, and that there were only 106 physicians for 252,000 people.

Frances Feldman, a University of Southern California sociologist who produced an addendum to the McCone report, says mothers often had to take their sick children on hours-long bus rides to get them to medical care. Infant mortality in South Central was nearly double the city average.

Residents couldn’t watch a movie where they lived or buy an ice cream cone. Forced to shop at the small markets in their neighborhoods, blacks were at the mercy of shop owners who weren’t black and didn’t live in Watts or the surrounding areas.

“The markets were really expensive and rundown,” Powe recalls. “Some of the shopkeepers weren’t nice to blacks. But that’s all we had.”

POLICE WERE LIKE “RABID DOGS”

In a poem written after the uprising, author James Baldwin described Watts as a place shadowed by a “miasma of fury and frustration” where “the girls move with a ruthless, defiant dignity,

and the boys move against the traffic as though they are moving against the enemy. The enemy is not here, of course, but his soldiers are, in patrol cars,” Baldwin wrote.

To many, the police were terrorists, not civil officers, says a Watts-born poet Raspoet Ojenke. From a table at a black-owned health food store on Crenshaw Avenue, the willowy 60-year-old with flowing waist-length dreadlocks told one of his tales of being black in a place ruled by white police.

As a teenager ready to head to college, Ojenke says he remembers walking through Watts when a stocky cop that many considered a neighborhood menace stopped and frisked him.

The officer gave no reason. He didn’t have to, Ojenke says.

When the officer found nothing, he cuffed Ojenke anyway and took him to jail. Ojenke had some cash in his pocket and the officer accused him of counterfeiting. Rage overtook him, he recalls. But Ojenke felt impotent.

“The police were always intimidating you as a black male,” Ojenke says with a shake of his head. “The police were like rabid dogs.”

Atop the daily indignities that were imposed on blacks in South Central by invisible hands, white police officers were the tangible

manifestation of racism for many of the area’s residents. Whether thug or scholar, few black males could make it through life in that community without a run-in with the law.

So it was almost predictable that the fires of Watts – like those that would soon engulf large swaths of the country – would be ignited by an incident of perceived police brutality.



▲ Shoe store burns/Associated Press photo

THE EXPLOSION

On Aug. 11, 1965 a white police officer pulled over Marquette Frye, a 21-year-old black motorist suspected of drunken driving. The night

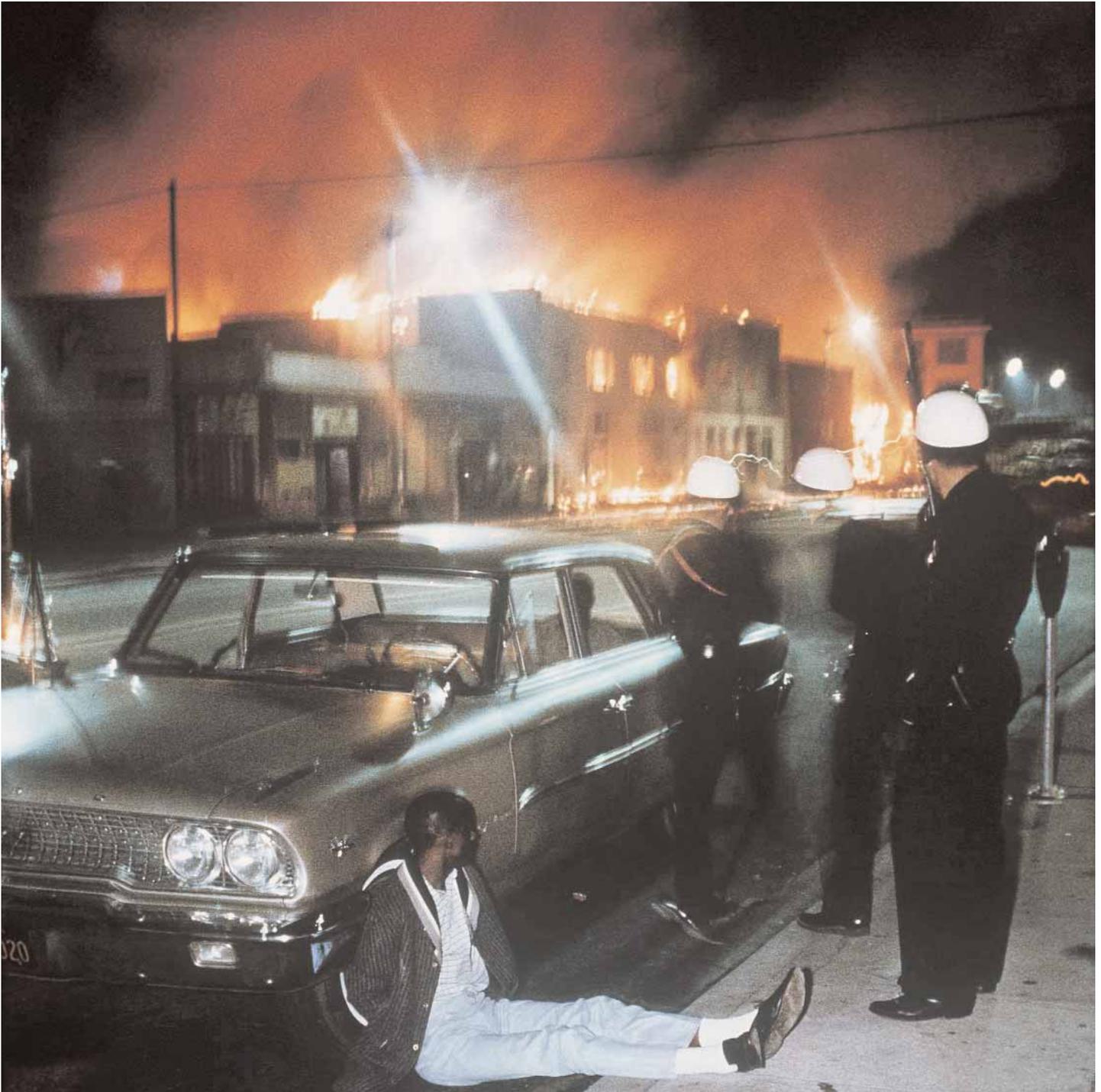
was steamy and the streets were filled with people.

Frye cooperated at first, but then his mother came and the officer refused to let her take the car Frye was driving, though it was registered in her name. An argument started and, in the end, the officer hit Frye in the head to force him to comply and arrested his mother as well.

The small group of bystanders had grown and become angry, thinking the police used too much force. Reinforcements were brought in and police hauled off others. As the crowd dispersed, police thought that was the end of it.

They were wrong.

When word of the confrontation between police and Frye spread the frustration and despair that had been simmering in Watts erupted. That night blacks began stoning cars with white passengers and vandalizing buildings.



▲ Police detain man - and watch Watts burn/Associated Press photo

Quickly the violence spread like a wildfire from neighborhood to neighborhood. The liquor stores, pawnshops and markets that sold shabby goods at luxury prices were looted and burned.

Feldman, the USC sociologist, says it amazed her that USC, right on the border of the riot zone, didn't suffer a single disturbance. The rage was aimed, she says, toward what rioters saw as the symbols of their oppression.

Whites unlucky enough to be passing through Watts found themselves at the epicenter of this rage. Many were beaten. Some were killed. White police officers also used deadly force. All but nine of the 34 people killed in the Watts riot were black.

The McCone report found that most of the rioters arrested had no real criminal record. The average rioter tended to be young, slightly better educated than his neighbor, and socially conscious. More than half were not native Californians but had migrated from Southern states. While government reports say just 2 percent of riot-zone residents participated in the uprising, other estimates are as high as 20 percent.

When a friend stopped by Stanley Sanders' house to tell him that people were setting buildings ablaze in the neighborhood in which he grew up, all Sanders could think was, "Let it burn."

Sanders was home for the summer after studying at Oxford



▲ Stanley Sanders-Photo by Nikole Hannah Jones

... *“But you’re living in a rat trap, and you can’t find a job and your kids can’t eat and your schools are atrocious.*

- Roger Wilkins

University. He was the first Rhodes Scholar to come out of Watts and was headed to Yale Law School in the fall. But despite his success, Sanders was still bitter about the way blacks were forced to live in Watts.

A few days into the riot, Sanders stood on a street corner and watched as some people looted appliances from a store.

He didn’t care. The Rhodes Scholar watched as the store went up in flames 30 minutes after a man announced to looters they had just a half-hour to finish before he would set it ablaze.

“I identified with the frustration, especially of young people in Watts, who seemed like they were expected to farm yet another generation of garbage workers and servile workers,” Sanders says. “I broke with a lot of my friends from Watts who said, ‘Look what they’re doing in our community, a bunch of thugs.’

“I identified with the rage.”

The National Guard eventually partitioned off the riot zone from the rest of the Los Angeles, sending tanks rolling through the streets of Watts. Americans across the nation watched television coverage of the marauding blacks and billowing smoke burning buildings.

Six days after it started, the disturbance ended and Watts’ residents were left to sort through the ashes of their ravaged community as the nation tried to sort through what had just happened.

SIFTING THROUGH THE AFTERMATH

Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, now a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, laughs when she thinks about the reaction black people visiting from the East Coast would have when they went to Watts after the riots.

“They couldn’t understand what was wrong,” says Burke, who organized legal counsel for those arrested in the riot and served as a staff attorney for the McCone Commission. “People from Washington expected to see tenements in Watts. They said, ‘This is middle-class housing.’”

Watts, with its cracked but tidy streets and faded-pastel stucco houses and two-story public housing units looked nothing like the stark high-rise projects and dilapidated apartment complexes that scarred the skylines of cities like Chicago, Baltimore and New York.

Nor did it reflect the crippling poverty and virulent racial caste system of the rural South. Just the year of the Watts riot, the National Urban League named Los Angeles the best city in the country for black people.

Many people who didn’t live in Watts looked at the arrest of

Frye and probably wondered how one incident could give rise to such an outbreak of violence in a city that a lot of blacks had considered a beacon for blacks.

In hindsight that’s not surprising. When the director of the Los Angeles Human Relations Commission drove Wilkins to the riot zone shortly after the riot, he admitted it was the first time he’d been to Watts in 10 years

Ferguson, the Vanderbilt professor, says groups like the Urban League, though black-run, didn’t have their finger on the pulse of the black masses, despite the fact that the tensions that came to a head in South Central Los Angeles had been smoldering for years.

The year before the riots, Los Angeles voters repealed a fair housing act that banned racist real estate practices. And despite passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act – which President Johnson signed into law just five days before the outbreak of the riot – there was a widespread sense of hopelessness among blacks in Watts.

The housing, educational and economic discrimination that they faced wasn’t written into legislation like the South’s Jim Crow laws.

“If you’re in L.A. or Philly or Chicago, you saw positive things happening in the South and even laws being made, and you’re supposed to have all of those rights people in the South don’t have,” says Wilkins. “But you’re living in a rat trap, and you can’t find a job and your kids can’t eat and your schools are atrocious.”

People in South Central tried to work through the system, and felt blocked at every turn, Ferguson says. “Sometimes it’s a rational response in the absence of options and choices, to pick up a brick.”

In fact, the McCone Commission acknowledged that forces out of their control constrained the lives of the blacks throughout Los Angeles County.

Feldman recalls how John McCone, the former CIA director who headed the commission, told her that despite complaints of unemployment in Watts, his wife couldn’t get a housekeeper from there. Feldman asked how much the position paid and McCone replied, \$6 a day.

Feldman, who had done anti-poverty work in Watts, told her boss that it would cost a Watts woman \$3 bus fare to get to Beverly Hills, \$3 for the trip home. “He said, ‘Well, they still should go to work.’” Feldman recalls.

The McCone Commission’s report would not change minds about entrenched systems, Ferguson says. The nature of the beast proved too much to comprehend for some, and the work to change it, too revolutionary.

That’s why people who lived through the Watts destruction bristle when others call it a riot. For them, it was an uprising.

“A riot,” Ojenke says, “is basically an unfocused outburst of social rage. A rebellion is more accurate because it’s the case of a subjected people trying to throw the shackles off.

“They didn’t care how they got free,” he says, his eyes staring into the distance. “They just wanted to be free.”

And that same yearning sent flames into the skies in dozens more cities across the nation not long after the Watts riot. ■

43 years later, Los Angeles still struggles with police reform

By Erin Aubry Kaplan

LOS ANGELES - As disastrous as the 1992 civil unrest was for South-Central Los Angeles, it did provide a nearly perfect moment to launch a kind of justice that had been too long delayed: Police reform.

For years, the Los Angeles Police Department had been dogged by accusations of police brutality, frame-ups and illegal shootings – but the department had never been publicly critiqued.

That changed with the report of the Christopher Commission, the blue-ribbon panel convened to review police conduct after the 1991 videotaped police beating of black motorist Rodney King re-ignited longstanding tensions in the heavily black neighborhoods south and east of the Santa Monica Freeway.

The report made official what these communities had known since Watts erupted 27 years earlier: The police had the mentality of an occupying army, routinely using excessive force on citizens of color and, just as routinely, getting away with it.

The 1992 riot provided a chance to finally address an underlying cause of the 1965 Watts riot. And here was a chance for Warren Christopher, the chair of the commission and vice-chair of the 1965 McCone Commission that largely ignored the role of the police in that disturbance, to make up for the oversight.

NEW ERA, SAME CULTURE

The Christopher Commission did indeed usher in a new era of reform. But the impact of that reform is difficult to measure.

Expanding the police commission, adding an inspector general and increasing civilian review of police misconduct have not entirely changed a culture of brutality or curtailed controversial use-of-force incidents that are nearly seasonal in Los Angeles.

These incidents almost always involve black or Latino victims, and a heavy-handed police response:

- Margaret Mitchell was a 55-year-old homeless, mentally ill woman was shot to death in 1999 after brandishing a screwdriver when stopped by two police officers.
- Stanley Miller, 36, was hit in the head 11 times by a metal flashlight wielding LAPD officer following a brief chase. The beating occurred after Miller, who was suspected of stealing a car, dropped to his knees and put his hands behind his head. The officer, whose actions were caught on a videotape, was fired.
- Devin Brown, a 13-year-old was killed in 2005 by a policeman who fired 10 shots at him as he backed the stolen car he was driving towards the officer following a chase. Brown's mother was paid a \$1.5 million settlement by the city of Los Angeles.
- 19-month-old Suzie Pena also was killed in 2005 by police gunfire. She died after being struck in the head by a bullet fired by a SWAT Team officer during a 3-hour standoff with Jose Pena, her father. The elder Pena, who exchanged gunfire with the officers, was hit several times and died as he held his young daughter hostage.

SCANDAL UNVEILS CORRUPTION

In the midst of all this came the 1999 Rampart scandal, the worst police scandal in Los Angeles history. The controversy involved a special anti-gang unit called CRASH, which is an acronym for the Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums. It



Gates/AP photo

policed an eight square-mile area, just west of downtown, which is largely working class, heavily immigrant and densely populated.

As part of a plea bargain with federal prosecutors investigating misconduct in the CRASH unit, Officer Rafael Perez implicated 70 fellow officers in transgressions ranging from improper shootings and arrests to planting evidence on suspects. His testimony eventually overturned the sentences of dozens of inmates convicted by police testimony and cost Los Angeles \$70 million to settle the resulting lawsuits.

A panel convened by the police commission in 2000 found the same problems within the department that the Christopher Commission had found nine years earlier: The LAPD was too lax in its disciplinary process, and was regarded in the community as more of a hostile presence than a public service.

In the wake of the Rampart scandal, the U.S. Department of Justice imposed a five-year consent decree on the LAPD to monitor reforms within the city's troubled police department.

BLACKS MOVE INTO THE TOP RANKS

One new twist in the past decade is the issue of race and politics moving from the streets into the top ranks of LAPD leadership.

After 1992, the police commission replaced white Police Chief Daryl Gates and hired Willie Williams, the first black to serve as Los Angeles police chief. Williams was an outsider from Philadelphia who was widely expected to help reform the LAPD and repair its image among the minority community. He was savvy enough, but proved too removed to be considered effective.

In 1997, Williams was replaced by another black man, Bernard Parks, an LAPD veteran who had long coveted the job.

But Parks, a protégé of Daryl Gates, was a department loyalist who was skeptical of any public criticism and reforms imposed from the outside. Among Parks' many controversial stances was his opposition to community policing, resisting the consent decree, declaring the Margaret Mitchell shooting "in policy" and opposing a state anti-racial profiling measure that required law enforcement to record ethnic data of motorists pulled over in traffic stops.

Yet blacks, out of racial fealty and a growing awareness that black people were losing positions of power in Los Angeles, mostly muted their criticism of Parks.

When Mayor Jim Hahn decided not to support a second term for Parks in 2002, a fight to renew Parks' contract consolidated black support across the board and quickly became an issue about identity, representation and a wronged black man – and not about Parks' actual record on policing issues.

Parks lost the battle, however, and was succeeded by William Bratton, another former police chief from the East Coast who had headed departments in New York and Boston.

From the beginning, Bratton, who is white, spoke a different language of accountability and a certain

humility that had been largely absent in Los Angeles law enforcement.

He vowed to hew to the provisions of the consent decree. He promised to reduce crime, run a less insular and more transparent department while also restoring the morale of a police force reeling from scandal and chronic understaffing.

It was a tall order, but Bratton, a master of public relations and an astute politician, appeared confident of success.

MURDERS, LAWSUITS PLUMMET UNDER BRATTON

Indeed, Bratton has had some success in Los Angeles. Since 2002, crime and homicides are down citywide, though they had been trending down through the '90s. The number of homicides recorded in 2007 was the lowest in nearly 40 years – 392.

Civil rights lawsuits against the LAPD also have declined on Bratton's watch.

The specter of excessive force and the culture of brutality remain – but the difference is that Bratton is more willing to criticize the rank and file than any chief before him.

When Devin Brown was shot, an event that prompted the creation of the grassroots group Community Call to Action and Accountability, Bratton called for a full and open review of the incident.

When a MacArthur Park pro-immigration rally erupted into a major police melee in May 2007, Bratton was quick to condemn the behavior of his cops and shake up the department's chain of command.

REFORMER OR POLITICIAN?

Whether this is all just smart politics of a man aiming for control, or whether Bratton is genuinely committed to reform remains to be seen.

In the Devin Brown case, Bratton ultimately recommended that the offending officer be disciplined, not removed; the MacArthur Park melee and Bratton's swift response occurred as the police commission was preparing to decide whether to give Bratton another five-year term.

It did. ■

Rodney King-Photo by David Longstreath/Associated Press

Progress slow in Watts since riots

By Erin Aubry Kaplan

LOS ANGELES – Forty-three years since rioters reduced much of Watts to ash and rubble its state is best illustrated by the recent misfortunes of its biggest institution: Martin Luther King Jr./Harbor Hospital.

The county facility opened in 1972 as the Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center. Its creation was a direct response to the 1965 Watts riot— and the finding by the McCone Commission, a panel created by then-Gov. Edmund Brown to investigate it causes.

Among other things, the commission concluded that Watts sorely lacked adequate health care. The nearest hospital to the South Central community was an hour-long bus ride away, the commission reported.

A postgraduate medical school named for pioneering black physician Charles R. Drew was founded at the same time. It eventually grew into a university that made King/Drew a teaching

hospital and in a needy neighborhood. Though the county has pledged to reopen an improved facility, the closing left Watts and the blacks who championed the hospital's existence with an overwhelming sense of defeat. It also reinforced the belief among many blacks across Los Angeles that progress for them is, at best, standing still.

That feeling is not far from the truth.

YEARS HAVE YIELDED FEW CHANGES

Forty-three years after the Watts riot, and 16 years after another round of unrest that proved to be the deadliest and costliest riot in modern American history, little has changed in Watts and adjacent neighborhoods of Los Angeles collectively known as South Central.

Just look at the numbers.

According to 2000 Census figures, 21 percent of men in Watts were unemployed. In 1965, 28 percent of men in Watts were jobless.

Fewer people in Watts own homes now than in 1965 – 32 percent versus 34 percent – and the average household income of \$18,000 a year is the lowest in Los Angeles County. The schools in South Central rank at the bottom among all schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District, and about half of South Central residents lack a high school diploma.

At the lowest rung in the South Central hierarchy, Watts has become a point of permanent departure for middle-class blacks who have fled over the years to more upscale locales in central Los Angeles, the Crenshaw district or far-flung suburbs like Riverside or Palmdale.

“Black people didn’t just leave Watts,” says Watts native and art curator Cecil Ferguson. “They deserted it.”

The result is that Watts has become a neighborhood of concentrated poverty.

WATTS NOW BIGGER, BROWNER

Though economic and social progress in Watts has stagnated, its population hasn’t.

Black flight, coupled with a steady influx of immigrants from Mexico and Central America, has transformed Watts and many other parts of the surrounding South Central neighborhood into a majority Hispanic community.

The Latino presence in Watts has complicated the picture, racially and otherwise.

For example, though most supporters of King/Drew hospital were black, its clientele was largely Latino. Tellingly, the image that sealed the hospital’s fate occurred in May 2007; it was that of a Hispanic woman writhing in pain on the floor of the emergency room while the mostly black staff failed to save her life.

King/Drew closed a few months later.

Despite the hospital’s problems and other incidents between blacks and Hispanics, relations between the two groups have been fairly uneventfully in Watts. The 1992 riots didn’t impact the relations between blacks and Hispanics, as black rioters lashed out mostly against Korean and white merchants.



hospital and in a needy neighborhood.

But while the hospital had many triumphs, including a state-of-the-art trauma center, political oversight weakened over the years, and King/Drew began to experience serious problems.

Press coverage of medical and leadership lapses at King/Drew intensified over the years, as did concern from its mostly black supporters – people who realized that the hospital and the legacy of racial justice that it represented were in serious trouble.

But a blistering 2004 investigative series by *The Los Angeles Times*, which highlighted everything from fiscal mismanagement to unscrupulous doctors, proved to be the death knell. County supervisors vowed to fix the hospital’s problems, but their efforts proved to be too little, too late.

While the hospital’s supporters argued that the county should find a way to keep King/Drew open or risk returning Watts to the dire conditions of 1965, their protests fell short. King/Drew closed as a full-service hospital in 2007.

The Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC), an employment and community service center founded in the wake of 1965, once had an almost entirely black staff. It is now nearly half Latino. For the past 15 years, WLCAC has joined with the Watts Century Latino Organization to stage a bicultural Cinco de Mayo celebration.

Bicultural collaboration, however, is a different matter.

In the years after the 1992 riot, the community action committee attempted, and mostly failed, to organize black and brown parents around the conditions of local schools.

Another nonprofit, Community Coalition, has had much more success in mounting campaigns to benefit all South Central residents, such as limiting the number of liquor stores.

But this small success hardly means the interests and issues of black and brown always converge.

“Historically, working-class people don’t automatically come together just because they’re working class,” says Raphael Sonenshein, a professor of political science at California State University-Fullerton and longtime observer of Los Angeles politics.

“Numerically, Latinos are on the rise, while blacks feel in many ways on the decline.”

Separation also is driven by differences in language, lifestyle and legal status. Jack Kyser, chief economist for the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp., says South Central’s heavily undocumented Latino population is hesitant to get involved with anything public, not simply festivals, but the activities of unions and other organizations that could improve their lot.

“Undocumented want to stay underground,” says Kyser. “But unless they get an education that leads to better employment, it’s a permanent poor class in the making.”

That recalls an observation by the McCone Commission that Mexican Americans in Watts shared many of the same grievances as blacks and, unless something was done, would join the ranks of the underclass.

GLIMMERS OF PROMISE

And yet Watts does not look all that hopeless.

Latino small-business owners filled an economic vacuum left by a shrinking black population. Thoroughfares like Central and Wilmington avenues are dotted with markets, clothing stores and other establishments that feature signs in Spanish.

In contrast to the stacked tenements of older, Eastern cities, Watts and South Central have mostly single-family homes with front lawns and backyards. Even the housing projects – Imperial Courts, Jordan Downs, Nickerson Gardens – never suffered the squalor that characterized the Cabrini-Green complex in Chicago or the Lafitte and Desire projects in New Orleans.

One National Guardsman dispatched to Watts in 1965, a young white man from the San Fernando Valley named Bob

Hipolito, said in a 2005 interview with *The Los Angeles Times* that he was surprised by the tidy appearance of a place he’d imagined as far worse.

The music and literary scene flowered in and around Watts in the years after the riots. There are the arts and cultural traditions begun after 1965, like the annual Watts Jazz and Day of the Drum festivals. In 1972, the Wattstax concert – the black answer to Woodstock – was held to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the riots.

Organized by Memphis’ Stax Records, the concert attracted around 100,000 people to the Los Angeles Coliseum on Aug. 20. It featured performers such as Issac Hayes, who was riding high off his soundtrack from the hit movie *Shaft*, and other legendary rhythm-and-blues artists such as The Staple Singers and Rufus Thomas.

It also was at that concert that the Rev. Jesse Jackson wooed black America with his fist-pumping invocation of “I Am – Somebody.”

The Watts Writers Workshop, Watts Prophets, Mafundi Institute and other groups that fused art to social change – led directly to a jazz and poetry scene in Crenshaw’s Leimert Park Village in the

’80s and ’90s. The city is building an arts center named for the jazz visionary and Watts native son, Charles Mingus, near the Watts Towers, a Los Angeles landmark.

All of this is what Los Angeles historian Mike Davis has described as the brightest spot of ’65 – a location for a West Coast version of a black arts movement.

ROADBLOCKS TO RENAISSANCE

In 2005, during a 40th-anniversary observance of the Watts riot, Timothy Watkins WLCAC president and CEO, convened a series of community meetings to create a grassroots blueprint for improvement, called Watts Renaissance. The WLCAC and Grant African Methodist Episcopal church, another local entity, are now partners with the city in developing a master plan for the Central Avenue corridor.

Watkins expresses the mixed views of many black Angelenos when he says that although he is optimistic about the project at hand, the larger picture of structural racism in South Central has barely changed.

“There are riots every day in the lives of poorest people – incarceration, poverty,” Watkins says. “Things have actually eroded since ’92. Our community is at the epicenter of the indicators for worst health outcomes, and we’ve just lost a hospital. We’re in terrible shape. How can I say things are better?”

Part of what frustrates Watkins is what he considers to be a lack of leadership from elected officials, who tend to reflect the split between the interests of the black middle class and black poor.

Of course, politicians have long had their work cut out for them.

“Things have actually eroded since ’92. Our community is at the epicenter of the indicators for worst health outcomes, and we’ve just lost a hospital. We’re in terrible shape. How can I say things are better?”

In his book *Official Negligence: How Rodney King and the Riots Changed L.A.*, Lou Cannon cited three forces since the 1970s that radically altered Los Angeles' urban core: Proposition 13, a state initiative that capped property taxes and reduced local revenues; the immigration of Latinos and Asians to the garment industry; and the decline of industry in South Central.

Kyser, the economist, says the last factor has been especially devastating.

"Basically, the industry that used to be in the central county is gone and has never been replaced," he says. "Industrial space is still



▲ Artistic revival-Photo by Reed Saxon/Associated Press

in high demand in L.A., but not in South L.A. and Watts, where land is actually expensive and parceled in ways that are unsuited to new development."

But the biggest problem, says Kyser, is a lack of political will to make development happen.

Watts is barren compared with other parts of Los Angeles that have profited from development booms in the past decade—the Westside, downtown, Hollywood, Culver City, even Inglewood. And it remains to be seen what impact the demise of King/Drew hospital, Watts' chief hub of employment that almost singlehandedly supported a nearby shopping mall, will have on the area's already frail economy.

Negligence is made easier by the piecemeal way Los Angeles is governed.

City and county operate separately, as do 88 cities within the county that all have their own mayors and city councils. Watts, for example, is part of the city of Los Angeles, but King/Drew hospital lies partly in a county area called Willowbrook. Compton is just south of Watts and has a similar profile, but it is its own city.

All this makes for a certain isolation and inertia that inhibits change. Sonenshein, the political science professor, says that although the county is most responsible for the needs of the poor and indigent everywhere, "Nobody's going to riot against the county."

J. Eugene Grigsby III, president of the National Health Foundation and a former professor at UCLA's School of Public Policy and Social Research, says the diffusion of blacks across Los Angeles County makes the inertia almost a foregone conclusion.

He points out that the majority of blacks no longer live in the city of Los Angeles, and to focus on a Watts or South Central as the locus of the black community is to miss the point of a new demographic and political reality.

Grigsby says the best way to get at black issues is to address the needs of those left behind and focus on the poor. But he admits that "nobody's doing it, because of the terribly bifurcated nature of L.A. – the overlapping jurisdictions of cities and county – always make it possible to pass the buck on the problems of poor people. It's an old problem of accountability."

ANOTHER DECADE, ANOTHER UPRISING

The explosion that started at Florence and Normandie avenues in April 1992 was the city's best opportunity to re-examine that accountability and to address the unmet problems that were revealed by the 1965 riot.

Once again, a police incident – the videotaped beating of black motorist Rodney King – stoked anger at racial injustice and economic disenfranchisement. And again, there were days of unrest, looting and flames.

But there were key differences between the 1992 and 1965 riots.

Reflecting new demographics, the 1992 riot spread out over a much wider area, reaching as far north as Hollywood. And it had nearly as much Latino as black participation.

Another key difference was the public response.

In the '60s, there was universal agreement that the root cause of the Watts riot was racial inequality; in the racially conservative '90s, public discussions of the riot had a much narrower focus. The talk was mainly of police, public safety and criminality.

There were some attempts to boost investment to South Central following the 1992 riot, chiefly through a funding consortium called Rebuild L.A. But a national recession swallowed those efforts whole.

WHAT NOW?

The question now, many say, is not what needs to be done in Watts and South Central, or even how. The question is whether to believe – again – that the things that need to be done will get done to scale, and in a reasonable amount of time.

Sonenshein, for one, says that they will.

He says that despite the problems, there is more commerce in South Central now than there was in 1965. He believes gentrification that is transforming other parts of the city will visit Watts - eventually.

And he believes blacks and Hispanics will work things out for their mutual improvement, because they have to.

"Hope is the best political resource," Sonenshein says. "There's always a sense in L.A. that things are possible still." ■

The media and race, 40 years after Kerner

By Darnell M. Hunt

In the aftermath of the civil unrest that swept American cities in 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson commissioned a study aimed at shining light on the causes of what was happening on inner-city streets. The Kerner Commission issued its report a year later, in 1968, painting an enduring image of a divided America – “two nations, one black, one white,” whose members continued to experience unequal access to resources, power, and prestige.

While the lengthy report had much to say about racial inequality in America, about how relatively miserable conditions in America's black ghettos had fueled the events, the report also explored other less-obvious factors that many believed contributed to them. One of these factors was the nation's news media.

The Kerner Commission report offered a relatively tame critique of the role the nation's news media played in the events. Although the report faulted the media for generally failing to explore the causes and consequences of the violence – including the press' silence on the fundamental relationship of the events to 1960s' race relations – it effectively patted the press on the back for making a real effort to accurately and objectively report on what was happening on the streets of inner-city America. The anecdotes of media sensationalism and the distortions that policymakers feared might have incited ghetto residents to participate in the events, the study found, were absent from the lion's share of news coverage.

To be sure, the study found that television coverage featured a “dominant, positive emphasis on control of the riot and on activities in the aftermath of the riot.” It is important to point out that the report also paid considerable attention to another crucial issue – the fact that African Americans were missing in action at America's news media in the mid-1960s.

Indeed, the report cited figures for the period indicating that fewer than 5 percent of employed journalists were black. Things were so bad in Los Angeles during the Watts riot of 1965, that some local television stations reportedly promoted black custodial staff to editorial positions so that the stations could deploy “insider” to cover the disturbance.

Of course, the situation is more sobering when we consider the men and women (usually men) who occupied key decision-making positions: less than 1 percent of supervisors and editors were black in the mid-1960s. The mainstream outlets of print and broadcast journalism were firmly in white hands during the period, which led to stories being told, as the report put it, “from the standpoint of a white man's world.”

In today's so-called colorblind America, these issues of race and representation rarely receive the serious national attention they did when the nation's race problem was front and center, acknowledged by the powers that be, and inscribed in the text of high-profile documents like the Kerner Commission report. According to today's conventional wisdom, we have come a long way from the turbulent era of the 1960s. We now live in a 21st century, multi-cultural America where formal barriers to minority inclusion in America's institutions have been eradicated; and where, for example, the demand of increasingly diverse audiences necessarily leads to more diverse news content in the marketplace, as well as to a more diverse corps of journalists.

But is this the reality today?

Surveys show that only about 14 percent of the nation's newspaper journalists were minorities in 2007, while about 22 percent of the local television journalists and 6 percent of radio journalists were so. When we consider that minorities constitute nearly a third of the U.S. population today – and that the 1960s minority figures cited above included only “blacks” – the myth of racial progress in the news media starts to unravel. The myth falls apart completely when we consider the continuing, woeful under-representation of minorities in news management positions or, even more significantly, in the ownership of news media.

Forty years after Kerner we continue to confront a reality in which news stories are routinely told “from the standpoint of a white man's world.” Just as this standpoint provided minimal insights in the mid-1960s about the relationship between American race relations and the violence erupting on inner-city streets, it has had little to offer in recent years about

the connections between race in America and, say, what happened in Los Angeles in 1992, or in New Orleans in 2005. This is because the dominant standpoint is wedded to the surveillance function of American news media, which is rooted in a fundamental interest in maintaining order above all else. It is a gaze invested in focusing on symptoms and overlooking causes.

As I have written elsewhere, the notion that America's mainstream news media function as a Fourth Estate, one that balances governmental power by serving as an independent source of information for the public, is as mythical as the idea of racial progress in media access and control.

Far from serving as a check on government power, mainstream media and the state are locked in a symbiotic relationship that significantly constrains adversarial possibilities. Newswriters rely on access to official sources for the "facts" of a given situation, and officials rely on newswriters to relay these official accounts to the public. At best, alternative accounts of the situation are routinely buried in mainstream news narratives; at worst, they are discounted in news narratives or left out altogether. These tendencies, studies show, have hardened as the interests of the handful of multinational corporations that control our mainstream news media align ever more closely with those of the power elite.

How the events of the mid-1960s (or Los Angeles 1992) are understood – as disturbances, unrest, riots, uprisings, or rebellion – is telling. These events might have been portrayed by mainstream news media as an unfortunate, but necessary wake-up call for the government, an important societal agent that had neglected inner-city needs for years. Or they might have been framed in more systemic terms, as the explosion of struggles between haves and have-nots in a classist and racist America.

Instead, mainstream news media's routine focus on the mechanics of the fires, looting, and police efforts to restore order wrapped the events in a crime

frame that works to divert attention away from the political dimensions of the activity. To say that participants are "venting their frustrations" by taking to the streets – a cliché in mainstream news coverage – is consistent with understandings of the events as riot, disturbance, or unrest.

By contrast, the terms uprising and rebellion are off-limits in mainstream news accounts. These terms' invocation of political realities in America profoundly conflicts with the dominant frame journalists are motivated to establish.

The Kerner Commission report spoke passionately about the need to maintain the independence of the press as questions about how to better cover inner-city America are examined. It proposed creation of a private, non-profit Institute of Urban Communications that would train journalists in urban affairs, recruit minority journalists to the profession, identify best practices for police-press relations, monitor media performance in covering race-related issues, and establish an urban affairs service that would support journalists who specialize in covering the nation's racial ills.

In many respects, this vision is embodied today in organizations like the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, which brings journalists, media educators, and the public together to explore ways that news media might "reconnect to their communities and engage their citizens in dialogue and problem solving." Race has been the focus of more than a few Pew projects.

If only it were this easy.

The mainstream press is not independent, and its accounts of race in America – despite the best intentions of some journalists – will never breach the barrier separating a routine focus on symptoms from a more penetrating focus on causes. Until we can find a way to elevate the profile of alternative media in our national conversations about race, the same old frame will continue to dominate.

Darnell M. Hunt is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Ralph J. Bunche Center of African American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Degree of damage undetermined
2 people dead

Tampa 1967

On a night in '67, Tampa learned that for black people, quiet didn't mean content

By Teresa D. Brown

TAMPA, Fla. – Ricky Adams knew something wasn't quite right that Sunday evening on June 11, 1967, as he walked home after a day of swimming at Walker's Lake.

The only sound he could hear as he headed for Central Park Village was his growling stomach.

Adams knew that dinnertime in Central Park was anything but quiet. With more than 400 black families living in Tampa's largest housing project, there was always noise.

But tonight was different.

Tampa police officers had been in the neighborhood looking for three burglary suspects. One officer spotted a group of black youths that included 19-year-old Martin Chambers. A foot chase began and ended with the boy fatally wounded in an alley.

"Come to find out, these white cops had shot Darby (Chambers' nickname)," says Adams, now 51. "They shot him in the back! I'm like, 'Oh, oh! It's on now!'"

Within hours, rioters had burned, looted and trashed buildings in black sections of the city. Pleas for peace went unanswered. Fearing the violence would escalate and spread into other parts of the city, Gov. Claude Kirk called in the National Guard.

"People were out there on the streets and they were angry. I don't think angry is a strong enough word. My thoughts were we should be angry at the police officer, not the world," says Carr Brazelton, who was 22 during the three days of civil unrest.

"I couldn't believe this was happening in my hometown," says Brazelton, who also witnessed the 1965 Watts riots in Los Angeles. "Could this be happening in Tampa? My city?"

MODEL OF RACIAL HARMONY?

Tampa had served as a model of racial decorum in the South, where civil rights demonstrators had been met with violence by white racists. It also had managed to escape the rioting that broke out in major Northern and Western cities during the first half of the 1960s.

Lunch counters were quickly and quietly integrated. Public schools were ordered desegregated. A biracial committee was created to foster race relations.



▲ Police examine blood stains where Martin Chambers was fatally shot/
Photo by The Tampa Tribune

But those changes did nothing to change the lives of blacks who lived in communities like Central Park Village, an impoverished area with a staggering unemployment rate and a largely white police department that blacks felt only existed to harass and control them.

And the long-simmering anger and frustration felt by blacks came boiling to the surface on that sweltering June evening.

A SHOOTING STIRS ANGER

Chambers' shooting marked the end of what started out as a burglary investigation. Officer James Calvert was combing the Central Park area looking for three suspects who had robbed a camera store minutes earlier.

Calvert spotted the trio who police say broke into the store. They were pursued by several police units. One of the young men was caught and another one escaped, according to newspaper reports.

Police say Chambers ignored orders to stop and darted into a narrow alley. The officer drew his .38-caliber service revolver and fired a single shot. Chambers was climbing a chain link fence when the bullet pierced the middle of his back, police say.

Calvert and two other officers placed him in a police cruiser and drove him to Tampa General Hospital where he died. All three officers wrote in their report that if Chambers had not been shot,

he would have climbed over the six-foot fence and escaped – although photos of the narrow space between the fence and the adjoining building show that such an escape would have been difficult.

THE CLASH COMES

The disturbances began that Sunday night as word of Chambers' death got out. They accelerated when State Attorney Paul Antinori ruled the shooting was justified. By Monday afternoon, the National Guard was deployed to Tampa.

"These folks had guns and shotguns and tanks and we had nothing, and black folks were raising hell and I figured a lot of people were going to get killed," recalls James Hammond who headed Tampa's Community Affairs Office in the 1960s.

So Hammond and his staff handpicked about two dozen young black men, nicknamed "White Hats" because of the color of their police-issued helmets, to identify the rioters and try to persuade them to resort to violence.

"At least half were teenagers and young adults," according to the report by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders – which President Lyndon B. Johnson formed in 1967 to investigate the causes behind the riots that had beset not just Tampa, but Detroit, Newark, N.J. and other cities.

"As they began to mill about and discuss the shooting, old

Filmmaker's work guided by the first time he saw life in black and white

By Anika Myers Palm

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. – The images were terrifying: Rocks being thrown, police decked out in seldom-seen riot gear. The smoke and the flames stood out the most.

St. Petersburg, literally, was burning.

But it wasn't 1967, the year when riots wracked Detroit, Newark and even St. Pete's neighbor, Tampa.

This was 1996.

It began Thursday, Oct. 24, of that year – four years after Rodney King asked the nation, "Can we all get

along?" After hip-hop had become the sound of the nation. And not too long before Bill Clinton, the white man in the White House, would be labeled "America's first black president" by Toni Morrison, one of the nation's most celebrated black authors.

This wasn't supposed to happen now, and certainly not here. St. Petersburg was a quiet place, known disparagingly as "God's Waiting Room," a haven for retirees.

But like most of the riots of the '60s, the disturbance was ignited by police action. In this case, it was the

shooting of 18-year-old Tyron Lewis.

Police said Lewis tried to run them over during a routine traffic stop. Before he reached the hospital, he was dead.

Within hours, St. Pete erupted. News clips from the time show a city bewildered. Eleven people were injured, a police officer was shot and about 20 people were arrested.

"They were tossing everything at us but the kitchen sink," St. Petersburg Police Sgt. Denny Simmons told CNN at the time. Police Chief Darrel Stephens told the media it was "inappropriate" to speculate on the reasons behind the uprising.

Walter Clark, then 12, saw the images from his home in Pinellas Point, a short distance from downtown St. Petersburg. Clark had grown up in the multiracial neighborhood, and had attended integrated schools.

He says he had never really thought much about race. But suddenly here it was, smack in his face.

Clark says most of the white kids didn't show up for school the day after the unrest. And when he rode his bicycle home from school and decided to stop at a convenience store for a snack, he came upon a scene he says he'll never forget: Two black men chasing and cursing a white man.

When they saw him, the black men told him he should treat white people the same way, he says.

The experience shocked Clark to his core. He was conflicted. Was he really on the same side as these men just because they shared skin color?

"I grew up sheltered," Clark says, adding that he and his parents didn't talk about race much. The only conversations about the subject that he really remembers are his father's warnings that he shouldn't attend parties where he would be the only black kid.

"I didn't pay him any attention," Clark says.

In time, the calm returned to St. Petersburg. President Clinton sent his housing secretary, Henry Cisneros, to the city to promise millions of dollars to revitalize government-owned property populated mostly by some of Pinellas County's black residents. The money never materialized, city leaders and activists say.

Mindful of the need to restore positive relations with the city's black community, the city promoted Goliath Davis III, its highest-ranking black officer, to police chief, a few months after the riot.

Davis' tenure brought important changes in the police department, says Omali Yeshitela, a black activist who founded the Uhuru Movement, a grassroots advocacy group some city leaders accused of fomenting the uprising.



▲ University of Central Florida student Walter Clark, editing a sequence, Tuesday, October 18, 2005, on his film, *Beyond The Blacktop*, a narrative based on Clark's experiences from a race riot in St. Petersburg. (Joe Burbank/Orlando Sentinel)

grievances, both real and imagined, were resurrected: discriminatory practices of local stores, advantages taken by white men of Negro girls, the kicking in

the face of a Negro boy by a white man as the Negro lay handcuffed on the ground, blackballing of two Negro high schools by the athletic conference," the report said.

As authorities worked to quell the unrest, selected members of the volunteer patrols, along with black leaders, met with government officials with a list of demands that included more job opportunities.

A series of meetings were scheduled so black citizens could address everyone from the mayor to the governor



▲ Martin Chambers and his mourners. Photos by Florida Sentinel Bulletin

about police brutality, educational assistance, recreational facilities and poor housing.

Tuesday morning, hundreds showed up at College Hill Elementary School's cafeteria where Brazelton promised no more rioting if their demands were considered.

The National Guard was sent home.

Brazelton, the son of a sheriff's deputy and one of the White Hats, says his father's boss – Sheriff Malcolm Beard – warned him that if there was one incident, "I am coming to put you in jail personally."

But no one broke the pact, and slowly, the violence stopped.

Besides Chamber's shooting and a sheriff's deputy's fatal heart attack, there were no other deaths.

"It got rid of a lot of the most noted bad cops, cops with a reputation of brutality in the African community," Yeshitela says.

Clark eventually left St. Pete and went to college, where he majored in film. For his senior project, he decided to explore the ideas about race relations he'd developed during the past decade. The riot was a big part of that.

Clark wrote about the experience of being a young post-civil-rights-generation black man in a world grown more complex. He remembered old friends. He remembered his confusion during those smoky days in October 1996. He thought about what it must have been like in the thick of the uprising, the way some boys his age had been, instead of watching it from his comfortable home.

"What if I had been there with one of my friends who wasn't black?" he wondered.

The script came together quickly.

Casting was another matter, though. So was getting approval from his advisers in the film department at the University of Central Florida.

They weren't really sure what he was trying to do.

"The first thing (his department head) asked me was, 'Are you angry?'" Clark says.

Clark says he realized that he was, and that anger would show up in his script, "*Beyond the Blacktop*."

It's the story of Marcus, a black kid, and his white buddy, Ryan. When another black friend with whom the boys play basketball is shot and killed by a white police officer, Marcus, for the first time, finds himself torn between the black and white planes of his existence.

Clark tapped family, friends and friends of friends to raise the \$7,000 he needed to pay for the short film. The first casting call went out before the school year began. Clark was disappointed when only two people showed up. The second casting call, which he held after the semester started, was more successful.

The film was shot over a week in the fall of 2005 at several locations in Orlando. Editing took nearly a year. Clark showed the 16-minute film at the University of Central Florida in 2006, to rave reviews.

Today, Clark says he's less naïve about race and he looks back at the 1996 riot with a more nuanced eye.

"It wasn't right or justifiable, but I understand where the frustrations came from," he said. "I understand where youthful anger can come from." ■

THE AFTERSHOCK

LeRoy Collins, who retired as governor in 1961 and was known nationally as a "spokesman of the New South" for his open-minded attitude towards integration, told The Associated Press that the civil unrest in Tampa was "sickening" and "something we felt just wouldn't happen in Florida."

"I have seen the same thing in Watts and Cleveland and other places and I felt we could avoid it," Collins said after the first day of rioting. "Criminal acts like this cannot be condoned. The past, present and future must be carefully reviewed to find true causes and sound remedies."

That review happened when the riot commission – more commonly known as the Kerner Commission – uncovered simmering inequities in Tampa that had been ignored by its white power structure.

Among other things, the commission found that six of every 10 black families lived in substandard housing, and that many dwellings were "shacks with broken window panes, gas leaks, and rat holes in the walls."

It also found that the majority of black children never reached the eighth grade, and that 55 percent of black men in Tampa worked in unskilled jobs.

Blacks also were marginalized in other ways.

"Although officials prided themselves on supposedly good race relations and relative acceptance by whites of integration of schools and facilities, Negroes, composing almost 20 percent of the population, had had no one of their own race to represent them in positions of policy or power, nor to appeal to for redress of grievances," the report said.

CHANGE BEGINS

“History picks the most minute, the most remote to play the most major part. For Tampa, it chose Martin Chambers,” says James Tokley, an adjunct professor of Africana Studies at the University of South Florida (USF). He also is the city’s poet laureate.



“He was a little guy who should have stayed in school but he was out running with his buddies ... not meaning anyone any harm,” Tokley says. “But he was the one that was chosen.”

After Chamber’s shooting and the riot it sparked, city leaders had no choice but to recognize the discontent that was growing among the residents in its housing projects.

The uprising, says Ray Arsenault, the John Hope Franklin Professor of Southern History and co-director of the Florida Studies Program at USF, ended any false hopes that the 1964 Civil Rights Act would solve the problems of black people.

“It was a great victory to get the right to vote, to sit down at the lunch counter and be able to have a cup of coffee,” Arsenault says. “But when you don’t have enough money to buy the coffee because you don’t have a job or the prospect of getting one, then the victory doesn’t seem as great. Inevitably, there was a sense of betrayal, disappointment.”

But 1969 ushered in some progress.

Hillsborough County – which encompasses Tampa – got its first black prosecutor when George E. Edgecomb took the oath in March 1969. He later became the county’s first black judge after being appointed by Gov. Rubin Askew in 1973.

The Rev. A. Leon Lowry, a minister and civil rights leader, became the first African American to win public office in

Hillsborough County when he was elected to the School Board in 1977. In the 30 years since he was elected, two black women have served on the board.

James Hargrett Jr. became the county’s first black state legislator in modern times in 1982 when he won the Democratic primary runoff for a newly created majority House district. A year later, Perry Harvey Jr. became the first African American elected to the Tampa City Council since Reconstruction.

It would take the arrest of three Hillsborough County commissioners on federal racketeering charges before blacks would be represented on that board. E.L. Bing was appointed to replace one of the commissioners in March 1983.

When Bing chose not to run in the following election, Ruben Padgett became the county’s first elected black county commissioner in May 1985 when he defeated a black Republican candidate.

But Tampa, which once billed itself as “America’s Next Great City,” has never had a black mayor.

Former City Council member Scott Paine, however, says the city eventually will elect a black mayor. But the winning candidate will have to appeal to both black and white voters.

“One of the realities of Tampa is that 25 percent is African American and if you are going to win at-large, winning requires you to win the support of a significant number from other ethnic backgrounds,” says Paine, an associate professor of communication and government at the University of Tampa.

“I think it can be done. I think there have been signs in the last 10 years or so that there will be an emergence of political candidates from the black community who will be able to be that bridge builder,” Paine said. “It’s just a matter of time.”

CHALLENGES SINCE ‘67

Arsenault says the answers to problems that plagued this city in the past aren’t easy to come by.

“When you look at a city like Tampa, things have certainly gotten better since ‘67,” Arsenault says. “I think when you see Tampa today it has many black leaders and a visible black middle class but there are tens of thousands (of black residents) who have very little hope of improving their condition.”

Arsenault says Tampa’s black community mirrors what is



▲ Tampa police mobilize: Photo by The Tampa Tribune

happening across the nation: The black middle class is making significant economic gains and growing upwardly mobile while the black working class is losing ground at a steady pace.

"I think that's what the Kerner Commission feared," he says. "A lot of people have difficulty seeing this because both blacks and whites have retreated to gated communities and have forgotten what the situation is like in urban areas."

Ironically, one of those areas once encompassed Central Park Village.

The place where Chambers' death gave rise to the voice of frustrated blacks in June of 1967 continued to succumb to crime, drug dealing and urban renewal.

Yet just weeks before backhoes plowed into their apartments in July 2007 to make way for a development, 484 families still called Central Park Village home.

Last year, an advisory panel decided to correct what members decided was a wrong in the city's past by honoring Chambers,

according to committee member Tokley. Across the street from Perry Harvey Sr. Park, a room in the development's recreation center will bear his name.

Tokley says he hopes that many of Central Park's former tenants will return to see the memorial for Chambers and even come back to live here.

But many probably cannot afford to.

Most residents of neighborhoods undergoing regentrification - the process by which developers buy into a poor community, fix it up, and increase its property value - often have to leave for good. As black people, "we are continuously at war in terms of where we live and why we live there," Tokley says. "Yes, the door is open but there are only certain rooms in the mansion where you are welcome or where you can go."

For Adams, the former Central Park Village resident says he would go back to his former home if he could.

"I had a great time growing up in Central Park," he says. "There'll never be another Central Park Village. Never." ■

For three days in Tampa the 'bad guys,' not the police, kept the peace

By Teresa D. Brown

TAMPA, Fla. - Back in his day, Norris Morrow was a hoodlum. He committed petty crimes and raised all types of hell that kept him in trouble with the law.

But for three days in 1967, Morrow was the law.

He was among 20 young black men plucked from Tampa's inner city to quell three days of rioting that erupted on June 11, 1967, after a white police officer fatally shot burglary suspect Martin Chambers, a black teenager, in the back while chasing him down an alley.

The White Hats - who got their name from the helmets that identified them as "good guys" - roamed the streets of this city's black neighborhoods to try to persuade rioters to stop the burning and looting.

"You couldn't consider me a law-abiding citizen," the then 25-year-old Morrow said during a Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing on urban uprisings in 1969.

"I have broken the law. I have been arrested three or four times. In the neighborhood where I grew up, you had to fight to get along," said Morrow, who died nearly 20 years ago from a rare blood disease.

But Morrow and other members of this unlikely crew of high school dropouts, former felons, and teenage fathers were the glue that held together the city's shaky peace.

James Hammond, a former Army officer who served as Tampa's commissioner of community relations in the 1960s, said it wasn't easy convincing city and law officials that his "lieutenants" were the answer to solving the violence, not members of the National Guard.

"We found out who were some of the top guys in the black community who were really involved in a lot of this stuff," says Hammond, now 78. So he and his staff, were able to pull them together and say, "Look, you guys got to stop this because you're going to get killed."

Hammond and other black community leaders shared the conviction that young men in Tampa rioted not because they were troublemakers, but because they were frustrated. They were smart and had common sense, Hammond says, but no one listened to them or trusted them.

C. Blythe Andrews Jr., who edited the black-oriented *Florida Sentinel Bulletin* at the time, says that young black men were tired of the unemployment, police brutality and poor facilities in their neighborhood.

"I think these young men wanted to be heard, needed to be heard, this was the only way they could be heard," says Andrews.

A similar tactic of faith and trust used with the White Hats was employed in other cities that were experiencing racial riots. But Hammond took it a step further and hired four of the White Hats as community advisers.

Two years after the Chambers shooting, Hammond received the Governor's Medal for community service for his role in organizing the White Hats. And others around the country also recognized the significant role that

the young men played.

Jane McManus Lineau of Mount Kisco, N.Y., wrote a letter to the editor of Time magazine praising the group.

"Sir: Living in a cool, calm suburban town makes it difficult to conceive of the violence that has occurred in places like Tampa, Los Angeles and Dayton, (Ohio)" she wrote. "But it isn't hard to recognize the guts of the 'white hats' in Tampa and in Dayton or the intelligence of the cops who made it work. There is the 'black power' that all Americans can be proud of."

But the story of the White Hats did not have the happy ending most envisioned.

Carr Brazelton, a former White Hat now living in Rocky Mount, N.C., says



▲ White Hat looks on as man carries out injured woman: Photo by The Tampa Tribune

many of those who won the admiration of the nation returned to their former lifestyle.

"We had a lot of pride, integrity about what we were doing, what we were about," says Brazelton, 62, a former police chaplain with a doctorate in theology.

"Here we were given this opportunity, this blessing. But a lot of them got themselves in trouble. It's a shame things didn't work out for all of us." ■

After years of riot-inducing wretchedness, renewal makes its way to Tampa

By Anika Myers Palm



New "Heights" for Tampa housing - Photo by Anika Myers Palm

TAMPA, Fla. – Belmont Heights was never pretty.

Situated near downtown Tampa, Belmont Heights was home for decades to the trash-strewn College Hill Homes and Ponce de Leon housing projects, a collection of functional but nondescript, gray-and-beige cinderblock buildings once synonymous with the city's drug trade – and worse.

The neighborhood doesn't look that way today. The projects are long gone. But almost as Central Park Village did in 1967, in the 1980s, Belmont Heights made its presence known in a big way.

It was in College Hill, the worst of its two neighborhoods, where Tampa's second major riot occurred. On Feb. 20, 1987, blacks threw rocks, set fires and fired guns for three nights after Melvin Eugene Hair, a black man diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic, died after a white police officer locked him in a choke hold. The disturbance intensified after police were cleared of wrongdoing in the arrest of baseball star Dwight Gooden.

According to *The Tampa Tribune* Gooden, a Belmont Heights native, had been pulled over by 22 police officers on suspicion of DUI. His bruise-filled face incited more anger.

Two years later, College Hill also was the site of another uprising. That one happened after suspected drug dealer Edgar Allen Price died in police custody on Feb. 1, 1989.

For the next two nights blacks threw bricks and bottles, mainly because they believed police had beaten Price to death. An investigation revealed that Price died of asphyxiation after police officers cuffed him and placed him face down in the cruiser. The officers were cleared of wrongdoing.

But that once-troubled area has buried its volatile profile along with its dilapidated projects.

In the place where the Ponce de Leon projects and College Hill once stood is Belmont Heights Estates, a mixed-income walkable community where brightly colored townhouses and single-family homes coexist with businesses and a new library.

The city received \$32.5 million in federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as part of the

Hope VI program to renovate the nation's worst housing projects and change them into mixed-income developments, according to Lillian Stringer, a spokesperson for the Tampa Housing Authority.

"It was a major change for that area," she said.

In addition to the town homes and single-family houses, Belmont Heights now has a village for elderly residents and traditional public housing, totaling 860 units.

The revamp has helped.

A 2006 University of South Florida study showed major crimes had fallen nearly 50 percent in Belmont Heights Estates the first year after the community's revitalization – a significant improvement for an area once considered too dangerous a place to go after dark.

Yet with all the changes, students from Belmont Heights Estates still live in one of the most segregated communities in Tampa and attend some of Hillsborough County's most troubled schools.

And not everyone has benefited from the improvements to the neighborhood: Some of the people who once called Belmont Heights home have been dispersed elsewhere.

BLACK TAMPA SINCE KERNER

Belmont Heights Estates is just one primarily black neighborhood, but its ups and downs are indicative of just how Tampa's black community has changed in the years since the June 1967 riot – and since the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, or the Kerner Commission, shocked America with its declaration that "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal."

While the steepest barriers to equality, such as laws that allow housing communities to discriminate based on race, have been torn down, structural and economic challenges – some of which have been made worse by the disappearance of much of the social network that once bound the city's black residents to each other – still remain.

A century ago, the area that became Belmont Heights Estates provided that network for Tampa's blacks. It wasn't just that people wanted to live there; it was almost the only place blacks could rent homes – or buy property – near Tampa, according to archives at University of South Florida, which feature interviews with some of the city's earliest members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Not far away, along Central Avenue, black Tampa's real commercial core developed as restaurants and small businesses serving the city's black community sprang up and thrived.

In the wake of the 1967 riot – which, like the disturbances in 1987 and 1989 erupted after a black man died at the hands of police – and the city's determination to make sure such events never happened again, Tampa embarked on what would become a

40-year multi-pronged project to avoid the commission's two societies prediction. So did the city succeed?

In some ways it did – and in some ways it didn't.

MORE EQUAL, BUT STILL SEPARATE

Black residents now have access to jobs that were out of their reach in 1968, and several have been elected or appointed to several citywide positions, including city clerk, city council and police chief.

And statistics show that while the vast majority of Tampa's blacks no longer live in substandard housing, as they did prior to Kerner (the commission found that six out of 10 houses where blacks lived were unsound) most continue to live in predominantly-black communities.

Of the 322,888 people who live in its city limits, about 64 percent are white, 26 are percent black, 19 percent are Hispanic, 3 percent are "other," and 2 percent are Asian, according to city data.

But Belmont Heights remains 73 percent black, and about 21 percent white. West Tampa, considered a middle-class neighborhood, is about 74 percent white, 11 percent black and 51 percent Hispanic, while Ybor City is about 72 percent black, 20 percent white and 20 percent Hispanic.

The Seminole Heights area is one of the few neighborhoods within Tampa city limits where the population of blacks and whites are nearly equal. That neighborhood is nearly 50 percent white, about 43 percent black, just less than 4 percent "other" and about 13 percent Hispanic, according to city data.

Researchers are unsure as to whether blacks and other races and ethnicities choose to live among themselves, or if there are other reasons for that, according to Robert Adelman, assistant professor of sociology at Georgia State University.

But many signs indicate that at least in Tampa, for many blacks, living in a certain neighborhood no longer equates to being trapped there.

MOVING UP AND OUT

While the majority of the city's blacks still live in largely segregated neighborhoods, those with the means to do so took advantage of the changing times to move into larger homes in safer neighborhoods and near better schools.

But when wealthy blacks, followed by educated professionals and finally working-class residents, moved away from older black neighborhoods and loosened their ties, it resulted in a brain drain for those places.

As a result, it is harder for companies and groups that target traditionally black communities to reach as many blacks as they once did – now that they're no longer as concentrated as before.

"We market a lot of our services through the [black-owned

newspaper] *Florida Sentinel*, and on [black-interest radio station] WTMP – they do newsy talk shows," said Toni Watts, CEO of the Corporation to Develop Communities of Tampa, an economic-development group. "You do have to do what you can to get the word out."

Then again, some of the blacks who left the neighborhoods where they grew up didn't move that far away.

West Tampa, in particular, became a popular destination for the city's middle-class blacks. The sprawling, poorly defined area near the football stadium for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, also was home to significant numbers of blacks and Latinos.

THE RENEWAL BEGINS

Projects to revitalize Tampa neighborhoods dominated by blacks and Latinos began in the 1970s. But city officials really became serious about making changes in the 1980s, when they started to contemplate what it would take to bring an Olympic Games to the city.

The newest targets include Central Park Village, a 400-unit housing project near downtown Tampa, and East Tampa.

City government development literature describes East Tampa, which includes Belmont Heights, as Tampa's "unpolished gem." The city hopes to do for the area what it did for Ybor City, an area near downtown Tampa with a large black and Hispanic population.

Ybor City, sometimes known as Tampa's Bourbon Street, was named a Community Redevelopment Area in 1988 as city officials decided to focus on eliminating blight in its most historic community.

The redevelopment plan centered on stimulating Ybor City's business community, primarily by the use of

incentives, which included ad valorem tax exemptions, loans and tax credits for historic preservation. Other incentives are designed to encourage companies offering jobs with high salaries to come to Ybor City.

Seminole Heights, another in-town neighborhood with a history of crime, began to make the changes without city help – mostly by gentrification beginning in the late 1980s.

That neighborhood – once home to street after street of Craftsman-style houses in disrepair – now is the home of a neighborhood association that says its mission is to ensure continued gentrification. It also maintains committees on standards for land use and preserving the neighborhood's greenways.

Also, even as their neighborhoods are largely segregated, there's some indication that Tampa's black communities are not entirely isolated economically. The funds for redevelopment of some of these areas come from the state's tourism-tax-fattened coffers.

According to the Kerner report, most black youths rarely reached the eighth grade. Of those blacks who made it to their senior year, only 3 to 4 percent of them scored the minimum passing score on the state college entrance examination.

But if those dollars decline, less money will be available for community redevelopment and other issues of concern to blacks.

DESEGREGATION'S DOWNSIDE

That's why some members of Tampa's black community are moving full-speed ahead with efforts to encourage residents to consider starting their own businesses.

But the effort has been stymied by the difficulty in finding ways to reach both the blacks who live in all-black communities and those who no longer live in those neighborhoods – and have few connections to them.

"If I can get the [black] bar association, the medical group, the dental group and these other groups to the table, we might all know a bit better what's going on," said Villard Houston, founder of the Urban Florida League of Business, a Tampa-based chamber of commerce affiliated with the Florida Black Chamber of Commerce.

Even with grassroots and city commitments to encouraging black entrepreneurship and redeveloping communities where Tampa's blacks live, some members of Tampa's black community miss what they once had.

Many fondly remember Central Avenue, once the heart of Tampa's black community, a street that buzzed with black-owned businesses, nightclubs and restaurants.

Although revitalized in some sections, the street's commercial activity, decimated by the interstate that divided the community, is a shadow of its former self today.

"In the '50s and '60s, when we had our own black business district, it was a great time for this community," state Rep. Arthenia Joyner, a Tampa Democrat, told *The Tampa Tribune* in 2005.

"Lawyers, newspapermen, barbers, bar owners, doctors. Everything we needed was there. ... Those were segregated times, but they were wonderful times," she said.

EDUCATION'S MIXED BAG SINCE KERNER

Times weren't so wonderful, however, for most black youths who were trying to get an education in Tampa. In the 1960s, the education system for blacks was as broken as the housing.

According to the Kerner Commission report, most black youths rarely reached the eighth grade. Of those blacks who made it to their senior year, only 3 to 4 percent of them scored the minimum passing score on the state college entrance examination.

As a result of a 1971 desegregation order, which many hoped would boost black achievement, Hillsborough County Public Schools also had changed George S. Middleton and Howard W. Blake, once-proud all-black high schools, to middle schools. It was a particular blow to those in Tampa's black community who had attended those high schools for generations.

And while graduation rates have improved, some of the statistics remain alarming.

While 90 percent of Hillsborough County's white 10th graders and 73 percent of Hispanic 10th graders earned passing mathematics scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test in 2007, only 60 percent of the county's black 10th graders did.

Likewise, only 33 percent of black 10th graders earned passing FCAT reading scores in 2007, while 44 percent of Hispanics and 70 percent of the county's white 10th graders did, according to state education data.

That's why some black Tampanians mounted a grassroots effort beginning in the early 1990s to return the former high-schools to full high-school status – with the hope that intensive focus in their own neighborhoods would contribute to higher test scores for black students.

The group, which comprised Blake alumni and others, had collected 456 signatures and began to discuss the possibility of reestablishing Blake and Middleton Middle School as high schools.

They began with Blake. But to their dismay, they discovered that the school board had different ideas about what the new high school should be.

The school board sought to make Blake a magnet school for high-achieving students, but the alumni group wanted the new facility to operate as a standard neighborhood high school, so it would serve nearby black students instead of white students from the suburbs.

For the Blake and Middleton alumni group, magnet programs weren't an option.

"Magnet school is another way of saying freedom of choice. Without an involuntary satellite where students are required to attend, magnet schools will become segregated," then-Tampa Urban League president Joanna Tokley told the *Florida Sentinel Bulletin* in 1999. "The plan is a Trojan horse."

The group also was upset at the school board's plan to locate the new Blake High School in a neighborhood that was considered by Tampanians to be closer to downtown than the city's black community. Several editorials in the *Florida Sentinel Bulletin* argued that the new school should be placed in the heart of Tampa's black community.

Yet Blake activists ultimately accepted the school board's wish for a magnet program.

In 1997, Blake High School opened in West Tampa with both a traditional "liberal arts" curriculum and a magnet program for the performing arts. The new Middleton High School, with a special magnet science program, followed in 2002.

Today, Blake is about 50 percent black, about 25 percent white, about 19 percent Hispanic and about 5 percent other.

Middleton is about 72 percent black, about 14 percent white, about 11 percent Hispanic and about 3 percent other.

But even though the Blake activists were forced to compromise on the mission of the formerly all-black schools, their success at putting them on the public agenda illustrates both the growth and the limitations of black political power in Tampa – so much so that it no longer resembles the troubled place described in the Kerner Commission report.

Some other blacks may be noticing that.

The Miami Herald reported in fall 2007 that about 30 percent of blacks who live in Miami-Dade County and earn between \$60,000 and \$80,000 annually wanted to move from the county as soon as possible.

Among their top three choices for a new location? Tampa. ■

The Kerner report: Exposing the American dream as an illusion

By James Steele

The creation of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (also known as the Kerner Commission) and its subsequent report almost one year later in 1968 was urged by President Lyndon Johnson to promote “a decent and orderly society in America.” But the commission’s conclusion that “Our Nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal” was not a revelation to most Americans.

The nation that inspired apartheid in South Africa had aggressively sought to legitimize “separate and unequal” as the social, political, cultural, and economic standard of U.S. society. The nation was aware of the debates surrounding *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the March on Washington. These judicial and legislative actions (and more) were all necessary to overturn a legacy of legalized privilege for white Americans. It was not that America was moving toward two societies; it was two societies. In fact, it was more than two societies.

What prompted the creation of the Kerner Commission and its subsequent report was not that the attitudes of the majority of white Americans had changed demonstrably with respect to race relations in America. It was the attitude of African Americans that changed. The urban disorders examined by the Kerner Commission happened mainly outside the South (e.g., Detroit, Newark, Watts).

For those self-satisfied whites and African Americans living in other parts of the country, this came as somewhat of a surprise. The idea that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his non-violent philosophy was an important, but not singular political philosophy among African Americans never really occurred to many whites.

When the four North Carolina A&T freshmen lead protests against existing public

accommodation laws in Greensboro, N.C. by mounting a sit-in at the F.W. Woolworth department store in 1960, their actions represented a certain belief in the unique values of American society and the U.S. Constitution that reached as far back as Frederick Douglass.

But that belief began to lose its support among African Americans on Sept. 15, 1963 when a bomb blast set off by white racists killed four young black girls who were attending Sunday school at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala.

Many blacks believed that the bombing (only a few days after the March on Washington on Aug. 28, 1963) was America’s answer to the apostles of non-violence. When Alabama state troopers savagely beat peaceful protesters as they attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965, people were again reminded of the limits of non-violence. The constitution did not seem to apply to protesters or to persons seeking to be treated with the same respect as any other person, unless they were accompanied by federal troops. What was called “racial progress” seemed grindingly slow and unnecessarily bloody. It was the end of innocence. It was the end of illusions.

By 1967 America had also come to understand that the nostalgic notion that African Americans were compliant, docile, and obedient was an illusion. In fact, there were many illusions that went up in flames during the 1960s. The old model of race relations between whites and “acceptable” African American leadership (ministers, high school principals, college presidents, and business leaders) had been challenged by a new generation of African American leaders, activists, and thinkers that did not seek permission of anyone to engage whites – or release the frustration and rage that laid dormant for years in communities across the country.

The idea of self defense, social justice, and an end to the daily humiliations faced by African Americans had long been a recognized option.

Supporters of this approach ranged from W.E.B. Du Bois and Robert Williams (an NAACP leader in North Carolina), to the Deacons for Defense and Justice (Louisiana), and Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz).

Even with the assassination of Malcolm X, the idea of self defense continued to grow with the publication of *Malcolm X Speaks* in 1965. The uprising in Watts (1965) and the founding of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California (1966) were embraced as significant statements by a Black Power Movement. It captured the imagination of African Americans disgusted with the pace of change and the lack of political will to enforce the ideals of freedom and democracy which the nation so easily touted around the world.

Even the Black Panther Party had its origins in the South as the Lowndes County (Alabama) Freedom Organization. Any examination of civil disorders must focus on more than major Northern cities, as the social unrests (as these were once called) in African American communities were rural and urban, South and North, West and East, educated and hardly educated.

The advent of the Kerner Commission was an acknowledgement by President Lyndon B. Johnson, and many of those trying to understand "the Negro Problem," that: "The only genuine, long range solution for what has happened lies in an attack – mounted at every level – upon the conditions that breed despair and violence. Those conditions included: ignorance, discrimination, slums, poverty, disease, [and] not enough jobs."

The Kerner Commission, however, was not equipped to incorporate the new conclusions reached among African Americans in their own commissions (the barber shops, street corners, churches, and schools). African American representation on the Kerner Commission included a notable black elected official, Sen. Ed Brooke, R-Mass., and an "official" representative of the race, NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins. But Black Power advocates were not among the presenters, staff, or members of the Commission.

It was not the occurrence of so many disorders in 1967 (more than 150 according to the Kerner Commission) that pushed President Johnson to investigate their causes and remedies. Whatever might have been the virtues of Johnson, insofar as they related to the African American community, there is also little doubt that he was first a political being. Johnson saw quite clearly that he was unlikely to win re-election in 1968 if the cities and towns of the nation were burning.

The idea that civil disorder began with the burning of cities is testimony to the insensitivity that existed at the time by the prevailing civil order to the legitimate demands of African Americans. The daily social violence of poverty, police brutality, unemployment, poor housing, diminished opportunities were the result of a social order that diminished the value of African American life even as that order profited from the institutionalization of what Dr. King once called America's "interrelated flaws – racism, poverty, militarism and materialism."

The conclusions reached by the Kerner Commission still haunt us today. We focus on street violence, but not the social violence of government and its policies that can effectively ignore the legitimate demands of those victimized by society. The nation and its institutions have turned workers into beggars, and children into objects of exploitation. Homelessness, the lack of health care, brutality by police, and even the lack of true compassion have become the signature of what we know as compassionate conservative policies. Inequality has become a sign of prosperity. Demands for equality and justice have been replaced by demands for law and order.

The establishment of the Kerner Commission was not just the formal documentation of grievances by African Americans against businesses, police, and local governments in the South, but also a recognition that the human and material resources of the nation must be used to remedy the ills its report uncovered.

James Steele is Associate Professor of Political Science at North Carolina A&T State University.

\$10 million in property damage
26 people dead

Newark 1967

Newark's 'action plan' ignored rumblings that led to riot

By Megan K. Scott and Kasi Addison

The violent street protests that hit Jersey City, N.J., in 1964 was perhaps small-scale compared with what the nation would experience the rest of the decade.

But for a few days that fateful August, it was no less intense.

Angered by the arrest of a black woman on a disorderly conduct charge on Aug. 2, 1964 - a Sunday night - black youths hurled gasoline bombs, bricks and rocks at police officers. The mob stoned three buses, injuring a driver and a passenger.

Police wearing gas masks and helmets, and armed with shields and pepper spray, poured into the streets to stem the rebellion.

By the time Tuesday rolled around, gangs of youths had looted storefronts and blown a delivery truck to pieces. Neighborhoods were left in the dark after police shot out street lights.

"There were two or three blocks involved," says Earl Morgan, 64, who grew up in Jersey City and is a columnist for the *Jersey Journal* newspaper.

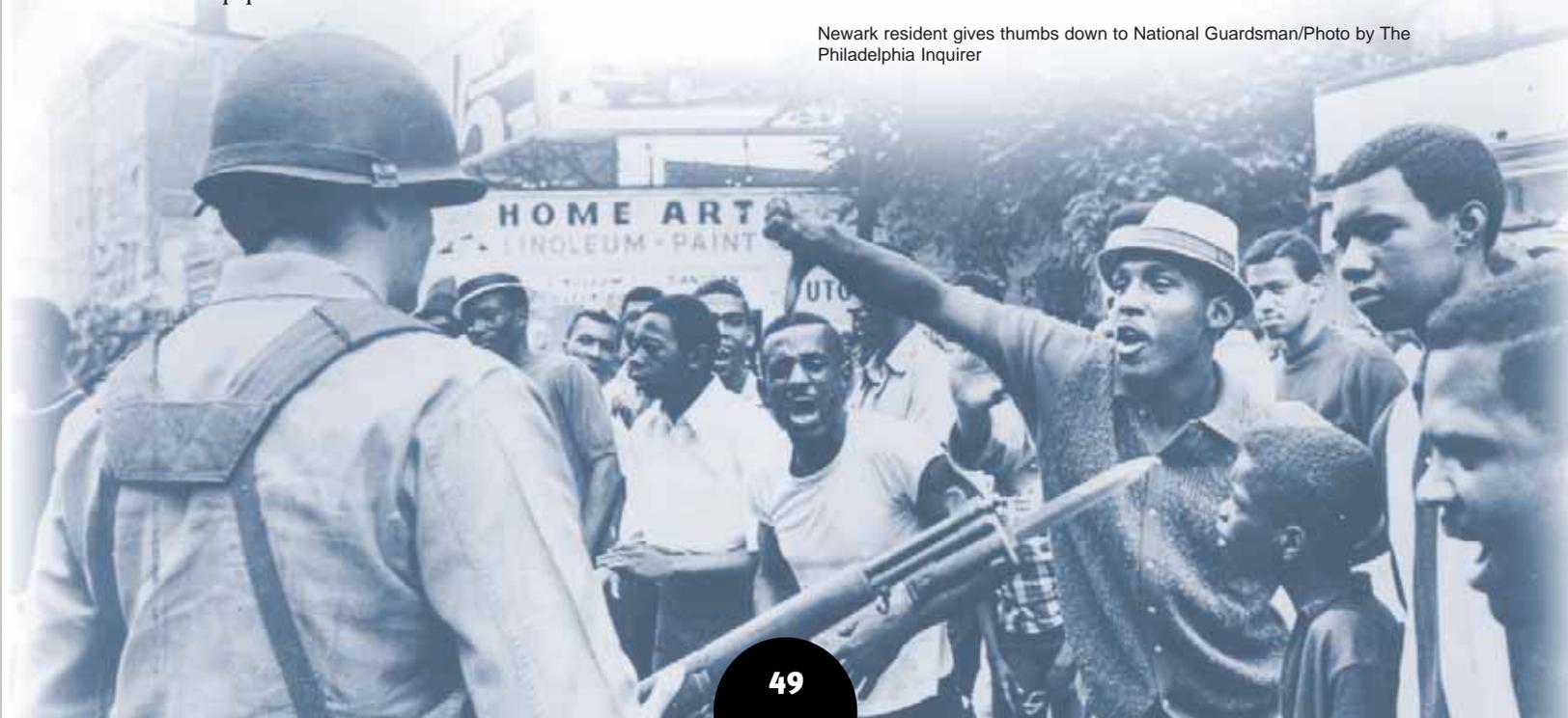
"Some carts were overturned. There were some kids running around the street screaming. Outside of those few blocks, it didn't affect anything.

"Riot? I supposed at that time it looked like a riot," Morgan says. "Yes it did alert the city that a lot of things were going on. It was a chapter in the history of Jersey City because it opened the door to some very unhappy black people.

"It showed you the displeasure that people felt that was under the radar that no one ever noticed. Black people had no way to voice it. It all started to come out when the riots happened."

As the situation worsened, Mayor Thomas Whelan met briefly with leaders from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to figure out how to stem the violence. A meeting between city officials and black leaders eventually ended the uprising.

Newark resident gives thumbs down to National Guardsman/Photo by The Philadelphia Inquirer



But for the remainder of the 1960s, such respites would be brief across the country.

A year later, 34 people were killed and 1,032 were injured when a riot erupted in the Watts section of Los Angeles. That uprising sent shock waves throughout the country, and prompted the New Jersey Department of Defense to meet with law enforcement officials in several cities to create an action plan in case of a riot.

It made Newark Mayor Hugh Addonizio believe he could deal with any disturbance.

Two years later, it turned out he was wrong.

On the night of July 12, 1967, a crowd, angered by reports that a black cab driver named John W. Smith had been dragged from his car and beaten to death by police, converged on Newark's Fourth Police Precinct. (Smith actually had been taken to a local hospital.)

Members of the crowd began throwing rocks at the police station, and before long, the mayhem escalated into widespread looting. It intensified once the National Guard and the New Jersey State Police were summoned.

At the end of five days of rioting, 26 people lay dead, 725 people were injured and close to 1,500 people were arrested. Property damage exceeded \$10 million.

DECADES OF DISCONTENT

For blacks in Newark, which is less than 10 miles from Jersey City, dissatisfaction had long displaced hope.

Newark had been a destination for blacks in two waves of migration, the first from 1914 to 1930, when 1.5 million blacks migrated from the South to urban centers in the North, says historian Komozi Woodard, who grew up in Newark and now teaches at Sarah Lawrence College.

Most of those who migrated were sharecroppers and were fed up with the grueling farm work, racist land owners and the poor pay. Newark, with its factories, tanneries and breweries, was seen as the land of opportunity.

"My father was a sharecropper. Regardless of how well he did at the end of the season he was always in debt to the owners," says Marlene Da Costa, 72, who moved to Newark from Georgia when she was a child. "We had relatives here in Newark who came to visit and talked us into relocating."

Back then, the neighborhoods were small villages, modest houses, and apartments for the working class. There was a bustling downtown. Da Costa remembers going there to window shop, to catch a matinee or sit on the lap of the Abraham Lincoln statue at the old courthouse.

"Whenever you walked the street, if you heard footsteps behind you, you waited for them because they were going your way," she says.

Racism was more subtle than in the South, where looking at a white person could cost a black person his or her life, says Marcia Brown, vice provost for Student and Community Affairs at Rutgers-Newark and a longtime community activist.

Black people felt more freedom and perhaps more ownership of the notion of being an American in the North – despite being poor, she says.

But blacks were still black.

The Great Depression hit Newark hard in 1929, says Woodard. More than 600 Newark factories closed and many neighborhoods deteriorated. Many blacks sought financial help from the relief office.

Some received a bus ticket instead, says Woodard, as if they were immigrants who deserved to be deported. Corporations that were based in Newark began moving out to the suburbs.

But World War II started in 1939 and many of the factories reopened. Blacks and Puerto Ricans flooded Newark for defense jobs, not knowing that this was a temporary phenomenon, says Woodard.

So when the war ended in 1945, the factories closed again. And again, black people were unable to find work because of discrimination and poor education – problems they didn't think they'd face in the North.

Most of them were victims of redlining, the practice of increasing the cost of services, such as health care, mortgages, insurance and even groceries.

INEQUITIES INTENSIFY

The flight of manufacturing jobs accelerated during the 1960s, in part because of technological advancements. In Newark, the breweries that drew water from the Passaic River shut down, along with the tanneries. The big conglomerates that manufactured large appliances in Newark, Westinghouse and General Electric, soon followed.

Many white middle-class families started moving to the suburbs in the 1950s. By 1967, the city's white population had plummeted to approximately 158,000, from 363,000 in 1950. At the same time, Newark's black population rose to 125,000 in 1960 and an estimated 220,000 in 1967, from 70,000 in 1950.

By 1967, 55 percent of Newark residents were black.

For the African Americans who remained in the predominantly black Central Ward, the police were a constant presence. The patrol officers, who were mostly of Irish and Italian descent, intimidated the residents there. They routinely stopped and questioned black youths with or without provocation, people who lived there say.

"The cops would ride through the streets and, from time to time, they would jump out of the cars with their guns drawn if they thought there was something going on," says Da Costa. "So there was fear."

There were several high-profile cases of police brutality against young black men in the years preceding the riot.

Lester Long, 22, was shot and killed by police in July 1965 after a routine traffic stop. A few weeks later, Bernard Rich, 26, died in police custody under mysterious circumstances while locked in his jail cell.

On Christmas Eve that year, Walter Mathis, 17, was fatally wounded by an "accidental" weapons discharge while being searched for contraband.

Angered by these cases, and the constant police harassment, black citizens pushed for the appointment of a civilian police review board. They also called for hiring more black police officers.

But those proposals were largely ignored. Few cases of police abuse in Newark ever made it to a jury.

BLACK POWERLESSNESS

Discontent in Newark had simmered for years. And one of the reasons was that blacks in the city had no political power. Addonizio had campaigned on his sensitivity to black issues, but he failed to appoint blacks to leadership positions in his administration, says Woodard.

In fact, Addonizio even went so far as to appoint to the school board James T. Callaghan, an Irish-American council member who held only a high school diploma, over Wilbur Parker, the first black accountant in the state.

To help more struggling people amass power, President Lyndon B. Johnson sought to channel funds to community groups in poor neighborhoods so they could address local social problems.

But the money quickly dried up. When that happened LeRoi Jones, a local activist and poet who later changed his name to Amiri Baraka, began to talk revolution.

There would be more frustration.

In early 1967, Newark proposed clearing 150 acres of Central Ward, home to 20,000 blacks, to build a medical school and hospital complex. Because of a housing shortage, losing those homes would have been devastating, activists said at the time.

One activist commented that it seemed as though Newark was trying to squeeze out “this rapidly growing Negro community that represents a majority of the population.”

“Most of the people in power were white back then,” says Max Herman, author of the study, *Fighting in the Streets: Ethnic Succession and Urban Unrest in 20th Century America*, and a professor in the sociology and anthropology department at Rutgers-Newark.

“For them, there wasn’t anything wrong with their city,” he says. “They couldn’t understand the pain and anger people in the black community were experiencing. They didn’t understand the source of the rage that was about to erupt. They thought everything was fine.”

But it wasn’t.

BOILING POINT

The summer of ‘67 was a scorcher in New Jersey. And to make matters worse, many black households had no air conditioning, recalls Alan Marcus, who was working for the *Hudson Dispatch* at the time.

But black people had more things to be steamed about than the heat, he says.

There was unemployment, inadequate housing, police brutality, no political representation and now Newark wanted to build a medical school in the ghetto – a seemingly good deed that would have had bad consequences for all the black people who would be displaced by it.

That set the stage for one of the worst riots in American history.

It began with the arrest of Smith, the cab driver, by two white police officers, John DeSimone and Vito Pontrelli, on charges of improperly passing their police car at 15th Avenue.

He was beaten badly, witnesses said. Smith claimed he was attacked after he asked why he was stopped. The officers claimed he resisted arrest.

Either way, by the time the trio arrived at the Fourth Precinct on 17th Avenue, Smith’s injuries were so severe he couldn’t walk on



▲ Newark aflame/Associated Press photo

his own. Residents living in Hayes Homes, a high-rise housing project with an active group of pro-civil rights, anti-violence agitators, saw Smith disappear into the building with police.

The sight of Smith being half-dragged, half-carried up the steps of the precinct inflamed those watching the spectacle. Soon a rumor spread that police had beaten the man to death.

That night, crowds pelted the station with rocks and a few stores near Springfield and Bergen avenues were looted. The damage was minimal.

Newark city officials thought they’d dodged a bullet. They thought the unrest that had cropped up in black communities across the nation had missed the Brick City, the nickname that was given to Newark in the ‘60s because of all the brick high rises. But it had only just begun.



▲ Guardsman and shop owner cross paths/Associated Press photo

United Community Corporation's Area Board No. 2, a federally funded anti-poverty program in Newark that had become a haven for black activists, didn't want Smith's arrest to be swept under the rug. The day after Smith's arrest, the group organized a protest against police brutality. The event was mostly nonviolent, a standard protest with picketers waving signs and shouting at officers guarding the Fourth Precinct.

Then a woman began smashing out the windows of the precinct with a metal bar. Mass looting followed. Molotov cocktails were tossed into shops, igniting fires that covered swathes of the city.

Addonizio resisted requesting help from state authorities. Such a plea could mean the end of his gubernatorial dreams; he wanted to run for that office in 1969. But reports that stores that sold weapons were being looted forced his hand.

He called New Jersey Gov. Richard Hughes, who activated the New Jersey National Guard and the State Police.

Their arrival further escalated the situation, as angry bands of young black men continued to loot. Authorities began shooting at everything in sight.

Larry Hamm watched the action from his second-floor porch. His mother wouldn't let him go much farther. Young people scurried through the streets with food, alcohol and clothing snatched from stores in the chaos, Hamm says. It wasn't lawful, but it also wasn't dangerous.

The five days between Smith's arrest and the eventual end of the disturbance were by turns "festive with the looting" and "outright violent" says Hamm, founder and president of the People's Organization for Progress, a civil rights organization created after the rebellion. Violence was introduced with the arrival of the National Guard, he says.

"The guard came in and we were literally under military occupation," he says.

THE GUARD VERSUS THE PEOPLE

Richard Cammierri, a white lifelong Newark resident who was 17 in 1967, agrees with Hamm that the uprising shifted to something more sinister once state troopers and Guard members entered the city.

Fueling the ire of guards and troopers was the now-debunked

theory that anti-government snipers were shooting at police from high-rise rooftops. (Now historians say the gunfire was in fact friendly fire between the Guard and the troopers.)

"It reminded me of old science fiction movies in the 1950's, the ones I grew up on," says Hamm, recalling black and white films about alien invasions that depicted tanks rolling through the streets. "There was a change in town when the National Guard came in and the shooting started."

James Sanders, who was burglarizing a liquor store at Springfield and Jones avenues, and Tedock Bell, who was looting a store at Bergen and Magnolia avenues, were the first people killed.

In addition to nearly two dozen black victims, the violence claimed the lives of two whites, Newark Police Det. Fred Toto and Fire Captain Michael Moran.

The looters avoided neighborhoods, sticking to main streets and business districts like Springfield Avenue and Broad Street.

"The rebellion was something against property primarily," says George Hampton, who was a freshman at Rutgers-Newark at the time of the riots. "You did not see attacks on people. It was Hispanics, blacks, busting the windows, getting inside, taking what you can from the place. The National Guard came in. Now it was more them against humans and those humans were blacks."

Most of the stores that were hit were Jewish meat markets and furniture stores, says Hampton, retired vice president for Urban and Community Development at University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Those were the stores that cheated blacks, he says.

"While those were the stores that served them, the prices were ridiculously high," he says. "The quality of food and services was lacking and quite honestly I saw it. These store owners were stealing. So these stores represented to the blacks ... signs of oppression."

Snipers were blamed for the death toll, but a group of rogue state troopers were blamed for one of the uglier episodes of the rebellion.

To escape destruction by rampaging looters, black merchants had marked the windows of their stores with "Soul" or "Soul Brother" to indicate the shop was black-owned or operated.

On Sunday, July 16, during the predawn hours when most news organizations were at a press conference held by Gov. Hughes, activists said troopers shot out hundreds of windows owned by black merchants.

A SURPRISE?

Newark leaders knew there was the potential for unrest, says Herman. It was, after all, happening across the country.

"Riots are like cyclones and hurricanes," says Jersey City's Morgan. "If the conditions are right you get them.

"It's not like outside agitators, which is what many whites think. You can't cause a riot from outside agitators."

Herman says the mini riots in Paterson, Elizabeth and Jersey City in 1964 sent the message that any city could be vulnerable.

"There is a certain arrogance about these local police forces," he says. "It's pure hubris to believe that somehow your city is going to avoid this.

"A lot of the white folks I interviewed said, 'Oh, I was so surprised this happened.' Most of the black folks I interviewed were not surprised at all."

Addonizio was one of several liberal mayors who formed alliances with black leaders in the 1960s, says Woodard, the historian. But if one of those black leaders spoke up about social ills in the black community, he or she fell out of the mayor's good graces, he says.

So the mayor only worked with black leaders "who said nice things to him, creating this fantasy land," says Woodard. He says some mayors even went so far as to pay black leaders not to complain.

"These mayors suffered under the illusion that as long as you gave one black person a job, then the community wouldn't explode over issues, such as the housing crisis, the jobs crisis, particularly police brutality," he says.

Addonizio also had been a favorite of militant black leaders, says Woodard. So he didn't believe that blacks would turn on him.

"You had radicals who are saying, 'He is our man,' " says Woodard. " 'He is a supporter of civil rights.' One of the things that stirred the uprising was this tremendous sense of disappointment and betrayal."

Herman, meanwhile, says that not everyone was out to make a political statement with the riot.

Herman points out that some historians have suggested that blacks destroyed telephone booths to protest the exclusion of blacks from telephone companies. Herman says he thinks they just wanted the money that was in the booths.

Historians also have said that blacks stole clothes off the mannequins because the mannequins were white. Herman says he thinks it was because the best clothes were on the mannequins.

"I don't want to strip these events of their political nature," says Herman. "But on the other hand, I don't want to glorify them as being that everyone there had some large political motivation in mind."

Over the years, some people have claimed that the riots were planned. But there has been no evidence to support that theory.

Whatever the case, Hampton says he can't shake the memory of the fear that permeated the community.

"I was scared in the long run," he says. "...I was afraid for the future of us as a people because it didn't look bright." ■

Even the 'Queen City' wasn't spared from uprisings of '67

By Megan K. Scott

It was known for its tree-lined streets and Victorian mansions, a Wall Street suburb in central New Jersey with 90 trains a day to world capital New York City.

In the '50s and '60s, it had a thriving downtown commercial district that attracted shoppers from throughout the region.

But brewing behind the pristine, peaceful façade of "Queen City," the blacks who lived in Plainfield in the '60s faced the same issues as blacks in other parts of the country: substandard housing, economic disempowerment, and a police force that harassed and intimidated.

Two days after decades of seething black anger bubbled to the surface in Newark in July 1967 and set off a five-day riot, an uprising erupted in Plainfield, just 18 miles away.

For three nights and four days starting on July 14, 1967, unrest reigned in Plainfield's West End, leaving a police officer dead. About 50 people were injured, more than 150 were arrested, and property losses were estimated at \$700,000.

"A lot of people assume that rabble rousers came from Newark in cars and went to Plainfield and started rioting," says Madera Edwards, who lives in Plainfield and is writing her dissertation on the riot for a doctoral degree from Drew University.

"Plainfield had their own amount of disillusionment, including the lack of jobs and programming for youth."

It was the arrest of a woman in the West End that ignited the rebellion, says Edwards.

On July 5, 1967, police arrested Mary Brown on a domestic disturbance charge in the West End, home to most low-income blacks. Brown fell down the stairs during the arrest, and neighborhood residents blamed the police.

Soon after, pictures began circulating around the neighborhood that showed her injuries. Plainfield, population 48,000 and 30 percent black, was on edge.

On the night of July 14, a fight broke out between two young black men at the White Star diner, a local hangout. One of the men suffered injuries in the fight and an off-duty police officer, the same one who arrested Brown on the domestic disturbance charge, refused to call an ambulance, angering people who had gathered outside. (The officer eventually called the ambulance).

Two black community leaders came to the diner to calm down the crowd, but to no avail. The black residents, most between ages 18 and 25, went back to the West End Garden Apartments, breaking windows along the way and throwing rocks at police cars.

Soon, members of the crowd began to break tavern windows and loot businesses. Sixteen blocks on the west side were cordoned off.

The worst was yet to come.

On July 16, a group of 200 black young adults gathered at Green Brook Park to write down their grievances. They were told by park police to leave because they didn't have a permit for group activities.

By 6 p.m. that evening, the riot was raging, says Edwards. Only 18 police officers were on duty.

One of them was John Gleason, who was white. Gleason shot and killed Bobby Lee Williams, a black man he had chased from a checkpoint. A mob gathered and beat and shot Gleason to death with his own service revolver.

Later the same night, looters raided a nearby munitions plant, stealing several weapons. A local fire station was under siege for five hours.

The National Guard was called in, and the next day city and state officials began talks with the rioters. Officials announced a truce on July 18.

"This was total chaos with rioters with guns and



▲ Tanks hit Plainfield- Photo by John Duricka/Associated Press

a very small police force and a very forceful National Guard," says Edwards. "I would envision confusion because there were sniper attacks and fires."

Five days after the outbreak, when the situation in Plainfield was almost back to normal, Gov. Richard J. Hughes authorized the New Jersey State Police to search the West End housing project for the stolen guns. This angered the residents – most of whom had not taken part in the violence. Police felt that because the governor had declared a state of emergency, no search warrants were needed. Several of the residents sued and eventually won.

Only three weapons were found during the search, says Edwards. The search was called off less than two hours after it started because of concern that it was going to provoke more unrest.

For weeks, however, the FBI and local police continued to search for the stolen weapons. No arrests were made in the theft and only a few of the guns were recovered.

In the end, a man and a woman were convicted of murdering Gleason in December 1968 and were sentenced to life in prison.

Seven others were acquitted and one case was declared a mistrial because of a deadlocked jury. ■

Post-riot Newark sees some success, but struggles to shake off the ashes of '67

By Megan K. Scott and Kasi Addison

NEWARK, N.J. – People streamed out of Newark Penn Station, the city's main railway terminal, en route to the Prudential Center for a landmark event on Oct. 25, 2007 – the first concert at the downtown arena billed as a key to Newark's future.

The raucous crowd of mostly white suburbanites was headed to see New Jersey-bred band Bon Jovi perform at the \$375 million hockey arena/concert hall in the center of Newark's downtown.

When Jon Bon Jovi, the band's lead singer, finally stepped on the stage, fans, some with signs, others wearing T-shirts with pictures of the group splayed across the front, raised digital cameras and cell phones to capture an electrifying moment.

But just three months earlier, another event, one more shocking than electrifying, had been observed.

On July 12, 2007, longtime residents and politicians gathered to mark the 40th anniversary of the Newark riot. The disturbance, which lasted five days, left 26 people dead and hundreds injured.

Those who were just teens when the city erupted in mayhem in 1967 recounted how they watched as their neighborhoods were destroyed, and the children of the dead talked about losing their parents.

Mayor Cory Booker urged those standing before the Fourth Police Precinct, ground zero for the 1967 riots, to honor the lives lost but move forward and show Newark can rise from the ashes.

"We will never forget what happened here 40 years ago," Booker told the *Star-Ledger*, New Jersey's largest paper. "We're here because of those who came before us, those who would not give up on this city."

But to many, moving forward isn't embodied in the success of a new stadium, but in addressing the issues that led to the 1967 riot – issues that hold the keys to success for everyone in the city.

ARENA SYMBOL, NOT SOLUTION

The Rock, the nickname for the state-of-the-art arena, is seen by city leaders and some residents as further evidence of the city's continued

renaissance. But critics say the arena matters little when it comes to addressing the lingering impact of the 1967 riot that accelerated the departure of businesses and whites, and left sections of the city looking like war zones.

On the night of July 12, 1967, long-brewing discontent in Newark's black community boiled over because of a rumor that a black cab driver had been dragged from his car and beaten to death by white police officers. Dozens of angry protesters converged on the Fourth Police Precinct that night to demand answers.

Their anger escalated into violence. And when it ended, 26 people were dead, 725 were injured and more than \$10 million worth of property was destroyed.

Since the riot in New Jersey's largest city, Newark has struggled to regain its footing. Once considered one of the country's greatest little cities, the riot was a death knell of sorts for this place. The residents who stayed here watched as crime skyrocketed and city services declined, leaving them trapped and under siege.

SHOWS OF SUCCESS

There have been signs of progress.

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center opened in 1997 and the Newark Eagles and Bears Riverfront Stadium opened in 1999 for college and minor baseball games.

Newark International Liberty Airport, which generates the largest share of the city's tax base, hosted 31.9 million passengers in 2004.

In a clear sign the city was advancing, a theater showing first-run movies opened at Springfield and Bergen avenues in 1993, near the epicenter of the riot. It was the first movie theater to open here in 50 years.

More than a decade later, it was joined by an Applebee's, the first nationally franchised family-style restaurant in the city.

Future plans include development of a river walk along the city's stretch of the Passaic River; an expansion of public libraries; and construction of more condominiums, town homes and apartments in the hopes of luring new residents from elsewhere in New Jersey and from Manhattan, which sits roughly 14 miles away from the city's downtown.

But while Newark has made strides since 1967, the improvements have yet to return the city to where it was in the early 1920s and 1930s, before industrial businesses began to abandon it.

"LACK OF JOBS, NO LACK OF DRUGS"

Unemployment continues to plague black Newarkers.

In the 1960s, the black unemployment rate was about 11.5 percent, according to Max Herman, a professor in the sociology and anthropology department at Rutgers-Newark and author of the study *Ethnic Success and Urban Unrest* in Newark and Detroit



Newark riot witness
Linda McDonald Carter

During the Summer of 1967. The number was two times the unemployment rate for whites.

In 2000, 12 percent of Newark's population was unemployed and 24.2 percent of residents living in the mostly-black riot-scarred area surrounding Bergen and Springfield avenues were looking for jobs, according to Census data.

Newark's schools also are struggling. A state takeover in the mid-1990s ceded control of the 42,000-student district to the New Jersey Department of Education, a move that was supposed to improve questionable financial practices and stem the tide of high school dropouts.

Still, poor academic performance persists and the district has one of the poorest student populations in the state. About 60 percent of the district's high school students passed the language arts component of the state proficiency test while less than 50 percent passed the math portion.

Violent crime continues to plague the city.

Newark police recorded 106 murders in 2006. In a macabre irony, less than a month after the city marked the 40th anniversary of the riot, three friends were forced to kneel against a wall behind an elementary school and were shot to death at close range. A fourth victim was found 30 feet away with gunshot and knife wounds to the head.

Three adults and two juveniles have been arrested in the case.

The horror of the crime resonated throughout the state and the country. And for many residents of Newark, it typified the lawlessness that many feel has overtaken the city.

The execution-style slayings were a setback for Booker, 36, who made crime reduction one of the cornerstones of his campaign.

Some residents say the city is rudderless.

"It's not the impact of (the riot) that has been lingering, it's been the lack of vision, and the leadership and the resources to change the way it is," says Marcia Brown, vice-provost for Student and Community Affairs at Rutgers-Newark and a longtime community activist.

"It's been the lack of jobs and no lack of drugs. It's been the absence of a middle-class group of people committed to stay in the city, including myself, although I spend all my waking hours here," she says.

THE ECONOMIC EXODUS

Going into the 1960s, the fissures in Newark's economy were becoming clear.

A number of major department stores did business in Newark – Hahne & Company, L. Bamberger & Co., L.S. Plaut & Company and Kresge's Department Store. The stores stood out at Market and Broad streets at the Four Corners, once one of the busiest intersections in America.

There were more than a dozen car dealerships. In fact, the largest Cadillac dealer in the nation sat along Central Avenue. There were 10 movie houses.

But people were leaving town.

The construction of the New Jersey Turnpike, Interstate 280, and the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, or the GI Bill – which helped World War II veterans with home mortgages – led to a decline in the city's population, as more and more whites moved out of Newark and into the suburbs.

Soon, the businesses began to leave. Most closed up shop, while a few attempted moves into newer communities like Caldwell and Montclair – more affluent suburbs less than 10 miles away from Newark.

Over time, the department stores, car dealerships and banks that helped to bolster Newark's economy were replaced by fast food restaurants, discount clothing stores and music kiosks that now dot the downtown corridor along Broad Street. Visitors to the Four Corners used to be able to find pharmacies, cigar shops, butchers and other stores.

Now, the intersection is home to Dollar Deal, Game Stop, Payless Shoe Source and The Wig Shop.

"After the riots, everyone was leaving, all those bank headquarters, said, 'We need to go,' " says George Hampton, an urban planner who grew up in Newark and was headed for his first year at Rutgers-Newark at the time of the riots.

Those businesses fled to more affluent communities in New Jersey, such as Short Hills, or Scotch Plains, Hampton says, and "suddenly, 1,000 people who used to work in the city and then spent that money at the store across the street" were gone.

Newark's population decreased to 339,000 in 1977 from 402,000 at the time of the riot, according to Census figures. The current population is around 280,000.

PICKING UP THE PIECES

For a while, both the black residents of the riot-torn Central and South wards of the city, and the predominately white residents living in the North and East wards of the city, seemed intent on staying to clean up and make Newark a better place.

There was a sense of cooperation between the Italian establishment and a burgeoning group of black activists, as if opposing forces were calling a truce.

In August 1967, the Newark Office of Economic Development went into the riot zone and found that while 161 stores, or 16 percent, were "completely demolished" or "heavily damaged," 850 stores, or 83 percent, had already reopened.

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey opened its Newark campus in the 1970s on 60 acres, a stark contrast to the furor once surrounding the school when the city first proposed taking 150 acres of land to build it – a move that would have displaced 20,000 black residents.

Coaxed to remain by city and state officials, large employers such as Prudential and Public Service Electric and Gas renewed their commitment to stay in Newark.

A number of non-profit organizations moved in to rebuild soon after the riot. Among them: New Community Corporation, one of the nation's most successful community development corporations. It was founded in 1968 to build affordable housing and create jobs.

In 1968, just after the riot, Henry Lewis, 36, was selected from more than 160 candidates to become conductor and music director of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, the first black conductor of a major American orchestra. He began a series of free concerts in the neighborhoods affected by the riot.

Meanwhile, several Springfield Avenue merchants, Fields Dress Shop, Bushberg Brothers Furniture and Almor Furniture put on a free boxing match in 1968 featuring hometown fighter and former Golden Glove champion Lloyd Marshall, according to the *Star-Ledger*.

Later that summer, the Newark Urban Coalition's "Love Festival" attracted more than 60,000 people to Weequahic Park, a county-run park in the South Ward of the city.

By the summer of 1970, big change came to Newark, owed in part to the political reawakening of the black community and the changing voter demographic.

Kenneth A. Gibson, a black former city engineer, was elected Newark's 34th mayor on his second try in four years. He beat out Anthony Imperiale, whom *The New York Times* described in his obit as "wielding a baseball bat to defend his white neighborhood during the 1967 riots." Gibson took over for outgoing Mayor Hugh Addonizio in the nonpartisan election.

As Newark's leadership began to change, Addonizio went to trial on federal corruption charges. He was convicted, along with five others, of taking kickbacks on construction projects, and was sentenced to five years in prison.

Backed by a group of black City Council members, including Sharpe James, his future political opponent, Gibson inherited a city with failing schools, a foundering economy and a rising crime rate. He vowed to turn things around.

Delivering on that promise proved to be difficult.

CRISIS OF EXPECTATIONS

Just months after his election, Gibson tried to serve as a mediator between the Board of Education and Newark Teacher's Union during a strike over wages and control of district policy. The strike stretched on for three months, nearly preventing the district's high school seniors of 1971 from graduating.

Gibson appointed the city's first black school board members and struggled to improve housing and create more jobs. During his tenure, more blacks joined the ranks of city hall workers.

But in the end, black leadership didn't have the effect many had hoped it would and there was a crisis of expectations, says longtime Newark activist Larry Hamm.

"People believed control of municipal government by African Americans would in and of itself be enough to alter the state of African Americans in the city," he says.

It had worked before.

Historically ethnic groups who controlled American cities in the early 1900s experienced socio-economic gains through control of municipal jobs and resources, Hamm says. But by the time Gibson, and later James and current Mayor Booker gained political power, that paradigm was no longer effective, he says.

"Blacks couldn't do what their Irish, Jewish and Italian predecessors had," says Hamm. "The problems of blacks, Hispanics, and the poor could only be solved by what (the) Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. called the 'great government interventions.' Not municipal government."

After four terms, Gibson was unseated in 1986 by James, who continued to try to move the city forward. Like his predecessor Addonizio, Gibson was indicted on charges of conspiracy and misconduct in office. The charges against him, however, were later dismissed.

"The nature of the politics did not change once blacks got political representation," says Herman. He says evidence suggests that riots are more likely to take place in cities that have strong political machines based on ethnic or racial lines.

"Unfortunately, to some extent, the black political officials replicated the machine, only now instead of it being Irish and Italians, it's African-Americans," says Herman. "It's Sharpe James.

"The schools became more about creating jobs for friends and relatives. The housing authority became less about housing and people who need it, and more about creating jobs," he says. "I think a lot of folks were disappointed by that. They were disappointed because (black leadership) didn't change things substantially in their lives unless they were part of the machine themselves."

But James was a cheerleader for Newark, and change began to happen under his watch. A combination of support from political bosses, and an influx of dollars into the city, brought a construction boom to Newark.

SUCCESS UNDER JAMES

James pushed for several completed projects, including the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Newark Bears and Eagles Stadium and the implosion of the city's high-rise public housing projects and construction of low-rise houses.

He was the driving force behind the Prudential Center. Though the city's agreement with the New Jersey Devils was modified after Booker took office in 2006, James' administration set up the financing, signed the deal and continued to push the project even after the New Jersey Nets basketball team backed out of the initial deal.

The center opened three months after James was indicted on corruption charges stemming from suspected misuse of city credit cards and personnel. At the opening, he wandered the arena, smiling and posing for pictures.

"These are the people they said wouldn't come," James said, pointing around a bar in the arena that was filled with mostly whites attending the Bon Jovi concert.

Once again, Newark seems on the brink of big change that could transform the city. And a number of events could hasten the movement.

School superintendent Marion Bolden will soon retire and the process to find her successor has begun.

More than a decade after taking control of Newark's schools, the state has taken the first steps towards giving city residents a direct say in how the schools are run.

Then there is a plan to turn the area around the Prudential Center into a bustling neighborhood with shops, restaurants, bars, a museum, a park, hotels and residences that city leaders hope will become a magnet for tourism.

STIGMA OF '67

Some might argue that the 1967 rebellion caused Newark to spiral, fueled white hatred of blacks and accelerated white flight and business closures. The perception that Newark is a dangerous place to live – or even to visit – persists today.

Herman argues that Newark might have declined anyway - even if the riots hadn't occurred. He says white flight had begun years before the riots, because people wanted "the American Dream, the house, two-car garage."

"The government subsidized the construction of interstate highways and gave them mortgages," he says, referring to the GI

Bill and Federal Housing Authority (FHA) loans offered to white veterans after World War II. “Most black people could not apply for these mortgages because of red-lining.

“You have to blame the Realtor who tried to stoke the fears of white homeowners and encourage them to leave, ‘Omgod, black people are moving into your neighborhood, you have to get out,’ ” says Herman.

Predicted changes in the racial breakdown of Newark after the riot became fact in the years that followed. They were the substance of the report by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, which was formed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to examine the root causes of the disturbances that ripped the United States apart in the late 1960s.

The commission was formed after the 1967 Detroit riots and got its nickname from the chair, then-Gov. Otto Kerner of Illinois. The Kerner Commission ultimately came to a bleak conclusion, that “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal.”

The New Jersey Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorders, also known as the Lilley Commission, a group modeled after the Kerner panel, echoed Kerner’s prediction in its own 1968 report. The commission’s report laid out nearly 100 initiatives that could help repair the damage of years of racism, including a reduction in property taxes, the end of high-rise public housing, and the repair of school buildings.

In the end, Kerner’s prediction about two societies was prophetic, says Richard Cammarieri, a member of the Newark Public Schools Advisory Board who was a teen at the time of the riots and went on to work for the New Community Corporation.

KERNER PREDICTIONS KICK IN

Cammarieri, who is white, lived on a street that was cleared to make way for the New Jersey University of Medicine and Dentistry. He watched as the medical school displaced white residents to the western suburbs of Essex County and black neighbors elsewhere in the city.

Then he watched as Newark struggled as federal money dried up, poverty and crime spiked and schools fell apart.

“It always strikes me that the Kerner Commission report came out in 1968, the same year the Republican Party developed its Southern strategy,” he says, referring to a plan by social conservatives to play up states’ rights in a bid to appeal to segregationists disenchanted with the Democratic Party.

“We haven’t dealt with the issue of race in any real meaningful way. There has been growth, but the people in this city of mostly blacks, (are) still pretty poor,” Cammarieri says.

Blacks in Newark now realize that political representation is not nearly enough. Economic power also is needed.

Hampton, retired vice president of Urban Planning and Community Development at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, says the biggest post-riot hurdle is peoples’ perception of Newark.

He points to the struggle to bring a Starbucks to the city and how there are still no department stores and no shopping malls, not even a Barnes & Noble bookstore, even though there are 40,000 students in the city.

“It’s still very difficult to clean up people’s minds to think



▲ Darkness falls on chaos/Associated Press photo

Newark is a safe place to live, (to think) it is a safe place to come and shop, where one can make significant money,” says Hampton. “That has been the hardest thing.

“People perceive Newark as far worse than it is,” he says. “It is damn near impossible to convince people that this is the place to come and build and invest. People blame city government for all this. No city was built by government alone. It has to be everybody working together.”

WHITHER BLACK POWER?

Brown, the vice provost and community activist, says it is wrong to think that Newark is run by African Americans, even though the city has a black mayor, black City Council members and a black schools superintendent.

“Downtown corporations are controlled by white CEOs,” she says. “The neighborhoods are steered by traditional non-profits struggling to survive and continue to provide services.”

Brown also questions why black people across the country haven’t thrived in the past 40 years.

“It has to do with economics, leadership and culture and the impact on children, families and communities,” she says.

But there continues to be hope here.

Newark’s infrastructure, the colleges, businesses, and location will aid its comeback, says Clement Price, a historian and Rutgers-Newark professor.

“I think that Newark will to an extent regain its stature as New Jersey’s most important city because there are a lot of urban assets,” he says.

While many people here echo Price’s sentiment, the whiff of disenfranchisement and bitterness remain, says Fredrica Bey, executive director of the community group Women In Support of the Million Man March.

There is no doubt Newark has come a long way since the “rebellion” says Bey, but no one can predict where the city is going, or whether the old Newarkers will have a place in the new Newark.

“Newark is in a better position than it’s been for decades,” she says. “But for who?” ■

Always and still divided: 40 years after the riots

By Anita L. Allen

The ink on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was barely dry when several nervous years of urban unrest broke out. Whole blocks were busted up and burned down, in Los Angeles, Detroit and Newark, N.J.

Forty years ago parts of downtown Washington, D.C. lay in charred ruins. Homes and businesses were destroyed, lives and livelihoods were lost. The irony here is that African Americans had won long overdue civil rights laws by making patient, orderly use of the courts, legislation, and collective action. The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the historic March on Washington were bold, but civil demonstrations of discontent.

Why did black people resort to violence? How could rioting follow Thurgood Marshall and company's three-piece suited courtroom prowess? How could violence be the successor of Rosa Parks' gracious defiance or Dr. Martin Luther King's principled civil disobedience? It was as if poor, urban African Americans gave up on law and the philosophy of nonviolence overnight.

The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders was convened by President Lyndon Johnson in 1967. Its mandate was to study the causes of rioting in the "ghettos." The commission – which is called the Kerner Commission after its chairman, Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner – released its report in February, 1968. Two months later more riots erupted following the assassination of Dr. King.

The riots that spawned the formation of the Kerner Commission were notable for the fact that they were not the result of a dramatic collective trauma such as the loss of a national or regional leader. According to the Kerner report, the precise causes of the riots were unclear, but some were apparently sparked by minor affronts or run-ins with local police.

The Kerner report linked the rioting to the inequities suffered by African Americans. Unhelped in their daily lives by the formal, equality-on-paper won through the Civil Rights Movement, rioters lacked tangible social and economic equality. The report advised the nation to give the rioters what they needed: respectful police practices, jobs, housing, education, recreational facilities, political power, fair lending, and egalitarian racial attitudes.

"White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II," the Kerner Commission concluded. Its report warned that a future of "coercion and mob rule" lay ahead if the nation didn't eliminate its ghettos.

I recently spoke to Kerner Commission member Sen. Fred Harris, now retired and living in New Mexico. Harris maintains that the report "didn't predict or condone violence." (It was accused of doing both.) It did, however, identify unconscious institutional "racism" as a substantial factor in the deplorable conditions in the ghettos. "White people drove around the cities, right past black neighborhoods without noticing the poverty. They didn't think about it. They didn't have to think about it," Harris said.

The Commission identified black pride and self-esteem as contributing to the violence. The riots "didn't occur in a climate of hopelessness," Harris said. For years, blacks half believed the negative stereotypes of themselves as ignorant, unwashed and undeserving. The Civil Rights Movement replaced self-hate with pride.

Perhaps the need to rebel has been greater in American history, but the security and self-confidence needed for rebellion had never been greater than in the 1960s. In the space of a few years "Negroes" and "coloreds" with deferential

manners and straightened hair, became assertive “blacks” and “Afro-Americans,” many with natural hairstyles, and African inspired names and fashions to prove it. “Say it loud, I’m black and I’m proud” became the chant of schoolchildren formerly admonished to process their kinky hair and lower their eyes in the presence of whites. The self-esteem made possible by the victories of the Civil Rights Movement made angrier, violent uprisings possible for African Americans – not inevitable, but psychologically possible.

African Americans got more than self-esteem out of the early 1960s, they got bona fide legal protections designed to enhance education, employment, and political power. However, the formal legal protections African Americans won occupying the moral high ground did little to address the immediate needs of urban blacks living in relative poverty. Rebellion was arguably a direct result of disappointment in the limits of formal legal reform: young black men especially just couldn’t take it anymore.

Critics of the Kerner Report – then and now – have complained that it puts too much blame on white racism for the creation of the segregation and poverty that bred explosive, frustrated racial ghettos. Critics complain that the report calls for expensive government programs to “close the gap between promise and performance.” They say blacks got what they were owed when they won formal legal equality, rejecting the new liberal philosophy that formerly-subordinated minorities are owed much more.

Conservative critics of the riots point the finger of blame at individual bad actors, or communities that willfully turned their backs on functional values, such as marriage and two-parent households. These are themes in Professor Stephan Thernstrom’s critique of the Kerner Commission

delivered at a Heritage Foundation symposium marking the 30th anniversary of the report.

But the report assiduously avoided the conclusion that the riots were either the moral misconduct of a few bad actors, or the deserts of a self-degraded community. The report ultimately characterized the riots as a pathological implosion of disorganized black- against-black crime perpetrated by frustrated youth. The damage was to authority and property in African American neighborhoods, rather than against whites. And “the overwhelming majority of the persons killed or injured in all disorders were Negro civilians.” Many of the riots were precipitated by grievances against the police; many escalated into looting and arson as a result of minor or trivial matters.

The wording of the report’s famous conclusion is curious: “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal.” But the nation was not “moving toward” polarization, it was already polarized.

The report warned that basic democratic values were at risk of destruction. But the truth of the matter was far worse. Democratic values had been compromised and neglected in America since the nation’s founding. Despite the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board* decision and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, two societies, one black, one white were a lived reality in the Deep South, to be sure, but also in the North, Midwest and West. The ghettos were products of a sick American apartheid.

The report was addressed, in part, to a northern white public that was unmindful of the segregation and inequality all around them, Harris said when I asked him why it spoke of “moving” toward two societies when so much segregation existed and was the norm already.

The lawyers and philosophers who masterminded the Civil Rights Movement left us

with an imperfect gift. The gift is an edifice of law and principle that never worked consistently for the disadvantaged. The ethical vision that King popularized, the vision of a racially harmonious, racially integrated society, seems to have fallen flat.

After the riots, affirmative action was added to the panoply of public policies thought to enable ghetto-to-riches success stories. Civil rights opens the door, affirmative action is supposed to help blacks get through it. But experts contend that affirmative action in education has benefited middle class blacks who would have gone to college anyway, along with the children of black immigrants and foreign nationals, more than disadvantaged native-born African Americans.

Should one undivided society of socio-economically, equal citizens ever have been a goal? I think it was a worthy goal in 1968 and remains a worthy goal.

The foundations of national unity could perhaps be forged in early childhood. Sadly, the current Supreme Court has ruled against efforts to integrate the public schools. The 14th Amendment does not allow localities to remedy merely de facto segregation through race-conscious measures, the Court recently held in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School Dist. No. 1*.

Voluntary school desegregation initiatives appear to be a thing of the past, discredited as unconstitutional, save as a remedy for legally compelled segregation such as once existed in the

Deep South. But de facto segregation that is a legacy of slavery and de jure segregation should be addressed too. It, too, can be pernicious.

Legal measures, such as mandatory health care insurance for children, could make a difference today. I believe gun control laws and fairer policing and criminal justice could help, too. But African America needs a new philosophy. Constructive and inspiring practical philosophies such as drove African-American leadership during the civil rights era are in short supply. Neither liberalism, nor socialism; neither integrationism, nor separatism are grabbing young minds.

The self-esteem of the mid-1960s is slipping away, replaced by dysfunctional bravado. Young African-American men boldly refer to one another as “nigga,” “bull,” and “dog.” They shoot their peers over sneakers, pot and bikes. Unfortunately “the hood” has come to be a state of mind, a philosophy of life, as much as a place people live. The reification of “the hood” deprives young blacks of the ability to want a better life – or to believe they deserve and can achieve it.

The Kerner report was a warning to government, and those whose race or class places them on the sunny side of the racial divide, to do more than build fences and count blessings. Riots may not be just a thing of the past.

But it should not take fear of new violent rebellions to prompt redoubled efforts to save our cities, our democracy and our ideals.

Anita L. Allen is the Henry R. Silverman Professor of Law and Philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania

\$45 million in property damage
43 people dead

Detroit 1967

Mid-summer explosion in 'Motor City' shook nation out of denial

By Shannon Shelton

DETROIT - Carl Taylor remembers being 17 and enthralled by the hot and sunny Sunday morning that greeted him as he and his mother left church in their northwest Detroit neighborhood on July 23, 1967.

The weather was unseasonably warm, even for mid-July, and Taylor recalls it as an unusually beautiful day. What marred that scene, however, was smoke. It darkened the clear sky, and its smell was unmistakable.

"It was one of those landmark times in my life," says Taylor, now 57.

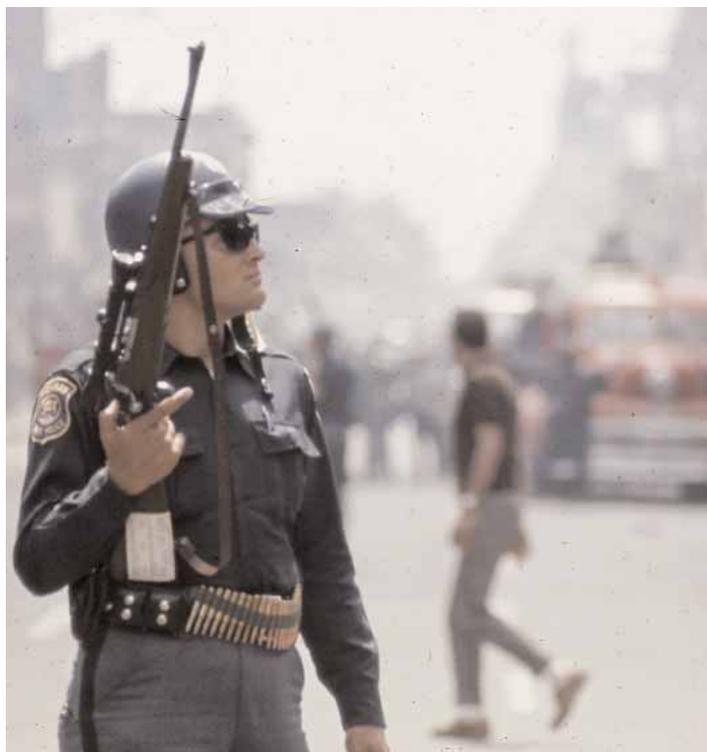
Just a mile from the church where he and his mother, Mae, stood, one of the deadliest riots in American history was unfolding. More than 3,000 black residents gathered on 12th Street near Clairmount Avenue, bent on burning and destroying anything in sight.

Earlier that morning, police raided an illegal after-hours club – known as a "blind pig" – and arrest more than 80 patrons. As police took them away a crowd of angry onlookers began confronting the officers that remained behind.

What happened next remains unclear. Some reports

say that a bottle was thrown at a squad car. Other accounts say that someone threw an object at a store window.

However it started, some small acts of rebellion powered a wave of destruction that continued for nearly a week. It went down in history as one of the most destructive uprisings of the era, costing 43 people their lives and leaving up to \$45 million in property damage in its wake.



▲ Police officer looks for snipers/Associated Press photo

The riot also served as a wake-up call that spurred the federal government to address the nation's growing racial inequality. President Lyndon Johnson established the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, which is now better known as the Kerner Commission, just days after the uprising ended.

Taylor says that at the time, he and other residents in his lower-middle class black neighborhood were surprised at the intensity of the riot.

"We certainly understood injustice, but the individuals who had jobs in the plants, the hospitals or worked for the city believed we were moving forward and following Dr. King's dream," Taylor says.

"No one advocated for the lower classes, and their

The Kerner Commission's report, released the following year, predicted that America was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal." ...

frustrations just overflowed," he says.

Taylor and his neighbors weren't the only ones stunned by the rebellion.

Despite the fact that riots had ravaged Watts and Philadelphia a few years earlier, and Newark in the same month, many believed that Detroit was immune to such an uprising.

National leaders in the 1960s hailed Detroit as a model city where blacks and whites worked, lived and thrived together, thanks to a vibrant automobile industry. Forty percent of black Detroit residents owned homes, the highest black homeownership rate in the country at the time.

Indeed, Detroit faced issues with housing and growing unemployment, but Jerome Cavanagh, the city's young, liberal mayor, had become a local and national symbol of progressive politics and integrated government – attracting federal money to promote economic growth and combat poverty.

If any major American city had the right to utter the phrase "it can't happen here," it was Detroit – or so many residents thought.

"Many working-class and middle-class families didn't understand what was going on," says Taylor, a criminologist and a sociology professor at Michigan State University. "The people that were pent-up in those apartments, the teenage mothers, the poor, they were ready for it. They saw it coming."

Apparently, everyone else had been wearing blinders.

Blacks had long complained about a police force they considered racist and abusive. The abundance of factory jobs that made Detroit so attractive to blacks migrating from the South had

evaporated by the summer of 1967. White flight and the destruction of black neighborhoods for freeway construction destroyed an economic base and worsened an already dire housing crisis.

The confluence of these factors turned Detroit into a tinderbox, and a routine police raid on that "blind pig" in the early hours of that fateful Sunday provided the lit match.

THE UNDERBELLY OF THE 'MODEL CITY'

Like many Northern cities, Detroit became a haven for blacks fleeing racism and poverty in the South during the Great Migration that began in 1916 and continued until roughly 1970. Blacks who moved to Detroit during the earliest waves of this migration told family members and neighbors back home that jobs in Detroit's auto factories were bountiful, and the need for more workers was endless.

In the 1940s, Detroit was one of the most prosperous and fastest-growing cities in the United States, and its manufacturing plants fueled national production during World War II, earning it the nickname, "The Arsenal of Democracy."

The black population of Detroit was close to 6,000 in 1910, according to Census records. By 1920, the city's black population had increased to more than 40,000, and rose to 120,000 by 1930.

As Detroit's black population increased, housing options for black residents became more limited. Segregated housing policies denied them access to neighborhoods outside of the eastside ghettos known as Black Bottom and Paradise Valley.

Housing issues were at the center of race riots in 1943 that foreshadowed the storm to come more than two decades later. According to Sidney Fine, an emeritus professor of history at the University of Michigan, the city lost 25,927 dwellings between 1960 and 1967, and only 15,494 new units were built. Most of the older units were demolished to build highways and other urban renewal projects.

Detroit led the way in the construction of highways long before President Dwight D. Eisenhower's plan to create an interstate highway system was authorized in 1956. The Davison freeway, a three-mile expressway cutting through midtown Detroit and the enclosed city of Highland Park, became the first urban freeway in the United States when it opened in 1942, creating a more convenient route for workers to get to and from their factory jobs.

Northland, located in the northwestern border suburb of Southfield, became the nation's first shopping mall when it opened in 1954. The John C. Lodge Freeway, another expressway built before the interstates, started as a seven-mile stretch between downtown and northwest Detroit, but eventually expanded to include direct access to the mall and the office complexes nearby.

The highways provided a direct route for travel in and out of the city, although migration patterns soon made it clear that a lot of people were using them to leave Detroit – and not just to navigate through the city.



Lyndon Baines Johnson/Associated Press photo

Retail centers like Northland fueled the growth of suburban home building, and working-class whites were able to use their factory wages to buy inexpensive homes outside the city.

On Detroit's far northwest side, Warren Armstrong remembers watching from his nearby home on McNichols Road as the Lodge Freeway was being built. A 53-year-old white business owner now living near Lansing, Mich., Armstrong says he and other neighborhood boys would buy food for the construction workers from a nearby hamburger chain.

As a reward, the workers would let Armstrong and his friends drive bulldozers around the construction site, sometimes actually doing some of the demolition work.

"We pushed down people's houses," Armstrong says. "We watched them physically build the freeway."

In *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, author Thomas Sugrue says 2,222 buildings were displaced during the construction of the seven-mile stretch of the Lodge Freeway. Some were preserved and moved, but most of those saved were owned by whites.

The homes that blacks rented were demolished.

Armstrong wasn't around for long after the Lodge's completion in 1958. By 1964, his father, an Arkansas native, decided it was time to leave Detroit and move his family to the northern suburb of Birmingham, Ala.

"We were a part of the white flight," Armstrong says.

As families like Armstrong's fled to the suburbs, blacks in Detroit found it more difficult to go anywhere. The city's plans for "urban renewal" included the destruction of Paradise Valley and Black Bottom to make way for the new interstate highways. Starting in 1958, construction on I-75, or the Chrysler Freeway, cut straight through Hastings Street, the heart of black Detroit.

Those neighborhoods were hubs of black culture, with establishments that were regularly frequented by celebrities like Joe Louis, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington and Sammy Davis Jr.

By 1960, however, Hastings Street had been reduced to little more than a desolate service drive for I-75.

Businesses vanished and housing stock deteriorated, while the black population continued to increase. By 1960, it was 487,000, representing 29.1 percent of Detroit's 1.67 million total population.

"We were confined," says Qadir Ahmad, a city health inspector in the 1960s who grew up in the nearby Brewster Homes, a housing project.

"There was an unwritten rule that black people had to be obedient," Ahmad says. "Caucasians didn't understand that we just wanted to be exposed to the same resources they had."

Some black families managed to move farther to the north and west, looking to use the money earned from years of factory work to buy their first homes.

The near northwest side became a popular destination in the late 1950s, as blacks were able to purchase homes for lower prices from Jewish owners, often the only group willing to sell to them.

Taylor lived in a neighborhood near 12th Street, a thoroughfare on Detroit's near northwest side that stretched from McNichols to the north and Fort Street downtown. The strip had everything that a resident of 1950s Detroit could desire, from supermarkets with



▲ Sweeping up after unrest/Associated Press photo

outdoor produce stands to clothiers, banks and photography studios.

It was a predominately working-class Jewish enclave from the late 1920s and remained that way until the early 1950s, before its racial and economic status transformed almost overnight.

A few black families began to move to the area near 12th Street, and white real estate agents preyed on white owners' fears, warning them of declining property rates and increased crime rates if they remained. The Lodge Freeway also cut through the neighborhood.

One by one, the Jewish families moved, first settling farther northwest within the city limits, including the neighborhood where Armstrong once lived, and by the 1970s, to the suburbs.

As property around 12th Street became less valuable, more blacks moved in. Apartment owners in the area also lowered rents to maintain occupancy rates, bringing in poorer blacks.

By the mid-1950s, the neighborhood was almost predominantly black. In 2001, *The Detroit News* studied demographic changes on one city block, Elmhurst Avenue, between 12th and 14th streets. In 1953, the block was predominantly Jewish, as reflected by the 191 names listed in the city directory from that year. By 1958, the city directory contained 159 names – only 10 of them Jewish.

Black Detroit court Magistrate Sidney Barthwell Jr., who grew up in a nearby neighborhood, recounted the changes he noticed in Alan Govenar's book *Untold Glory: African Americans in Pursuit of Freedom, Opportunity and Achievement*.

"During the time I grew up, the neighborhood was all white," Barthwell says. "When I started elementary school in the early 1950s, there were just two African Americans in my kindergarten class. This was a public school called Roosevelt Elementary School.

"By the time I came out of the sixth grade, I think there were maybe five or six white people in the class of 35. So it was a neighborhood in transition," he says.

Sociology professor Taylor attended all three schools and remembers 12th Street as a thriving business district. Residents, he says, could get almost anything they needed along the strip.

But even then the strip was showing signs that all was not well in Detroit.

In the early 1960s, many of the higher-end merchants had already moved to the north and west, following their former customers, and left behind a grittier business base for the black families that dominated the neighborhood.

Seedy bars and pool halls, liquor stores and storefront churches began to sprout, but enough grocers, dry cleaners and restaurants remained to fulfill residents' basic needs.

In Detroit's poorer black communities, racial tensions and frustrations were reaching a boiling point. The Brewster Homes, a housing project in Black Bottom that originally was made up of two-story row houses and low-rise apartment buildings, became symbols of urban crowding.

The first phase went up in the mid-1930s, and was completed in 1952 with the addition of 14-story high rises. Around 8,000 to 10,000 people lived in the project at the height of its occupancy.

The project was relatively stable in its early days, and for years was one of the only communities to allow black tenants. But by the 1960s, it had become places of despair, as the standards put in place to maintain order – such as requiring one employed parent as a condition of occupancy – had been abandoned.

The market for unskilled labor in the city, which kept generations of Detroiters employed, also was vanishing. Sugrue writes in his book that Detroit lost 134,000 manufacturing jobs between 1947 and 1963, while the population of working men and women increased. Manufacturers began closing factories in the city and moving operations to suburbs; whites living beyond the city limits were the beneficiaries.

Poverty, unemployment, poor housing and general dissatisfaction with the lack of tangible economic gains in the waning days of the civil rights movement had angered blacks around the nation.

And the strategy of a peaceful, nonviolent struggle for change had become less appealing to a new generation of urban blacks – many of them in Detroit.

"I wasn't surprised (by the riot) from a national standpoint," says the 68-year-old Ahmad, who spent time in New York in the mid-1960s working for the Congress of Racial Equality. "Black Power was in the air."

Taylor, who would later complete field research on youth and urban violence, made a similar assessment. "It's been very powerful for me to become a social researcher and see what caused the riot," he says. "Historically, we have always neglected the poorer element of our society."

THE MATCH

Like the Newark uprisings just days before, the genesis of the Detroit riots followed a similar script. Members of a mostly white police force were accused of unnecessarily rough treatment of some blacks – and other blacks retaliated.

By the morning of Sunday, July 23, 1967, thousands of people filled 12th Street, which was then the heart of a declining, all-black neighborhood. They began by breaking windows, and moved on to burning buildings, looting and firing guns. They smashed the plate-glass windows of nearby businesses and stormed markets, filling shopping carts to the brim with food and anything else that could carry off.

"It was a mixture between hitting the lottery and a free-for-all," Taylor says. "Nothing was left alone."

Some prominent black figures attempted to quell the violence. Star baseball player Willie Horton, of the Detroit Tigers – who grew up in Detroit – and Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., who was first elected to Congress in 1964,

were among that group, but they discovered that their pleas fell on deaf ears.

"(Horton) was standing on top of a car, thinking his celebrity would help calm things down," Ahmad says. "He had to run for his life."

Conyers too found himself in danger and escaped quickly.

"You try to talk to these people," Conyers was quoted in *Time* magazine in the Aug. 4, 1967, cover story, "and they'll knock you into the middle of next year."

By Tuesday, July 25, the third day of the riot, federal troops and National Guardsmen patrolled city streets, creating a scene that will forever be etched in the minds of many Detroiters. Police in riot gear roamed majority black neighborhoods, and residents watched in amazement from their homes as tanks rolled down their streets.

The Detroit riot raged for six days, spreading east and north from its origin and encompassing up to 14 square miles, according

The Kerner Commission's report, released the following year, predicted that America was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal." That statement proved prophetic for Detroit almost immediately.

to some estimates. By its end on Friday, July 28, 43 people were dead, 1,200 were injured and more than 7,000 had been arrested.

The Kerner Commission's report in 1968 said that the city had suffered between \$40 million and \$45 million in property damage.

THE AFTERMATH

Artistic renderings of scenes from 12th Street appeared on the cover of the Aug. 4, 1967, issue of *Time*. The article, titled *The Fire This Time*, attempted to explain the genesis of the riot, and how such an uprising could take place in a city considered one of the nation's most progressive.

The worry was that if it could happen in Detroit, it could happen anywhere.

The Detroit riot provided the catalyst for national action, and by the end of the month, President Johnson had created the National Advisory Commission for Civil Disorders, which got its nickname from its chairman, Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner.

The Kerner Commission's report, released the following year, predicted that America was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal." That statement proved prophetic for Detroit almost immediately.

After the 1967 riots, the stream of whites leaving the city became a deluge as they all but abandoned Detroit's interior to move to the far northeast and northwest sides.

Eventually, most left the city entirely.

In 1970, the percentage of blacks in Detroit grew to 45 percent. It climbed to 63 percent in 1980, 76 percent in 1990 and 82 percent in 2000.

Today, in the areas once known as Paradise Valley and Black Bottom, stand Comerica Park, the baseball stadium that is home to the Detroit Tigers, and Ford Field, which hosted the Super Bowl in 2006 and is the permanent home of the Detroit Lions football team.

Both venues and the surrounding entertainment districts have been hailed as symbols of Detroit's rebirth, and their gleaming structures have provided the city with a sense of pride. For decades, burned-out buildings and vacant lots were the only remnants of Black Bottom, creating an eyesore for visitors to the city's downtown.

Detroit renamed 12th Street "Rosa Parks Boulevard" in the mid-1970s in honor of the civil rights icon, who late in life made her home in the Motor City.

Some new town homes have been built in the city, illustrating another sign of Detroit's rebirth. Yet a lot of decaying buildings still are prevalent — as are the many trash-strewn, overgrown vacant lots that are called "urban prairies."

"I feel like we sat on the cusp of something tremendously powerful — the destruction of Detroit. Everybody lost, white and black," says Armstrong, the Lansing business owner.



▲ Sharing conversation and coffee/Associated Press photo

"When anyone asks me if anything positive came from the riots, I say, 'Not in my opinion,'" Taylor says. "We took 12 steps backward. It devastated the black community." ■

Motown: The ‘Sound of Young America’ becomes a voice for change

By Shannon Shelton

DETROIT - The young men and women who flocked to the modest two-story home on Detroit's West Grand Boulevard during the late 1950s and early 1960s weren't looking to start a revolution.

They just wanted to make music, or get close to the people who were.

"There was no intention for our music to necessarily make any changes or have any influence," says Patricia Cosby, the alumni liaison for the Motown Museum in Detroit. "The operation was, in essence, people doing what they loved."

But Motown doing what it loved, however, morphed into something more meaningful. The historical timing of the pioneering black record label's rise made it impossible for it to avoid playing a role in what has become known as "protest music."

In the 1970s, Edwin Starr's "War" gave voice to the frustrations of young Americans drafted to fight in the ongoing conflict in Vietnam. Marvin Gaye's seminal album "What's Going On" tackled urban poverty, environmental issues, drug abuse and the war.

Before that, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas' 1964 single "Dancing in the Streets" became the unofficial theme song of the summertime riots that wracked the Los Angeles community of Watts, then Newark, N.J., and finally Detroit - although it was intended to simply be a party song.

Even the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, more commonly known as the Kerner Commission, appeared to reference the song in its 1968 report about the Detroit riots.

"Late Sunday afternoon, it appeared to one observer that the 'dancing amidst the flames,' " a part of the report read.

Ultimately, Motown benefited from, and influenced, the era in which it emerged - a turbulent period in which America was forced to face its racial demons in a big way for the first time since the Civil War.

Motown's black artists, who faced discrimination on some of their early ventures into the segregated South, became ambassadors for racial understanding, as the nation's growing embrace of black music paved the way for greater integration between blacks and whites.

"Music, particularly music created in Detroit's black community during the 1960s, could rarely, if ever, transcend the politically and racially charged environment in which it was produced," says Suzanne E. Smith in her scholarly work, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*.

HUMBLE START, SIMPLE GOAL

When Berry Gordy Jr. started his record label in a west-side Detroit home in 1959, his only goals were to make music and make money selling it. By the mid-1960s, his Hitsville U.S.A. studio was handling both quite well, as Motown became an international symbol of musical ingenuity and American culture. His music transcended race, class, religion and national

boundaries to become the "Sound of Young America."

That part of the Motown story is well known, but while the music was changing the world, it also reverberated in Detroit's black community and black centers around the country, particularly as many of them were on the verge of explosion during the long, hot summers of the 1960s.

After the 1967 Detroit riots, Motown's music took a bolder turn, as artists who gained fame through Gordy's practice of creating catchy R&B/soul tunes about love and hope in the early 1960s wanted to explore the greater issues of the day through their music.

The company made a more deliberate effort to move into the political realm before 1971's "What's Going On," Edwin Starr's "War" and Stevie Wonder's 1973 "Living for the City," but did it discreetly.

On its Black Forum label, Motown released albums featuring works from renowned poets including Langston Hughes and Amiri Baraka. It also released the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Why I Oppose the War in Vietnam" speech delivered on April 4, 1967, a year before his death.

In 1970, the speech won a Grammy Award for best spoken-word recording.

By the 1970s, even the musical artists were

creating a new Motown sound, despite Gordy's early objections.

"Berry Gordy wasn't going to release 'What's Going On,'" says Eric Deggans, a media critic for The St. Petersburg Times who has written extensively about protest music.

"He thought Marvin would destroy his career. He was scared - he wanted to keep the formula going."

The 1971 album would become one of the defining works of Gaye's career and a commercial success. That's not surprising, Deggans says, because of the confluence of numerous societal and industry elements that developed in the 1960s.

The rise of FM/Top 40 radio provided exposure for music that would previously have been considered "subversive." The AM format played more traditional fare, while FM provided a freewheeling, unregulated environment where disc jockeys could play whatever they wanted.

Some stations played entire albums, which proved to be a boon for Gaye, since "What's Going On" was a collection of inter-related, continuous recordings.

FM radio proved to be the perfect destination for an audience of young adults of the baby boomer generation who wanted music that addressed their experiences.



▲ Martha Reeves and the Vandellas/Associated Press photo

"There were a lot of things going on at the time to make protest music commercially successful," Deggans says. "The civil rights movement, the women's movement, the draft, the war in Vietnam – these things were defining the nation."

Detroit served as a breeding ground for a generation of protest music because it was a place where black Americans like Gordy and his artists could achieve great success, while others struggled with dire poverty. The frustrations of those mired in the latter state would eventually erupt during the 1967 riot.

MOTOWN AND THE MOVEMENT

Unlike other works that look at Motown's indirect role in facilitating integration and cross-cultural understanding during the 1960s, Smith's book, focuses on Motown's influence on black Detroit and the company's complicated relationship with the civil rights movement.

The book's title, "Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit," was no fluke.

Of all of Motown's pre-1967 records, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas' "Dancing in the Street" was the most politically charged. Lead singer Martha Reeves has often been asked about a hidden meaning behind the tune, and has long insisted that it was simply a party song.

But the lyrics took on a different tone when set against the backdrop of the violent mid-1960s, particularly the third and fourth lines – "Summer's here and the time is right, for dancin' in the streets."

As an eerie coincidence, Reeves and her group were performing the song at Detroit's Fox Theater on July 23, 1967, the day rioting erupted in Detroit.

Motown released the song in 1964, and accounts from Watts the following summer indicated that it had earned a status as the unofficial "theme song" of the rioting in that section of Los Angeles.

Gaye saw the same signs of political protest in the Vandellas' work. David Ritz, who wrote the biography, "Divided Soul: The Life of Marvin Gaye," quotes Gaye as saying that the group appeared to provide a departure from the usual Motown standard of singing of teenage love, romance and optimism.

"Funny, but of all the acts back then, I thought Martha and the Vandellas came closest to really saying something," Gaye said. "It wasn't a conscious thing, but when they sang numbers like 'Quicksand,' or 'Wild One,' or 'Nowhere to Run,' and 'Dancing in the Street,' they captured a spirit that felt political to me."

After the riot, Motown began to take on a more political, activist stance through its spoken-word recordings – although Gordy didn't fully embrace the more radical elements of various black power movements developing in the city. The company faced criticism from radical black leaders, who believed that as a black-owned organization Motown had a responsibility to be more vocal about the ills facing black Detroit.

The Black Forum label didn't garner sales anywhere near Motown's musical offerings, but it served as Motown's underground method of providing support for the work of black civil rights leaders.

"It was the quiet way for Motown to say that we respected and appreciated all of their efforts,"

Motown Museum alumni liaison Patricia Cosby says.

MOTOWN'S COMMUNITY ROOTS

Then known as Patricia Thompson, Cosby came to Motown in 1962 after graduating Central High a year earlier. She remained at Hitsville U.S.A. until the company moved to Los Angeles a decade later. She held a variety of jobs, working as a switchboard operator, tape librarian and album coordinator, and met her future husband, Hank Cosby, a saxophone player and songwriter for Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, the Supremes and the Jackson 5.

Detroit's black community had a tight-knit feel in those days despite its size, and Motown helped strengthen those bonds, Cosby says. Doo-wop groups featuring future Motown stars were fixtures on street corners in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and many black Detroiters who came of age in those years can legitimately claim to have known a Motown entertainer.

They might have met in the hallways of Northern, Northwestern, Cass Technical, Northeastern, Eastern and Central – the Detroit schools that had large populations of black students – or the Brewster Projects and nightclubs that served as gathering places for black teens.

Diana Ross, Mary Wilson and Florence Ballard, the original Supremes, grew up in the Brewster Projects, one of the few public housing projects in the city that rented to black families when it was built in the 1930s. Until the mid-1960s, the Brewster Homes maintained strict standards to screen tenants, making the community a solid place for working-class residents to raise families.

Brewster's community center served as a place for the high-school-age Supremes – then known as the Primettes – to practice their routines. The apartment buildings also took on a street-corner feel of their own at times, as youngsters rehearsed lyrics in the hallways and stairwells.

Other centers of black culture included the Graystone Ballroom, the Driftwood Lounge and The 20 Grand, all places where Motown artists performed on their way to stardom and even afterward. Cosby says those venues attracted young blacks throughout the city, allowing kids from different neighborhoods and high schools to meet and form friendships.

When many of those kids later went to Vietnam, Motown provided a link to their lives back home. For a group of people attempting to define themselves and build pride in a turbulent era, Motown's mere existence proved to be a testament to black strength and resilience.

"I know a lot of the guys that came back from Vietnam said Motown music was something for them to cling to," Cosby says. "Even guys in my family talked about its impact, how they couldn't wait to get back home and start 'dancing in the street.' It made a significant impact for them to know that a black company back home was making black music."

TWILIGHT IN DETROIT

The 1967 riot signaled the beginning of the end of Motown's era of glory, even though the company reinvented itself to a degree through its protest music and spoken-word recordings.

The rebellion hastened the "white flight" from the inner city, as well as black movement into the outer reaches of Detroit and surrounding suburbs. Businesses destroyed in the riot either closed or relocated outside of the city, further stripping Detroit of its economic base.

Gordy first moved Motown's headquarters from the home on West Grand Boulevard to an office building in downtown Detroit, and then shifted Motown's operations to Los Angeles in 1972. Although Motown's move had more to do with Gordy's desire to expand into television and film production than disenchantment with Detroit, the loss of Motown was a blow to black Detroit's already fragile business core.

Many other black-owned businesses had either been destroyed through the "urban renewal" of the 1950s and '60s, or in the riots. Centers of black culture like the Graystone Ballroom and The 20 Grand also fell victim to the aftermath of the riots, closing down as Detroit's inner-city culture withered.

The music of the era would also lose its pointed nature. By the mid-1970s, radio listeners were "burnt out" on issue-related recordings, Deggans says. The Vietnam War was ending, the Watergate scandal had removed President Richard Nixon, one of the principal forces behind the war, from office and visible victories in the civil rights movement and women's movement had been won.

People were ready to move on musically, and protest music never regained its potency, Deggans says. FM radio became more niche-oriented, while simultaneously embracing a mainstream pop sound that emphasized hanging out and partying.

"Radio was not as receptive and there's no longer a commercial incentive," he says. "It's unfortunate. I think we would have had more protest songs if they were more receptive. There's no place where artists can go en masse and have a large audience for protest music."

As for Motown, rioters spared the Hitsville U.S.A. building, although flames and destruction raged just blocks away.

Today, the building exists as a museum, attracting thousands of visitors each year. Tourists from all over the world come to learn about Motown's contribution to history and the destruction of racial barriers, but there's also plenty of focus on how Motown influenced black America's burgeoning sense of pride in the 1960s.

"People don't realize the dynamics of what we did until they go into that tiny building, and wonder how we did it," Cosby says. ■



Forty years after the Detroit riots, desolation and determination reign

By Kayce T. Ataiyero

DETROIT – A cold, misty rain hangs heavy in the air like a damp rug. From her front porch, Althea Armstrong surveys the vast expanse of decay and disrepair in her 12th Street neighborhood. Her finger zigzags through the fog as she highlights one eyesore after another, all standing in monument to the community's malaise.

She pauses as she points to the charred carcass of a home across the street, one of 10 on either side that is boarded up.

"You see that house? That house has been set on fire six times in a year and a half," Armstrong says. "And that one ... just this spring, some men in trucks pulled up and stripped it in broad daylight. It was like watching someone getting raped."

Forty years after six days of riots left 43 people dead and 1,200 injured, the 12th Street neighborhood looks like it was visited by a

Gone are the businesses that used to be squeezed in like sardines along 12th Street – which was renamed Rosa Parks Boulevard in 1976. In their stead: a bare-bones strip mall.

There are bright spots: Clusters of town homes and a gated community dot the area. Armstrong, a retired college professor who recently moved back to her childhood home, started a garden along the stretch that she calls "Redemption Mile."

The mixed bag that is the 12th Street neighborhood is a reflection of the condition of the black community in Detroit today – 40 years after the wake-up call that rang all the way to the White House to quell the mounting frustrations of black people struggling against poverty and hopelessness.

POLITICAL GAINS, ECONOMIC LOSSES

In 1967, shortly after the riots, New Detroit Inc. – a non-profit organization of community leaders – was formed to address the social problems that gave birth to the unrest. But many cite the 1973 election of Coleman Young as Detroit's first black mayor as the first major turning point for the city, one that laid a foundation for black political empowerment that has extended to the election in 2001 of the current Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick.

Yet while blacks have established and maintained a political foothold since the riot, the results for the community have been uneven, says Todd Shaw, an assistant professor of political science and African-American studies at the University of South Carolina.

Shaw, who has written extensively about the condition of Detroit's black community, says the city is in better shape since the riots but not without some losses. While political empowerment has increased, so has poverty, he says.

While the city saw a greatly improved economy in the 1990s, it has struggled with the increases in joblessness and unemployment since 2000.

There is a larger black middle class but a widening gap between it and the poor, Shaw said.

"In the long haul, Detroit has now had more than 30 years of African-American leadership of the city," Shaw says. "People expected that would mean not only the dignity of having African-American representation in city government but that the government would be able to spur economic development.

"It was a hope that came with Coleman Young through his first two terms. In the third and last term, community activists became skeptical that he would act upon promises of being equitable in who got what."

Young inherited a city that was hemorrhaging people. From 1950 to 1967, Detroit's population dropped from 1.8 million to 1.4 million. In 1972 – the year before Young became the city's first



▲ Althea Armstrong/Photo by Kayce Ataiyero

tornado of blight that hop-scotched through, destroying some areas and sparing others.

Parts of the neighborhood still burn. On any given night, the sky is aflame with abandoned homes set on fire by owners looking for an easy way out or squatters looking to keep warm. The empty homes that are not burned are stripped to their foundation by thieves looking for parts to pilfer.

Gang turf wars make it treacherous terrain to navigate after dark. Mounds of garbage sit in yards and on sidewalks, dumped by outsiders who use the neighborhood as a landfill.

black mayor, Detroit had a population of 1.2 million. In 1990, that number had shrunk to just over a million people.

No city in the nation had such a crippling level of disinvestments as Detroit experienced after the riot, as people fled to the suburbs taking businesses and jobs with them. Young's vision for renewal – one centered on revitalizing downtown and on big-ticket projects such as The Central Industrial Park – clashed with those who wanted more investment in neighborhoods.

Under his successor, Dennis Archer, who was elected in 1993, economic development in Detroit increased. Archer privatized functions in the city that brought in more money. Benefiting from the Clinton administration increased financial support of his city, and an improving economy, Archer had a stronger relationship with the city's business elite than Young.

He presided over the construction of football and baseball stadiums as well as the reoccupation of the Renaissance Center, a commercial complex that had defaulted on mortgage payments in the 1980s but went on to become the headquarters of General Motors in 1996.

The year 2001 brought the election of Kilpatrick as mayor – and ushered in a new recession. Critics say it proved to be a one-two punch as Detroit is still reeling from a bad economy and the Kilpatrick administration has done a poor job of managing the city's finances.

In 2005, Kilpatrick was named one of the nation's worst mayors by *Time* magazine, based largely on the state's threatened takeover of Detroit's finances in the face of a \$230 million budget deficit. Last year the city council agreed to pay \$8 million to two former cops and \$400,000 to another officer to settle harassment and whistleblower lawsuits that grew out of an extramarital affair Kilpatrick is alleged to have had with his chief of staff.

Kilpatrick and the woman denied the tryst under oath but *The Detroit News* later obtained transcripts of more than 14,000 text messages in which they discussed their affair.

This payout added to the city's financial woes – a problem that only seems to be getting worse.



▲ Riot zone house/Photo by Kayce Ataiyero

Little progress has been made in the city on the key socioeconomic indicators highlighted in the Kerner report: segregation, unemployment, poverty and crime.

According to the U.S. Census, Detroit is now the nation's most segregated city, with a black population of 85 percent and a white population of 9 percent. These figures are in sharp contrast to the population in 1970, which was 56 percent white and 44 percent black.

White flight was accelerated by the city's escalating crime rate. Detroit has been plagued by its perception as a violent city since it was pegged the nation's murder capital in the 1980s. Recently, it was designated the nation's most dangerous city, according to an analysis of FBI crime statistics published annually by Congressional Quarterly.

The exodus of whites – and the declining tax base that results from this loss – has left a broken city in its wake. Next to crime,



▲ Grace Boggs/Photo by Kayce Ataiyero

the epidemic of abandoned buildings is a matter of great concern to the people who remain in this city. Roughly 61 percent of Detroiters say there is a vacant building within walking distance of their home.

TALES OF TODAY'S DETROIT

At a recent hearing marking the 40th anniversary of the Kerner Commission report, dozens of city residents talked of their despair. The voices varied but the chorus was the same: Jobs are scarce, city services are lacking, education is poor and hope is thin.

The statistics are staggering:

- Black families in Detroit are poorer than they were 30 years ago. Some 24.1 percent of black families were living below the poverty line in 2000, compared with 5.9 percent of whites. That is up from 18.5 percent in 1970.
- The median family income for blacks in 2000 was \$36,803, compared with \$65,516 for whites.
- Unemployment for black males age 25-64 nearly doubled in the past 30 years and is nearly four times the rate of whites. Roughly 12 percent of black men were unemployed in 2000, up from 6.8 percent in 1970. In contrast, the unemployment rate of whites has held steady, hovering around 3 percent.

Armstrong, who lives in the 12th Street area, doesn't need a survey to know that her fellow residents are unemployed. While chatting recently on the porch of neighbor Eva Williams, she was interrupted.

"I got fresh T-bone porterhouses here," screamed a young black man walking by swinging a plastic grocery bag with trays of meat inside. After politely declining his offer, Armstrong says, "See that? That is something else. Selling raw meat walking down the street. That hustle was an economic indication that folks need jobs."

The educational outlook is equally bleak. Detroit public schools, which were taken over by the state in 1999 due to fiscal woes, are among the most segregated and poorest districts in the nation. Roughly 93 percent of students are black and 77 percent receive free and reduced lunches.

The district's academic performance is abysmal. Detroit has a dropout rate of 75 percent, according to Education Week. It has the worst on-time high school graduation rate in the country, 21.7 percent. In addition, only 54 percent of students passed reading tests last year. Only 33 percent passed math, according to George Galster, a professor of urban affairs at Wayne State University.

Galster blames Detroit's stagnation on "cumulative causation," a system of interlocking social phenomenon in which everything reinforces itself. Essentially, the cause of a condition becomes an effect, which begets a cause, creating a never-ending cycle.

Based on Galster's model, Detroit's residential and school segregation erects barriers that perpetuate blacks' socioeconomic inferiority. That condition reinforces whites' racial prejudice, which motivates discrimination in various forms. That, in turn, causes white flight, which reinforces segregation.

According to *Detroit Divided*, a book by Reynolds Farley, Sheldon Danziger and Harry J. Holzer, published in 2000, most whites in Metro Detroit say blacks are less intelligent. Three-quarters say blacks don't speak English as well as whites and that blacks are more likely to prefer living off welfare.

Forty-three percent of whites in Metro Detroit would not "feel comfortable" if their neighborhood was even one-third black. Roughly 59 percent would not move into a neighborhood that had one-third black residents, the authors contend.

Studies of housing discrimination by white real estate agents showed that whites are consistently favored over blacks in 14 percent of searches for rental apartments and 17 percent of searches for homes to buy, Galster says. "Cumulative causation is alive and well and it has transformed our notion of equal opportunity from a hallowed premise into a hollow promise."

But some in the community say this outlook is too bleak.

HOPE SPROUTS FROM THE GRASSROOTS

Grace Boggs, a 92-year-old community activist and founder of The Boggs Center, says there is a vibrant, grassroots effort to solve the city's festering problems. Her center, in collaboration with 32 other community organizations, runs The Detroit City of Hope campaign to "rebuild, re-spirit and redefine" Detroit.

While Boggs acknowledges that Detroit's problems are great, she says people's time would be better spent focusing on solutions.

"It is about turning grief into hope to find new forms of participatory education, new ways of relying on one another to make our neighborhoods safe, new ways of making a living," she says.

Dawn Taylor, a 28-year-old writer and poet, agrees.

Through her work, she encourages blacks to clean up the community, put an end to violence and move toward strengthening the family unit. She says too many people don't believe it can be done.

"I feel a lot of people are stricken by hopelessness. They don't seem to be able to see through the situation to a future," she says. "One of my neighbors, who has been living here forever, said they are packing up and leaving because it's over, there's nothing here," Taylor says. "But I think Detroit is going to come back. I will stay here in Detroit because I love Detroit." ■



Climbing Out of the Abyss: Capitalism, Racism and Kerner at 40

By Claude W. Barnes

Race riots, urban rebellions, and collective civil violence are not new phenomena in American society. Race riots, in fact, litter American history. Examples include the New York Draft Riots during the Civil War in 1863; riots in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1898; Atlanta, Georgia in 1906; Tulsa, Okla. in 1921; and Rosewood, Fla. in 1923. The urban rebellions of the 1960s, however, were different.

Unlike the race riots perpetrated by whites against blacks, these represented the responses of oppressed African Americans in urban ghettos. Over 750 rebellions were recorded from 1964 to 1971, and they involved cities North and South, East and West, large and small. In fact, some of the more alarming events would take place in the small to medium-sized cities like Greensboro, N.C. in 1968 and 1969.

These spontaneous uprisings began with the Rochester, N.Y. rebellion in 1964 over police brutality and escalated with the Watts rebellion in 1965 and the massive Detroit and Newark riots of 1967. In fact, 1967 constituted a turning point in the rebellions with over 150 riots or civil disturbances occurring that year, resulting in an estimated 500 million to 1 billion dollars in property damage, tremendous loss of life, and, of course, disruption of the social peace.

America could no longer conduct business as usual while hundreds of cities were erupting in flames every summer. The 1967 riots prompted President Lyndon B. Johnson to create the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, also known as the Kerner Commission, some 40 years ago to study the causes and impact of urban rebellions and to suggest ways of preventing their recurrence. The analysis and conclusions of the politically moderate Commission confirmed what most African Americans already knew:

there are separate realities for black and white Americans, and most white people are not willing or able to look at the dark side.

The Commission's report represented one of the last attempts by national public power and American liberalism, in particular, to seriously address the problem of racial oppression, racial inequality, and the absence of racial democracy.

The Kerner report provided justification for the short lived and much maligned "Great Society Programs." This was a historic opportunity for the country and its leadership to face its core contradiction – its most intractable and fundamental problem: racism. Unfortunately, like so many times before the national leadership took a few steps out of the abyss of racial inequality and racial oppression and, before any real progress could be made, jump right back into the bottomless pit.

In fact there have been many missed opportunities to correct the historic injustices around race in our nation. It appeared as though America was going to solve the "race question" in the aftermath of the Civil War; for one brief shining moment reconstruction, reconciliation, and racial democracy were moving forward, but all began to crash with the 1876 Compromise. The rise of the Populist Movement in the 1890s was another missed opportunity. It was betrayed by Tom Watson and the movement's turn toward rank racism?

The beginnings of the Labor and Socialist Movements had their shining moments of multi-racial solidarity in the gallant fight for justice for the Scottsboro Boys; however, these movements soon succumbed to racism or orders from Moscow.

For a brief moment after the 60s riots it appeared as though America would finally right its wrongs with the

Great Society, War on Poverty and Model Cities programs. But these noble efforts soon gave way to Goldwater, the flight of white Democrats to the Republican Party, the rise of neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism, and an accord with American racism. In fact, Presidents Nixon and Reagan made it safe to be racist again.

What is most interesting from today's perspective is that the objective conditions undergirding the 1960s urban rebellions not only still exist, but in many cases are worse. Our cities are powder kegs waiting to explode and, in fact, do explode from time to time, as Los Angeles did in 1992, and Cincinnati did in 2001.

Growing inequality, increasing marginalization and isolation of the poor, the shrinking middle class, the crisis in health care, the elimination of entire sectors of stable employment (what some social scientists call deindustrialization) characteristic of America's political economy today are not natural phenomena. These outcomes are the result of policy deliberately pursued.

Like so many watershed events in our nation's history, our leaders never seriously engaged the fight for racial democracy and greater equality in the late 60s, gave up the War on Poverty, and gave up trying to create a "Great Society." Instead, from Nixon forward our national leadership pursued foreign wars and invasions (Vietnam, Panama, Grenada, Iraq) and launched a war on its own citizens – the so called "War on Drugs."

What we see on the American landscape today is the consequence of neo-conservative policy since the Nixon administration. According to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal, inequality in America is greater now than at any other time in the nation's history, with the exception of the Great Depression era.

So if the conditions in urban America are so bad, why don't we see more urban rebellions? The fire this time is different – smoldering, more isolated, and diffused – for a variety of interrelated reasons. First, it is more difficult for the urban poor to craft a collective response to their oppression. The culture is different. Nihilism, crass materialism, and possessive

individualism are much more pronounced in these early years of the 21st century.

Second, the forces of repression are better organized and equipped as a result of neo-conservative policies building up local law enforcement arsenals of repression. Third, the 500 billion dollar phony War on Drugs, and the concomitant rise of what is most accurately called the "prison industrial complex" as a means to lock up the discontented before they have a chance to engage in collective acts of spontaneous violence have further squelched the possibility of urban rebellion. The War on Drugs could more appropriately be called the "war against black people." While blacks represent only fourteen percent of drug users, they are three-fourths of the persons incarcerated on drug related charges.

A collective response to increased exploitation is also more difficult today because of the presence of so many willing black managers of oppression. Consider that in the 1960s there were fewer than 300 black elected and appointed officials while today there are over 10,000. The willingness of so many blacks to turn their backs on the plight of the black poor and serve as pressure release valves is tragic but effective.

Today the violence of the discontented is directed inwardly and can be seen in the increased crime waves in the inner cities of our nation. Given the present day conditions, the response of the exploited and oppressed could be much worse than the riots in the 60s, but so far America has escaped its just fate.

Can we use this moment to have an honest conversation about race in America? Can we use the 40th Anniversary of the Kerner Commission Report to embark on a long overdue confrontation with America's most intractable problem? Or will this nation do what it has always done: jump back into the abyss?

The country is living on borrowed time and at some point the neo-conservative fantasy erected over the last few decades will come crashing down, and the emperors in charge will fall as well. The fire next time will burn us all. While King had a dream, I still have a nightmare.

Claude W. Barnes is Associate Professor of Political Science at North Carolina A&T State University

property damage undetermined
2 people injured

Cambridge

1967

Blacks still struggling in 'Maryland's Mississippi'

By Gregory P. Kane

CAMBRIDGE, Md. – In the matter of race riots and civil disturbances, it was this tiny town that pulled off the hat trick of the 1960s.

Three times National Guard troops patrolled the city's streets to keep order. The first two times were in 1963 – one of the most violent and turbulent years of the civil rights era.

On June 14, two days after Medgar Evers, NAACP field secretary in Mississippi, was gunned down on his lawn by segregationist Byron de la Beckwith, National Guard troops descended on this town of 13,000 after nonviolent demonstrators here clashed with violent racists.

The troops returned in July and imposed limited martial law after violence flared again. This time they didn't leave until the spring of 1964.

But three years later, the embers of discontent in Cambridge would flare again – and burned bright enough for the entire nation to see.

On July 24, 1967 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee chairman H. Rap Brown arrived in Cambridge, a city in which tensions had already been ratcheted up by a speech that a member of the National States Rights Party, a white supremacist organization, made a few days earlier.

Brown used the same kind of inflammatory speech on black residents here that he'd given to black audiences in other cities throughout the nation. But in Cambridge his words got a fiery reaction.

"Burn this town down, if this town don't turn around," he shouted to a crowd of blacks from the hood of a car

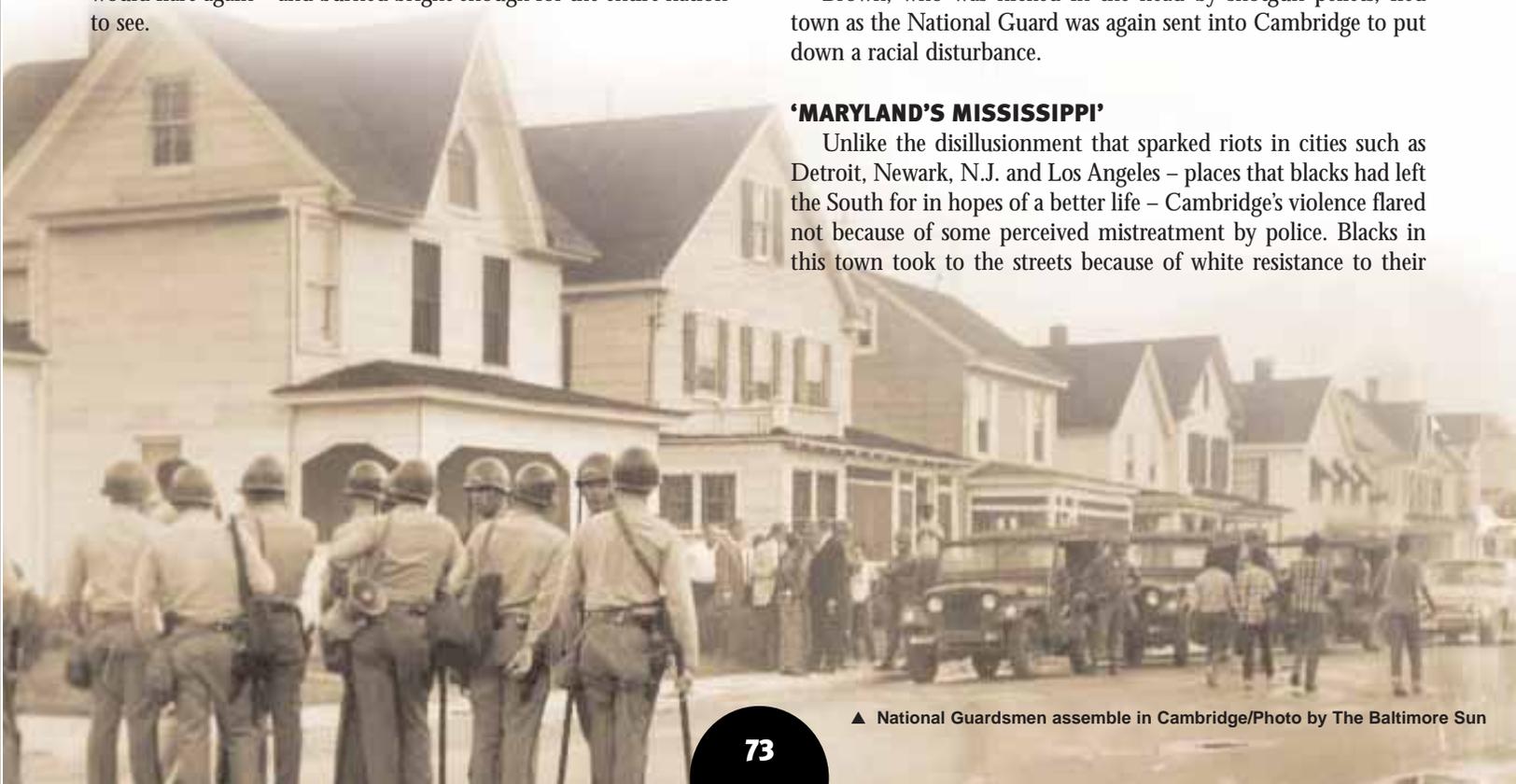
A few hours after Brown spoke, the burning began.

Arsonists set fire to the black elementary school, destroying it and much of Cambridge's black business district. Some rioters and police began shooting at each other, and an officer was wounded.

Brown, who was nicked in the head by shotgun pellets, fled town as the National Guard was again sent into Cambridge to put down a racial disturbance.

'MARYLAND'S MISSISSIPPI'

Unlike the disillusionment that sparked riots in cities such as Detroit, Newark, N.J. and Los Angeles – places that blacks had left the South for in hopes of a better life – Cambridge's violence flared not because of some perceived mistreatment by police. Blacks in this town took to the streets because of white resistance to their



▲ National Guardsmen assemble in Cambridge/Photo by The Baltimore Sun



▲ Guardsmen stand watch/Photo by The Baltimore Sun

demands of for equal rights.

Cambridge, which is located on Maryland's Eastern Shore, has more in common with the Deep South than the rest of the state. It is isolated, is largely agricultural, and was a hotbed of Confederate sympathizers during the Civil War.

"Since the Civil War," wrote historian John R. Wennersten in *"Maryland's Eastern Shore: A Journey in Time and Place,"* "the history of race relations on the Eastern Shore of Maryland has been a story of struggle and tragedy.

"Although the Eastern Shore counties are within a two-hour drive of the nation's capital, the communities in spirit and sense of place have been more like the Deep South when it comes to racial attitudes. Like slavery, segregation and white supremacy died hard as a sustaining ethos of Chesapeake country life," he wrote.

That bit of history is one explanation for why the Eastern Shore came to be known to many as "Maryland's Mississippi." But there are other explanations.

In 1931, the trial of Euel Lee – a black man accused of killing four members of a white family in the town of Taylorville, not far from Cambridge – was moved to Towson, on Maryland's Western Shore. The change of venue came after Lee's lawyer complained that his 61-year-old client couldn't get a fair trial on the Eastern Shore.

He had good reason to worry.

Lee was allegedly beaten by police while being transported to a jail in the town of Snow Hill and there was talk of an attempt to lynch him. As it turned out, Lee wasn't lynched, but Matthew Williams, a 35-year-old black man accused of killing a white businessman, was.

After Williams' killing Lee's trial was moved. Even so, an all-

white jury quickly found him guilty, and Lee was executed.

In 1933, George Armwood, a 27-year-old black man accused of assaulting a white woman, was lynched in the Eastern Shore's Somerset County. When Maryland Gov. Albert Ritchie sent a detachment of National Guardsmen to arrest the four white men state police identified as ringleaders of the lynch mob more than 1,000 townspeople lobbed rocks and bricks at the guardsmen.

COUNTDOWN TO CHAOS

Cambridge is the county seat of Dorchester County, Md. Today it has a population of around 11,000 that is about 50 percent black and 47 percent white.

But in the 1960s Cambridge was a predominantly white city whose black population was largely confined to one municipal legislative district.

Schools in Cambridge were officially desegregated, but local black students who dared try to integrate Cambridge's high schools faced harassment from white students and teachers.

Businesses, too, were segregated. Blacks in Cambridge could vote, but only one black sat on the town's city council. White unemployment was low; black unemployment was high.

To address these inequities and to desegregate the city, the city's blacks formed the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee, which was cut from the activist mold of SNCC.

"I got involved in the movement because I was supposed to," says Enez Grubb, who joined CNAC as a high-school student. "I'm sure, like most African Americans when we were growing up and studying slavery, we thought there was something we could have done if we lived back then."

CNAC also received an assist from President John F.

Kennedy's administration – which responded not as much to the degrading situations blacks in Cambridge faced, but to the potential for bad public relations.

Diplomats from newly independent African countries traveling between New York and Washington, D.C. found themselves subject to Maryland's Jim Crow laws once they crossed the Mason-Dixon Line. Many restaurants in Maryland refused to serve the diplomats because they were black.

Someone in Kennedy's administration – then locked in a battle with the Soviet Union for the hearts and minds of Third World countries – figured that this was not a good thing. So federal officials – as well as civil rights activists – pressured Maryland Gov. J. Millard Tawes to push for passage of a state public-accommodations law that would force those restaurants to desegregate.



▲ H. Rap Brown in handcuffs/Associated Press photo

But with that effort civil rights activists were just warming up.

Some of them decided to go on “freedom rides” to stage sit-ins at segregated restaurants. Soon they turned their attention to restaurants along a major thoroughfare on the Eastern Shore.

After several protestors were arrested in the seaside town of Crisfield – Tawes’ hometown – Frederick St. Clair decided it was time activists turned their attention to Cambridge.

FACING DOWN RACISTS

St. Clair was a native of Cambridge and the first cousin of Gloria Richardson, a homemaker who would go on to lead civil rights protests in this city.

“My cousin suggested that the civil rights protesters organize in Cambridge,” Richardson, now Gloria Richardson Dandridge, says, “because it was totally segregated there.”

Richardson-Dandridge says that SNCC left several organizers behind in Cambridge. Soon the CNAC was formed with St. Clair as the chairman.

But St. Clair’s duties as a bail bondsman who had to get protesters out of jail made him leave the post. Richardson-Dandridge became the new chairman.

Most of those protesters, Richardson-Dandridge says, were high-school students. One was William Jarman, who participated in demonstrations in 1962 before he left Cambridge to attend college.

“We would march down Pine Street, come down Muir Street,” Jarman remembers during a recent drive through Cambridge.

As he approached of Poplar Street and the famous (and, perhaps, appropriately named) Race Street – which at one time divided black Cambridge from white Cambridge – Jarman’s

Cambridge’s unrest propelled Agnew’s rise to power

By DeWayne Wickham

Spiro Agnew was an accidental governor who became an infamous vice president. He rode into both positions on waves of racial unrest that swept the nation during the 1960s.

In 1966, Agnew – a Republican – easily won election as Maryland’s governor. He beat George P. Mahoney, an opponent of legislation that would outlaw housing discrimination, whose campaign slogan was “Your home is your castle – protect it.”

To keep Mahoney out of the statehouse, a coalition of white and black Democrats threw their support behind Agnew, the Baltimore County executive.

Agnew easily won the General Election in a state where registered Democrats outnumbered registered Republicans by 3-to-1.

But shortly after Agnew took office in 1967 the relationship between him and Maryland’s black leaders started to rupture. In April, he warned that the push for passage of an open housing law in Maryland was being hurt by black leaders who led protests in opposition to the Vietnam War. The following month he called Stokely Carmichael, head of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) “one of the most irresponsible people to have ever entered the national political scene” and urged black leaders to denounce him.

“We are...disenchanted by the governor’s attempt to tell us what we can speak out for, or against, and how what we say will affect the progress of civil rights. We do not like being told to keep quiet about Vietnam,” the Rev. Marion Bascom said at the time.

In July, when H. Rap Brown, SNCC’s new leader, gave a speech that sparked a riot in Cambridge, a tiny hamlet on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, Agnew put even more distance between himself and black

leaders. He ordered law enforcement officers throughout the state “to immediately arrest any person inciting to riot and to not allow that person to finish his vicious speech,” leaving it to police to decide what constituted such objectionable talk.

The following year, when rioting broke out in Baltimore shortly after the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968, Agnew called about 100 black leaders to a meeting with him in an office building just blocks away from where National Guardsmen and federal troops were patrolling.

“You were beguiled by the rationalizations of unity; you were intimidated by veiled threats; you were stung by insinuations that you were Mr. Charlie’s boy, by epithets like ‘Uncle Tom,’ ” Agnew told them. As he spoke, the governor was surrounded by the state police superintendent, Baltimore’s police chief and the commander of Maryland’s National Guard.

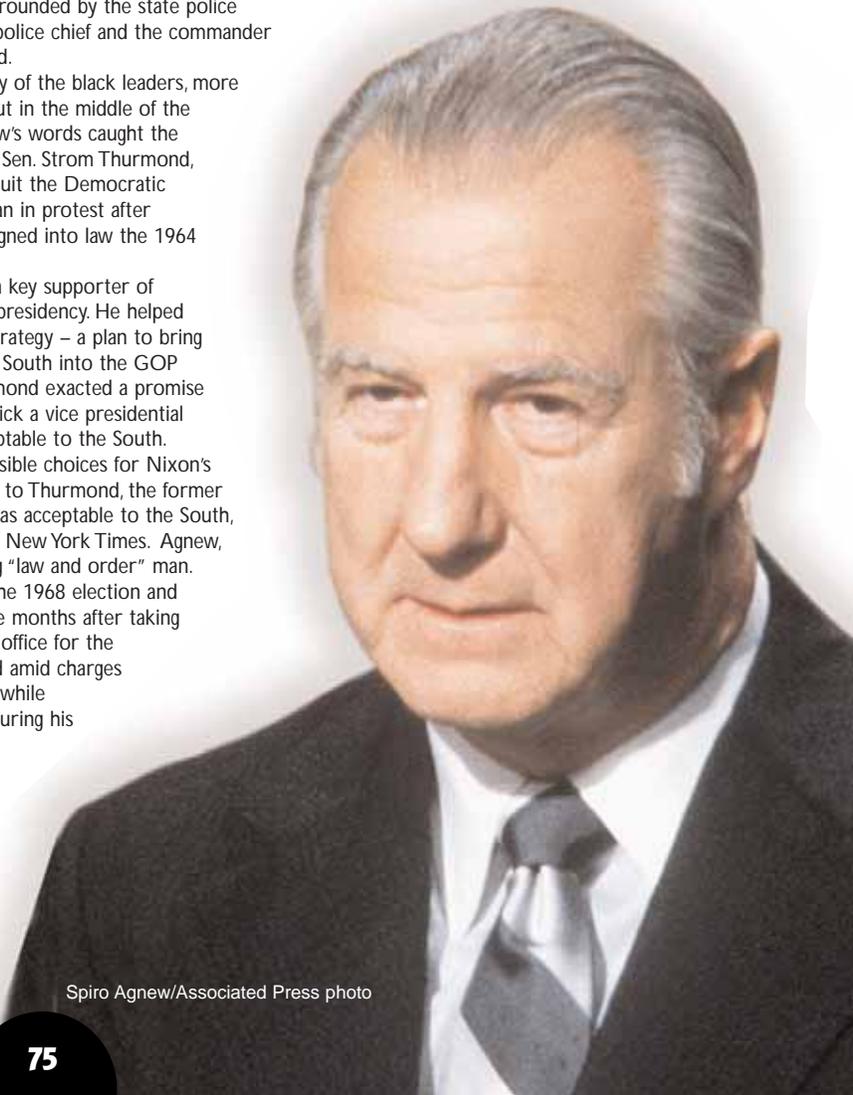
His words outraged many of the black leaders, more than half of whom walked out in the middle of the governor’s speech. But Agnew’s words caught the attention of North Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond, who just four years earlier quit the Democratic Party to become a Republican in protest after President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

In 1968, Thurmond was a key supporter of Richard Nixon’s bid for the presidency. He helped Nixon forge the Southern strategy – a plan to bring the then largely Democratic South into the GOP fold. In return for this, Thurmond exacted a promise from Nixon that he would pick a vice presidential running mate who was acceptable to the South.

When a list of seven possible choices for Nixon’s running mate was presented to Thurmond, the former Dixiecrat said only Agnew was acceptable to the South, according to a report in *The New York Times*. Agnew, Thurmond said, was a strong “law and order” man.

Nixon and Agnew won the 1968 election and were reelected in 1972. Nine months after taking the vice presidential oath of office for the second time, Agnew resigned amid charges that he had accepted bribes while Maryland’s governor – and during his time as vice president.

In return for his resignation, Agnew was allowed to plead “no contest” to a single charge of income tax evasion and escape a prison sentence. ■



Spiro Agnew/Associated Press photo



▲ View of Pine Street/Photo by The Baltimore Sun

thoughts lapsed back to a troubled time.

“It was on these corners where things were thrown at you,” he says. “Once the word got out that African Americans were demanding something, you had this mobilization of those who didn’t like blacks.”

Octavene Saunders, who in 1992 became the first black woman elected to the Cambridge City Council, also participated in the demonstrations and recalls the reaction of Dorchester County whites.

“They would kick you and spit on you,” Saunders recalls.

Grubb says it wasn’t so much the reaction of whites that

astounded her as who it was doing the spitting and kicking. “I just couldn’t believe it, particularly the reaction from the women,” Grubb says. “In many instances the females were worse than the males.”

Tensions also rose because many Cambridge blacks didn’t buy the philosophy of nonviolence that was the mantra of leading civil rights activists of the 1960s. Saunders remembers Richardson-Dandridge having to restrain her from fighting during one demonstration. Other demonstrators armed themselves.

On June 14, 1963, racial tensions in Cambridge came to a head.

THE CHAOS COMES

On that day, according to Levy in “Civil War on Race Street,” “fires erupted at several white-owned businesses in the Second Ward. Guns were fired, apparently by both blacks and whites. (A white businessman) was hit by one of the shots. Local police who entered the Second Ward were met with a barrage of bricks and bottles. State police accompanied by canine units and armed with riot sticks rushed into the area to restore order.”

Gloria Richardson: Homemaker who found her place in streets, not the kitchen

By Gregory P. Kane

NEW YORK – When 85-year-old Gloria Richardson-Dandridge emerges from her apartment in lower Manhattan, onlookers probably see just another slender, white-haired woman.

But what they’re really watching is the most famous civil rights activist they’ve likely never heard of.

More than 40 years ago Richardson-Dandridge, then a homemaker and mother of



▲ Gloria Richardson/Photo by Gregory P. Kane

two known as Gloria Richardson, led civil rights demonstrations in Cambridge, Md., during a time when a visit by Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee chairman H. Rap Brown and an ensuing riot put it in the national spotlight.

Even today, Richardson-Dandridge remains an activist at heart.

“Yes, you have to vote,” Richardson-Dandridge says. “That’s one of the tools in the basket. You have to go to court; that’s another tool in the basket. Sometimes you have to use the third tool – direct action.”

The latter was a tool Richardson-Dandridge and her compatriots used effectively and often in the 1960s, when she was chairwoman of the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee – and when Malcolm X singled her out in his famous 1963 “Message to the Grassroots” speech as one of the few local civil rights leaders who began to “stir up our people at the grassroots level.”

She was at the Rev. Albert Cleage’s church in Detroit when Malcolm gave that speech. She had gone to that city for meetings the traditional and more mainstream civil rights groups – the Urban League, the NAACP and Martin Luther King Jr.’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference – were having.

But Richardson-Dandridge had never been quite in step with traditional civil rights leaders. She’d felt that way ever since King had turned down the request of CNAC leaders to visit Cambridge. She soon found herself tuning out the speakers in Detroit.

“A guy came up to me and said ‘You’re in the wrong place,’” Richardson-Dandridge recalled. “He told me to go to Rev. Cleage’s church and that Malcolm would be speaking. That’s when I first met Malcolm.”

Richardson-Dandridge is convinced that mainstream civil rights organizations had no more use for her or Malcolm than she did for them. She did indeed get an invitation to speak at the 1963 March on Washington, but remembers that the people who extended the invitation told her not to wear jeans and wanted her to speak for one minute.

When she was at the march, a reporter from Great Britain took her aside for an interview.

When she was done Bayard Rustin, the civil rights activist who handled logistics for the march, led her to the stage to take her seat.

“When I got there they said ‘they took your chair away,’” Richardson-Dandridge recalled.

Today she feels it was perhaps just as well.

“If I had spoken,” she said, “I was going to tell (the marchers) to sit there until civil rights legislation was passed. I didn’t even get to say that.”

Richardson-Dandridge remembers someone told her that she was treated that way because march leaders didn’t want too many women on the stage. But she has another theory.

“It was because of the whole attitude among traditional civil rights leaders about Cambridge,” she insists.

Those leaders supported the efforts to desegregate Cambridge, of course. But just a month earlier Richardson-Dandridge had called for blacks to boycott a referendum on a charter amendment that would have outlawed segregation in Cambridge.

The amendment was defeated, and some civil rights leaders accused her of betraying the movement. Yet 42 years later Richardson-Dandridge still believes she was right.

No group of people, she says, should be asked to put their basic rights up for a vote.

“I wasn’t going out there to get any votes for a referendum,” Richardson-Dandridge said. “In this country, with referendums, the wrong side always has the most money.”

Richardson-Dandridge left Cambridge and moved to New York City when she remarried in 1965. She worked in several anti-poverty jobs before finding employment with the city’s Department for Aging. She’s now retired and living in an apartment building in lower Manhattan. ■

Gov. Tawes sent in National Guard troops twice that summer, and they didn't leave until the next spring. But their presence in Cambridge didn't keep racial tensions from festering.

By 1967 CNAC had given way to the Black Action Federation. Comprised of former CNAC members, the BAF, like SNCC, had switched from advocating integration to advocating black power.

They invited H. Rap Brown to town. After his speech, Cambridge's Pine Street erupted in flames. Pine Street Elementary School was set afire, and the blaze destroyed it as well as 11 businesses. During the night, Brown was hit with shotgun pellets, and a police officer was injured.

CAMBRIDGE TODAY

More than 40 years after that incident, Mayor Cleveland Rippons, a white man with blondish hair and a Fu Manchu mustache, sat in a Denny's restaurant in Cambridge and talked about what's happened that night. And he talked about what hasn't happened for blacks in Cambridge since that time.

"There's a tremendous amount of substandard housing out there," Rippons says, with a hint of a Southern drawl.

Finding jobs is still a problem for those seeking work. "This area has always been in the top three, never out of the top five, in the unemployment rate in the state," says Rippons.

According to the 2000 census, the overall unemployment rate in Cambridge is 4.4 percent. But the black unemployment rate of 6.8 percent is almost triple the white rate of 2.4 percent.

Some 26 percent of Cambridge's black families live below the poverty line, versus 7 percent for white families. The \$24,000 median income for black households in the city lags behind the \$30,000 for white families.

Businesses tend to come – and go – in Cambridge. The Phillips Packing Company, for years the main employer in the town, no longer exists. Early in 2007 Icelandic, a frozen seafood company left Cambridge and took more than 400 jobs with it.

Attracting workers to Cambridge is as much a problem as keeping businesses.

Talibah Chikwendu, now the editor of *"The Daily Banner,"* remembers when that paper hired its first black reporter. The year was 1996 – nearly three decades after the Kerner Commission recommended that newspapers diversify their staffs.

Chikwendu even remembers who the first black reporter was. "Me," she answered when asked. Chikwendu knows how many blacks work at the paper today.

"Me," she answers again.

Finding and retaining black reporters is not, Chikwendu emphasized, the fault of the paper's management.

"I have not had African Americans apply," Chikwendu said. "I have beat the bushes. I have contacted journalism schools. Nobody wants to come here."

Federal courts ordered a redistricting of Cambridge's five council districts in 1984. As a result, three of the city's five council representatives – called commissioners – are black. But there are no blacks among the five workers at Cambridge's tiny city hall.

"There have been African Americans who've worked there in the past. We just don't have any working there today," the mayor says. ■

Brown's words sparked arson – and lifted him into nation's spotlight

By DeWayne Wickham

The racial conflagration that erupted in Cambridge, Md., on the night of July 24, 1967, might have been fanned when H. Rap Brown climbed atop a car and urged a crowd of blacks to "burn this town down, if this town don't turn around."

But the embers of that disturbance had been smoldering long before that – during years of civil rights protests and demonstrations in that hamlet, the county seat of Dorchester County, which is the birthplace of Harriet Tubman.

Yet while the 23-year-old leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) didn't create the turmoil that led to Cambridge's 1967 racial disturbance, by the time its embers had cooled it had propelled him into the national spotlight.

Brown and Stokely Carmichael, who preceded him as head of SNCC, were architects of the black power movement that emerged in the 1960s. But it was what happened in Cambridge, a town of 15,000 people on the Choptank River, a Chesapeake Bay tributary, which put Brown's name on the front page of newspapers and his picture on an FBI wanted poster.

"This ain't no riot, brother. This is a rebellion and we got 400 years of reason to tear this town apart," Brown told a gathering in a section of Cambridge where most of the town's 4,000 blacks lived, according to a story the following day in *The New York Times*.

For more than three years, civil rights activists had staged demonstrations and boycotts in Cambridge in an effort to integrate local schools, desegregate public accommodations and to get black cops the same police powers as white officers.

Cambridge was placed under martial law in the summer of 1963. A curfew was imposed. Demonstrations were banned. And helmeted National Guardsmen with bayonets fixed to their rifles patrolled the town's streets for more than a year.

Alabama Gov. George Wallace took his segregationist campaign for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination to Cambridge in May of 1964. His speech at the Volunteer Fire Department hall to a crowd *The New York Times* called "a wildly enthusiastic audience" of about 1,200 whites triggered a street



H. Rap Brown/Associated Press photo

confrontation between black protesters and nearly 400 Guardsmen.

But it wasn't until Brown came to town that gunfire erupted and buildings burned in a spasm of racial violence. He urged blacks to burn down a dilapidated, all-black elementary school and told them to arm themselves because Cambridge, he said, was about to explode.

The SNCC leader was struck in the face by a pellet from a shotgun blast about an hour after his speech.

A police officer was caught in the crossfire between a gun-wielding carload of whites and residents of the Second Ward, the town's black section of Cambridge. He was wounded in the face and hand.

Nearly two blocks of the Second Ward were destroyed by fires that burned out of control for two hours as the all-white volunteer firefighters refused to enter the area – even though it had been secured by 120 state troopers and Guardsmen.

A day later, Brown – who fled the town shortly after being released from a hospital – was charged with inciting a riot and arson. After six years of legal wrangling, Brown pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of failing to show up in 1970 for his trial on the original charges.

Brown was placed on the FBI's Most Wanted List when he went into hiding after two of his friends were killed when a bomb exploded in their car near the Bel Air, Md., courthouse in which Brown's trial was to have been held.

While serving five years in a New York prison for a robbery conviction during the 1970s, Brown converted to Islam and changed his name to Jamil Abdullah al-Amin. In 2002, he was convicted in Georgia of killing one sheriff's deputy and serious wounding another.

Abdullah al-Amin was sent to prison for life. ■

The Kerner Commission's unfinished work

By Mary Frances Berry

Since the Kerner Commission reported forty years ago that "Our nation is moving toward two separate societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal," the lack of racial progress has made the problems of the poor seem more intractable.

President Johnson appointed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, chaired by Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner, in the summer of 1967. Riots sparked by alleged police abuse had become endemic beginning with Harlem, Jersey City, and Philadelphia in 1964, the Los Angeles Watts area in 1965, the forty-three disorders in the summer of 1966, and then the explosions in Detroit and Newark in 1967.

President Johnson, embracing J. Edgar Hoover's conclusion that the riots arose from Communist plots, created the Kerner Commission to confirm this "fact." Surprisingly, given the moderate backgrounds of the members, the commission's report reached beyond the surface and looked at the same conflict in police-community relations, and the underlying causes of poverty and discrimination that the independent bipartisan Commission on Civil Rights had been emphasizing for years. The Kerner Commission asked the nation to make the eradication of poverty, joblessness, and racism an urgent priority.

The Kerner Commission worked in what otherwise seemed auspicious times. The Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 marked major changes in race relations. The economy seemed sound, and Vietnam had not yet drained the budget. But the period also saw the rise of the Black Panthers and Black Nationalist movements.

A little more than a month after the Kerner report was issued, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., set off more riots. Underscoring the "system of failure and frustration that dominated the ghetto and weakened society," the commission recommended the development of programs in education and housing on a scale equal to the dimensions of the problems. They asked for local government responses to the accumulated grievances of blacks which had been ignored. They encouraged the recruitment of more black police officers and strategies for improving police-community relations, so that the police would not be regarded as an occupying force.

Pointing out that the news media did not effectively communicate to whites what was happening in the ghettos, the commission recommended regular coverage of the black community and the assignment of knowledgeable reporters including the recruitment of more blacks. Noting that many rioters had not finished high school, the commission asked for efforts to end racial isolation and improve education. The commission asked that the federal government create public and private sector jobs, provide more job training, and strengthen anti-discrimination enforcement to increase employment opportunities.

Johnson ignored most of the commission's findings, but the riots and the report accomplished something. Other institutions in society responded positively. The media, as one example, began programs to become more diverse in their staffs and reporting. In addition, the Nixon administration increased aid to cities in revenue sharing and other programs.

In the years since the Kerner Commission, evidence of progress for African Americans abounds. There have been CEOs of major corporations, governors of states, Jesse Jackson in 1988 and Obama in 2008 mounted serious efforts to win the presidency, and Oprah Winfrey became one of the most influential women in the world. In addition, the black/white gap in median household income has narrowed.

However, high black child poverty rates and high incarceration rates of blacks persist. Blacks have moved to the suburbs but are largely still racially segregated. The subprime mortgage scandal disproportionately ensnared African Americans who were drawn by lenders to take loans they could not afford; the jobless rate is again twice the white rate. There are documented racial disparities in the criminal justice system, in health care, and in education despite the much contested No Child Left Behind Act.

Black students and faculty have a measurable presence in predominantly white higher education institutions [PWIS]. Still, according to the American Council on Education almost half of all black faculty teach at historically black colleges and universities.

In 1975 the number of black faculty in PWIS reached a high of 4.4 percent. It still lingers right

around 5 percent. In fact, the only growth at all in the participation of people of color has been among Asian Americans from 2.2 percent in 1975 to around 5 percent today. Latinos were only 1.4 percent of faculties in predominantly white institutions in 1975 and are around 3 percent today. The number of Native American faculty remains too minuscule to track.

The complications that are a drag on more progress have arisen largely because of disparities and division among African Americans; between those who have become upwardly mobile and those left behind. In 2007 the Pew Foundation reported that by a ratio of two to one African Americans say the values of poor and middle class blacks have grown dissimilar over the past decade while values of middle class blacks and whites have grown alike.

However, the same report noted that the children of middle class blacks are more likely to skid back to the lowest socio-economic status than to maintain middle class status. The Foundation also reported that upwards of two-thirds of blacks believe race discrimination remains widespread while whites by majorities of two to one disagree. Still, 53 percent of blacks believe that individuals are mainly responsible for their situation despite the discrimination, but they are increasingly less optimistic about making progress.

The complaints of the black poor are mostly ignored by middle class African Americans who think they know better what ails the least among us. Incarceration rates as a result of the drug culture have narcotized organizing efforts. Besides, drug addicts are not able to organize a movement or a riot.

Quick crackdowns of any nascent protests, usually led by black police commissioners and black mayors, or county executives dependent on state government and gentrification have taken a toll. Most African Americans who have become part of the power structure and exercise indirect rule do not live anywhere near the people who suffer live – and they avoid even passing through those neighborhoods.

More affluent African Americans who benefited from the civil rights struggle assign the failings of poor blacks to personal responsibility and bad behavior. Those who have adopted white values fail to acknowledge that all those ideals are not valuable. They discount the structural failings of society: bad public policy, unequal education, economic neglect, and unfairness in the justice system. Their beliefs also don't address the failure of law enforcement to stop the drug trade, or something like the still unresolved fallout to protect the Lower 9th Ward from the levees breaking in New Orleans.

Upwardly mobile African Americans express their outrage in quick bursts that soon pass about Jena and nooses, or the removal of Don Imus – no matter how temporary – for making racist remarks about the women's basketball team at Rutgers University.

A favorite reform activity for middle class African Americans is engagement in electoral politics. Elections and the right to vote are important, but protest is an essential ingredient of politics. The anniversary of the Kerner Commission report is a good time to begin to clear away the confusion so that the unfinished work of equal opportunity can seriously begin.

While we celebrate the progress that has been made, we have a great deal of work to do.

We need good public policy and committed voluntary action. We must choose political leaders who include combating discrimination, poverty, and inequality on their agendas. And we need to support activist organizations that pressure elected officials for a response to these problems. We need to push private and public employers to recommit to more diversity in their work forces and we need to develop more weekend and evening voluntary academic and recreational programs for at-risk children.

Only with a combination of non-violent protest, good public policy, and committed voluntary action can we advance the struggle for liberty and justice for all.

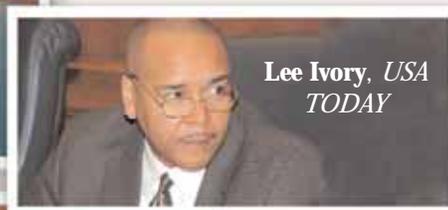
Mary Frances Berry is the Gerald R. Segal Professor of American Social Thought and Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania

Kerner Commission Report JOURNALISTS ROUNDTABLE

Moderator: Tukufu Zuberi, Professor and Chair,
Department of Sociology and the Lasry Family
Professor of Race Relations; and Director, Center for Africana Studies



Panelists



TUKUFU ZUBERI: Why don't we just start with a question?

In the '60s, we had the riots, we had the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, we had the SCLC, we had the Nation of Islam, we had Malcolm X, we had H. Rap Brown, and we had Martin Luther King Jr.

What has happened since then and what are the parallel domestic issues today which we can reflect on having the same importance, if you will, as the issues then and now? What are the domestic issues?

BERNARD SHAW: We haven't changed much. You're talking about housing, education, job opportunities those are issues

then and those are the issues now, exacerbated by a federal treasury that is spending more than \$6 billion dollars a week on a military that's fighting two wars, Afghanistan and Iraq.

ZUBERI: But then you had riots and you had organizations like SNCC, organizations like the Black Panther Party, you had individuals like H. Rap Brown, Huey P. Newton, and these groups of people distinguishing themselves in response to these circumstances. What do we have now?

ROCHELLE RILEY: We have the offspring of those organizations. So that in every community you find many SNCCs and many community organizations that aren't able to tackle the problem, but they try.

In the state of Michigan, from wince I hail, you've got a legislature that has run out of money and sent all the problems that the state used to try to help with out to the communities – everything from mental health to unemployment. So while there is an attempt at response, it is a bigger issue and a bigger problem and there should be a bigger response.

And I agree with Mr. Shaw that we are, for many people, a nation stuck in time. If you took the date on the Kerner report and just changed it from 1968 to 2008 so many of these things are still true in Detroit and other urban centers. You've got people who live like they are in 1967. The fact that there has not been another riot is because I think people are too tired to bother.

LES PAYNE: It's a huge question. I'll try to kind of slice into a piece of it.

I think that in '68, one of the pressing issues, I think we all would agree, and certainly one of the triggering mechanisms, was police brutality. When most of the riots began, the triggering mechanism was a street confrontation between police and citizens. And it fed into the reality that there was no sense of justice in the streets or in the courts.

So the whole criminal justice superstructure at that point was one that was being challenged. The broader issue in '68, quite apart from that particular issue, is the fact that African Americans, (who by the way were Negroes, with a capital 'N', thank you very much.) were outside and demanding to get inside.

Riots resulted from the rebellion by people with rising expectations, who had no stake, had nothing to lose. Therefore the country realized that "Holy Cow!" we have this 10-15 percent of people with nothing to lose – and they're acting as if they have nothing to lose – and therefore we are going to have to do something.

If you fast forward, the question that we could examine is, are African Americans still on the outside looking in? I think that there has been some headway made in that area.

ZUBERI: Yeah, because we are definitely more represented in the criminal justice infrastructure – at least as prisoners – than ever before. Those numbers are at historic levels. The number of African Americans involved in the criminal justice system, and even being victimized by the justice system, is much higher now than in '68. There is not this spark. There have been a couple, but there is not this persistent spark of social upheaval in terms of a riot.

SHAW: You asked about the parallel domestic issues. One is the hopeless feeling of isolation that existed in every black community across this great country in the 1960s in 1968. That feeling exists at this second in every community across the country. Then, black people felt isolated everywhere they turned. When it came to the media, there was no representation, no reflection of their grievances, none whatsoever. That's one of the key things the

Kerner Commission talked about, was media. Get your own house in order.

ZUBERI: So what is the state of diversity in the newsroom today? What is the state of diversity and what does this diversity mean?

SANDRA LONG: The diversity today is really not much better today than it was in the '60s. There were lots of efforts made between 1968 right up into the 1990s, and for various reasons, there were contractions of newspaper companies that produced layoffs. The first people laid off are the last people hired. Those tended to be minorities.

At my own paper in Philadelphia, we had layoffs this year. Twenty-eight percent of our diversity walked out the door because they were laid off, or had other opportunities. One of the biggest differences is that in the '60s, there were no blacks in management positions at white-owned media. Today, we do have blacks that have reached various levels of senior management. But, looking behind me, there are not a lot of people to bring along, to move up to the ranks. That is where we are suffering today, so that is one of the biggest issues to me.

RILEY: And there is another issue. The Kerner Commission recommended that the media expand coverage of the Negro community and race problems through permanent assignments of reporters familiar with urban and racial affairs. Back then, news organizations were quite willing to go out and grab whoever they could and make them reporters, instead of having to make their existing staff do their job. The continuing problem is that you still have people on the staffs of urban newspapers who don't know their way around the city, who don't really understand what some of the social ills are, and, quite frankly, don't care.

SHAW: I was just going to say they lack the interest.....

RILEY: Absolutely.

SHAW: And the sensitivity.

PAYNE: But I think that, looking back over the past 40 years, there are issues that we have to at least give brief attention to. In the newspaper business – when I talk media, that's what I am talking about – there was in 1968 something on the order of 1700-odd daily newspapers daily, mainstream, all white-owned newspapers.

And of that number, I think that something on the order of 99 percent did not employ any blacks. I think that is one of the things that chapter 15 of the Kerner Commission report addresses.

Since then some headway has been made. There were some publishers who took its recommendations seriously. I can only speak of some of the one's I know, who did take them seriously. They did go out and do some hiring and began to break the inertia where there were no blacks in the newsroom. Bill Moyers, for instance, who was the publisher of Newsday at that point, set aside

six slots. Six slots were set aside for blacks as a direct result of the Kerner Commission report.

So I think that, if you just dash up to '75, and let me just go on record, to the degree that progress is made, I think is the degree that blacks make that progress. Progress is not distributed. People are not freed. Someone used that term earlier, free yourself. So, I think the progress that was made happened because black people organized.

If they organized at a given paper, then you saw progress. If they organized in a region, whether it's New York, Detroit, Chicago, then you saw progress. If they organized nationally, as we did with the National Association of Black Journalists, then you began to see progress and internships and outreach.

So only to the degree that blacks organized was there any progress. But we did not permanently ensure; we did not entrench our influence; we did not ensure its irreversibility, because it is being reversed. I think we can say this about both national and local media.

You see editors of papers, black managing editors, and once they leave it is years before you see black replacements. And the answer cannot be, well they didn't find any, What were you doing? You had influence. Why didn't you put some into the pipeline? I think that we black editors and managers have not been doing that. I think that there should be some self-criticism, here.

LEE IVORY: Yeah, absolutely. Les is right. What's troubling to me is that even though we have made gains since 1967-68 in this country, both with the print and the broadcast side, we still, like you said Sandra, don't have enough people in management to effect the kind of change that we need to get people into some of these positions – and keep them there.

Over the years, folks have talked about succession plans and mentoring programs and the like, and largely that's just been talk. The thing that I see that really bothers me is newspapers are behaving much as they did during the riots, when they brought in African Americans to cover their butts.

Black folks are kind of stuck in the journalistic ghetto – because there aren't enough opportunities in newsrooms around the country, especially at the national level for people to cover Congress, to cover the White House, to cover NASA, to cover the military, to cover the Pentagon.

So that is troubling in itself. Is there a responsibility that we need to step up to? Absolutely. I've seen a change personally in the past 10 years. It seems that 15-20 years, 25 years ago, we were hungry; we wouldn't take no for an answer. We'd step up. We'd kick on the door; we'd bang down the door. We would call these people on the carpet. Publicly, privately, whatever we needed to do.

I've talked to a lot of brothers and sisters in newsrooms, and it seems like we're doing so well, we're not as hungry anymore. We're

so fearful of rocking the boat that sometimes we end up hurting ourselves. I had one brother tell me, "Well, I got a mortgage." And my answer to him was, "So did Martin Luther King Jr." If he thought that way, we'd still be picking cotton in Mississippi.

ZUBERI: Now has news coverage changed and has that had an impact on the kind of diversity that we find in the media now?

IVORY: I think so. News coverage has evolved just like everything else. I think it depends on the prism that you look at it through. We've had some instances at *USA TODAY* that were embarrassing to the paper because there were no people of color in place to kind of check the white journalists who did the reporting, who did the editing, who actually put the story in the paper. Now I won't say that blacks are monolithic, but if you have diversity in the newsroom chances are it wouldn't have gone through.

SHAW: I was just going to say, but that would be changing subjects. I'll wait until you finish.

RILEY: Well, let me just offer this: I think there has been an evolutionary regression. We've come full circle from trying to incorporate coverage of all types of people of color into the fabric of news. Did you talk to a black person for this particular story? Not that that opinion matters, but that the numbers matter. You count whether there are black people on the page.

It's not really an effort to understand what's going on in the community or letting the news drive whatever we're doing. It's sort of filling in the boxes. And that's not what this was supposed to do. That's not what is best for the community. You can do that and make yourself look pretty and still not have a clue about what is going on in your community.

PAYNE: That's a key point. The Kerner Commission said and to me this goes to the question of fairness it said the media had failed to portray blacks as a matter of routine.

Now what that means is that when it snows, you should also have it snowing on black folks' houses. When the gypsy moths attack the leaves of the trees in suburbia, then you should also talk to black suburbanites whose leaves are eaten as well.

So has fairness in news coverage arrived? I think that is a key challenge and we might have our separate answers.

SHAW: I was just going to say that the Kerner Commission's parameters are outdated to a great extent. It talks about two societies, separate, unequal. It talks about two racial groups, whites and blacks.

Has there been improvement in coverage? I submit that the news media's coverage of Latinos, Hispanics in this society is very good. It's not the best, but it's very good – especially when you consider immigration as an issue. This nation is becoming browner and browner.

ZUBERI: Let me ask a kind of related question. I want to ask the question this way: Some of you have covered important events over the last 30 years. You've chronicled the independence movement, from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, from apartheid to post-apartheid South Africa; the first meeting of Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan – historic events and many others as well. Did it matter that you were an African American?

PAYNE: Yes.

RILEY: It always mattered.

IVORY: Yeah.

ZUBERI: Why?

SHAW: Well, for one reason, it mattered mightily to other African Americans. To read the byline, to read the copy written by people of color, and to see people of color on television, it confirms your vitality in this multiracial and multicultural society. It says we can do this too. It also mattered in the education of white people, in and out of government.

ZUBERI: Did it matter for the story?

IVORY: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

SHAW: It depends. It depends.

PAYNE: It certainly mattered in South Africa. It certainly mattered in Zimbabwe, mainly because of access.

SHAW: Yeah.

PAYNE: Clearly, good reporting is keyed to access. In South Africa, as but one example, when Soweto happened, I happened to have been there as a reporter. The South Africans closed down all the black townships. Therefore, if you wanted to go into the black townships to cover that story you had to get the government's permission and they would deny you.

Whites could not get into those townships. A black reporter who was aggressive enough and ambitious enough and was not obedient to the system of apartheid could go in there as I did and spend as much time as you wanted. You would not be detected and you could talk with residents and report. So it was a question of access, in those particular cases.

Now if you're talking about the wall coming down in Berlin, if you're talking about Gorbachev, there I think we get into the other question. I think it matters that Bernard Shaw was in Moscow or St. Petersburg. You know it matters to me, but it should be routine. I think that there are people who did achieve that; have achieved that. But where are there replacements? Who replaced Max Robinson? Who replaced Bernard Shaw? Who replaced Ed Bradley?

ZUBERI: It seems to me that part of the issue, of if it should be routine, raises a question about just joining, or getting onboard a train that is already going in a direction. So it doesn't necessarily imply that you're going to get anything different; that the story you've got is going to be the same whether it's a black reporter, a white reporter, a Hispanic reporter, an Asian reporter.

PAYNE: I would say two things. One is that it does matter in some cases and in some cases it doesn't matter.

SHAW: Well, it didn't matter. My skin color was irrelevant in Tiananmen Square, because we were covering the historic Deng Xiaoping-Gorbachev summit. It was the first sign that Sino-Soviet relationships were showing a major improvement. And because of that, the pro-democracy demonstrations, not only in Beijing, but elsewhere intensified.

It intensified to the point that Gorbachev had to sneak into the back door of the Great Hall of the People, because the crowds were just enlarging every day; more than a million people on average. And that became the historic story that we know it to be today.

It didn't matter in Geneva at the first Gorbachev and Reagan Summit. It did matter to an extent in Jonestown, Guyana, because of the obviousness of color. It mattered elsewhere in a strange way, and I've never told this story before, but the sitting president of Egypt Hosni Mubarak, had a thing about television interviews in the United States.

When he came here, he preferred to be interviewed by either myself or Bryant Gumbel. That wasn't publicly stated, but if you check the records you'll see the special access there. Was I easy on him? No. I was just as tough on him as any other world leader I'd be interviewing. But there's a perceived relationship and kinship there.

IVORY: You know what's interesting is that perhaps one of the areas where we've made some impact is the coverage of sports. In sports, it really does matter, because for years black athletes were seen as this muscular, non-thinking species that was just supremely gifted. They didn't bring anything intellectual to the game.

But there have been quite a few African-American sportswriters, and some sports editors, who have gotten into the mix. A small example of why this is important when Dave Stewart – a great Hall of Fame pitcher – was in his last year we did a big profile. The lead was something like, "Dave Stewart, looks down from the mound at the batter, 6'3, 250 pounds, angular shoulders. Black." That was the lead.

SHAW: Who wrote it? Who wrote the lead?

IVORY: A white reporter.

RILEY: Of course.

IVORY: He was one of the better guys in the newsroom, and I don't think he willfully or with malice did that. In his mind, that made Dave Stewart more menacing, more devilish in a way.

SHAW: He was trying to construct a picture of intimidation.

IVORY: Right.

LONG: We were talking about having access. One of the things that is important is bringing perspective to the conversation, bringing something different to the table. When I am pulling together coverage of an event I want a good mix of people. I don't want people who agree with me. I want somebody who is going to say, "Well, what about this?"

That makes the whole news report, it makes the presentation better. You have this mix of thinking at the table, not just people who think alike. One of the areas that I oversee is the visual people. I don't want photographs that only have white people. You went to this event and there were no black people? How did that happen? Let's go back through it and see what you have. I want the picture to really reflect what went on. So when they bring me things now, they're like, "Well, Sandra wants us to have a mix." That's right. That's what I want.

RILEY: And that's such a good point. I'd like to argue that it matters on every story. Your coverage is informed by who you are, by where you've been, by the things that you are passionate about.

I am a black Southern woman and that impacts and infuses everything that I do. That doesn't necessarily mean that there will be some clichéd and literal tone to what I write. It just means that I was a child who used to sit under Chinaberry trees and read. Walking along a road in another country that looks like that will mean something to me.

I think that Les used the most important word: It has to be *routine*. It has to be a mix of all of these different perspectives, so that people can get a sense of all of the newness and values that different people bring. If you don't have enough different people, then the values are the same, the stories are the same and the pictures don't reflect the world in which we live.

SHAW: Can I be doctor of doom and gloom for a minute? I disagree with Les. In my judgment, it will never be routine in our country.

I was a history major. I believe very passionately, emotionally, that race relations will always be uneven in our great country, because of the way this country was founded. A great example of this racial prism, through which most whites in this country view people of color, was last year's Super Bowl. It became nauseous the way the news media fixated on Tony Dungy and Lovie Smith, to the point where they were exasperated responding to the endless questions day in and day out, and even during the play of the game.

These two guys were trying to figure out ways to beat each other's brains out and win that game. That was their fixation because they are professionals. The news media remained fixated on the fact that they were both black.

PAYNE: And you think it always will?

SHAW: I think.

PAYNE: That's how you disagree with me because you think it always will?

SHAW: I think that it will never be routine.

PAYNE: Well, I think that we do disagree. But we need not get into our disagreement, but it feeds into the larger question – and we probably all will agree with this – that the Kerner Commission got it wrong. America was not moving toward.

SHAW: It was already there.

RILEY: Been there.

PAYNE: We're talking about American as a slave society from its very founding. So the whole idea of moving towards something where it has been, since its very inception obviously that was a misdirection.

In terms of the improvement see my position is not so much that whites will change their position and begin to view Tony Dungy differently. That's not my point. My point is that, I think the system can be manipulated, depending on our perspective; the perspective of African Americans so that it doesn't matter what the white bigots think.

SHAW: Precisely.

PAYNE: Once that manipulation happens then the system has been changed.

The Kerner Commission talked about viewing the world from a white man's perspective. If you're telling me that that can't be overturned, I think that we should go home now. I think it can be overturned and it must be overturned. It is wrong. It is distorted.

SHAW: I don't disagree with anything you just said there.

PAYNE: But what I am saying is that, therefore, it will change.

RILEY: Those are two different things: the fact that these things are all true but, how do you change them? I'm with you. You had me at 'This is what needs to happen and our views should not be based on how they see us,' but how do you do that when you're talking about media that is being run increasingly by white billionaires who determine the message and who determine what that view is? How do you change that?

PAYNE: Well, there are some black billionaires. You know, Oprah Winfrey could buy three papers. Bill Cosby.

ZUBERI: But the reality of it is that the ownership in media is consolidating around a very few individuals.

RILEY: It's like the founding fathers all over again.

ZUBERI: Increasingly, a few individuals control the.

PAYNE: Yeah, but I think we all know that there's power, and then there's influence. And I think that the influence, which is to say from the craft aspect of the house, not the business side of the newspaper, is what I am talking about.

Forget the business side. The craft side is where the talent in this room is concentrated; on the craft side – on the side that gathers the news. That is where we could have enormous influence. I would suggest there's tremendous influence quite beyond what we have exercised. And I think that if we're careful and if we plan right, we can have that influence dominate.

The thing that strikes me is that even when we get there we don't recognize that we are there. I'll give you but one example. There was a piece written in the National Association of Black Journalists Journal and it was written by a woman I know, I won't call her name, and she was covering 9/11.

She said, Once again, with 9/11 blacks have been shut out of covering the story. And she quoted one reporter for the *New York Daily News* in her story and she quoted a television person, but I'm not going to get into television; I'm just talking about the newspaper business and she was talking about 9/11.

And I read this and I was appalled. You see I work in New York, and I lived there, for 35 years. And if you looked at the paper that I worked for, the foreign desk, which covered Afghanistan, all of that, was run by Dele Olojede, who is black.

The National Desk, which covered the Pentagon attack; run by assistant managing editor Lonnie Isabel's staff. He's African American. I was the New York editor, and the entire paper was turned over to me during the early stages of our coverage of 9/11. I ran the entire operation. OK now, that's *Newsday*, that's personal with me.

Let's get away from the advertisement for myself. At *The New York Times*, Gerald Boyd, who is black, was the managing editor, the number two editor at the paper. *The New York Times* won seven Pulitzers for its coverage of 9/11. So here's an example in which, quite suddenly, unbeknownst even to African-American journalists at the National Association of Black Journalist, some blacks had moved into positions of enormous influence, without them, A, recognizing it; B, observing it, or C, knowing how to entrench it and make it irreversible.

SHAW: Who didn't recognize it?

PAYNE: I'm talking about the person who wrote that story for the membership of the National Association of Black Journalists. She did not notice it and she didn't write it. But that, by the way, is sort of the myopia that we have. We don't seize our power and we don't realize our power, we don't realize our influence – even when it's there in plain sight.

ZUBERI: Bernard, you wanted to make a point?

SHAW: The other point which is not really racial, it's a weakness. It's almost a systemic weakness within the American people. For all our power and all our might on this planet, we are extremely poor students of history.

LONG: Absolutely.

SHAW: And it hurts us. It hurts us with our relations with the world. It hurts us with the relations between ourselves. We forget so soon. I dare say that there will be a need for a second Kerner Report based on all that is fermenting and festering right now.

ZUBERI: The question here seems to be – is racism a problem that will be persistent for the foreseeable future?

SHAW: Not just the foreseeable future.

ZUBERI: You think forever.

SHAW: Forever.

ZUBERI: As long as there is a United States?

SHAW: Yes, because you can pass laws to protect people rights, but you cannot pass laws that change people's attitudes and perceptions and behavior.

IVORY: Right.

RILEY: But we lost a valuable opportunity. President Lyndon Johnson said, 'OK, bring me the report.' They brought it back four months early and out of all the chapters and all the interesting things in it, it says, new taxes need to be enacted to pay for the recommendations. And he said, 'I can't afford it because of Vietnam.'

And with that we lost an opportunity to try to equalize people economically in this country. Once you do that, it's easier to not be so afraid, or not to see people as a threat – as needy, or taking your job, or hurting your children. You know, we lost that great moment for equalization.

SHAW: Don't flagellate yourself to much. Think about the national mindset when that was proposed. I don't know that there were five white senators on the Hill or five members of the House Ways and Means Committee who would have endorsed taxing people to help poor people.

RILEY: Absolutely.

SHAW: Poor black people especially.

RILEY: I didn't say it would happen. It would never have happened. But that's what the report called for. Because it was all this need for money, there was no attempt at equalization, so we tried to do it through other means. Trying to force people to live together, so kids could attend school together, which would never happen. We just missed an opportunity to go down an economic path instead of a racial path. And you can not change people's attitudes about people who they think are very different.

IVORY: One thing that is particularly disturbing is, in terms of racism as a whole, is what continues to happen to children; both in education and health care.

I speak to kids a lot in the District of Columbia, and in Maryland and in Virginia. And when you go to schools in the District they are in awful shape. I mean, they have had to cancel classes because the heat wasn't working. When the new superintendent came in and was doing a tour of the schools, some of the schools were saying they didn't have enough text books.

The superintendent went to areas where there were big, giant mounds of text books, still in the plastic that hadn't been distributed. It's just anecdote, after anecdote, after anecdote. Not enough computers, not enough experienced teachers. That's going to come back to haunt us. Not just black folks, but this country. We talk about the brain drain, well here's where it starts. It's very troubling.

ZUBERI: Let's shift directions a little bit. What do you all think of technology that didn't exist at the time of the Kerner Report? You have podcasts, you have blogs, YouTube. You have all of these various new types of Internet-based media. What do you think about the news coverage that you get from these new media? Are there diversity issues that rest here as well?

PAYNE: You asked three major questions.

SHAW: Well, the first thing that I think of when I contemplate the new technology are the numbers of jobs lost in the business. Regardless of media, print, broadcast, television, radio. The more sophisticated the equipment and technology, the fewer people are needed to run it. Journalism will always be journalism, regardless of the media. That's my initial thought.

LONG: In one of the questions you asked, 'Is there diversity in all of this?' And when you look at it, there are a few African-Americans managers who are getting out and doing some Internet coverage. But when you look at the staffs, when you look at who's staffing it, it's mostly white, and it's mostly white male. That is starting to hurt us.

And so we are starting to have to push in some directions in order to continue to hone our craft, and make sure we have people in print, but also make sure we have people who can also write, and do video on the Internet. So we're challenged in a lot of ways of

learning how to use technology, and how to take advantage of it, but we're not there yet.

There are not enough jobs. It's not just running the equipment; it's really telling the stories because most newspapers – which is what I know best – have downsized. We have fewer people trying to do stories on the Internet, trying to do an audiocast and trying to do the story in print.

We're asking younger people to come into this business, and they're seeing it as risky because, OK, you did a layoff last year what does the future look like in five years? Are you going to lay me off? So the diversity in using this technology is lacking. The technology is great on the other hand, because it does allow us to tell stories in a different way and it also allows us to reach niche audiences. We need to reach more black audiences. We need to reach more black women. We need to reach more African-American young people. We need to push out into all of those markets.

PAYNE: I am very optimistic.

My optimism comes from our own ability and the strength we have within us. It doesn't come from whether some white guy is going to think differently about me. It really comes from within.

I think that the technology offers an extraordinary opportunity for those who, forget black, those who were not previously in the system to get in on the ground floor. This is the ground floor. This is a frontier, wide open. Doesn't cost a lot of money. (Rupert) Murdoch is not out there. Nobody is making money. We need to get our children, nieces and nephews, they need to get out there and we need to finance them. Let them get in on the ground floor and not wait until all the land is bought up. This is a frontier, wide open. There are no sheriffs. No one has set down any stakes. We just need to get our kids in it.

RILEY: Let me just offer this caution. The Wild West did have its downsides. I think that while Mr. Shaw is right, that journalism will always be journalism

SHAW: Call me Bernie, please.

RILEY: Thank you. Bernie is right, journalism will always be journalism, but people will not always know what journalism is.

SHAW: Very well said.

LONG: That's true.

RILEY: We have got to, while we are in the Wild West, make sure people know that this is the journalism, these are people exercising their right to free speech, because that line has been wavering all over the place.

PAYNE: All of us are managers. We all are in some way or another. Newspapers are at the center of this transition, ink on paper, to cyberspace, the Internet. So I think that, just as early on when we saw newspaper people gravitate in the early days – Gabe Pressman

and others, Walter Cronkite – from the newspaper business to television and bring along with them certain standards about what journalism is, there's no problem in migrating.

You know, I think we're going to see journalists migrate over into the Internet and blogs.

They bring with them those standards. The average age of the newspaper reader today is 55 years old. No young people are reading newspapers. It's clear that as managers, we've been at this for years, in terms of the migration of our content onto the Internet. We are going to see the values, and we're going to see the standards migrate, too.

But that's not what I am talking about. That will happen. That must happen. But in addition to that, right now, those kids – black kids who want into this craft – could be on the ground floor where everyone else is, without the standards. Don't wait until the standards get there.

With the standards will come structure. With standards come corporations. With standards come a fixed hard body and then they begin to control access.

RILEY: We agree and disagree.

What I am saying is no, don't wait. I'm absolutely with you. I want my daughter to have her own blog that people pay attention to. But I want them to know, she's not a journalist. What you are listening to are Nicki's rantings. These are the things she's interested in.

Now, if you come over to her mom's blog she's been trained, she will try to give you some balance. I want people to know the difference. They have the opportunity to understand the technology and jump out there, but that 55-year-old who is getting sick of the paper and wants to read something, I don't want them to learn about the war from my daughter's perspective. Not necessarily. Not yet.

PAYNE: Yes, but I think that we can stipulate that we know the difference.

RILEY: Well, you can do that, but look at Matt Drudge who five years ago was a lunatic that is now actually considered a journalism king.

PAYNE: Our performance hasn't been all that stellar.

RILEY: No, it has not.

PAYNE: Despite our standards. With all of our unimpeachable standards, our super impeccable journalism helped get us into this war in Iraq. I don't think we need to hide behind these standards. I think we need to change and improve them. They probably need to be rediscovered at any rate.

LONG: They need to be rediscovered, but we do need to say that there are standards. We need to let people know that there are

standards, and that you need to hit a bar, if it's journalism you're doing. If it's not and it's an opinion, it's fine. You're right; I agree with Rochelle. Blog all you want. We still need to say 'There is a bar.'

PAYNE: But standards can migrate.

RILEY: And they have, as you can tell.

PAYNE: That's what's so exciting here.

IVORY: I hear what you are saying, but there is a reckless sense of oversight when it comes to the Internet right now. Even with big newspapers that have websites there's this push about speed to market. Get it up there first and then we'll worry about rewriting and fixing it.

That's not the same thing we do on the print side. I mean, I hear what you're saying, absolutely. I think we all agree that there is a vast frontier out there and we need to get into it. It is a little troubling, though, that people can put a blog up there and become an overnight sensation and an overnight expert when they actually have no journalism expertise whatsoever.

RILEY: But even with no expertise many of them declare themselves a journalist.

IVORY: We have been trained all of our lives to believe what we read in print. It's not the same for the Internet. I've had students who've turned in reports with footnotes from Wikipedia.

ZUBERI: Even though I hear your criticisms about blogs and the Internet world, isn't there a similar kind of criticism that is being at least suggested about both broadcast and print media today? That the quality isn't what it used to be in the good old days? That there's a lot of jumping to the conclusion, and a growing awareness that having embedded reporters means you're not going to get both sides of the story?

RILEY: Absolutely.

IVORY: Sound bites, you know.

RILEY: They're competing with bloggers. It's about entertainment, and getting the story first, and making it fun. And while I am not ever going to say that journalism must be boring, or staid, or institutional, or overly regulated. I do think people should know what it is they're getting. While we are providing information, make sure they know what the source of the information is.

IVORY: Again, when we talk about trying to take advantage of this whole world of digital technology, I think it goes back to education and to our schools.

PAYNE: I certainly agree.

IVORY: It just is not being taught. They don't have the resources. My little boy is very fortunate that, in the sixth grade, they were doing podcasts. But if you go across the bridge to schools in the District of Columbia, you have 20 students hovering around one computer. That's an extreme example.....

ZUBERI: But it's an important example. There is a very clear racial divide in terms of access to these new technologies.

IVORY: Absolutely.

RILEY: I'm with Les on this one. The schools will never be equal. I can tell you horror stories about the Detroit public schools, which are not schools. But you can not use that as an excuse not to jump in. I know the kids at the schools who don't have computer, who go to the library to do their blogs. I still think that they must be encouraged. I think that *Emerge* magazine first said this a decade ago, 'Don't become road kill on the information superhighway.'

Having said that, I still think, when you look at the level of intensity for the level that the Kerner Commission cited, No. 1 was police practices. Two, was unemployment. Three, was inadequate housing. Not until the second level of intensity did they get to inadequate education, which is just above poor recreation facilities. They didn't get it. I don't think they were really hearing people.

I think that part of the problem with unemployment problem is that people are not trained. If they're not trained, they can't get jobs, and they're hanging out more. Of course, they're going to have more encounters with the police. We see this all the time in Detroit, where there's a 50 percent dropout rate, where there's a 24 percent graduation rate, and where kids still think that they can find work in the car plant; get a job on the production line and make \$60,000 dollars a year.

This hasn't been true for a decade, but there are people literally standing on the corner saying it's going to come back and I'll be able to do that. And they're not doing anything while they're waiting.

PAYNE: Are the dropout rates higher than in '68. Am I putting you on the spot?

RILEY: You are putting me on the spot. I think they are higher. Here's what happened. The white flight in Detroit did not happen because of the riots. It started in the early 1950s. People started to move out and buy bigger houses. By the time they got to '68, that's when the school system started to changebecause you could go to Cass Tech from anywhere in the region.

Cass Tech, you know was Diana Ross's high school; was like the school where people would come in from everywhere to attend. Well, all of that changed and Detroit's schools became mostly black. And the kids in these schools mostly drop out, because they can at 16. They drop out to go get jobs. Well, you could do that in '68. You could do that in '75. But you cannot do that now.

SHAW: I just want to make an observation. The Kerner Commission didn't get to education until the second level. The emphasis for the commission was the riots. Lyndon Baines Johnson wanted to know, 'What the hell is going on? What happened and what caused it? How do you prevent it?' That was the emphasis. And that's why the emphasis was on law enforcement grievances and that why you didn't get to education, which is paramount, until the second tier.

ZUBERI: Now looking at then and now, are there connections between democracy, diversity and the kind of global reporting now that is as important today as the riots were in the '60s?

SHAW: Democracy, diversity, global reporting?

ZUBERI: Yes. I mean you have a lot of reporting on democracy issues now. Is there a question of diversity in the media in the context of these kinds of issues – and, if so, how they are covered?

I recently went on a very interesting trip. I've worked a lot all over Africa, but recently I went on a trip to Columbia, and while I was in Columbia I noticed that there were all these black people involved in a kind of black power movement. And I just heard about it. I went to four cities and talked to people. They explained to me that a similar movement was taking place in Venezuela, Panama, and other places.

SHAW: It's also in Cuba, too. I've covered Latin America for three years and there's also that kind of movement in Brazil – especially in Brazil. The poor neighborhoods. Anywhere there is a dark-skinned population, people who share a society with white people – there is still race discrimination. There's still racism. And what you are seeing is resistance to that.

ZUBERI: Are we getting that in the reporting that occurs in these areas of the world?

SHAW: I think so.

I think the media routinely – they don't lead with it every Sunday – make the world aware that there are problems in wonderland. I mean, for years Brazil would tell the world that there were no racial problems. Just look at the movie *Black Orpheus*. They would cite other things that would say they are so multiracial.

They're multiracial alright. Have black skin and try to succeed in that society. Regardless of your education credentials, you will have problems. And that's happening in Colombia, as you pointed out. Even Fidel's government says there is no racism in that country. But tell that to a dark-skinned Cuban.....

RILEY: I will speak very generally and very stereotypically to tell you that for the most part Americans don't care. Middle America, away from the East Coast where you do have papers that give you international coverage, and the West Coast where the *L.A. Times* tries to do what *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are doing, there's not a lot of foreign reporting and there is not a lot of stuff in the newspaper or on the television about anything that is going on outside of their local communities.

Local newspapers cover their local communities and what's happening at the garden club and what's happening on Main Street, but not much else. So by the time you have a major event happen somewhere beyond that their small piece of the world – whether it's in Brazil or Cuba – it comes as a great surprise to people in those communities.

That is doing a huge disservice. That's a whole other discussion that's not even something the Kerner Commission dealt with.

ZUBERI: OK, but that sounds like two issues to me.....

SHAW: When I was just getting started in this business at CBS, our news division was always in the red because you can not anticipate all the stories that will chew up your news budget next year. You just can't do that. But William Paley, the chairman of the board of CBS, said don't worry about losing money.

He said, 'Just bring me prestige and honor and I'll make my money from the entertainment division - *I Love Lucy*, *The Jackie Gleason Show*, *(The) Ed Sullivan (Show)*. And they made hundreds of millions of dollars. And every year, our news division was in the red, but we excelled.

That has changed. Now every news division has to be a profit center; no longer a loss leader. Owners know that international news costs money to staff and to cover. They also know that most Americans are as you just characterized us.

There's no motivation to spend millions of dollars covering international news, if the interest is not there. But it's a kind of macabre situation because this country is powerful and that puts a burden of responsibility on its citizens to be better informed. Americans should be better informed, instead of under-informed as we are. You find that the most interested and interesting people – when it comes to being aware of the world – are from island nations.

Jamaica, England – people from island nations have an insatiable thirst for knowledge and information about the rest of the world. I will go to my grave knowing the big curse in my country and for people are those expanses of water, the Atlantic and the Pacific, which isolated us geographically and historically, and made us not care so much about the world beyond them.

ZUBERI: Let me close with one last question that I think is related to this. Does this shift from a newsroom which makes no profit to a newsroom that is aimed at profit have an impact on diversity in terms of both the coverage and newsroom personnel?

IVORY: No question it does. I mean let's face it. It's all about advertising. That's what they are going toward. That's the demographic, the sweet spot that they're looking for. They quite simply are going to cater and appeal to that demographic, for the most part.

Does every person in the newsroom have that thought in their mind – 'Only write for white males ages 18-48?' No. But after you hear it enough times, you tend to pay attention to the issues that the demographic that are important to your paper cares about – and not so much what interests minorities, who usually aren't an important demographic.

That's the reality of it and that is why it is important (for African Americans) to be in positions of power in the newsrooms to remind them that these are important issues that need to be covered.

LONG: That economic shift made such a huge difference. In the 1980s it was 'spend what you need to give us the best coverage.' The Inquirer had six national bureaus, four foreign bureaus. For the most part, they are all gone now. We have one person in Washington and if we need to do, if we feel we can justify an international story because it has a connection locally we'll send somebody to do it and bring them back home.

To routinely have coverage from overseas, we simply don't do that anymore. What we have to do is make the business case for diversity. And it has become sort of the buzz phrase that you hear out there. 'Let's make the business case for diversity'. It is important to have diversity because you will make money in this area. Say that and ears kind of perk up.

IVORY: That is absolutely true. The business imperative is all we listen to nowadays. And if you cannot make the case for diversity forcefully and intelligently, and consistently, it goes away. We are way beyond doing the right thing. That moment in time has passed us by.

SHAW: Another fact is leadership. Regardless of medium, if you don't have the leadership at a newspaper or a television network, or radio network, you are not going to go down the path of fairness and what is right. You're going to hide behind economic stratagems and other pillars to cover your butt. If the leadership doesn't exist, it's not going to get done. And I submit that the quality of leadership in journalism has changed for the worst.

RILEY: Absolutely.

ZUBERI: To what?

SHAW: It's less than it used to be.

LONG: Newspapers used to be owned by people felt they could

make a difference in their community. They believed that telling the truth and finding wrongs in government and writing about these things made a difference. So they were involved in it for that reason. Now, it's, 'Let's see, how can I make money?' Newspapers are a good investment. 'OK, show me the dollar.' It is a different philosophy.

RILEY: We used to have coverage based on news and mission, now we have coverage based on budget, which means that the people who run the numbers are the most important people in the newsroom.

You don't have a conversation about what is the story and what do we need do to get it? It's, 'How much is it going to cost and can we keep it below this amount – and that has lessened the coverage. That has lessened an informed populous and that is the reason why the isolation continues.

IVORY: Another big concern is that, the more we get into this kind of capitalistic look at the business, the more we move towards what I call the 'Chamber of Commerce' version of journalism.

SHAW: Piggybacking on something you said, and actually it permeates on the remarks of everybody else at the table, your demographics, your audience, your listeners, your viewers, given all these changes, most of them financially driven, it's not attractive, nor is it fashionable to be poor, to be uneducated.

It's not fashionable in our society to be a poor person, to be without. So what's the attraction in covering a person in those straits – regardless of color, gender, religion, geography? Stories about people in this predicament do not sell.

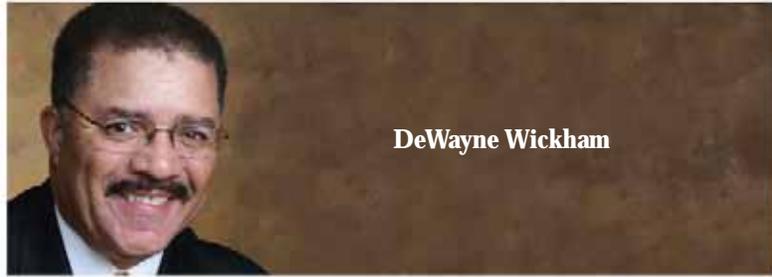
IVORY: And do not buy.

RILEY: And there it lies the problem.

ZUBERI: I think we have used up a little more time than our hour. It has been a pleasure for me. I really do appreciate you taking this time to talk about race in the media. Thank you very much.

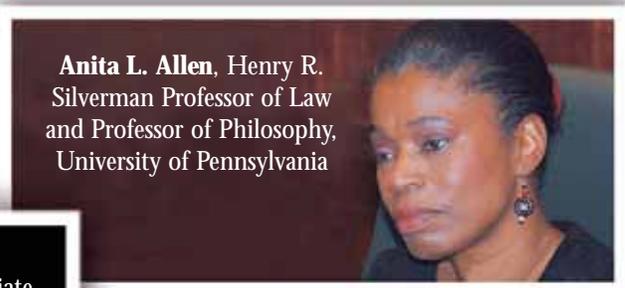
Kerner Commission ACADEMICS ROUNDTABLE

Moderator: DeWayne Wickham, Director,
Institute for Advanced Journalism Studies North Carolina A&T State University



DeWayne Wickham

Panelists



Anita L. Allen, Henry R. Silverman Professor of Law and Professor of Philosophy, University of Pennsylvania



Camille Z. Charles, Associate Professor of Sociology and Faculty Associate Director, Center for Africana Studies, University of Pennsylvania



Claude Barnes, Jr., Associate Professor of Political Science, North Carolina A&T State University

DeWAYNE WICKHAM – February 29, 2008 is the 40th anniversary of the release of the report of the National Advisory Committee on civil disorders, which has come to be known now as the Kerner Commission. 40 years ago that commission looked at conditions which bred scores of so-called race riots in the 1960s and concluded that our nation was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal.”

Anita Allen – Professor of Law and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania – on what did the Kerner Commission base this dire warning?

ANITA ALLEN – I think it was based on the perception that African Americans and non-African Americans were experiencing

both geographic and social segregation. The nature of the segregation was such that, African Americans were losing out on some of the promises of life in a modern, liberal western democracy. Were that situation not to change, we would be in for not only the kind of violent uprisings that we saw in the 1960s, but we ran the risk of becoming a society that was hopelessly divided and unable to function a democracy.

WICKHAM – But in fact, throughout the history of this country, we had divided societies. What does it say about the panel that it didn't recognize or acknowledge the existence of this division even prior to the disturbances that occurred in the 1960s?

ALLEN – Well I think when you have a pattern of violence, so-called mob violence, group violence, rioting, political protest, that it changes the nature of perception, although as you say, because of slavery and then post-slavery reconstruction era retrenchment we never had a society that was fully integrated, was fully equal, in which everyone had the same opportunities. Yeah, it took the 1960s in order for people to become truly alarmed about this.

WICKHAM – There were major clashes back in the 1960s, but there were also clashes that were not so major and as a result have not been remembered as Detroit and Newark have been remembered. Claude Barnes Jr. – associate professor of political science at North Carolina A&T State University – in 1969, a year after the Kerner Commission issued its report; you were elected president of the student body at your high school. That event the resulted in a disturbance that caused the governor of North Carolina to send in 650 National Guardsmen, and which tragically caused one student at North Carolina A&T to lose his life.

CLAUDE BARNES – Well, my election was the straw that broke the camel's back. This occurred in the late 60s when black power advocates – and the discussion in the community – had created a kind of political consciousness that caused people to raise questions about the quality of education, and the type of education that we were receiving.

Black power advocates were challenging the status quo and it was also a time when the civil rights phase of the black liberation struggle was stagnating.

I think my election represented the end of the turning of the cheek philosophy and the beginning of discussion about the need to be more assertive, more aggressive, and more militant. So, it wasn't so much my election, as it was a constellation of issues that came together in the community of Greensboro, N.C., that brought people to the point where they wanted to resist business as usual.

So when the officials took my name off the ballot, the students resisted by protesting. Protesting led to the calling of law enforcement officials. This escalated to three days of back and forth arrest and violence, and then escalated our high school to the campus of North Carolina A&T.

WICKHAM – But this was high school, not college. You were vying for student government president, not president of SNCC.

BARNES – Right. Dudley High School was the all black high school in Greensboro, and at that time there was a very close connection between Dudley High School, North Carolina A&T and the African American community.

So even though it was a high school election, my election represented a threat to the status quo. I was raising questions about linking up the community to the school to challenge the status quo.

It was not just the election but, the way the African American community was being treated by larger white society. The question of housing; the question of unemployment, and the question of racial discrimination, my election linked to all those issues. So, it wasn't just an election.

WICKHAM – As now, most blacks lived in the South. Certainly back then, Jim Crow was an oppressive force in the South. So why is it that the most devastating riots occurred outside of the South?

BARNES – That's a good question. It may have something to do with the fact that blacks in the South have made certain accommodations. I think that's one of the reasons. In the South you didn't have the stifling ghettos that you had in places like Detroit and Philadelphia. There were lots of black businesses, there were lots of black institutions, you didn't have the same kind of social isolation, I would suppose. So, that may help to explain why you didn't have as many, but there were some that are noteworthy that still need to be discussed and appreciated.

WICKHAM – The 1960s were the best of times and they were the worst of times. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which has come to be known as the Fair Housing Act of 1968. But it was also a time in which scores of race riots occurred. Camille Charles – associate Professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania – were these signs of a nation that was schizophrenic on the issue of race, or simply the thrust and parry of a country struggling to throw off the yolk of racism?

CAMILLE CHARLES – I think we've always been a schizophrenic country.

I think in this particular case, the passage of legislation brings with it a sense of hope. And that getting that legislation passed took a lot of hard work and sacrifice and struggle. People had this sense, or at least the hope that things would get better.

I think there was a hope that people would get better quickly. Some things didn't change much at all, in particular the relationship between the black community and white law enforcement. You didn't see the kind of changes that people probably hoped would occur in a short period of time after those acts became law. And I think the nation reached a point where people were fed up. They had the law behind them and I think they felt a little bit freer to say 'I'm fed up and I'm not going to take it anymore.' I think to sort of get back to this notion of why more in the north.....

WICKHAM – Wait. Before you go there, the law was behind them, but law enforcement was apparently not on their side. The Kerner Commission, on this issue, urged police departments to become more involved in community matters, and to develop non-adversarial relationship with the black community. That didn't happen, or did it?

CHARLES – Yes. We're still encouraging police departments to develop non-adversarial relationships in black communities. So certainly, the unrest during that period brought it to the attention of everyone that there were adversarial relationships between black communities and white law enforcement – something that black folks knew all along and all to well.

I think there was this hope that things would change, once it's no longer legal to treat us this way. I think the expectation was that those who responsible for enforcing the law would also change their behavior and that didn't happen.

I think that the sense of hope, in some ways, may have been greater in the North because there has always been a stereotype of the North as the promise land. So it wasn't supposed to be as racist as the South. Truth be told, it was just different. I don't know that it always makes sense to talk about it in more than, or less than. The North was just different from the South.

In talking to people who were teenagers and young adults during that period and came from the rural South, I think there were accommodations that were made. There was an understanding that that's just the way white folks. But in the North it was much denser. You had black folks living in tight space and we know that can cause tension. I think there was also probably a different sense of hope that was dashed when in fact there is no difference or not much difference between the law enforcement and the black community in the North than there was in the Southern communities.

WICKHAM – Dr. Allen?

ALLEN – I just wanted to add that we shouldn't overlook the influence of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his message of non-violent protest.

There was, perhaps especially in the South, this very strong model of protesting boldly and strongly and morally, but in a way did not result in fires and destruction. That was the other sides' techniques. Our technique is to peacefully march, to boycott, to sit at a lunch counter. It's not to rage and burn.

I lived in deep-South for much of the early 60s and went to a recently-integrated public high school in Columbus, Ga., and also integrated a public junior high school in Forest Park, Ga. It is amazing how calmly and how peacefully those processes went. I mean on the one hand it took a court order to get Georgia to integrate its public schools, and it did so on a very slow timetable so it took years to get all twelve grades integrated.

On the other hand, when my father took me to Forest Park Junior High School and knocked on the door and here's my daughter, even though there had never been a black girl at that school in that grade before. There was a little bit of nervousness but it happened in a kind of smooth way.

I think that the message of the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board* decision, although it took ten or twelve years to filter in, was that school integration was inevitable. So, I think there was a certain amount of acceptance among white people in the South of the inevitability of integration.

Obviously we were still having the 1960s beatings and other violence against blacks, but in many ways it was a much calmer atmosphere than we saw on the evening news happening up North.

WICKHAM – So you saw your acceptance in those schools as a concession to Brown, and not simply just a change of tactics?

ALLEN – I definitely felt that way at the time. I saw it as a slow begrudging embrace of the notion that these schools were going to have to integrate. There was very little violence in the public schools in the Greater Atlanta area compared to the violence we saw on television happening in Detroit or Philadelphia.

WICKHAM – And so, as we move into the 1970s where else did you see progress? Richard Nixon had the Philadelphia Plan but he also had the Southern strategy. I mean, where else did you see progress? Can you site some other areas of progress as we move to the 1970s?

ALLEN – College admissions. I think that we saw, in the universities, more African Americans going to graduate school, getting PhDs. We saw the Ford Foundation funding PhDs for blacks. More black kids were going to college. More black kids were being told 'You can be something more than maids and train porters. All of you, even the darkest of the dark, the poorest of the poor, can be teachers, doctors, lawyers, accountants, and can run for public office.'

That was a huge change, and it happened very, very quickly. Within the space of five or ten years black kids were getting a very different message. They were acting on that message and taking advantage of the doors that were being opened.

WICKHAM – This was legal progress or social progress?

CHARLES – Its social progress that comes as a consequence of legal progress. I think certainly in terms of attitudes.....

WICKHAM – Willing acceptance on the part of whites?

CHARLES – Umm.....In some ways yes, I would say that. I think you do see a fundamental change in the racial attitudes that is profound and real in the decade of the 70s. I think it's a function of the legal reform so that basically the law said that you can't do this anymore. It is socially unacceptable to do, and as whites see that the world doesn't come crashing down around them because now black kids are going to school with their children, as they see that they're not losing their jobs, their neighborhoods aren't being destroyed, basically life goes on and life is OK. You do see

some fundamental changes in attitudes and you see a majority of whites by the mid 80s embracing the principles of equality.

BARNES – I have a slightly different view of that.

I think a lot of whites have expressed those kinds of opinions to public opinion pollsters. But if you look at their actions, their actions are totally different. I mean, they fled the cities in droves, leading to a lack of tax base in the cities, at the same time blacks were taking over the cities politically, you had the election of Mayor Maynard Jackson, in Atlanta; you had the election of Carl Stokes, the first black mayor of Cleveland, and so forth and so on.

But with this white flight, the cities were losing the ability to take care of its residents. This helped fuel the rebellions. You raise people's expectation as a result of the Civil Rights Movement and the passing of all these laws. At the same time, the economic condition of many blacks doesn't change. There was rising black unemployment, you the re-segregation of public schools happening in many of these cities. All these problems suggest that very little progress had actually taken place.

There was this little window of opportunity and optimism that appeared in the 70s but it closed right away when Ronald Reagan became president. That was the end of whatever progressive moment and whatever window of opportunity we had as a nation to really deal with the issue of race.

WICKHAM – When Ronald Reagan became president?

BARNES – The Reagan years in the 1980's truly put the nail in the coffin on discussions about racial equality and programs that were designed to help the blacks and women and the environment. The rise of the neocons, and the public policies that they represent, systematic attacks on civil rights, systematic attacks on the environment, is how we got to where we are now.

If you look at the Kerner Commission's discussion about where the African American community was in the late 60s, and then you look at where we are now, we're going backwards in too many different areas. We're going absolutely backwards.

One more thing, I was struck by how moderate the Kerner report is. This was a document that was put together by moderates. One of the things they consciously did was avoid inviting radicals to the table. They didn't invite Stokely Carmichael to give testimony. They didn't invite H. Rap Brown to give testimony. So the whole shift of blacks from being Negroes to being African Americans was missed by the commission.

It's good that the Kerner Commission's members recognized that the nation was becoming "two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal." But, that's as far as they took it.

CHARLES – I should say, I make a huge distinction between what

whites are willing to believe in terms of their principles versus what they are willing to do in practice. So that the shift in attitudes is about their principles of egalitarianism so that they believe that there should be free access to public spaces and that blacks have the right to a high quality education but when you then ask them what they're willing to do to create those circumstances there is still a lot of entrenchment.

And the more personal the interaction becomes, the more entrenched they become. They believe we should be able to ride the bus on an equal basis with them, and enter restaurants through the front door and stay in the same hotels they stay in. To some extent school integration is OK with them as long as it doesn't involve busing their kids to make it happen.

But when you get to things like neighborhoods, twenty years after the passage of the fair housing act, you still have a majority whites who said they should be able to sell their house to whomever they want and that if there was a fair housing measure put on their ballots that they would vote against it.

And when you get to things like interracial dating and marriage to this day, there is still a lot of resistance. So the more personal the interaction becomes the less willing white folks are to actually do things or support actions that would change relations between the races. Which suggest that there is still a substantial amount of prejudice, and a disconnect between what we believe in principle and what we're willing to do in practice.

WICKHAM – Well, on this topic of disconnect, when I asked the question about progress, and maybe I misled you when I asked the question, the answers came back in the context of how blacks were able to move ahead in certain areas in our society/ But the warning raised by the Kerner report was about the yawning gap between black and whites. And so my question about progress ought to be restated in this way; Did we see progress in terms of closure of that gap in the 70s and the 80s?

CHARLES – I think that Claude is right, in that there was a moment. I think there was a moment right after the passage of the 1960s civil rights acts where we did see more blacks going to college, and the development of a larger black middle class and that helped to close some of that yawning gap.

WICKHAM – Whites are more accepting of blacks who go to college, than those who don't go to college?

CHARLES – Yes. The more they see that blacks are just like them, right, and once you have created or opened opportunities where once none existed, in terms of educational opportunities and occupational and professional opportunities, then they can start to get past that disconnect.

They have to start to abandon notions of intellectual inferiority, because we're graduating from college. We're becoming doctors and

lawyers and teachers and those kinds of things. The problem is that during the Nixon and Reagan/Bush era we moved toward stereotypes based around cultural deficiencies rather than biological or innate intellect, intellectual deficiencies. And coincided with when cities started to fall apart.

ALLEN – IF you look back at the October 2007 unemployment rates, black unemployment was 8.5 percent compared to 4.2 percent for whites. That's a very wide gap.

WICKHAM – Double that of whites as it was 40 year ago.

CHARLES – And it has stayed about double that of whites the entire 40 years.

ALLEN – And other minority groups are doing better than African Americans. Asians are doing quite a bit better, and Hispanics are doing somewhat better.

There's a gap in education. We know that the high school graduation rate is lower for black kids. Graduation rates for black boys are abominable – much lower than they are for white people. We know that the college graduation rate for whites still exceed the rate for blacks.

Healthcare disparities are still gigantic. It's still the case that fewer blacks are insured and more blacks are forced to be on Medicaid. Jobs, employment, healthcare, there is hardly an area you can point to where you can say that blacks are doing better than, or equal to whites. Maybe in some sports – maybe basketball.

BARNES – Well, can I just add that housing ownership also has gone backwards? In '92, I think that African American housing ownership was about 56 percent, now it's down to 49 percent, so we are going backwards in that arena. If you look at the incarceration rates, the recent figures from the census bureau suggest that while we're only 12.2 percent of the population, we are 42 percent of the prison population. We are going backwards and we're going backwards at an accelerated rate.

We're seeing in the South the re-segregation of the public schools. So even in this arena, which was supposed to be a legacy of the Brown decision, we're looking at more and more schools being 90 percent minority then they were at the height of the so called progressive era in the 70s and 80s.

WICKHAM – I want to get back to this issue you raised about education and the willingness of whites to accept blacks who have higher levels of education or achievement. Most whites in this society did not go to college; have not gone to college. They're just high school graduates. Why is there a greater burden on blacks in terms of closing this gap to achieve a level of education that whites themselves have not achieved?

CHARLES – Now you know we have always had to work twice as hard to get half as far. And I don't think that has changed. I think

African Americans have always been and continue to be held to a higher standard.

WICKHAM – But you think that if more blacks were college graduates there would be greater acceptance of blacks, the gap between blacks and whites would close?

CHARLES – No because in fact, I think if suddenly we didn't have more black men in jail or in some way connected to the criminal justice system than in college, I think then the issue would become 'Well gosh, more of them are going to college than there are of us.'

There will continue to be competition over valued resources. On my best days the Clinton years are the best it's going to get, in terms of racial harmony, if you want to call it harmony. I sort of take Derrick Bell's position that even if you know you can't win it you keep fighting the good fight it's the right thing to do.

We are deserving of being treated as fully human, as having equal access. We've done a lot to contribute to what this country is and all that is good about it. We deserve those things. Do I think that whites will ever see us as full and equal partners? No. I don't think the melting pot was something that we were ever invited to.

As long as we don't have a serious conversation about race with whites, I don't see the gap closing. And certainly as long as you have residential segregation at levels as high as it is you're not going to see a closing of the education gap, or in terms of labor market opportunities, poverty rates and access to healthcare. All of these things are intricately tied to residential segregation. That's one of those more personal domains which whites are still quite resistant to.

WICKHAM – The Kerner Commission said that those who participated in the disturbances were more likely to be black men who were unemployed or underemployed, and black men who had in fact not completed high school. Today in this country black men continue to be disproportionately under-employed. Is that not the case?

I think that's true. Is your question then going to be, well, are those same types of men likely to take similar measures? Is that where you're going?

WICKHAM – I'm headed in that direction.

ALLEN – I think not. Think about the million man march. I think that men with those problems have found other ways of expressing their discontent and trying also to encourage one another to keep faith against some pretty formidable odds by joining together to say we want to be better fathers, husbands, brothers and so forth. So I'm not so sure that just because you happen to be less employed than you're going to take to the streets and start to riot. There has to be other factors that go into those kinds of protest.

WICKHAM – Well there are precipitating events that usually involve law enforcement. But there certainly were riots after the 1960s. Miami exploded at least twice I believe in the 1980s and Los Angeles in the 1990s.

ALLEN – And tomorrow there could be a police beating in Philadelphia or Los Angeles and a riot could erupt. Would those riots be causally tied to this gap you're talking about? It's hard to say.

WICKHAM – Well here's the point of my question. If Kerner saw in 1968 that black men who were unemployed or underemployed and undereducated were more inclined to participate in violent upheavals and you want to close that gap, wouldn't that be something you focus on? And has the nation focused on these problems, and if it has, what has been the result?

ALLEN – I just have to throw this out, because I'm afraid we will never get to this point if we don't. We haven't talked about political leadership.

WICKHAM – I'm going to go there next.

ALLEN – OK. OK. I think that it.....

WICKHAM – Well can we talk about this first?

ALLEN – is an important issue. OK, so.....

WICKHAM – That's the problem. What was the solution?

ALLEN – Can we fight the premise a little bit, that somehow the gap and the violence go hand in hand? That deprived black people go crazy and hit the streets and start bringing stuff down. Something about that makes me a little uneasy. And I don't want to say that I don't believe that the violent protest in the past had to do with disenfranchisement of African Americans. I don't want to leave the impression that inevitably unhappy, discriminated against, subordinated, mistreated people will resort to the large scale burning down of their own neighborhoods and their own enterprise. I don't think that necessarily follows.

WICKHAM – But wouldn't it be a good thing, in any event, to address the gap, to increase the educational opportunities for black men, particularly to increase their employment prospects?

ALLEN – So there are efforts afoot to do that. Unfortunately they're not big enough, funded enough, public enough. I mean there are hundreds of organizations, private organizations out there that are trying to address the problems of black children.

I am the chair of the board of one such organization. We are trying. There are charter schools being set up. Immersion schools for black boys. There are efforts out there trying to improve the educational attainment of African Americans. Trying to make it

possible for kids to go to college and stay in college. We are trying.

Unfortunately, I think we do a public education system that is not well tailored to get that result. I was appalled by the New York City school chancellor's plan to pay a stipend to black kids who go to school, and pay their parents if they have full time jobs and health insurance and get their kids to school. What that implies is that the only thing African Americans can respond to is bling.

I think we need really large creative efforts to get black kids in school, to keep them in school, to encourage them to achieve. I wonder sometimes about what our own African American experts are telling us we should do to achieve these ends. I think those efforts are out there but they're not public enough, they're not large scale enough and they're not well designed enough.

WICKHAM – What about the government's responsibility to ensure the domestic tranquility?

BARNES – Back to what my colleague is saying about the efforts out here – they're anemic. They are not enough. They're not even dealing with the tip of the iceberg of the problem from my perspective. It seems to me that the government has withdrawn from trying to solve this issue. As a result, we're left with these private efforts and the private efforts don't have the resources, they don't have the vision, they don't have the money, and so I think these cities are potentially powder kegs. We are looking at a situation that is probably going to be worse than what happened in the 1960s.

WICKHAM – Today?

BARNES – Right. I'm not saying that it's inevitable, that these cities will explode, but all the conditions are like powder kegs in these cities with large African American populations, with large levels of unemployment, with more and more hopeless individuals that don't have anything to lose. That's a little bit different from what the social scientist were talking about in the 1960s when they said the riots were caused by black rift raft.

Underemployment is a key problem. When you have people whose expectations are curtailed by frustration, this leads to situations where urban rebellions can take place.

WICKHAM – Now let's talk about politics.

CHARLES – I wanted to say something.

WICKHAM – Go right ahead.

CHARLES – I think one of the things to think about is that the disruption is now taking a different form.

If you think about the increase in crime and violence in large cities like Philadelphia where men – young black men in particular – can't find jobs in the mainstream economy, they create other

opportunities in underground economies that are violent by their nature.

So you do have a lot of violence – it's just a different kind of violence. And actually in the last week three police officers have been shot in Philadelphia. When you reach a point where there's not enough risk attached to shooting a police officer, the violence can start to take a different form. It doesn't always have to be about burning everything down.

In some sense, you can look at increases of crime and violence in these communities as a slow burn. In many ways we are worse off. There is more concentrated poverty. The public schools are worse off in terms of their capacity for graduating literate students and young adults at the end of twelve years, much less those that could go on to four year educational institutions.

So again, the hopelessness sort of starts to expand because you have men who are underemployed and you have younger men who can't get regular jobs at all once they're in that criminal justice system it becomes even more difficult for them to obtain any kind of mainstream regular employment, and there is no infrastructure that is properly resourced enough or open minded enough to really solve those type of problems.

WICKHAM – But if you're right, doesn't that slow burn suggest that there really is the kind of festering problem that Dr. Barnes talks about in terms of the possibility for even greater violent disruptions?

CHARLES – Certainly. I don't think it's impossible, but I do tie it to these larger structural issues. I do think that it festers, and it festers and it festers. And it could fester for a generation. But at some point there is that precipitating event that symbolizes all of that festering over larger structural issues.

So I can see where others might look at it and think of it negatively, that we're just destined to kill ourselves or to tear up everything we have. I realize that others might see it that way, but I don't want to move away from talking about it as I think it is, which is that the hopelessness just multiplies and there is that symbolic event that represents everything that is wrong in my community.

ALLEN – I love this idea of the slow burn. I think there is a slow burn occurring. I also was thinking about a different metaphor as you were speaking that we're not exploding, we're imploding.

CHARLES – Yes.

ALLEN – Will the implosion, the slow burn, make us more likely to have the hot and fast burn, the big explosion, a rebellion? I don't know. I don't know. I guess this is the philosopher in me coming out. I would like to create a discourse among African Americans that would make that less likely.

WICKHAM – I still think that this conversation is on two tracks. I think one track is, what can we do, or what can be done, or what has occurred to make us better. I'm trying to get us on a track that talks about this gap that Kerner said existed and how it might close. So let me just ask this question. Is it important?

ALLEN – Is the gap important?

WICKHAM – Why should we care about the gap?

BARNES – It seems to me that if you don't solve this racial problem, the racial inequality that exists in America, then democracy is hopeless, it's collapsing, it is not going to work. And that's tragic. If we can't solve America's most fundamental dilemma, then democracy has no hope. This is the most intractable problem, this is the most complicated issue, the most difficult issue I think America has to face.

America walked away from the issue of slavery, didn't solve that properly. It walked away from Jim Crow segregation, didn't solve that properly. When we walked away from the urban rebellions, we didn't solve that properly either. These issues, they will come back to haunt us and they will be more and more difficult and this has worldwide implications.

WICKHAM – In 1965, this country passed and President Lyndon Johnson signed into law a Voting Rights Act that had great promise of political inclusion, and in fact we've seen significant growth in the numbers of black elected officials at the state and federal levels. Back in the late 60s there were just a handful of blacks in the House of Representatives. Now we have in excess of forty. We have one black in the Senate. We have a black governor. We even have a black who is believed to have a decent chance in winning the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. That's significant progress if you just measure it in terms of numbers. Why hasn't that brought about the kind of change that we're looking for?

ALLEN – Did you see the smile on my face when you said we have a black in the Senate?

WICKHAM – Yes, one out of one hundred.

ALLEN – It's ridiculous. So we had, what, three blacks in the Senate in the 20th century? I think it was Ed Brooks, and Carol Mosley Braun and Barack Obama. That's it?

WICKHAM – And we had two in the 19th century, during Reconstruction.

ALLEN – So this is not much by way of progress. You know, we may have three dozen or so in the House, but I think we have a far cry from something close to good political representation for black people in the U.S.

WICKHAM – But the expectation is there, among people who put these people in office, that when you go from five or six black members of Congress to 43.....

ALLEN – We'll get something done.

WICKHAM – Right.

CHARLES – Right.

WICKHAM – When you go from no blacks who chair congressional committees to several who now chair congressional committees the expectation is at least there that something significant will happen for black people.

ALLEN – Politics unfortunately is politics. When Shirley Chisholm ran for president she was discouraged because in the 11th hour the black men sold her out. There are larger political battles to be fought sometimes than the black-white battle and I don't think that African American members of Congress are immune from wheeling and dealing over oil and gas, or global warming, or farm subsidies or whatever else. So, it's complicated. We don't get automatic improvement just because we have black faces on Capitol Hill, or as governors and mayors.

Look at Philadelphia. Look at Detroit. Look at Washington, DC. It's not as if black leaders have been a panacea. The gaps still exist because black people can't close it alone. We cannot turn this nation into one in which there is no longer an inferior group of people who are systematically discriminated against on the bases of their color.

It has to be a group effort. We all have to participate. We don't have the economic, the moral and social resources to turn things around. Yes we need representation, but we can't do it by ourselves.

WICKHAM – Wait a minute. This is a chicken or the egg problem. I asked what we need to do to bring blacks and whites together. And you're suggesting that blacks and whites have to come together.

ALLEN – Hey, how about that?

WICKHAM – So, the fix is what?

ALLEN – But not just come together in the sense of sitting in a boardroom and being polite, but actually being bound together with a common normative vision.....

CHARLES – And a sense that both sides win equally. I think this has been something that is seen as, if we do all of this, it benefits black people. It doesn't benefit us. And in fact whites are thinking they might actually lose something here because they see it as a zero sum game.

As long as it is seen as a zero sum game and there are winners and loser, and whites see themselves as the losers, you're not going to get them to the table. But she's absolutely right, you have to have them at the table.

So, I think that part of it has to be about coming to the realization that this is bad for everybody. Whites can keep trying to move to the suburbs, but buses go to suburbs. People can get to victimized you wherever you are. You're schools can go down hill and you're tax base can be eroded and you can have more uninsured people in your hospitals because low wage jobs don't offer medicals benefits and this is bad for everybody.

Until it starts to hurt whites, you don't get them to the table. So we have whites wanting to talk about universal healthcare now because you have more and more middle class whites losing their health insurance. Once it becomes a problem for whites, then they see they can get something out of this too. Otherwise its guilt that they don't think they deserve because they didn't own any slaves and they didn't say that it was right to have Jim Crow, so why should they now have to sacrifice something for something they didn't have anything to do with.

WICKHAM – Dr. Barnes, doesn't the answer lie in whites have to do just what she suggests they fear – that they have to give up something? When you have a disproportionate share of the opportunity pie and you want to balance things out, don't you have to give up something?

BARNES – They need to give up they're racist attitudes. That's what they have to give up. One of the things happening in America right now that may make this grand coalition possible is that the situation on the ground is getting bad across the board.

If you look at what's happening with America's jobs, for example, blue collar jobs used to be plentiful in America. It's almost to the point now where blue collar jobs – whole layers of the economy – have disappeared through outsourcing.

When you call for technical support on the phone, most likely you're talking to somebody in India or Taiwan. So even highly educated whites, they're jobs are not secure in the high tech economy. So it may be just basic self interest that will drive a coalition between liked-situated blacks and whites that can finally get to a real solution to the race problem.

People don't operate out of the goodness of their heart. I'm sorry it just doesn't happen. People are not going to come together because it's the right thing to do. People are going to come together because their self interest is involved.

ALLEN-And I think that right now, the mainstream of America doesn't appreciate the ways in which failure to attend to the needs of the least well off are already causing a huge cost. We're paying for all of those emergency room visits of blacks who don't have any

health insurance. And we're paying for all those special education needs for black kids who are not getting the kind of psychological care and health care that they need because their families are broke. We are paying for that already.

We'd be better off, and white people would be better off if they were more generous, if they had a different attitude about trying to lift up the least advantaged. I think it would be ironic if it took more race riots for white people to feel as if their interest was threatened.

WICKHAM – We've got just a few minutes left and I want to try to bring this to a head. Ten years from now we can be certain that there will be a 50th anniversary look at the Kerner Commission and its warning. What has to happen over the next ten years to move us closer to the goals the Kerner Commission set?

BARNES – Somebody has to exercise leadership. I don't see it, right now, I just don't see it coming from Washington, unfortunately, but someone, somewhere, in some sector of American society has to step forward and offer bold leadership. During the 1960s there were thousands of organizations on the ground, grass roots organizations, which provided leadership.

We tend to look at history as if it is great individuals that make these events happen, but in fact it's the thousands of grass roots organizations that mobilize people to make social change take place. There's got to be a different type of leadership emerging in America from the African American community, from the white community, from the Latino community to bring about a more inclusive democracy, otherwise the apocalypse is right on us.

CHARLES – I think Claude is absolutely right and certainly it's hard for me to imagine that gap closing, given how much geographic segregation there is between us. Between 1980 and 2000, we saw the number of cities where blacks were hyper-segregated, meaning that they were extremely and multi dimensionally segregated from whites. In fact, the number of cities in that category nearly doubled.

So we are moving closer to the Kerner commission's prediction in many ways. In much more serious ways I think than we're avoiding their prediction in other ways because we do have an expanding black middle class. This doesn't offsetting the issues around black male underemployment, mis-education in the black community, hyper-segregation, health disparities and all of these other things.

WICKHAM – Dr. Allen, a final word?

ALLEN-For me the future is symbolized by this recent Supreme Court decision, in which the court held that public school districts could not voluntarily desegregate. As long as our Supreme Court takes the position that it's wrong, its unjust and unconstitutional for communities to voluntarily seek to desegregate their public schools, I think we're in big trouble.

And I think if the court's position doesn't change ten years from now the world will look a little bit too much like it does right now.

WICKHAM-Dr. Anita Allen, Dr. Claude Barnes, Dr. Camille Charles, thank you very much.

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