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BUILDING BRIDGES AND BURNING THEM

Black-Jewish Relations in Cincinnati 1955-1970

Gary A. Mazo

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for Ordination

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

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Prof. Jonathan Sarna

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Gary A. Mazo

For Debbi,
whose love and support
provided me with the
strength needed to
attain my goal.
"I betroth myself to
you - forever."

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DIGEST

This thesis explores the relationship between the Black and Jewish communities of Cincinnati between the years 1955-1970. It examines the bridges that were formed through joint efforts in the civil rights struggle, as well as the bridges that were burned as a result of neighborhood tensions and divergent philosophies.

The thesis is primarily written in a chronological manner. After a brief introduction to the background history of Black-Jewish relations in Cincinnati, it begins with the Coney Island amusement park controversy of 1955. The thesis then traces the fight for Fair Employment Practices, Fair Housing and desegregated schools, the integration of so called "Jewish" neighborhoods, and the problem of "White flight." Each of the neighborhood councils which played an important role in this integration is discussed in depth. The thesis concludes with a look at the riots of 1967-1968.

The thesis is written from a Jewish perspective, based on Jewish sources. It is primarily based on research of the Manuscript Collection of the Jewish Community Relations

Council of Cincinnati, housed at the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. Also consulted were pertinent files in the Cincinnati Historical Society. Several "key" players of the time period studied were contacted for interviews. The secondary sources consulted offered insights into Black-Jewish relations in general, and other communities to which Cincinnati can be compared.

CHAPTER ONE

Black-Jewish Relations in Cincinnati Prior to 1955

Blacks and Jews have inhabited Cincinnati since the early 19th century and have had, over the years, an extensive relationship. Contact between Jews and Blacks increased as the city's population grew.

In 1830, there were 1,200 Blacks in Cincinnati, one of the largest Black populations in the Northern United States.[1] A major factor in the size of the Cincinnati Black population was the fact that Cincinnati was located just across the river from the slave states of the South. While many of the city's Whites sympathized with slavery, Blacks received rights they would not have had in the South.

Blacks arrived in Cincinnati slightly earlier than Jews did. While the first Jewish settler came to Cincinnati from England around 1817, there was no substantial Jewish population until the 1830s. Cincinnati represented for Jews the lure of economic opportunity; it offered them a chance to work hard and succeed free from persecution. As the

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[1] From the papers of the Jewish Community Relations Council, Miscellaneous Collection #202 at the American Jewish Archives. (Henceforth referred to as JCRC) Box 16, file #2.

nineteenth century progressed, an increasing number of Jews came to Cincinnati from Germany, particularly Southern Germany, and specifically the small Bavarian Province of Upper Franconia.[2]

Like Jews, Blacks came to Cincinnati seeking opportunities that they could not attain elsewhere. Blacks, however, met with much greater resistance to their endeavors than Jews did. In 1820, for example, the first Black school was founded in Cincinnati. In 1825, a law providing tax support to this and other Black schools was passed. Yet, in 1829, the law was changed and Black schools were specifically barred from receiving tax support.[3]

After the Civil War, a law was passed giving Black children, in principle, the right to attend public schools, but not the right to attend racially mixed schools. In 1874, the Ohio Supreme court upheld this law, ruling that segregated schools did not violate the 14th amendment.[4]

Three years later, the court held that any mixture of "Negro" blood could be enough to require a child to attend a racially segregated Black school. Thus, Cincinnati established a policy of "separate but equal" schools, and,

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[2] Jonathan Sarna and Nancy Klein, The Jews of Cincinnati. Cincinnati: Center for Study of the American Jewish Experience, 1989, p.3

[3] Ibid.,

[4] JCRC., Box 16, file #2. Report of the CAC, April, 1964.

as in so many cities the quality of education, the facilities and the teachers were anything but equal. Liberal Whites (including Jews) worked with Blacks to push through a bill in 1887 which prohibited segregation in the public schools, but its net effect was not great.[5]

In 1850, Cincinnati was the sixth largest city in the country, known as the "Gateway to the West," and the Queen City. By 1880, however, Cincinnati had lost much of its lustre. The city became congested as Blacks and Whites moved in from the south, and Jews and other immigrants moved from Europe.[6] Economic growth, meanwhile, slowed down, especially as railroad traffic by-passed Cincinnati and moved on to Chicago.

In the 1850's, there were small shops and factories around the periphery of Cincinnati. Lower class immigrants lived along the banks of the river near the factories. These were primarily the Blacks and the Irish. The German's lived in the area of downtown known as "Over the Rhine."[7]

Jews found their way into the economic mainstream far more easily than Blacks did. They became heavily involved in the garment industry, so much so that by 1860, the manufacturing, distribution and sale of men's clothing

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[5] Ibid.,

[6] Zane Miller. Boss Cox's Cincinnati: Urban Politics in the Progressive Era. Oxford University Press, New York. p.5

[7] Ibid., p. 4

provided over half of Cincinnati's Jews with their livelihood.[8] Jews were less involved in other local industries such as pork packing, candle and soap making, brewing, iron works, machine and carriage making and steamboat production.[9]

Jews and Blacks became a part of Cincinnati's diverse ethnic and cultural make-up. But Jews won acceptance into Cincinnati society far more easily than Blacks did. Blacks had a far more difficult time gaining any semblance of equality; in that respect Cincinnati remained a Southern city.

In 1870, there were 5,900 Blacks in Cincinnati. By 1880, that number had grown to 8,200, and by 1900, there were 14,500.[10] During this same period of time the Jewish population grew from 8,000 in 1870, to 16,000 by 1900.

In the 1880's, most Blacks lived in the area then known as "Bucktown," around 6th and 7th streets, east of Broadway. They were also located down by the river bottoms in areas known as Rat Row and Sausage Row.[11] Cincinnati's major Jewish ghettos at this time were a Russian Ghetto and a combined Rumanian and Austria-Hungarian ghetto. German Jews

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[8] The Jews of Cincinnati, p.6

[9] The Jews of Cincinnati, p.6.

[10] JCRC., Box 16, file #2. CAC report, April, 1964

[11] Boss Cox., p. 13

scattered throughout the town except for the Black ghettos. While much of the German Jewish population had earlier been located in the Over the Rhine area, by this time, they had begun to move north into Avondale.[12]

In the late 1880's and early 1890's, the Blacks of Cincinnati were legally liberated. Legislation was passed which enabled Black children to attend White schools.[13] Of course, this did not ensure their acceptance into the White community. Many Whites had a great deal of antipathy towards Blacks and color lines showed up everywhere.

In the 1890's, Blacks were discriminated against in virtually every field of employment in Cincinnati. They were denied jobs in the health department because White women were afraid of them entering their homes. They were excluded from the fire department because the White fire fighters did not want to sleep near them. There were only 12 Black policemen out of a force of over six hundred. There were no Black stenographers or book-keepers or store clerks or public school teachers.[14]

The White man's word in Cincinnati was law. All hotels, restaurants and other eating establishments were closed to Blacks. Theatres charged them higher prices and

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[12] Ibid., p. 14

[13] Ibid., p. 30

[14] Ibid., p. 30

put them in a separate gallery. All three amusement parks were closed to them except on annual "nigger day."[15]

In March of 1897, a new organization was formed: the "Colored Citizen's Labor League." This organization demanded that both mayoral candidates should pledge to spend $100,000 to $500,000 on public works for the un-employed. It wanted a remedy for public refusal to accept Black applicants. The Douglas League (another Black organization) claimed that under the administration of Boss Cox, administration prejudice had grown and interest in helping the Black had dwindled. It also attacked the superintendent of schools for failing to hire Black teachers and to integrate the schools. The Douglas league also claimed that Cox was responsible for the refusal of admittance to Blacks at Coney Island.[16] Little did the Douglas league know how important Coney Island would later be in the struggle for Black equality.

By the year 1900, things had gotten worse for Blacks. Historians have questioned why such a strong anti-Negro sentiment was present in Cincinnati. Some argue that Cincinnati's reliance on Southern trade was a factor; others point to the fact that a large number of Cincinnati Whites

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[15] Boss Cox., p. 31

[16] Ibid., p. 165-166

had southern roots and a southern mentality.[17]

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Blacks were not the sole minority discriminated against in Cincinnati. Jews also experienced discrimination. Many Jews, including Isaac Mayer Wise, had prided themselves on their close relations with the gentile community, yet, the feeling was not necessarily mutual. Several clubs, including the Cincinnati Country Club, the Cincinnati Women's Club, the Junior League and the Avondale Athletic Club refused or ceased to accept Jews as members.[18] There developed a general tendency to exclude German Jews from gentile social gatherings attended by both sexes after six o'clock.[19]

Even with the anti-semitism, Jews fared much better than Blacks. Nowhere was this more noticeable than in the housing conditions of both minorities. By the year 1912, 44% of Cincinnatians lived in tenements; many in the downtown area. Much of the lower class (of which the Blacks were a large majority) lived in the area known as the circle. Disease flourished in this area, Blacks being particularly hard hit.[20]

Many Jews, meanwhile, had moved to the area of 6th, 7th

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[17] Ibid., p. 31

[18] The Jews of Cincinnati, p. 9

[19] Ibid.,

[20] Boss Cox., p. 18

and 8th streets. As the Jews moved in, many Christians fled to the area known as Walnut Hills. With the development of rapid transit, many "Hebrews" followed them to the hills. This area became known as little Jerusalem, and Christians fled from it to Avondale. But rapid transit soon brought Jews to this desireable area as well.[21]

German Jews congregated in Avondale in large numbers, so much so that the area became known as the "Golden Ghetto." German Jews also settled in hilltop neighborhoods to the north and the east. Hyde Park remained Protestant, but Walnut Hills now contained a mixture of Jewish, Protestant and Irish residents.[22]

At this time, 50% of Cincinnati's Blacks lived in the area known as the "Zone," an area located between the fashionable suburbs and the inner "circle." 60% of native Whites also lived in the zone.[23] But Blacks felt trapped, for it seemed impossible for them to move out of their ghetto and into "mainstream" society. Blacks could not depend on anyone but themselves for support; thus, discrimination continued well into the 20th century.

Meanwhile, by 1929, many Jews were doing quite well in Cincinnati. The number of Jewish doctors, lawyers, dentists

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[21] Ibid., p. 47

[22] Ibid., p. 48

[23] Ibid., p. 28

and other highly paid professionals had multiplied several fold, most auctioneers and pawn brokers were Jews, and four of the city's largest department stores were Jewishly owned and operated.[24]

While Jews improved their economic status during the first half of the 20th century, things remained difficult for Blacks. Discrimination found its way into every aspect of society, including politics. In 1943, when Charles P. Taft was a candidate for Governor of Ohio, it was revealed that deeds to all the property that he owned contained discriminatory clauses which prohibited the resale of the property to persons who were non-White. When questioned on the subject, Taft told the local papers that such clauses were demanded by the banks in order to insure the loans.[25]

While Jews were succeeding, they were not oblivious to the fact that Blacks were having a more difficult time assimilating into Cincinnati society. Some Jews, motivated by their tradition of social justice, became involved in philanthropic organizations as well as local civic groups to aid Blacks. They began calling for changes in the law to eliminate de-facto segregation in Cincinnati. The prime mover in this Jewish organizational response was the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC). It focused on

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[24] The Jews of Cincinnati., p. 6

[25] JCRC., Box 14, file #6

discrimination not only against Jews, but against Blacks as well.

The Jewish voice in the civil rights struggle was heard loud and clear by the year 1946. In December of that year, the American Jewish Congress and the Cincinnati Jewish Community Council, an organization representing the entire local Jewish community, stated that: "...Jewish interests are threatened wherever persecution, discrimination or humiliation is inflicted upon any human being because of race, creed or color."[26] The statement continued with a call for a Fair Employment Practices ordinance (FEP) for the city of Cincinnati on the grounds that "...racial discrimination produces growing community tensions, public disturbances and disorders." The study showed that those states which had FEP legislation suffered from less discrimination. By December of 1946, Chicago and Milwaukee had such ordinances, while Buffalo, Philadelphia, Detroit, Los Angeles, San Diego, Indianapolis and St. Louis all had legislation pending.[27]

By 1947, the FEP proposal was complete. Section 742-1 of the proposal stated that any company employing 25 people or more could not discriminate based on race, color, creed

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[26] JCRC., Box 14, file #9. From a "Memorandum of Law" submitted by the American Jewish Congress and the Cincinnati Jewish Community Council, December 6, 1946.

[27] Ibid., p. 3 of report.

or national origin. This applied to job applications, hiring, upgrading of employees, promotions, demotions, discharge and compensation. Section 742-2 of the law prohibited those contractors used by the city from discriminating and legislated punishment for anyone who did not comply.[28] It would take many years, however, for the legislation to be enforced in Cincinnati.

One problem that Jewish civil rights activists began to encounter in 1948 would plague them throughout the civil rights struggle: unscrupulous real estate practices. In 1948, this was manifested in the form of restrictive covenants. It was commonplace for homeowners to restrict the sale of their property to Whites only. It was also common for realtors to list houses for sale in a way that restricted Blacks from purchasing in White neighborhoods. In June of 1948, Richard Bluestein (Cincinnati JCRC) discovered a new real estate problem. To circumvent the recent Supreme Court decision prohibiting the use of restrictive covenants, realtors would negotiate among property owners of a specific community, making them liable if they sold their home to a Black and property values declined. Out of respect to their neighbors, and, out of fear of losing money, homeowners in these communities sold

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[28] JCRC., Box 14, file #9. From the text of the proposed Fair Employment Practices Legislation for Cincinnati. 1947

only to Whites.[29]

Bluestein became immersed in the civil rights struggle in Cincinnati. In August of 1948, he was asked by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith to call two local private employment agencies under an assumed name to ask for a "White Protestant stenographer." As it turned out, each employment agency accepted his requests and sought to fulfill it.[30]

In September of 1948, the civil rights movement in Cincinnati received a boost when the Cincinnati Urban League opened its doors seeking to "...improve living and working conditions among Negroes and to promote inter-racial cooperation." A number of Jews, including Dick Bluestein, became active in the Urban League's quest for racial harmony.

In the 1950's, Jewish involvement in the effort to secure equal rights for Blacks increased. At the same time, many Cincinnati Jews were looking for ways to fend off the Blacks who were beginning to move into their neighborhoods. Fear, xenophobia and anxiety over what this would do to property values sparked neighborhood group discussions. In

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[29] JCRC., Box 14, file #12. Letter from: Dick Bluestein, Cincinnati JCRC, to: Will Maslow, American Jewish Congress. June 23, 1948.

[30] JCRC., Box 14, file #9. Survey of Fair Employment Practices, organized by the ADL. From the minutes of the JCRC, August 6, 1948.

May of 1951, Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus, a professor of American Jewish History at the Hebrew Union College, called a meeting to discuss the issue of Negroes moving into the area around Lexington avenue.[31]

Charles Posner, director of the Cincinnati JCRC, requested information from the American Jewish Committee in New York, and from the Mayors Inter-racial Committee of Detroit to see how these cities coped with Blacks moving into Jewish neighborhoods. He was sent pamphlets by the AJC entitled "If your next-door neighbors are Negroes."[32] Posner realized that this was only the beginning of a larger "problem."

In the spring of 1953, Jews were instrumental in the formation of an organization that would later stand in the forefront of local civil rights activities: the Avondale Community Council. The council consisted of teacher representatives from each school, parent representatives from the PTA, social work agencies in Avondale, each religious organization, the Avondale Businessmen's Association, the Avondale Property Owner's Association, the Avondale Civic Association and other adult fraternal

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[31] JCRC., Box 19, file #6. From the minutes of the JCRC, May 16, 1951. The meeting was held on May 20, 1951.

[32] JCRC., Box 19, file #6. JCRC minutes of May, 1951.

organizations.[33] Jews and Blacks worked together in this organization through what would prove to be its most difficult years.

Local Jewish leaders also began to speak out for Black civil rights. Jacob Rader Marcus, a Jewish historian, rabbi and civic leader was engaged in a most interesting dialogue in the summer of 1953. At that time, Dr. Marcus' wife was quite ill and confined to a wheel chair. She was also a member of the Cincinnati Women's Music Club. The Music Club gave a luncheon at the Cincinnati Country Club, and Mrs. Marcus arrived with her Black nurse. Upon arrival, Mrs. Marcus was told that Negroes were not allowed in the club; the nurse would have to stay outside during the luncheon and would not be served lunch. Mrs. Marcus relayed the incident to her husband who began to inquire. Dr. Marcus was then asked by several of the Jewish women of the club not to make a fuss; they were afraid that it would affect the good relations that existed between Jews and Christians.[34] Like many Jews, these women were more concerned with their place in society than in civil rights for Blacks.

Jews and Blacks came to Cincinnati in the wake of persecutions. Blacks were persecuted in the South as

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[33] JCRC., Box 14, file #12. Minutes from the JCRC, MAy 28, 1953.

[34] JCRC., Box 14, file #12. Memorandum of the JCRC, June 10, 1953.

slaves, and viewed Cincinnati as the land of freedom and prosperity. Jews were persecuted overseas, and saw Cincinnati as the gateway to American opportunity.

Yet, life soon became much better for Jews. By virtue of the fact that their skin was White, they were accorded greater opportunities, and were able to settle in desireable areas of town which remained restricted against Blacks. Blacks found themselves living in deplorable conditions with little hope of improvement. Jews by contrast, were full of hope. They achieved economic strength and wealth, dominated the garment industry, and achieved prominence in dry goods. Blacks achieved little economic success.

Eventually, some Blacks were able to succeed so as to move out of the "Zone" and into neighborhoods occupied by Jews. Perhaps Blacks expected Jews to be more accepting than other Whites due to the "shared experience" of being a persecuted minority. But Jews were hardly receptive to their new neighbors. Many became concerned that their property values would decline, and fled.

Some Jews did care about the plight of Blacks. Those active in the Jewish Community Relations Council, the Fellowship House and the Urban League fought hard for Black civil liberties, and continued to fight well into the 1960's. It is on account of their efforts that one can speak of a Jewish presence in the Cincinnati civil rights struggle.

CHAPTER TWO

The Civil Rights Struggle

While Jewish involvement in the civil rights struggle did not begin in 1955, it was in this year that Jews were thrust into the forefront of activism. "The" civil rights issue was centered around Coney Island Amusement Park, located on Kellogg Avenue. To understand the crisis of 1955, one must look back to the Coney Island's history.

Coney Island was owned and operated by Edward L. Schott. It did not admit Blacks. In 1947 this issue was first brought before the city council, but no action was taken. In October of 1952, Ted Berry, a prominent Black lawyer, introduced to City Council an ordinance to eliminate the discrimination at Coney Island.[1] While those on council acknowledged the discrimination, again no action was taken.[2] The next step was civil disobedience.

On May 16, 1953, a group of eight ministers attempted to enter Coney Island. To document the park's

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[1] From the papers of the "Jewish Community Relations Committee" at the American Jewish Archives. MS #202, Box 15, file #7

[2] JCRC., Box 15, file #7

discrimination, two of those present were Black; they had been sent by the Cincinnati Commission on Human Relations. An onlooker filmed a movie of the entire scene, showing the Black ministers being denied entrance to the park.[3]

Civil disobedience continued. A Black woman by the name of Ethel Fletcher attempted to gain admission to the park on July 2nd and July 4th, 1953. As one would expect, she was denied entrance on both occasions. She then took it upon herself to sue Edward Schott.[4] Schott replied that she was a known member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and thus was a known trouble maker. It was his prerogative to deny known trouble makers entrance into the park.[5] This would be Schott's rationalization of his racial discrimination policy for the next several years.

In January of 1955 the issue came to a head, and Jewish involvement in this matter began. Edward Schott had applied for renewal of his operator's license. Apparently, Charles Posner (who was the director of the JCRC) happened to be in city hall at that time. Posner made a statement that "..according to the law - a place of public accommodation

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[3] JCRC., Box 15, file #7. From a leaflet published by Ernest R. Bromley of the Cincinnati Commission on Human Relations.

[4] Ibid.,

[5] Ibid.,

should be open to all people."[6] According to Mike Israel, a former director of the JCRC and prominent Jewish activist, he and Posner met and decided to question the law.[7] The papers got hold of the story, and Posner was quoted. It was up to the Jewish community to decide what to do next.

Israel called a meeting of the JCRC and the Jewish Welfare Board at the Jewish Center. According to Israel: "Everyone ran for cover; Posner and I were left holding the bag." [8] Posner and Israel were the only two members present who went on record as being opposed to Coney Island receiving its license. Some of those present went so far as to say: "Let the Catholics and the Goyim deal with this one."[9] The chairman of the Forum at that time was Phil Meyers. According to Israel, Meyers told him, "Mike, you're interfering with property rights, this is none of our damn business, we'd better get out!" [10] Israel responded that "this is human rights - this is first." [11]

Mike Israel then took the matter before the City

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[6] From an oral interview with Clarence Elbert (Mike) Israel in Cincinnati, Ohio. The interview took place on 12/6/74 & 1/3/75

[7] Ibid.,

[8] Ibid.,

[9] Ibid.,

[10] Ibid.,

[11] Ibid.,

Council. While he did receive support from various community organizations, one group that he expected to receive support from, and did not, was the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee (MFRC). It told Israel that the issue was simply too political.[12] Israel did get support from the Episcopal Bishop and the YWCA. Eventually, the JWB also lent its support to him.

Understandably, Edward Schott did not respond too kindly to all of this. In an open letter to the community, he denied practicing any discrimination at Coney Island. He stated that "...it is unthinkable that the city would refuse to let us open Coney Island this spring."[13] He went on to remark that Charles Posner and Ted Berry would not "dictate" his policy.[14] He then wrote a very controversial letter to The Cincinnati Enquirer, claiming that his admission gate was not within the city limits of Cincinnati and defending his "Jim Crow" admissions policy.[15] Schott also wrote to the Safety Director of Cincinnati saying that Coney Island did not practice racial discrimination and had not in the past. Those excluded from the park, he explained, were only

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[12] Ibid.,

[13] JCRC., Box 15, file #7. Letter from Edward Schott which was carried in The Cincinnati Enquirer on January 10, 1955.

[14] From the Fellowship House Newsletter, January - 1955.

[15] JCRC., Box 15, file #7. Letter from Edward Schott to The Cincinnati Enquirer - January 10, 1955.

trouble makers associated with radical organizations like the NAACP.[16]

Edward Schott was not the only one writing to the city Safety Director. On January 13, 1955, a joint statement was made to Cincinnati's Safety Director by Dr. Claude Garrison, the district supervisor of the Methodist church, Mike Israel, chairman of the CRC and of the JCC, Reverend Richard Moore, of the Presbytery of Cincinnati, and Reverend David Thornberg, the president of The Council of Churches of Cincinnati, terming Schott's letter of January 10 "unjust and disturbing in its moral implications."[17] The joint statement urged the city to refuse Schott a license because he did not comply with the Civil Rights Statute of Ohio which forbids discrimination based on race or color.[18]

The Coney Island crisis soon drew notice from national Jewish leaders. David Petegorsky, the Executive Director of the American Jewish Congress, made his concerns known to Charles Posner in a letter dater April 4, 1955. In the letter, Petegorsky questioned whether the Jewish community should concern itself with segregation problems that don't

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[16] Ibid.,

[17] JCRC., Box 15, file #7. Statement to the People of Cincinnati. From: Dr. Claude Garrison, Mike Israel, Reverend Richard Moore and Reverend Daniel Thornberg to: The Cincinnati Safety Director

[18] Ibid.,

affect Jews.[19] Posner responded that it was the right and responsibility of Jews to help; "Racism is an infection which ultimately affects all groups."[20] Charles Posner also received a letter from Ben Kaufman, the National Director of Jewish War Veterans. Kaufman expressed surprise at some of the comments that were made at the initial meeting between the JCRC and the JWB. "Jewish war veterans," he said, "had the type of experience that lead us to the conclusion that we must carry the fight against discrimination even if it is another minority group that is affected."[21]

Posner received many more letters during that week. One from Benjamin Epstein, of the ADL, was concerned that perhaps there was anti-semitic motivation in quoting Posner in the paper; society might turn against the Jew as well as the Black.[22] Robert Segal, of the Boston CRC and formerly of Cincinnati, a close friend of Posner, expressed sadness at reading the minutes of the JCRC meeting of January 10th. He was sorry that Posner had run into opposition from three

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[19] JCRC., Box 15, file #7. Letter from David Petegorsky, American Jewish Congress - to Charles Posner. April 4, 1955 -

[20] JCRC., Box 15, file #7. Letter from Charles Posner, responding to letter from David Petegorsky.

[21] JCRC., Box 15, file #7. Letter from Ben Kaufman to Charles Posner - April 5, 1955.

[22] JCRC., Box 15, file #7. Letter from Benjamin Epstein, ADL to Charles Posner - April 6, 1955.

or four diehards.[23]

Posner also received letters of advice from various members of the American Jewish Committee. Solomon Andhil Fineberg, of the AJC, commended Posner. The AJC, as a rule, favored appropriate action - especially cooperation with other racial and religious groups to end discrimination in public places.[24] By contrast, Edwin Lukes, of the AJC, was critical. He felt that Posner should have consulted more with the JCRC before he made his remarks, and that the JCRC should have worked to formulate a policy. "Had Coney Island been subjected to this type of process," Lukes wrote, "many, if not all of your difficulties may have been alleviated."[25]

It soon became clear that in order to desegregate Coney Island once and for all, a test case was needed. The JCRC, the American Jewish Committee and the Anti Defamation League of B'nai B'rith worked with other religious organizations to find one. They decided to use the case of Ethel Fletcher. After her first suit, in November of 1954, she was granted an injunction restraining Coney Island from denying her admission based on her race. Schott appealed the decision,

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23 JCRC., Box 15, file #7. Letter from Robert Segal to Charles Posner - April 6, 1955

24 JCRC., Box 15, file #7. Letter from Solomon Andhill Feinberg, American Jewish Committee, to Charles Posner - April 22, 1955.

25 JCRC., Box 15, file #7. Letter from Edwin Lukes, American Jewish Committee, to Charles Posner - May, 3, 1955.

and in April of 1955, the court of appeals reversed the judgement. While the court agreed that Schott had violated the Ohio Civil Rights Act, it claimed not to have the right to enjoin future violations of the same Act.[26] Mrs. Fletcher was planning an appeal to the Ohio Supreme Court when, on April 30, 1955, Coney Island opened its gates and voluntarily admitted Blacks for the first time in its history.[27]

Jewish involvement was thus significant in bringing about the end to discrimination at Coney Island. Yet, the involvement was of but a few individuals, all associated with the JCRC. The Jewish community as a whole was not ready to jump on the civil rights bandwagon. Only with the move for Fair Employment Practices in Cincinnati did many Jews join in the struggle.

Coney Island was but an isolated victory for civil rights. Another such battle occurred eleven years later on Ludlow Avenue. One evening, Murray Branch, a Black Ph.D student at the Hebrew Union College, joined several HUC rabbinical students for dinner at the Busy Bee Cafe on Ludlow Avenue. All ordered their meals, but the waitress brought food for only the White rabbinical students.

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[26] JCRC., Box 15, file #7. From a memo of the American Jewish Committee and the ADL detailing the court history of the Fletcher case.

[27] Ibid.,

Furious, the students told the waitress that they were with the Black man and that if he was not served, they would not eat or pay. As the waitress removed the food from the table, the students called in reinforcements from the dorm. Twenty students came and ordered meals; when they were served, however, they told the waitress they were with Murray Branch and would not eat or pay until he was served. After a long standoff, the owner consented to serve Branch his dinner.[28] It was a small, but important victory.

A more important victory, which took many years, was the enactment of a Fair Employment Practice bill in Cincinnati. The call for fair employment legislation went back to the 1930s, when Mayor Kuhn asked the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee (MFRC) to study Negro employment in the city. The study showed that Negroes were denied employment in every field except for menial labor. It was this study that planted the seed for FEP in the mind of Mike Israel. It was not until 1944, however, that the first FEP committee was organized.

During World War II, Mike Israel and Charles Judd decided to take it upon themselves to pass FEP in

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[28] JCRC., Box 14, file #9. This story comes from several sources: The Jewish Post ran the story on November 26, 1957. Rabbi P. Irving Bloom, one of the students at the Busy Bee that night, also detailed the incident.

Cincinnati.[29] There was a great shortage of manpower at the time, yet when Blacks tried to fill these positions they were refused. Mike Israel looked for community support to create a FEP. When he was refused by the Catholic Archdiocese, he sought help from the businessmen themselves; he organized the Cincinnati for Fair Employment Practices Committee in room 507 of the Schwartz Building. Mike Israel and Charles Judd were co-chairmen and Charles Posner was the executive.[30]

The Cincinnati for Fair Employment Practices Committee sought the support of then mayor, Carl Rich. Rich told Israel and Judd that if they received support from the power structure of Cincinnati (meaning the businessmen) he would push the legislation through.[31] With this promise in hand, Israel and Judd organized a businessman's hearing in front of City Council.

Israel was not able to get a single businessman in town to lend support to the bill. Aside from Israel, who was a businessman himself, the only other businessman willing to take a stand in favor of an FEP was Charles Messer (a prominent contractor in town), who did not come in person to lend support. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, Mayor

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[29] Oral interview with CLarence Elbert (Mike) Israel. December 6, 1974 & January 3, 1975

[30] Ibid.,

[31] Ibid.,

Rich switched his vote and temporarily killed FEP.

According to Mike Israel, in the early days of the struggle for FEP legislation, the JCRC was afraid to become too involved or too politically active.[32] So, Israel, Posner and Judd were "the Jewish voice." At that time, Mike Israel was also the treasurer of the state committee for FEP, and Ted Berry was the chairman. Thus, there was some work on the grass-roots level, but there still needed to be work on the legislative level from within Congress and the State House. According to Mike Israel, only two legislators were bold enough to introduce civil rights, and specifically FEP legislation: a Democrat from Cleveland named Howard Metzenbaum and a Republican from Cincinnati named Gil Bettman - both Jews. It would be many years, however, before there would be full support for the legislation.

In 1955 the fight for an FEP law in Cincinnati was renewed. Charles Posner, again, stood at the forefront of the struggle On February 2, 1955, he wrote to Charles Lucas (from the Ohio Committee for Fair Employment Practice Legislation) and invited him to speak in Cincinnati, as part of a panel discussion at the Fellowship House. The panel included Lucas, Gil Bettman, Ted Berry, Jim Paradise and Charles Posner.[33]

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[32] Ibid.,

[33] JCRC., Box 15, file #2. Letter from: Charles Posner to: Charles Lucas of the Ohio Commission for FEP Legislation.

In April of 1955, Rabbi Albert Goldman, of Wise Temple, was scheduled to appear before the Senate Committee on Labor and Industry. Charles Posner wrote to Goldman before the appearance, asking him to "stress the fact that Jews in America are overwhelmingly in favor of Fair Employment Practice laws and that discrimination is great against Jews as well as against Blacks."[34] Goldman went to Washington and conveyed the message.

It was clear that if an FEP law was to be passed by the Council in 1955, it would have to be drafted and pushed by Charles Posner and Ted Berry. The two men worked diligently as a team; individually, they sounded out various members of city council as well as state legislators.

Mike Israel had a different approach towards recruiting support for FEP in CIncinnati. He put together a pamphlet entitled "FEPC and the Cost of Discrimination," and sent it to businessmen throughout the city. The purpose of this pamphlet was to show that discrimination in employment was responsible for a 30 billion dollar loss in buying power; that ten dollars out of every seventy-five paid the cost of discrimination.[35] Thus, Israel attempted to sway the local businessmen by showing them how it would be economically beneficial to them if there were an FEP in Cincinnati.

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[34] JCRC., Box 15, file #2

[35] JCRC., Box 15, file #2 "FEPC and the Cost of Discrimination" June, 1955

FEP came up again before the city council on July 7, 1955, and once again, the ordinance was defeated. On July 8, Posner wrote to Vice-Mayor Dorothy N. Dolbey commending her for supporting the defeated FEP. "The JCRC" Posner wrote, "supported FEP legislation and is greatly concerned with the widespread practice of discrimination against minorities and the devastating effect this discrimination has on a person discriminated against and the person discriminating."[36]

The battle for FEP did not die in July of 1955. Refusing to be discouraged, Charles Judd (chairman of the MFRC) wrote to Posner inviting him to an intergroup planning meeting to discuss what each group could do to ensure that an FEP ordinance would eventually pass.[37] To them, the question was not whether there would be FEP legislation, but when.

In December of 1956, Mike Israel (then chairman of the JCRC) called for new legislation guaranteeing equal job opportunities for all.[38] He spoke at nearly every Negro church, asking for their involvement in lobbying for FEP. In unabashed immodesty, Israel stated that when he arrived

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[36] JCRC., Box 15, file #2 Letter from Charles Posner to Mrs. Dorothy N. Dolbey, July 8, 1955

[37] JCRC., Box 15, file #2 Letter from: Charles Judd to: Charles Posner, July 29, 1955

[38] JCRC., Box 15, file #2. Letter from: Mike Israel to: community leaders

at the churches, the Negroes would...."thank God for sending Mr. Israel to lead us and help us."[39] Mike Israel and others rallied for support of FEP, but no real progress was made until 1958.

In the winter of 1958, Mike Israel once again made a public plea for support of FEP. He especially commended the Cincinnati Chapter of the American Jewish Committee. "The AJC" Israel said, "has done yeoman educational work in support of civil rights in general and FEP in particular."[40] In the same newsletter, Israel encouraged people to attend an Ohio FEP mobilization and rally in Columbus on January 18, 1959.

The year 1959 proved to be the watershed year for FEP in Cincinnati. On January 6, 1959, Jerry Belenker, the program director for Cincinnati FEP, wrote to Stuart Warshauer of B'nai B'rith, expressing his hope that B'nai B'rith would take an active part in the campaign for FEP legislation in Cincinnati....."on behalf of the welfare of the Jewish and the total communities."[41]

It became apparent to all involved that the real battle was to be fought in the state legislature. If the state house passed FEP legislation for all of Ohio, it was

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[39] Interview with Mike Israel

[40] JCRC., Box 15, file #8 "American Jewish Committee, Cincinnati Chapter News." Winter, 1958-59

[41] JCRC., Box 15, file #8

believed that Governor Michael V. Disalle would sign the bill into law.

In March of 1959, Charles Posner sent letters to the State representatives from the greater Cincinnati areas. He advised them of the official JCRC position which urged passage of Senate Bill #10 (for FEP in Ohio.)[42] Prolific correspondence ensued between these Representatives and the JCRC. One of the more interesting responses came from Representative Robert Groneman. Groneman claimed to find "objectionable features" in the bill. He stated that, as an attorney, he was shocked.[43] Posner, responding in kind, expressed shock at Groneman's response, the fact that nowhere in his letter did he state that FEP was desireable or even needed. Posner accused Groneman of "dubious criticism."[44]

In March of 1959, Posner as well as Mike Israel sensed that passage of the FEP legislation was near. Israel met with Governor Disalle to discuss the bill, and Disalle told him that he would let him know which Representatives were for Senate Bill #10 and which were against; seventy-two positive votes were needed to pass the bill. Disalle found that there were sixty-eight supporting members, and promised

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[42] JCRC., box 15, file #8

[43] JCRC., Box 15, file #8. Letter from Representative Robert Groneman to Charles Posner. March 28, 1959.

[44] JCRC., Box 15, file #8

Israel that if he could secure each of these votes he (Disalle) would somehow get the other four needed for passage.[45]

Both sides kept their bargain. The FEP legislation was passed and Governor Disalle signed the bill into law on April 29, 1959. Present at the signing were Mike Israel, Charles Posner, Chet Walker and Ted Berry.

But there remained many other battles to fight. One, in which the Jewish community had been involved since 1957, was the battle to desegregate Cincinnati's public schools. On Friday, October 25, 1957, the American Jewish Committee issued a press release that divulged the results of an AJC commissioned study concerning the school systems of nine major northern cities, including Cincinnati. The AJC stated that a..."potentially explosive segregation problem" existed. The study concluded that one out of four schools in these cities had a majority of non-White pupils, due to segregated housing.

The AJC correctly pointed out that, as a result of segregated housing patterns, racial groups congregated in specific areas. This had a profound effect upon the racial balance of the public schools, especially at the elementary schools.[46] The survey also showed that Black teachers, when

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[45] Interview with Mike Israel

[46] Ibid.,

employed at all, were placed primarily in Black-dominated schools.

The survey was also specific as to the demographic makeup of the Cincinnati schools. The Black population of Taft High School was 70%, Winthrow High - 22%, Hughes - 18% and Walnut Hills - 12%. Out of 68 elementary schools located in the Cincinnati area, 14 had a Black population of 75%. Out of 14 Junior High Schools, 3 had a population of 75% Black students.[47] The study also showed that 71-76% of Black students attended schools in which Blacks formed the majority.[48]

Cincinnati newspapers responded to the AJC's survey. The Cincinnati Times Star ran an article entitled "School-Race View Disputed Here" pointing out that the superintendent of schools, Dr. Claude J. Courter, and the Mayors Friendly Relations Committee felt that the word "explosive" was exaggerated. Courter stated that "no signs of increased tensions had been reported in schools where there are large numbers of Blacks."[49] Courter did not however, address the segregation issue itself. In responding to the critics, Irving Engel, president of the

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[47] Ibid.,

[48] JCRC., Box 15, file #9. Press release from the American Jewish Congress, October 25, 1957

[49] JCRC., Box 15, file #9. The Cincinnati Times Star, "School-Race View Disputed Here." October 25, 1957

AJC, said that "the AJC has an obligation to anticipate troublesome situations." He urged Bidinger to re-examine the study and to take a second look at racial conditions in the Cincinnati schools.[50]

Within the Jewish community, however, the AJC study spawned controversy; especially since the JCRC was in conflict with the AJC at this time. Charles Posner, Director of the JCRC, was one who objected to the report. Contacted by Cincinnati newspapers, he stated that the AJC release complicated the problem; it made people shy away from dealing with the integration issue. Posner was angry that AJC published its report when it did, just as he was in the midst of delicate negotiations over integration with the Cincinnati public schools.[51] Posner wanted to deal with the issue of school integration in his own manner, but he was unsuccessful. Cincinnati schools remained in a de facto state of segregation until 1963, when the NAACP filed a formal complaint against the Cincinnati School System, charging the schools with the practice of de-facto

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[50] JCRC., Box 15, file #9. Letter From Irving Engel, American Jewish Committee, to George Bidinger, Editorial Writer - The Cincinnati Post. November 4, 1957

[51] JCRC., Box 15, file #9. Letter from Charles Posner, Director of the JCRC to the Executive V.P. of the AJC November 13, 1957

segregation.[52]

With full school desegregation still many years away, and, with the battle for FEP already won, the next step was to try to secure fair housing for Cincinnati's Blacks. "Cincinnati," 94-year-old Dr. Jacob R. Marcus remembers, "always was a segregated city."[53] Nowhere was this more obvious than in the city's housing patterns. Blacks were primarily located in the center city, with isolated "pocket ghettos" located uptown. A retrospective compiled by HOME (Housing Opportunities Made Equal) shows just how desperate the situation was. Between the years 1950-1960, there was a 19.4% increase in the population of Hamilton County. By the year 1960, 87% of all Cincinnati Blacks lived in the center city area.[54] If this were not bad enough, from 1953-1960, 22,000 housing units were demolished in the center city area. This left 17,00 Black families displaced. Consequently, these families moved to Evanston, Walnut Hills or into Avondale.[55] By 1962, according to the Better Housing League (BHL) of Greater Cincinnati, Cincinnati's Blacks lived in 14 separate areas. Nine of these areas were

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[52] JCRC., Box 16, file #2. The NAACP charge was outlined in a letter from Robert S. Perlzweig of the NAACP to Will Maslow of the American Jewish Congress. DEcember 17, 1963

[53] Interview with Dr. Jacob R. Marcus, August 1, 1989

[54] JCRC., Box 22, file #7. From the appendix to the HOME annual report of 1967

[55] Ibid.,

within the city proper: West Basin, East End, Avondale, Walnut Hills, Evanston, Kennedy Heights, Silverton, Cummingsville, Madisonville and parts of Mount Auburn. Blacks were also living in Lincoln Heights, Wyoming, Steele Sub-Division, Woodlawn and the Hollydale Project near Greenhills and Forest Park. The rest of Cincinnati was closed to Blacks with the exception of North Avondale, East Walnut Hills and South West Hyde Park, which were the city's only integrated neighborhoods.[56]

Jewish involvement in attempting to alleviate the housing crisis became strong in 1957. In February of that year, The Cincinnati Post reported that "there is a strict restrictive covenant which bars sales to people of Negro blood or the semitic races, the latter defined as Armenians, Jews and Persians."[57] This prompted Mike Israel to become involved in the housing issue. He discussed with Alfred Segal a well publicized case of housing discrimination by a White woman who was attempting to sell her house, located in a White neighborhood. A Black man came and offered a fair price for the property. The woman said that she hoped she would be able to sell it to him. She then pondered a dilemma: To say no to the man meant hurting him, while to

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[56] JCRC., Box 20, file #5. Report of the Better Housing League of Greater Cincinnati, 1962

[57] JCRC., Box 14, file #6. The Cincinnati Post, Wednesday February 6, 1957

say yes meant hurting every one of her neighbors. In the end, she decided against selling the house to the Black man.[58]

Mike Israel thought that she made the wrong decision. "I believe in the moral principle of the brotherhood of man. I would judge the applicant not on color of skin, but on what kind of neighbors they would make. Jews should take the lead to remove injustices." Israel concluded by stating that he would explain to his neighbors how he felt, and that he would have most certainly sold the house to the Black man.[59] But he represented a minority position on that issue.

In a memo from Jerry Belenker, the program director of the Cincinnati JCRC to Arnold Aronson of NCRC, Belenker spoke of the "panic selling" in which Jews were engaged. As soon as a Black family would move into a neighborhood, the Jewish neighbors would quickly sell and move to an exclusive "Jewish" ghetto. Belenker assured Aronson that the JCRC was trying to discourage panic selling, but he admitted that as Jews moved out of ghettos in Cincinnati, Blacks moved in; former Jewish ghettos became Black ghettos.[60]

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[58] JCRC., Box 19, file #12. Correspondence between Mike Israel and Alfred Segal, March 21, 1957

[59] Ibid.,

[60] JCRC., Box 20, file #1. Memo from Jerry Belenker, Cincinnati JCRC to Arnold Aronson, NCRC. January 28, 1959

A large part of the problem lay neither with the Jews nor with the Blacks, but rather with the realtors. They would often list houses as being "for colored only," or "for White only, or "restricted." In 1961, in response to these adds, representatives from the JCRC met with the newspapers. Charles Posner, in an attempt to rectify the situation and eliminate racial comments from the papers, sent letters to CRC directors around the country attempting to discern whether this practice was unique to Cincinnati, or not.[61]

In the fall of 1962, President Kennedy signed an executive order promoting fair housing. The Civil Rights Committee of the JCRC applauded this act as an important first step, although it knew that there were loopholes which would allow segregated housing to be built with federal aid. The CRC suggested that the JCRC had an obligation to confer with Jewish builders and real estate operators to ensure compliance by Jewish firms.[62] The JCRC, along with other religious groups, thus began to take a more active role in assuring fair housing for all.

In 1963, the JCRC joined with the Society of Friends, the Catholic Interracial Committee, the Council of Churches and the Urban League in forming the Greater Cincinnati

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[61] JCRC., Box 16, file #4. Letter from Charles Posner to CRC leaders, May 25, 1961

[62] JCRC., Box 16, file #4. Minutes of the Civil Rights Committee of the JCRC, December 18, 1962

Committee for Equal Opportunity in Housing (GCCEOH). in the statement of purpose, published in February of 1963, The group set as its goal to change real estate and loan practices as well as public prejudices. Its ultimate goal was to establish a fair housing law in Ohio.[63] The GCCEOH kept the Cincinnati community aware of the status of housing and of what needed to be done to rectify the problems.

One newsletter put out by the GCCEOH detailed the severity of the segregated-housing problem. According to the newsletter, the majority of Blacks in Cincinnati lived in overcrowded run-down apartments. Even well educated Blacks were limited in where they could seek housing. The study showed that between 1950-1960, 50,000 new homes were built in the greater Cincinnati area, of which only 1,200 were built for Blacks. In the same time period, 10,000 homes were demolished - half of which were occupied by Blacks.[64]

The newsletter also pointed out that there were two real estate boards at work in Cincinnati - one Black and the other White. The multiple listings of White brokers were not available to Blacks. Another problem existed in the lending institutions. Apparently, the lending institutions

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[63] JCRC., Box 20, file #5. From the Statement of Purpose of the Greater Cincinnati Committee for Equal Opportunity in Housing, February 8, 1963.

[64] JCRC., Box 20, file #5. Newsletter from the Greater Cincinnati Commission for Equal Opportunity in Housing

would only approve a mortgage for a Black family if the house were located in a pure Black area or in a "changing" neighborhood. According to the GCCEOH, this perpetuated the city's slums.[65]

In order to solve these problems, the GCCEOH proposed new measures. The proposed program included close contacts with neighborhood groups (such as the North Avondale Neighborhood Association) as well as contact with intergroup agencies. The program set out to obtain all the facts in the housing crisis in Cincinnati, including demographic studies and records from the housing industries. The group proposed contacting men and women who were leaders in their community so they could work with other city and state agencies towards a public policy of open occupancy. The GCCEOH also intended to establish a connection with the real estate brokers, the housing industry, and the builders in order to monitor the crisis from within.[66]

In April of 1963, Harry Kasfir, of the JCRC, asked the chairman of the special committee considering the Fair Housing Bill to include his name as a supporter. Kasfir detailed some of the problems in Cincinnati as he saw them: that there was an influx of Blacks in Cincinnati in need of homes and that Whites were fleeing neighborhoods as soon as

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[65] Ibid.,

[66] JCRC., Box 20, file #5. Newsletter of the GCCEOH

Blacks moved in. "With the Fair Housing Law," Kasfir said, "people would have no restricted areas to which to flee."[67]

Unfortunately, all this support for bill no. 308 (the Ohio Fair Housing Bill) was to no avail. The bill did not even receive enough votes to be reported out of committee. In response to the "death of bill no.308," CORE staged a mock funeral in the bill's memory.[68] But although the bill itself was dead, joint efforts for fair housing were not.

On July 28, 1964, Abe Citron (JCRC director) received a phone call from Dr. Bruce Green, CORE's director, who reported that CORE was having problems with a Mr. Irwin H. Rhodes, a Jew, who owned the Standish Apartments on Glencoe Pk., Mt. Auburn. The apartments were alleged to be in violation of all standards of decency; they lacked screens, and were blighted with roaches, rats, broken toilets and garbage inside the building.[69] Green, who was Black, felt that this was a "Jewish" matter because the owner was a Jew. But Abe Citron disagreed. He felt that this was a matter for the Health Department. He refused to treat this as a Jewish case simply because the owner was Jewish.

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[67] JCRC., Box 21, file #7. Letter from Harry Kasfir (JCRC) to Ralph B. Cole, jr (chairman of the special committee considering Fair Housing Bill no. 308). April 24, 1963

[68] JCRC., Box 21, file #6. Memo to Dan Asher, Charles Posner and Sidney Vincent - from Melvin I. Cooperman. June 19, 1963

[69] JCRC., Box 21, file #3. Memo from Abe Citron, outlining the incident. August 4, 1964

In December of 1964, the civil rights committee of the JCRC met to discuss fair housing. Rabbi Stanley Brav, of Temple Sholom, moved that the JCRC support fair housing legislation, and specifically the Ohio Fair Housing Bill. His motion passed unanimously.[70] Less that a year later, in the fall of 1965, the Ohio Legislature finally passed a Fair Housing law prohibiting discrimination "in the sale or rental of housing because of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry." [71] Those Jews who had worked to enact this law felt elated. Now, their challenge was to get the average Jew to go along.

Charles Judd attempted to do just this. In an open letter to the Jewish community published in the American Israelite, he called on Jews "to show their convictions by volunteering to do a few hours a week, to help build non-discriminatory housing projects."[72] A year later the Civil Rights Committee of the JCRC created a sub committee on housing to help persuade realtors to show all houses on a non-discriminatory basis.[73]

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[70] JCRC., Box 16, file #4. Minutes from the December 10, 1964 meeting of the Civil Rights Committee of the JCRC.

[71] JCRC., Box 21, file #6. The Cleveland Plain Dealer, January 2, 1966.

[72] JCRC., Box 21, file #1. The American Israelite, letter to the editor by Charles Judd - December 23, 1965

[73] JCRC., Box 19, file #12. Minutes of the Civil Rights Committee of the JCRC, July 25, 1966

There were several other groups in which Jews participated that were concerned with fair housing. One group which was totally dedicated to the issue of fair housing was HOME, Housing Opportunity Made Equal. In October of 1967, HOME proposed to alleviate housing discrimination by helping 5% of Cincinnati's Blacks (1000 families) to move out of ghetto areas over the next three years.[74] Many Jews helped them in this endeavor, including several students from the Hebrew Union College. But the effort proved to be no more than a drop in the bucket; segregated housing patterns remained in place.

In May of 1968, The Cincinnati Enquirer ran a series of articles on the housing crisis. The first, entitled "Neighborhood Integration Tricky," studied five "changing" blocks: three were in Bond Hill and two in Kennedy Heights. The study showed that there was a 6-25% integration rate on the blocks studied. Blacks were buying houses in these neighborhoods because they were among the few areas in which they were permitted to buy.[75] The article also confirmed that Blacks were forced to pay more for quality housing than Whites, and the Whites were fleeing. The Enquirer felt that racism mixed with fear and coupled with realtor pressure were the primary causes for White flight out of Bond Hill

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[74] JCRC., Box 21, file #1. HOME newsletter, October, 1967

[75] JCRC., Box 22, file #7. The Cincinnati Enquirer, "Neighborhood Integration Tricky," May 12, 1968

and Kennedy Heights. Many realtors were known to call up White families immediately after a Black family bought a house in the neighborhood hoping to scare them into a "panic" sale.[76] Fear, particularly the fear of losing one's investment in a house was a primary cause of "White flight."

The second article in the series was entitled "Integration Worries Area Residents." The article detailed three types of worry. First, people were worried about change; many were simply used to stability in neighborhood population and color. Second, there were those who were worried about financial loss; a fear compounded by realty "blockbusting." Third, and most important, was fear of the unknown. Many Whites had never had a conversation with a Black family, and were unsure of what life with Blacks would be like.[77]

To reach their 1967 goal of alleviating unfair housing practices, HOME enlisted the support of several lawyers, who agreed to take on housing discrimination cases in order to set legal precedents. Encouraged by the JCRC, several Jewish lawyers responded. One, Bernard Rosenberg, agreed to take on a housing discrimination case free of charge, and

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[76] Ibid.,

[77] JCRC., Box 22, file #7. The Cincinnati Enquirer, "Integration Worries Area Residents." May 13, 1968

encouraged his friends to do the same.[78]

At times, the Jewish community found itself cast in the role of mediator. Such a case was the 1963 boycott of the Husman Potato company. CORE accused the Herschede family (who owned Husman's) of discrimination against both Blacks and Jews in its hiring process. The Herschede family denied the allegations. Mark Herschede, president of Husman's, stated emphatically that "the rumor that Husman discriminates in its employment policies against Jews and Negroes is incorrect." Herschede also stated that he would look to the Jewish Vocational Service and to Negro leaders to see how he could employ more Blacks and Jews.[79]

CORE remained dissatisfied and looked to the JCRC for help. On July 31, C.W. Vinegar, director of CORE, talked with Harry Kasfir, JCRC president, to discuss a selective buying campaign against Husman's. Instead, the JCRC agreed to serve as mediator and arranged a sub-committee of the Civil Rights Committee to gather further information.[80] The sub-committee met with CORE and with Frank Herschede, owner of Husman's and Herschede Jewelers. The latter denied discriminatory practices and charged CORE with persecuting

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[78] JCRC., Box 22, file #7. Letter from Bernard Rosenberg to Harry Kasfir agreeing to take on cases. April, 1969

[79] JCRC., Box 17, file #4. Letter from Mark P. Herschede to CORE and the JCRC. July, 1963

[80] JCRC., Box 17, file #4. Minutes of the JCRC Civil Rights Committee detailing the crisis.

him.

Later, the sub-committee met with CORE's negotiating committee, urging it to make specific demands to Herschede, and to be flexible. Before long, the JCRC found itself caught in the middle of this conflict, suspected by both sides.[81]

The selective buying campaign came to an end in September of 1963. Frank Herschede agreed in September of 1963 that Husman's would hire Blacks as driver-salesmen as well as in other capacities.[82] Two months later, however, Mark Herschede, spoke to the Retail Merchants Association and aroused anger by making a pair of tasteless racist jokes. He spoke of a new organization called SPONGE; The Society for the Prevention of Negroes Getting Everything, and of a new of people called "chiggers": Chinese and Negroes that could be dealt with chemically.[83] Jews who had been sympathetic to Herchede's complaints against CORE felt betrayed.

Concurrent with the Husman incident was the organization of the largest Civil Rights march ever to be held in Cincinnati. The Cincinnati March for Jobs and

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[81] JCRC., Box 17, file #4. Minutes of the JCRC detailing the chronology of the Husman Boycott.

[82] JCRC., Box 16, file #4. CORE Newsletter, September 30, 1963.

[83] JCRC., Box 16, file #4. Letter to Charles Posner and Harold Goldstein from Herbert R. Bloch, jr. November 20, 1963.

Freedom was organized to raise the consciousness of local citizens, and, to bring about change in the city. The local Jewish community responded in an overwhelmingly positive manner. Those Jewish organizations that supported the march included: all local synagogues, the JCRC, U.C. Hillel, B'nai B'rith, the Labor Zionist Organization, NCJW and the HUC student association.[84]

As part of their support of the march, Cincinnati rabbis drafted a statement on August 26, 1963, asserting that "racism has no place in Jewish belief or practice. The achievement of full equality for all Americans without regard for race, religious or national origin remains the principal unfinished business of our democracy."[85] The JCRC was also very active in the march. Letters urging Cincinnati's Jewish community to march ran in the American Israelite during the first two weeks in October. In addition, the University of Cincinnati worked to mobilize its youth into attendance as did the Ohio Valley Federation of Temple Youth (OVFTY).

Harold Goldstein (representing the JCRC), Murray Blackman, and Albert Goldman spoke at the march. Blackman, claimed to speak "....in the memory of those who died in the

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[84] JCRC., Box 16, file #2

[85] JCRC., Box 15, file #8. "Joint Rabbinic High Holy Day Statement."

struggle for civil rights."[86] Goldstein spoke more personally; "I am here because I am a Jew, who affirms the prophetic tradition that is my heritage; a tradition that cries out against injustice.....I am here because I remember what it was like to live in a world where people remained silent."[87]

The Hebrew Union College, as an institution, was not represented at the march. Dr. Jacob Marcus, professor of history at the Hebrew Union College, explains that this was simply because Nelson Glueck, president of HUC, and the HUC administration were not overly concerned with the plight of the Black; their own job security was top priority.[88]

Out of the march came a statement of purpose. Those present sought fair housing laws, integration of teachers and pupils, Fair Employment Practices, a municipal human rights commission, integration of the police department, removal of police dogs from patrols in Black neighborhoods, impartial justice in the courts, local support for the federal civil rights bill, the right to participate in non-violent protests against racial discrimination, election of pro-civil rights politicians and a city-wide campaign to

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[86] JCRC., Box 17, file #2. Memo of the JCRC, October 27, 1963

[87] JCRC., Box 16, file #2. Memo from the JCRC detailing the march, October 27, 1963. Goldstein's remarks were also reprinted in The American Israelite, November 14, 1963

[88] Conversation with Jacob Rader Marcus, August 1, 1989

register Black voters. It would be many years before some of these goals were met.

The issue which was, perhaps, the most sensitive, was the continued push for desegregation of the Cincinnati public schools. As 1964 began, the issue, once again, became a top priority. In February of 1964, the NAACP and CORE sought support for a boycott of the Cincinnati schools. Unless the Board of Education appointed a citizen's committee to cope with the de-facto segregation and the inequality of educational opportunity in Cincinnati, CORE threatened to organize a school boycott on February 11. On February 3, Abe Citron (JCRC), Robert Perlzweig (NAACP), Rev. Isler (Council of Churches), Robert Coates and Albert Wesley met to discuss the issue. Isler stated that the Council of Churches would not support the boycott, but would issue a statement expressing understanding of the motivations behind the boycott.[89] Abe Citron, sensing the urgency of the situation, called for a similar statement from the JCRC. It responded by..."deploring tension and [the] necessity of the boycott," and by calling for new methods of adjudicating the charges without a boycott altogether.[90] The plan failed and tensions grew.

On February 7, Bishop Blanchard and Ted Berry met with

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[89] JCRC., Box 17, file #10. The School Boycott Crisis detailed in the minutes of the JCRC, February 3-10, 1964

[90] Ibid.,

Wendell Pierce, Superintendent of the Cincinnati Schools. Berry proposed an idea for a mediation team to include Bishop Blanchard and Rabbi Murray Blackman. In response to Berry's idea, the JCRC stated that the committee should include lay people and be headed by a Black.[91]

As the deadline of February 11 grew near, negotiations moved into full swing. But despite the best efforts of Murray Blackman, compromise proved impossible to achieve. The boycott took placed as announced.

The school boycott had an adverse affect on Black-Jewish relations. Most Jews opposed the boycott due, in large part, to the emphasis the Jewish community placed on education. Removing children from school was simply not an option for Jewish families. CORE had arrived at a position which was too extreme for the Jewish community. While most Jews opposed the boycott, the Jewish community actively fought school discrimination in the years that followed.

School integration was not the only Black-Jewish issue that Jews were active in during the mid sixties. Several Cincinnati congregations maintained an active involvement in other aspects of the civil rights struggle as well. Stanley Brav was one of the most active local rabbis in the forefront of the struggle for civil rights. In 1963, he and Temple Sholom held many programs dedicated to the issue.

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91 Ibid.,

Brav's Yom Kippur sermon was devoted entirely to the issue of Black-Jewish relations. Throughout the year he invited a Black to speak from the pulpit, as well as Mike Israel to address the issue of race relations, and the director of the Urban League. Brav also declared his sin of not going to Washington to march during the High Holy Day period. He also persuaded his board to sign a joint declaration against racial prejudice and to permit the Temple name to be displayed at the Cincinnati March for Jobs and Freedom.[92]

Rabbi Fishel J. Goldfeder and Adath Israel were active in the civil rights struggle as well. Goldfeder had preached sermons on the civil rights crisis, and he and the auxiliaries participated in the March for Jobs and Freedom. The men's club had honored Ted Berry during 1963 as well. Adath Israel also agreed to put a clause in their constitution stating that they would have no dealings with any firm that practiced discrimination in its hiring.[93]

The Anti Defamation League took an active role during this time. The Northern Hills chapter of the ADL wrote a letter to Abe Citron in February of 1964 detailing their actions on behalf of civil rights during the previous year. The ADL had published articles each month in their

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[92] JCRC., Box 17, file #7. Minutes of the JCRC, February 4, 1964.

[93] JCRC., Box 17, file #7. Memo from Rabbi Fishel J. Goldfeder to Abe Citron. March 13, 1964

newsletter on the civil rights theme. It was a sponsor of the Cincinnati March for Jobs and Freedom and planned to sponsor an April meeting to a civil rights topic. It also volunteered to monitor the climate in the Brentwood Village area, a community about which the ADL was fairly certain that if a Black family moved in, violence would erupt. Thus, it tried to alleviate the tension.[94] The tensions were, unfortunately, too deep to fully alleviate.

The Jewish community often times refers to the period of the late 1950's - early 1960's as the "golden age" of the Black-Jewish alliance. The evidence does not fully support this. A handful of Jews shared in the Black civil rights struggle. Jewish leaders, however, took the lead in assuring civil liberties and freedoms for Black's. Some local rabbis even served as the spokes-men for Black organizations. Starting with the Coney Island dispute in 1955 and moving through the issues of Fair Employment, the rabbis and particularly the Jewish Community Relations Council did their best to help insure the basic human freedoms which they felt all Americans had the right to enjoy.

The issues of school segregation and fair housing were far more controversial. While Jewish leaders were in the forefront of these issues, many Jews were ambivalent at

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94 JCRC., Box 17, file #7. Letter from Northern Hills ADL chapter to Abe Citron. February 25, 1964

best. As the issue of school segregation became a top priority, the Black-Jewish alliance began to break down. Education was sacred to Jews; a boycott of schools was unthinkable. For Blacks, the boycott seemed to be the only alternative. This was a gap that could not be bridged.

Jews were sympathetic to anyone who was persecuted. Jews were, however, less concerned with the issue of segregation. Many Jews actually preferred to live a segregated lifestyle. The Jews had always formed "Jewish" neighborhoods in Cincinnati.

The Jew did not react with the spirit of "brotherhood" when Blacks began to move into these neighborhoods. As Blacks began to move into the traditional "Jewish" neighborhoods, many Jews fled. Blacks felt angry and betrayed by this "Jewish flight." Some Jews fled out of racial prejudice; many, however, were simply frightened of losing their life-long investment and pressured by realtors to sell "quickly." The tensions of the early 1960's forced Jews and Blacks, allies for so many years, to become foes; battling over turf.

CHAPTER THREE

The Battle Over Turf

Joseph Jonas, the founder, in 1824, of K.K. Bene Israel, later known as Rockdale Temple, was the first Jew to settle in Cincinnati. He came from England to Cincinnati in 1817. The first substantial Jewish "community" came from Germany. Some Jews lived in what is known as the "Over the Rhine" area, and some settled in other parts of the downtown. Downtown was also home to most of the synagogue life of Cincinnati; K.K. Bene Israel, the first to be located downtown, was at the corner of sixth and Broadway.

As the Jews became successful in Cincinnati, they moved out of the downtown area into what were considered northern suburbs. The first of these was the area known as Avondale. By the year 1941, 82% of Cincinnati's Jews lived in the Avondale area.[1]

The Jewish population did not remain in one location; it continued to move north. By 1955, only 42% of

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[1] JCRC., Box 20, file #8. From a Memorandum on discrimination in housing as it affects the Jewish community of Cincinnati - submitted to the Ohio Advisory Committee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. March 20, 1959

Cincinnati's Jews lived in Avondale. Jews had begun to move into the North Avondale, Bond Hill and Roselawn communities which were still within the corporate limits of Cincinnati. Jews had also begun to move into Amberly Village and Golf Manor; these communities were outside of the corporate limits of Cincinnati.[2]

Like many other northern cities such as Philadelphia, Rochester and Detroit, in Cincinnati it was the case that where the Jew moved, Blacks were soon to follow. By 1962, the Black community had jumped to 100,000; four times the size of the Jewish community. Blacks began to move out of the slums of the inner city and into "Jewish" communities. This process was hastened by urban renewal and the building of several major expressways.[3]

Jews did not react well to the movement of Blacks into their communities. The primary Jewish reaction was fear, followed by flight. The JCRC tried to alleviate these reactions; it adopted a policy stressing open occupancy and integration as the ideal. It also began a process of educating the Jews who lived in the Avondale, North Avondale, Bond Hill, Roselawn and Paddock Hill areas.[4] The JCRC tried to assure those Jews who lived in racially

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[2] Ibid.,

[3] JCRC., Box 20, file #7. Letter from Charles Posner to Bernard Stern of NCRAC. January 12, 1962

[4] Ibid.,

integrated areas that their property values would not decline and their safety would not be jeopardized by the Black influx.

The JCRC, with the help of a few local rabbis, organized block meetings. These provided a forum for education as to the pros of integration, as well as an opportunity for residents to vent fears and anxieties. Ninety to one hundred percent of the attendees were Jewish. The JCRC also helped to establish neighborhood groups dedicated to a smooth integration of Blacks into the community, maintenance of high standards in the public schools and an end to unscrupulous real estate block-busting tactics.[5]

The migration of Blacks into Avondale, North Avondale, Bond Hill and, eventually, Roselawn would be the source of a great deal of tension between Jews and Blacks. Most of the Jews who lived in these areas moved. The early 1960's saw the not so gradual changing of neighborhoods from Jewish to Black. As the Jews moved, so did their houses of worship, sparking particular controversy.

The changing of Cincinnati's neighborhoods set the stage for a confrontation between Blacks and Jews - two groups which had worked so closely together in the struggle for civil rights. The battle over turf would profoundly

[5] Ibid.,

impact upon the Black/Jewish alliance.

The first neighborhood to undergo a traumatic "changing" was Avondale. The once almost exclusively Jewish neighborhood began to receive Black families at the end of the 1950's. As Blacks began to move in, Jews began to move out.

In response, Jews organized neighborhood associations to enable a smooth transition. The first such group was the Avondale Community Council. The residents of North East Avondale (bounded by Reading Road, Dana Avenue, Victory Parkway and Asmann Avenue) formed their own neighborhood association called N.E.A.R.; North East Avondale Residents. The acronym NEAR was significant as it meant that people who moved into North East Avondale would be *"near"* to downtown, the hospitals, Xavier University, University of Cincinnati and the Hebrew Union College.[6]

In 1959, tensions grew as more Black families began to move into the Avondale area. Local organizations sought to find a way to prevent the "White flight" which was occurring. Several projects were initiated.

One was entitled the Avondale Project. Launched in October of 1959 by the Better Housing League and the Avondale Community Council, its purpose was to provide the services of experienced community relations personnel to

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[6] JCRC., Box 19, file #13. Memo from N.E.A.R., March 18, 1959

help the people of Avondale organize their community leaders and resources so as to avoid further "White flight." A secondary purpose was to show the effectiveness of citizen participation in other "changing" neighborhoods.[7]

Perhaps the most effective neighborhood group was the North Avondale Neighborhood Association (NANA). The statement of principles of NANA was published in July of 1960:

> There is currently a stir of uncertainty in our area because of the introduction of new residents into what has been, for several generations, a relatively homogeneous population. ....A condition of panic developed, fanned by rumor, fear and prejudice, and exploited in some instances by unscrupulous and avaricious real estate interests, thus causing home owners to list their houses for sale and flee the area. But in many other cities, i.e., Baltimore and Philadelphia, neighbors have successfully joined together in dealing with, and overcoming the situation. In order to accomplish this in our community, we have formed an organization of residents called N.A.N.A.[8]

The NANA statement continued:

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[7] JCRC., Box 19, file #13. From the "Avondale Community Council Newsletter", October 17, 1960.

[8] JCRC., Box 20, file #7. "Statement of Principles of N.A.N.A." July, 1960

> we welcome all good neighbors without prejudice as to race, creed or color, believing that people can live together harmoniously.... while welcoming Negro neighbors, we will seek to attract new White homeowner families to achieve and maintain stable integrated neighborhoods.[9]

Thus, NANA was dedicated to active integration of the North Avondale neighborhoods.

Many events in the late 1950's had helped to dictate the need for the formation of NANA. One specific incident, involving a Jewish family, received a great deal of press. Alfred Segel had a column in the American Israelite called "Plain Talk." In the February 28, 1957 issue, Segel detailed the experiences of a Jewish woman who was selling her house in Avondale. She debated: "Should I or should I not sell my house to a colored family who is very interested in buying it.?" She said that as a Jew, she knew what it was like to be left out by discrimination, yet, she was concerned with what her neighbors would think. She feared that they would all then have to look for new places to live. She concluded that:..."it would be doing Jewishly more right to my neighbors by not selling our house to this family."[10]

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[9] Ibid.,

[10] JCRC., Box 14, file #6. "The American Israelite," February 28, 1957.

NANA tried to change the discriminatory practices of several organizations, including those of the local newspapers. In May of 1961, it met with the classified manager of The Cincinnati Enquirer to eliminate the terms "Negro", "White" and "all welcome" from their "Houses For Sale" advertisements. They pointed out that the ACTION report (of the Civil Rights Commission) stated that Cincinnati was one of the few major cities north of the Mason Dixon line that used those terms.[11] The report also showed that property values were in fact stable in the "changing" neighborhoods. 41% of the neighborhoods where Blacks moved in experienced no price changes, 44% had a rise in property values and only 15% suffered a decline.[12]

NANA achieved recognition as a model organization for those who were concerned with equality and civil rights. It received wide publicity. One article entitled "Negroes Next Door no Cause for Panic" appeared in the Catholic Telegraph Register on October 13, 1961. A White, Christian couple had moved into North Avondale. Apparently the first question they were asked was "Why did you move into a Jewish neighborhood?" Then, two Black families moved in on either side of them and their friends asked "You mean you're staying here?" The couple joined NANA and became active in

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[11] JCRC., Box 20, file #7. "N.A.N.A. News" - May, 1961

[12] Ibid.,

working for integration. Soon after the Black families moved in, they were accosted by real estate brokers who said: "Naturally, you must want to move out as soon as possible."[13] The author of this article tried to show how ridiculous it was for Whites to flee.

What were Whites, and, especially, Jews afraid of? Some were afraid for their safety. The Black was believed to be a vagrant, a thief and a threat to Jews' physical safety. Others were afraid of ".....what the others might think." The Black was stereotyped as lower class, no matter what his or her financial situation was. Thus, to live near a Black family would be to endanger one's social status. Many were afraid of losing their investments. Given the negative stereotypes, even those who personally may have favored racial equality feared that their property values would decline due to the influx of Blacks into their neighborhood.

The unscrupulous tactics of the realtors, many of whom were Jewish, was a cause of particular concern to the members of NANA. NANA created an ordinance which, if passed, would prohibit direct solicitation of homeowners by real estate brokers who used the argument that a Black presence in the neighborhood reduced property values. This ordinance was patterned after one from Shaker Heights, which

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13 JCRC., Box 20, file #7. "The Catholic Telegraph Register" October 13, 1961.

prohibited inciting, arousing or referring to neighborhood unrest, tension, race, religion or nationality to induce selling. The ordinance was submitted to city council on January 31, so as to promote integrated neighborhoods and prevent panic selling.[14]

NANA received a great deal of support from the Jewish community as well as from the political community. James C. Paradise, active in the JCRC, defended the NANA proposal on a WKRC radio editorial on Wednesday, March 21, 1962. "...The direct solicitation of homeowners to sell their homes not only invades their privacy, creates tensions, and floods the real estate market with residential properties," Paradise stated, "but, more importantly, tends to produce panic selling and a racially segregated community."[15]

The ordinance was formally submitted to the city manager by Councilman Willis Gradison. The city manager recommended a more limited ordinance: "We recognize that a stable, integrated neighborhood cannot be achieved by letting things drift by stubborn resistance to change, or by allowing this predominantly White neighborhood to become an exclusively or predominantly Negro neighborhood." The City Manager also censured the real estate brokers stating that they ignored these neighborhoods until the first Negro

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[14] JCRC., Box 20, file #8. Memo from NANA, April 30, 1962

[15] JCRC., Box 20, file #8. reply to a WKRC Editorial by James C. Paradise. March 21, 1962

families moved in.[16] It was to be a long battle between NANA and the realtors. Blockbusting, the incitement of fear and tension into the minds of White homeowners by realtors so as to induce the sale of their property, would continue well into the late 1960's.

One area where NANA saw more immediate results was in the North Avondale school system. In the Spring of 1963, NANA petitioned the superintendent of schools, Wendell Pierce, for more classrooms in North Avondale Elementary School. NANA pointed out that the overcrowding of the elementary school was a cause of great concern to young parents in North Avondale. NANA also proposed that the city rent two classrooms from Wise Center (the synagogue-center of Isaac M. Wise temple) to house the primary age students in that immediate area.[17]

Pierce studied this plan as well as alternate plans for the school. He felt that the idea of Wise Center was not ideal because it would set up racial boundary lines: since those students who lived closest to the Wise Center were Black, classes there would be almost all Black. This would be interpreted as segregation.[18] Pierce also felt that

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[16] JCRC., Box 20, file #8. Statement by James C. Paradise.

[17] JCRC., Box 20, file #7. Special report of Superintendent Wendell Pierce. May 27, 1963.

[18] JCRC., Box 20, file #7. "Alternate Plans for North Avondale School," from "NANA News." May 31, 1963

although Wise Center did have room for grades 1-3, and most likely grade 4 as well, the classrooms were small and the children's exposure to other students would be severely limited. Since Wise had neither a lunch room nor gym, the students would have to walk back and forth throughout the day. Another problem was that if the students were taught at Wise, school would be required to shut down an additional five days a year for the Jewish holidays.[19] For these reasons, the Wise center option was dropped as a solution to the overcrowding of the North Avondale Elementary school. It is interesting to note that the issue of church state separation did not directly factor into these discussions.

NANA did not give up its quest for a better education system for its students. In conjunction with the JCRC, it set out to establish a Pupil Enrichment Program (PEP) for the North Avondale students. The program was to be all volunteer; PEP volunteers would offer courses in geology, chemistry, geography, biology, great books, creative arts, creative writing and journalism.[20] The program provided a huge success. Many CRC's around the country heard of the program and sought advice on how to implement it in their

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[19] Ibid.,

[20] Ibid.,

communities.[21]

As the 60's moved on, NANA grew in recognition and power. The Cincinnati Enquirer ran an article in December of 1964, detailing some of its accomplishments: "Four years ago North Avondale was an all White community....there was a White exodus when the first Negro moved in...since NANA was formed, Whites and Negroes have worked together to thwart blockbusting."[22]

NANA turned to the JCRC for help in 1966. In order to avert a zoning change in North Avondale, Mrs. Jerome Berman, President of NANA, appealed to the JCRC for support at a City Council hearing on September 21, 1966. The zoning change would permit current single or two family homes to be turned into multi-family dwellings. The change would also allow for the construction of new shopping centers in the area. Berman felt that these changes would change the character and desirability of the North Avondale area. In urging the JCRC to help, she wrote that "it would seem proper that a Jewish organization participate in promoting a creative idea for zoning in a neighborhood struggling for survival as the leader in orderly and desireable

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[21] JCRC, Box 20, file #7. Letter from: Alvin Kushner, Detroit JCC to: Abe Citron, JCRC of Cincinnati. October 14, 1964 Kushner had heard of the JCRC involvement in the racial integration of North Avondale schools through the PEP and wished to implement such a program in Detroit.

[22] JCRC., box 20, file #7. The Cincinnati Enquirer, 12/14/1964

integration."[23]

NANA also sought JCRC support in trying to create more equitable housing. Tension occurred, however, when NANA sought to reveal and prosecute so called "slum-lords" - especially when they turned out to be Jewish. Stanley Ducovna, a Jew, was the owner of Mr. D Realty that owned a building at 508 Clinton Springs Road. The Tenant Council of the building alleged that he did not take care of it; he was lax in repairing broken toilets as well as in ridding the building of rats, etc. The tenant council said that allowing blight on Clinton Springs affected the whole area as well as Rose Hill.[24]

The Council contacted NANA for help. A letter was sent by NANA to Myron Schwartz of the JCRC asking him to intervene. Apparently, Ducovna sent eviction notices to all of the tenants in the building. NANA was planning to picket the house but they were afraid doing so would have adverse repercussions for Black/Jewish relations.[25]

The Ducovna affair received a great deal of press.

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[23] JCRC., Box 20, file #7. Letter to: Myron Schwartz, JCRC From: Mrs. Jerome R. Berman, President of NANA. September 12, 1966

[24] JCRC., Box 22, file #5. Original letter was sent to Stanley Ducovna of Mr. D realty from Margaret Ballard, NANA Standards Committee. When no reply was offered, a copy of the letter was sent to NANA. August 7, 1967.

[25] JCRC., Box 22, file #5. Letter to Myron Schwartz. August 9, 1967

The Cincinnati Call and Post picked up the story and stated that the tenants received their eviction notices after protesting that their living conditions were unfair, unhealthy and unsafe. On August 9, the tenants put up a picket line. A "United Black Community Organization" was set up by Reverend Harold Hunt.[26]

Ducovna responded three days later "I am happy to be able in the near future, to fix the drive, install steps, install a walk into the rear yard, fix one balcony, and clean up the upper part of the unused yard at Clinton Springs," he wrote. "The cost will come out of the 100% collection of the July rent which is in escrow...my company would also like August rent in full so we can pay mortgage and other monthly expenses."[27]

The tenants did not accept this response. Ducovna had proven himself unreliable in the past, and they were thus reluctant to forward him any more rent until repairs were completed. The tenants also wondered why Ducovna needed more money to make repairs since he had been collecting money for years and little, or none of it, had been put into the building.

The Cincinnati Herald ran the story on September 12,

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[26] JCRC, Box 22, file #5. The Cincinnati Call and Post. August 12, 1967.

[27] JCRC., Box 22, file #5. Letter from Mr. D Realty, August 15, 1967.

1967. It stated that the tenants planned to picket the landlord's residence and encourage other Blacks not to rent apartments from him. The Herald pointed out that Ducovna raised the rents after the protests began, and, as a result, the tenants formed rent escrows to hold their money in case Mr. D Realty did not comply with their demands.

The demands were as follows: periodic exterminations, driveway repairs, steps up to the driveway, rat control, replacement of old unsanitary carpets, removal of unsightly tree limbs and backyard landscaping. Although tenants received a proposal which said that $100 a week would be used to meet some of their demands, they were not satisfied, as their needs were immediate, not the kind that could be dealt with on a week to week basis. Tenants then received three days notice to vacate. At this time, veteran attorney and former NAACP President Webster Posey was called in to help. HOME, NANA, and the ACC (Avondale Community Council) all pledged support. The tenants posted signs on the building stating: "Soul brothers must stick together." "Rats stay, but tenants go." "Landlord lives on Rose Hill, therefore, watch your neighbor."[28]

While the Cincinnati Herald condemned Ducovna in September of 1967, NANA commended him. On September 23, NANA wrote to Ducovna commending his cooperation in a common

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[28] JCRC., Box 22, file #5. The Cincinnati Herald. September 12, 1967

effort to improve housing.[29] How ironic it was that the local Black newspaper and the leading community organization had totally differing perceptions of the situation. It seems as though NANA was looking for a "Jewish hero" and the Herald was responding out of Black frustration. The fact that this incident could have such differing interpretations indicates the beginning of breakdown in the established Black-Jewish alliance.

The continued fight against Jewish slum-lords further eroded the Black-Jewish alliance. In September of 1967, NANA wrote to Mrs. Leo Kurtz, a property owner on Avondale Avenue, claiming that her building was being used as a rooming house, and that there was police evidence of one tenant who was sub-letting his apartment. It was pointed out to her that sub-letting was a violation, as the building was not zoned for this. NANA also pointed out that there was a pending narcotics case at her address. "We hope that you will clear the building of these tenants by October 1, after which we will take forceful action."[30] One could interpret this letter as a desire on the part of NANA to rid the neighborhood of young, lower class Blacks. 1969 was a year of great tension between the Jewish and Black

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[29] JCRC., Box 22, file #5. Letter from: L.T. Ballard, Standards Committee of NANA, to: Stanley Ducovna. September 23, 1967.

[30] JCRC., Box 22, file #5. Letter from: NANA, to: Mrs. Leo Kurtz. September 18, 1967.

communities in "the battle over turf." Rockdale Temple had decided to move to Amberly village in 1964, broke ground in 1967 and moved into the facilities in early 1969. Wise Temple had already moved to Amberly. Both congregations based their moves on the argument that a congregation should be near its constituency, a constituency which had vacated the Avondale area. In fact, the congregations were largely motivated by fear.

Both congregations were engaged in tense dialogue with the Black community. In March of 1969, George Hale, the president of NANA wrote to David Goldman, the president of Wise Temple. He was responding to a bulletin article in which the Wise president mentioned moving. "....It is a symbol both to our neighborhood and to the entire city that a major religious group is willing to live and work with the inevitable problems which confront morally committed persons in today's world." He hoped that Wise Temple would remain where it was.[31]

Hale questioned the tenor of the questionnaire which Wise had sent out to its members. He felt that the questions, some of which dealt with the "poor" neighborhood, would cause racial tensions at a time when tensions were already high. "...At times there are considerations even

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[31] JCRC., Box 22, file #5. Letter from: George Hale, president of NANA, to: David Goldman, president of Wise Temple. March 5, 1969.

more important that the convenience of the majority," wrote Hale.[32]

Hale appealed to Myron Schwartz of the JCRC as well. He noted that the questionnaire sent out to the members of Wise Temple referred to the neighborhood as a "poor" one. "In what way was the neighborhood poor?" Hale asked. If it were economic poverty, Hale suggested that perhaps Wise could support a neighborhood rehabilitation project instead of putting its money into a new building. If poor meant poor housing, perhaps Wise could influence Jewish slumlords to upgrade their property. If it was poor in social behavior, perhaps if Wise helped NANA fund a youth house and program for the troubled kids, things would not be so bad. This would be better than spending money to flee to an affluent neighborhood. If "poor" meant poor relations between Blacks and Jews, Hale assured Schwartz that up until this point there had been a "good neighborly feeling." "Nothing has happened to change the community's good feeling towards Wise. Has something happened to change Temple's attitude?" asked Hale.[33]

Goldman responded to Hale's letter by stating that Wise Temple had made no decision concerning relocation; it was simply studying the possibility. He also pointed out that

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[32] Ibid.,

[33] JCRC., Box 22, file #5. Letter from: George Hale, president NANA, to: Myron Schwartz, JCRC. March 7, 1969.

the majority of members no longer lived in North Avondale, and that the trustees were wondering why Wise, as yet, had not followed the migration of the other Temples to the northern part of the city.[34]

Wise Temple was not the only Temple engaged in controversy. Rockdale, too, was involved in a heated dialogue with the Avondale Community Council. Rockdale had moved from the building at the corner of Rockdale and Harvey Avenues, and was allowing the ACC to use the facilities rent free. W.E. Crumes, of the ACC, asked Rockdale for a 400 year lease at the cost of one dollar a year. The ACC also wanted Rockdale to pay all maintenance costs. Rockdale refused.[35] Rockdale's board of trustees felt that they needed the flexibility to sell the old structure if needed. The suggestion that they not only lend the facilities but also pay for maintenance seemed preposterous. Rabbi David Hachen, the rabbi of Rockdale Temple, felt that the Black community suggested such an idea because they knew that the Jews were afraid of the Blacks, especially after the riots.[36]

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[34] JCRC., Box 22, file #5. Letter from: David Goldman, president of Wise Temple, to: George Hale, president of NANA. March 14, 1969.

[35] JCRC., box 56, file #4. Letter from the president of Rockdale Temple to the members of the congregation. August 7, 1969.

[36] From a conversation with rabbi David Hachen, rabbi of Rockdale Temple 1968-9. January 23, 1990.

Avondale and North Avondale were not the only neighborhoods where there was a "battle over turf." Just slightly north, in the communities of Bond Hill and Roselawn, tensions were also mounting. Bond Hill's boundaries stretched nine blocks North of California Avenue and East of Paddock Road.[37] In 1966, the JCRC, recognizing the growing tensions in the Bond Hill and Roselawn areas, and the number of Jews who were fleeing these areas due to Black migration, organized a series of meetings to deal with the problem. The JCRC proposed that neighborhood associations be formed; one for Bond Hill and Roselawn, one in Golf Manor and one in Paddock Hills so as to alleviate tensions. A JCRC study showed that there was a need to help the rabbis facilitate integration in their communities.[38]

In March of 1966, Marvin Kraus suggested that the JCRC locate Jewish talent to support the existing, yet weak, Bond Hill- Roselawn Community Council. He felt that it was necessary to prevent panic and to forestall a mass move out. Harold Goldstein proposed that the JCRC take steps in Bond Hill and Roselawn to help maintain a stable inter-racial community.[39]

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[37] JCRC Box 22, File #2. From the preliminary investigation of the Cincinnati Planning Commission, September 11, 1967.

[38] JCRC., Box 22, file #2. From a proposed program of action by the JCRC. January, 1966

[39] JCRC., Box 16, file #4. Minutes of the CRC of the JCRC, March 4, 1966.

The Bond Hill - Roselawn Community Council (BHRCC) was in full swing by March of 1966. There were 300 people on the mailing list and a full quarter of the active membership were Jews. One important thing that the council did was to initiate block meetings. Most people who lived in these areas were uncomfortable or afraid to speak about the changing nature of their neighborhoods. It was hoped that the block meeting would alleviate these tensions. The most talked about issue in these meetings was the fact that between 1963 and 1966, Blacks had moved into certain blocks, and, when one family moved onto the street, others soon followed.[40]

The JCRC organized a one day conference in May of 1966 entitled "The Jewish Community and the Urban Crisis: Role and Responsibility." Its purpose was to review the relationship of the suburban Jewish community to the problems of the inner city. There were many Jews who owned homes or shops in the inner city, and this was a cause of Black-Jewish tensions.[41]

The BHRCC worked very hard to establish a positive, attractive image. In July of 1966, the executive committee

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[40] JCRC. Box 22, file #2. Memo to: Marvin Kraus, concerning the racial percentage makeup of the Bond Hill Roselawn schools. March 2, 1966.

[41] Unlike many other minorities, as the Jews left a particular neighborhood they retained property and businesses. Thus, while the Jews were gone, the black still had to pay money to them; often times more than a reasonable sum.

set up a campaign to attract people to move into the area and to dissuade Whites (primarily Jews) from moving out. One slogan was: "In every metropolitan area there is a cosmopolitan community. In Cincinnati, it is Bond Hill."[42]

In July of 1966, a JCRC memo detailed the formation of the BHRCC and the challenges that lay ahead. The memo, written by Charles Cook, stated that the council was organized in response to reports of residential racial tension. It also pointed out that the Jews of Bond Hill and Roselawn might not welcome a block by block organizing effort (which the JCRC was trying to initiate) because there was a high percentage of economically, socially and intellectually self sufficient people who were not in favor of the "togetherness" of a block organization.[43]

The JCRC held a public meeting in November of 1966 to discuss the integration of Bond Hill and Roselawn. Harold Goldstein, of the JCRC, stated that the primary goal of the JCRC was to avoid ghettoization. He tried to encourage Jews to stay put in Bond Hill and Roselawn and take an active part in the council.[44]

More and more Jews became interested and involved in

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[42] JCRC., Box 22, file #2. JCRC memo of July 11, 1966.

[43] JCRC., Box 22, file #2. JCRC memo - an excerpt from the report of Charles Cook to the BHRCC on May 31, 1966. The memo was dated July 12, 1966.

[44] JCRC., Box 22, file #2. Minutes of JCRC meeting at the JCC. November 29, 1966.

the BHRCC. At a meeting of the council in January of 1967, over half of the attenders were Jews. The meeting was to clarify the purpose of the BHRCC as well as to discuss proposed zoning changes. One key zoning change which the council was fighting was the plan to turn the Crest Hills Country Club into a shopping mall. The Council felt that such a change would jeopardize the neighborhood stabilization that they were working so hard to maintain.[45]

While more and more Jews were involved in the BHRCC, the new Jewish Community Center in Roselawn seemed hesitant to take a firm stand. In February of 1967, it passed a resolution stating that it would like to be an observer on the council without committing itself to the council's point of view. It stated that it was concerned with maintaining good relations with its neighbors and in maintaining a stable community, but by virtue of..."our position in the community, we felt it important to maintain independence of action on each issue as it arises."[46]

As tensions mounted, both the JCRC and the City Planning Commission carried out studies so as to determine the severity of the problem. In response to the survey, Dr. Moses Zalesky, the Executive Director of the Bureau of

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[45] JCRC., Box 22, file #2. Minutes of the BHRCC, January 31, 1967.

[46] JCRC., Box 22, file #6. Letter from: Harold Goldberg, Executive Director JCC, to: Charles Cook, President BHRCC. February 14, 1967.

Jewish Education and principal of the Cincinnati Community Hebrew School said: "This neighborhood is bound to change, it is just a question of time. If the Negro is middle class with the same standards as the White community, there will be no problem. If the Negro is lower class, and engaged in hooliganism, there will be many problems." Zalesky said that the Community school and the B.J.E. was going to stay put because they did not have the finances to move, there was no place to run, and as long as the neighborhood remained safe it would be fine to stay.[47]

Zalesky's comments provide insight into the Jewish psyche. The Jew was afraid of the Black. The perception was that Blacks were lower class, perpetrators of violent crimes and dangerous to be around. Zalesky was in a difficult position; he needed to be consistent with the mainstream Jewish ideology, yet, as a liberal educator in the community, he was expected by Blacks to be at the forefront of integration.

Many of the local rabbis did attempt to avert panic among their congregants. Fears of declining property values, an increase in crime, a lowering of educational standards and of being "left behind" were all rampant - rabbis attempted to quell them and to promote calm. Rabbi Fishel J. Goldfeder, rabbi of Congregation Adath Israel

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[47] JCRC., Box 19, file #12. Minutes of the BHRCC, October 23, 1967.

(Conservative), said that "unless we help to avert panic, we are working against ourselves." He called for the people of Golf Manor, Bond Hill and Roselawn to work together and to work on a consistent basis. He also called for the establishment of an educational program for Bond Hill and Roselawn residents so they could get to "know thy neighbor."[48] Goldfeder also addressed the issue of what the constituency of the JCC would be if a preponderance of Blacks moved into the area. He felt strongly that the purpose of the JCC was for Jews to meet Jews, and if Blacks applied en masse to join, he would be willing to forego the state money grant so as to keep the Jewish center Jewish.[49]

Rabbi David Zielonka, of Valley Temple, (a new congregation), took a more "popular" and perhaps more realistic view. He said that the congregation would build in the Wyoming area. He felt that there was no question that as soon as Blacks moved into their neighborhoods, Jews would move out in droves. "The quality and caliber of incoming residents will determine if Whites remain," Zielonka stated.[50]

In addition to rabbis, several Jewish professionals

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[48] JCRC., Box 19, file #12. JCRC memo quoting various rabbis in the community. From a discussion with Rabbi Fishel Goldfeder, November 11, 1967/

[49] Ibid.,

[50] Ibid., Discussion with Rabbi David Zielonka. November 7, 1967.

were outspoken on this subject. Mrs. Harold K. Moss, executive assistant of the American Jewish Committee, stated that the changing neighborhood would not affect the AJC office at the Jewish center. She did say that if those Blacks who moved into the area were militant, the AJC would have to rethink its position. The problem, according to Moss, was not the neighborhood, but the areas one has to drive through to get there.[51]

Julius Graber, executive director of Glen Manor nursing home, felt that Roselawn was typical of other middle class neighborhoods; first the Jews move in, then the Italians, then the Poles, then the Negroes and then the Puerto Ricans. He said that if Glen Manor became "completely surrounded," then the residents would become uneasy.[52]

Rabbi Bernard Greenfield, of Congregation Ohav Shalom, considered it "...unheard of for a synagogue to be in a non-Jewish area." Since most of his congregants walked to shul, he felt that the shul would have to move if they, the congregants, did.[53] Greenfield believed that the residential part of Roselawn posed no problem. He, himself, lived at Shenandoah and Parkdale and had Black neighbors.

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[51] Ibid., Discussion with Mrs. Harold Moss, November, 1967

[52] Ibid., Conversation with Julius Graber, November 16, 1967.

[53] Ibid., Conversation with Rabbi Bernard Greenfield. November 22, 1967.

He felt that a few "Negro" families are acceptable, and as long as the character of his neighborhood did not change, he would stay.[54]

In March of 1968, the BHRCC, in conjunction with the Bond Hill Civic Club, the JCC and the Paddock Hills Assembly issued a set of community goals: 1. to maintain or improve the residential character of the community, transportation facilities and traffic circulation; 2. to improve existing commercial districts and to maintain the existing economic position of the residential communities; 3. to maintain the current educational and cultural standards; to improve availability and accessibility of related facilities and programs; 4. to maintain a high level of physical comfort which was already existing in the community, and to eliminate those points of stress and strain evident in the community; 5. to improve citizen participation and awareness within the community; and 6. to reduce the causes of illness and accidents and improve medical service personnel and facilities.[55]

The JCRC continued to work closely with the BHRCC to achieve a smooth integration. In the winter of 1968, the BHRCC wrote to the JCRC asking for help in dealing with real estate solicitors, many of whom happened to be Jewish.

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[54] Ibid.,

[55] JCRC., Box 22, file #2. Statement of Community Goals: Bond Hill-Roselawn Community Council. March 5, 1968.

Robert E. Stautberg, President of the BHRCC pointed out that people who live in recently integrated communities are sensitive to pressure and panic.[56] The realtors only pressured those communities which were recently "opened" and were able to convince many to sell.

The JCRC took an active role in combatting block busting. The sub committee on housing was attempting to contact realtors and to induce them to show houses on a non-discriminatory basis. The aim was to keep the realtors from excluding Whites who might want to move into Bond Hill or Roselawn.[57]

Because Jewish realtors received a bad reputation, as many were involved in blockbusting, some took to advertising their commitment to integration. One local company - The Ben Franklin Company - took out an ad in the American Israelite saying: "We believe integrated working is living. We are proud of our work in Bond Hill and North Avondale. We provide homes for all residents and encourage home buyers of both races to come in. We also encourage White homeowners to keep their homes when Blacks move in."[58]

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[56] JCRC., Box 22, file #6. Letter from: Robert Stautberg, President of the BHRCC, to: Harold Goldberg, JCRC. February 1, 1968.

[57] JCRC., Box 22, file #2. Memo to: The JCRC Sub-Committee on Housing, from: Myron Schwartz. July 25, 2966

[58] JCRC., Box 23, file #4. The American Israelite. June 6, 1968.

A few days after this ad ran, an ad-hoc neighborhood committee on unscrupulous real estate practices made a presentation before the Cincinnati Real Estate Board. It pointed out that since the civil rights act of 1968, real estate people were forbidden from discriminating. The committee asked the real estate board to add a non discrimination clause in all standard form contracts and to embark on a community wide program of education about housing economics. The committee wanted all myths about integrated neighborhoods exploded, all facts which could avoid panic selling up front and open, and the benefits of open housing discussed.[59] Bond Hill and Roselawn were not the only neighborhoods dealing with these difficult issues.

Following in the footsteps of the BHRCC, the next neighborhood association to be formed was the Paddock Hills Assembly. In September of 1967, it sent representatives to the JCRC meeting to discuss mutual concerns. Robert Chaiken, of Springmeadow Drive, stated that the Assembly was more concerned with neighborhood deterioration than with the fact that their neighbors might be Negroes. He felt that people would stay in the Paddock Hills area if the people moving in (the Blacks) had similar intellectual and economic backgrounds. He stated that his home was on the market

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[59] JCRC., Box 22, file #6. Presentation to the Cincinnati Real Estate Board by an Ad-Hoc Neighborhoods Committee. June 10, 1968.

because he wanted his children to grow up in a neighborhood with children they could play with.[60]

Another Paddock Hills resident, Robert Jacobs, stated that as long as his neighbors were compatible with those on the block, he would stay. He also said that there was no point in running; that there was no place to run. "As long as the neighborhood remained two thirds White, it will be O.K." said Jacobs.[61]

Mrs. Ora Sievers also attended the meeting. She said that she had no objection to Negro neighbors as long as their backgrounds were of comparable standards to hers so as to make for a compatible relationship. She felt that a great deal of the tension in Paddock Hills area was do to the fact that Mayor Bachrach moved out quickly, selling his house for a loss, and that his son went door to door saying "the neighborhood was going."[62] On October 30, Mrs. Sievers called the JCC saying that the neighborhood was in a panic, and that they must do something to keep people from running.

Dr. Stanley Block, of the Paddock Hills area, felt that the real problem was the blockbusting in which the realtors

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60 JCRC., Box 22, file #8. Meeting of the JCRC with representatives of the Paddock Hills Assembly. September 27, 1967.

61 Ibid.,

62 Ibid.,

were engaged. He felt that the realtors had made the assumption that "no sane White person" would move into the area, and thus, they were attempting to turn the area into a Black ghetto. Mrs Fred Levor stated that she did not like the integration of Springmeadow one bit; she had nothing in common with her neighbors socially or culturally.[63]

On November 2, 1967, Mrs. Alfred Fritz, president of the Paddock Hills Assembly, held a meeting with people who lived on the east and west sides of Paddock Road. She tried to get a representative from each and every street so that each street could have a block meeting in order to stabilize the neighborhood. The plan of action was that two block leaders, Mrs. Fritz and the JCRC would meet to set the agenda for these meetings.[64]

One block meeting took place at the home of Roz and Bob Chaiken. People were clearly motivated by a desire to stay in their homes, and thus, they did not speak directly to the issue at hand. They were not open to discussing the problem of panic selling or the malpractice of realtors.[65]

As the problem of blockbusting continued, it was perceived that many of those culpable were Jews. Miriam

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[63] Ibid.,

[64] JCRC., Box 22, file #8. Minutes of the Paddock Hills Assembly, November 2, 1967.

[65] JCRC., Box 22, file #8. Minutes of the Paddock Hills Assembly, November 16, 1967.

Mann wrote a memo to members of the Paddock Hills Assembly explaining problems with realtors who were using "outrageous and unethical methods" to induce panic selling. She stated that Spencer Realty had been one of the most unethical, and that the Jewish firms of Franklin, M & M and Mayer Realtors were also unethical.[66]

Representatives of the Paddock Hills Assembly got together with members of the Bond Hill-Roselawn Community Council as well as the JCRC. They discussed the relationship between the two groups, specifically concerning borderline areas of each neighborhood such as those areas of Bond Hill and Roselawn beyond Tennessee Avenue. They also discussed the possibility of meeting with local realtors in an attempt to put an end to blockbusting.[67]

Another block meeting was called at the home of Paul Schindler who lived in the Egan Hills area. In his announcement of the meeting he eloquently stated that "Paddock Hills area, both east and west of Paddock Road, is a highly stable, highly desirable integrated neighborhood with special appeal to professional and business people. In an era of rapid urban expansion, to maintain the unique

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66 JCRC., Box 22, File #8. Memo from Miriam Mann to the Paddock Hills Assembly. January 12, 1968.

67 JCRC., Box 22, file #8. Minutes of the Paddock Hills Assembly mentioning a meeting held at the home of Myron Schwartz - including members of both the BHRCC and the PHA. November 20, 1967.

nature of such a neighborhood, the cooperation of all home owners and residents is a necessity. It is necessary to cooperate in order to insure high property valuation."[68]

The issues were terribly complex and agonizing for all parties involved. The once strong relationship between Blacks and Jews was definitely hurt by these tensions. Jewish flight from Avondale, Roselawn, Paddock Hills and other areas sent a very powerful message to the Black community. It was inevitable that the Jewish community was going to re-locate, yet, Blacks could not help but feel abandoned. The Jewish realtors who engaged in blockbusting also provided ample cause for distrust and dislike.

The migration of the synagogues to the Ridge Road area also met with less than enthusiastic responses from the Black community. Yet, to remain in non-Jewish neighborhoods simply for the sake of integration made little sense, and might have led to their demise. There was also a fear of violence, such as had occurred in Boston's Mattapan and Dorchester areas, where synagogues had been vandalized and one conservative rabbi had acid thrown in his face.

Jews and Blacks were, unfortunately, in a no-win situation. Each group began to suspect the other, and each had ample evidence to back up its analysis of what was happening. Frustrations and tensions were reaching the

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[68] JCRC., Box 22, file #8. Letter from: Paul Schindler to: Residents of Egan Hills. November 28, 1967.

breaking point. And then came the riots.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Riots

As 1964 approached, tensions between Blacks and Jews had risen sharply. Those bridges which were not burned as a result of the battle over turf were none the less very weak. The once strong alliance continued to crumble. The early 1960's witnessed new and disturbing phenomena: Jewish racism and Black anti-semitism. Acts of "love and kindness" were slowly replaced with acts of frustration and rage.

Cincinnati was not unique in terms of the broken bridges between the Black and Jewish communities. Indeed, in Philadelphia in the summer of 1964, tensions erupted into riots. The city's JCRC found that most of the stores wrecked in the riots were owned by Jews.[1] Whether these riots were specifically aimed at Jews and Jewish store owners, or whether Jews had simply been in the wrong place at the wrong time remained unclear. A major concern in Philadelphia was "what would this do to the civil rights movement and Negro-Jewish relations?"[2]

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[1] JCRC., Box 17, file #9. Memo to: JCRC officers of Philadelphia, from: Jules Cohen, Executive Director of the PHiladelphia JCRC. August 31, 1964.

[2] Ibid.,

The Philadelphia riots made news in Cincinnati on September 4, 1964. On that day, the Every Friday ran an article headlined "Jewish Storekeepers in Philly Lose Millions in Rioting." The riots lasted for two nights over a 125 block area. According to the Every Friday, 80% of the businesses wrecked were Jewish owned. Jewish leaders denied that the riots were motivated out of anti-semitism.[3]

The Cincinnati Call and Post, sensing the tension in Cincinnati carried an article entitled: "Now Philadelphia, What Next?" The paper reported that the Philadelphia riots began with an illegal act by the police and that this sparked violence and looting. The Call and Post claimed that civil rights issues were never at the cause of the riots erupting throughout the country, and that the public image of the Black was greatly damaged by these riots.[4]

The pattern leading up to the Philadelphia riots was repeated in New York, Rochester, Jersey City and Paterson, New Jersey which all experienced riots at about the same time. In each case (Except Harlem) the riots came on the heals of an apparently routine police action. Usually a Black was arrested, leading to attacks on the police by groups of Blacks, and ultimately leading to the destruction

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[3] JCRC., Box 17, file #9. The Every Friday, September 4, 1964.

[4] JCRC., Box 17, file #9. The Cincinnati Call and Post, September 12, 1964.

of White owned stores. Because so many of the store owners in the inner city were Jews, anti-semitism was often cited as a factor in the riots.[5]

In the Harlem and Rochester riots, a large number of Jewish stores were burned and looted. Abe Citron heard of this and contacted a member of the American Jewish Committee in New York. He was checking on reports that Jewish stores were marked for destruction whereas many non-Jewish stores were left untouched.[6]

Abe Citron wrote a letter to the ADL in New York seeking information on possible anti-Jewish motivations behind the riots in Rochester and New York City. Jerome Levinrad, of the ADL, responded by saying that stores owned by both Jews and non-Jews were looted, as well as stores owned by Blacks. He stated that there was no evidence that Jewish shops were painted with anti-semitic markings or desecrated in any anti-Jewish way.[7]

The New York AJC also responded to Citron by quoting from the Allen-Scott Report, a report dealing with the Rochester riots. This report was the work of syndicated

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[5] Ibid.,

[6] JCRC., Box 17, file #9. Letter from: Abe Citron, to : Milton Ellenin, American Jewish Committee, New York. August 28, 1964.

[7] JCRC., Box 17, file #9. Letter to: Abe Citron, from: Jerome L. Levinrad, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, New York. October 9, 1964

columnists, and found its way into newspapers such as the New York Herald Tribune. Their study showed that Jewish stores were pinpointed for destruction.[8] Milton Ellenin, Director of the AJC, stated that there was no evidence to back up the Allen-Scott report, but he did not deny its allegations either.

The Allen-Scott report sent shock waves throughout the Jewish community. In response, the Rochester JCC sent out a memo to CRC's and national agencies across the country re-iterating the position of the New York AJC that the riots were not motivated by anti-semitism. Rabbi Philip Bernstein of Rochester, explained the JCC position: "...the riots took place in crowded negro areas of 3rd and 7th wards; 7th ward is the old Jewish neighborhood. Many families have moved but kept their stores. Jewish stores were looted; however, stores owned by non-Jewish Whites as well as stores owned by Blacks were also looted."[9]

One can see just how far tensions extended by looking at the community of Mattapan, Massachusetts. In Mattapan, one local rabbi had his faced burned by acid. In response to this and other tensions, thousands of Jews left the metropolitan area for the suburbs. Many Jewish students had

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[8] JCRC., Box 17, file #9. Letter from: Milton Ellenin, AJC of New York, to: Abe Citron. September 1, 1964.

[9] JCRC., Box 17, file #9. Memo from: Rochester JCC, to: CRC's and National Jewish Agencies. September 2, 1964.

to pay extortion money to Black students for protection. Other Jews, whose buildings were sold to Black landlords, found themselves evicted for no apparent reason.[10]

As Black-Jewish tensions rose around the country, they reached high levels in Cincinnati as well. Many feared that violence - long predicted - would break out. Bruce Green, of the NAACP predicted in 1964 that racial violence would not only erupt in Cincinnati, but that it would occur at the corner of Rockdale and Reading roads, where a statue of Abraham Lincoln stood - as if a symbol of how little had been accomplished in civil rights in the century since Lincoln was assassinated.[11]

At the core of the tensions were charges of Jewish racism and Black anti-semitism. The JCRC had been responding to charges of racial prejudice levelled against Jews since the 1950's. At that time, most of the incidents dealt with Jewish slum-lords. The charges became more severe as the 60's progressed.

In April of 1964, Abraham Citron (JCRC) received a call from James Vinegar of CORE, detailing a problem with a Jewish owned bakery, the Wolf Bakery on Reading Road, run by two sisters. Apparently there were only 2 Black employees

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10 JCRC., Box 18, file #5. The Jewish Post and Opinion. August 1, 1969.

11 The Cincinnati Enquirer, June 16, 1967. "Living Conditions Poor in Powder Key Area."

at the bakery, and one had recently been fired for supposedly hitting one of the sisters. The one who was fired was then replaced by a White man. Vinegar also claimed that the Wolf sisters made a practice of throwing Black children out of the bakery.[12]

In an attempt to resolve the situation, Citron placed a phone call to Dave Wolf, the brother of the Wolf sisters. Wolf replied somewhat angrily that there were only 4 employees working at the bakery and that two of them were in fact Black. He said that one Black porter did hit his sister and was fired, but that all were welcome in the family bakery; the only ones thrown out were those kids who attempted to steal.[13] On May 7, Robert Gentry of CORE went to visit the bakery, and decided that the charges against it were unfounded.[14]

In August of 1964, the Jewish community again found itself in a very difficult position. Adath Israel Congregation was exploring the possibility of moving or expanding its facilities. It employed, at that time, a cantor named Cantor Jacob E. Rosenberg. On August 1, Abe Citron received a call from Roger Abramson, a member of

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[12] JCRC., Box 18, File #5. Memo to: Harold Goldstein, from: Abraham Citron. April 29, 1964.

[13] Ibid.,

[14] JCRC., Box 18, file #5. Memo from: Abe Citron, to: Harold Goldstein. May 7, 1964.

Adath Israel as well as a member of the NAACP, who reported a rumor that Rosenberg was leaving and that synagogue blocked the sale of his home when they learned that Rosenberg planned to sell it to a Black couple.[15]

As the week unfolded, so did the story. According to JCRC memos, Cantor Rosenberg had walked into Spencer Realty and said that he had a home for sale or rent. Mrs. William (Mildred) Whitehead, an employee, expressed interest in the home for herself and asked Rosenberg to show the home to her and her husband. They then drew up an agreement to rent the home for a period of time with a right to purchase at a later date. The Whiteheads gave Rosenberg $100 for the first month's rent.[16]

Two days after this agreement was drawn up, Rosenberg called Whitehead and said that after thinking about it, they really wouldn't be interested in the house: the basement leaked, he had overestimated the house's worth, he had received threatening phone calls and he was sure the Whiteheads would not be happy there.[17] The Whiteheads, the NAACP, CORE and the JCRC all launched investigations into the matter.

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[15] JCRC., Box 18, file #8. Memo From Abe Citron, August 3, 1964.

[16] JCRC., Box 18, file #5. Memo from: A. F. Citron to: Harold Goldstein, Harry Kasfir, A.W. Bilik and Herbert Bernstein.

[17] Ibid.,

It was learned that just prior to the transaction, Rosenberg had been fired by Adath Israel. The synagogue wanted to acquire the house and the land, and Rosenberg knew this. He then rushed out so as to make a personal profit and prevent Adath Israel from securing the land. According to Rabbi Goldfeder of Adath Israel, Rosenberg was unstable and a liar --the reasons for his firing. Goldfeder understood that the check from the Whiteheads was returned for insufficient funds and that Rosenberg then sold the house to a member of the congregation without telling the Whiteheads.[18]

After this occurred, the realtor notified the Whiteheads that the check had bounced, but, when they tried to contact Rosenberg, he had already left town. Citron then called Whitehead who was very upset. He told her that in light of the bad check, the contract was null and void. Citron immediately called the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee and all agreed that "...if the Negro press got hold of this story, it would be devastating."[19]

It appears that in light of the breakdown in relations between Blacks and Jews, Citron feared that this would be the bombshell Blacks were looking for. If the check had in fact bounced, then there would be no reason not to cancel

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[18] Ibid.,

[19] Ibid.,

the contract. Perhaps Citron over-reacted. It is unclear as to why the JCRC became so involved in this issue.

Once involved, the JCRC felt compelled to diffuse this situation. Their methods for appeasing the Whitehead's were questionable. On August 6, the JCRC decided that Allen Brown should approach Whitehead and her attorney, Arthur Reid. On August 7, Reid asked the JCRC for $600 plus an additional $150 for CORE. It is remarkable that the JCRC even considered paying hush money for the actions of one Jewish individual. Citron consulted with Charles Messer, Herbert Bernstein and Dr. Abraham Brown and they rejected the offer. They felt that $600 was blackmail; that $100 or $200 would be fair. They felt that the long range interests of the local synagogues as well as the Jewish community demanded that there be no surrender to threats.[20]

Lawyers for both sides sat down to negotiate. The JCRC pointed out that the only real legal case was against Rosenberg. Whitehead's attorney pointed to the synagogue's prior need for this piece of property. The two sides settled the dispute on August 12, and the terms of the settlement were not disclosed.

The Rosenberg case was not the only embarrassing situation for the Jewish community. Another case which received a good deal of press was that of Elenore Pranikoff

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[20] JCRC., Box 18, file #5. Informal meeting of the JCRC held on August 6, 1964.

vs. Donald and Barbara McDonald. Mrs. Pranikoff, a Jew, owned "The Good Design Gift Objects Shop" on Reading Road. The McDonald's apparently bought $7 worth of merchandise, yet, as they were leaving Pranikoff asked the police to search Donald McDonald. The McDonalds claimed that because he was Black, she (Pranikoff) thought him to be a thief. Pranikoff later told the police that he "...looked like someone else."[21]

Pranikoff's reaction to this couple was symbolic of Jewish fears that they were being victimized by Blacks. As Jews moved out of Avondale and into the "fancier" neighborhoods of Golf Manor and Amberley, they distanced themselves from Blacks both physically and psychologically. Increasingly, they perceived Blacks in negative terms, as social failures and dangerous criminals. Feelings of compassion dissolved into fear; Blacks became the enemy.

The Pranikoff case sparked reaction from many Cincinnati organizations. "We find it extremely difficult to see how you can, in good faith, continue to operate a business in this community when you have such little regard for the character of persons who frequent your store," wrote the Avondale Community Council. They also suggested that Mrs. Pranikoff relocate her business in another

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21 JCRC., Box 16, file #4. The Cincinnati Herald, Saturday, May 13, 1967. "Young Couple to Sue Store."

community where her regard for customers would be higher.[22]

Rabbi Murray Blackman, in an attempt to resolve the matter, called Mrs. Pranikoff. She explained to him that two years earlier a shoplifter made off with $750 in merchandise. The police had given her a picture of a Black man with a mustache. McDonald was a Black man with a mustache, so she became suspicious. She told Blackman that she was wrong, and that the police had apologized to McDonald.[23] But by them the damage had been done. Publicity given the case further divided the Black and Jewish communities.

Another Jewish institution which came under Black criticism was the Jewish Hospital. A Black woman, Mrs. Martha Holt, had a heart attack on November 22, 1963, was admitted to Jewish Hospital, and stayed there for three weeks. During this time, a head nurse came in and said that she was moving Mrs. Holt. When she protested, the nurse agreed to call the doctor for his opinion. A young resident came by and agreed with Holt that she should not be moved. The nurse allegedly replied that "we don't mix colored and White in the same room, and I need that room for a White patient." Eventually, after complaints by Holt and the

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[22] Ibid.,

[23] Ibid.,

doctor, Holt stayed in her room.[24] The incident, however, was publicized and, since the hospital bore a Jewish name, the incident created further tensions between Blacks and Jews.

Given these growing tensions, and the riots in other parts of the country, Abe Citron was clearly nervous. He feared that riots might someday erupt in Cincinnati as well, and sought to plan ahead so as to avoid them. He noted, for example, that police brutality often started riots, setting off rioting and looting. He also noted that the police generally did not use guns, tear gas, clubs or hoses, and predicted that if they did, the riots would be much worse. He urged control without violence.[25]

Citron felt that if a riot occurred in Cincinnati, and if the police responded quickly and in full force, the problem could be quelled. He suggested that the JCRC encourage liquor store owners to remove the stocks from their windows and that they support the employment of state and federal troops if necessary. He concluded that riots were the result of civil rights injustices and could be avoided if the injustices themselves were removed.[26]

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[24] JCRC., Box 18, file #4. Letter from: Mrs. Martha Holt to : The JCRC Office. January 28, 1965.

[25] JCRC., Box 17, file #9. JCRC memo to: Civil Rights Committee of the JCRC, from: Abe Citron. September 9, 1964

[26] Ibid.,

On Monday, June 12, 1967, the violence that Bruce Green had predicted in 1964 and that Abe Citron had feared ever since became a reality. A peaceful demonstration in response to the arrest of Peter Allen Frakes, erupted into violence, following an emotional speech. Frakes was arrested for carrying a sign which said "freedom for Laskey."

Posteal Laskey was on trial for the murder of a young woman in Cincinnati. At the time of his conviction, several woman had been killed by a strangler. Laskey was not accused of being the strangler, but a local newspaper suggested that he was the one. Although he was not on trial as the strangler, he was convicted and sentenced to death. The only positive I.D. was made by a woman who saw a Black man in the back seat of a car on a dark night. When asked if Laskey's conviction solved the stranglings, city manager William Wichman said: "I've got a smile on my face."[27]

At about 9:45, crowds formed around police cars and rocks were thrown into the windows. Someone threw a rock through a pharmacy located at the corner of Rockdale and Reading. In reaction, gangs of Black youths spilled into the streets damaging 24 Avondale stores with rocks and Molotov cocktails. Several people, including newspaper

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[27] JCRC., Box 18, file #2. "Why Did it Happen?" A Report on the riots written for the JCRC by Grant G. Cannon, Robert B. Bect and Charles M. Judd.

reporters, suffered cuts and bruises.[28]

Many of those whose stores were damaged were Jews. Mike Levy was the owner of Mike's Meat Market at 3349 Burnett Avenue. He told the press that he was still staying put, that the damage was done by hoodlums and not by his customers. Rudolph Youkilis, the owner of Rudolph's Jewelers at 2842 Burnett said: "I just can't take it any more." He later moved his store. Ben I. Torf, owner of Torf's Pharmacy said that he would sell his store. Milton Harris, owner of Schoeppel Meats said that he would also have to move. Harris noted an interesting fact: his store was surrounded on either side by two Black owned stores. Only his store was destroyed. The others carried a sign in their windows that said: "Soul Brothers."[29]

Jewish store owners were not the only Jews who suffered during the riots of the summer of 1967. On June 13, rioters damaged the Rockdale Temple which stood at the corner of Rockdale and Harvey Avenues.

At that time, Murray Blackman was the rabbi of Rockdale Temple. His congregation had long planned to move, and a new site in Amberley Village had been selected; construction had recently commenced. The Black community was angry; it

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28 The Cincinnati Post and Times Star, June 13, 1967. "City Acts to Avert New Violence; 24 Avondale Stores Damaged."

29 The Cincinnati Enquirer, June 17, 1967. "Mike Still Staying Despite Damaged Store in Riot Area."

seemed as if the congregation was "fleeing" the neighborhood. This was true, in part. From the perspective of many of the congregants, it was no longer safe to travel to the Temple. The issue had become a divisive one between Blacks and Jews.[30]

Most of the rioting that occurred throughout the country in 1967 occurred in slums. Avondale, however, was not a slum - at least not on par with the Haugh ghetto of Cleveland. Yet, the riots caused people to realize that "slum-like" conditions existed in Avondale. Buildings designed for two or four families had, in some cases, 60 or more people living in them, and were infested with rats.[31] This was blamed on the landlords, many of whom happened to be Jews.

The police and the national guard managed to quell the Avondale violence relatively quickly. In early July, however, riots broke out anew. On July 4, many businesses in Avondale and surrounding areas were systematically damaged and looted. City manager Wichman was quoted as saying: "Now, we are dealing with organized crime."[32] Groups of Black youths were reportedly attacking police and

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30 Comments from a conversation with Rabbi David Hachen, Rabbi of Rockdale Temple 1968-69. January 23, 1990.

31 The Cincinnati Enquirer, June 14, 1967. "Avondale's No Slum.....So Why?"

32 The Cincinnati Post and Times Star, July 5, 1967. "Crackdown Ordained on New Lawlessness."

firemen.

The event that instigated these riots occurred on Friday, June 30. A Black power group picketed two grocery chains on Rockdale and Forrest Avenues, near Reading road. The group demanded that the stores hire a Black manager and bookkeeper, get rid of police protection and speed up the grocery lines.[33] As frustration mounted, rioting broke out. It continued through July 6. At least seven major fires were started and windows were smashed in nine other stores. On July 26 and 27, more riots occurred in the streets of Cincinnati. $100,000 in damage was done to The Giant Furniture store on Gilbert avenue.[34]

In October, riots spread to a new location - Hughes High School in Clifton. Gangs roamed the halls of the school using blackjacks on White students. Two White girls had their clothes stripped off and one was being beaten as police arrived on the scene.[35] Black clergy and civic leaders condemned these attacks, but it was clear that they were no longer in control of Cincinnati's Black youth.

The insured riot loss in Cincinnati from the riots of June 11-19, 1967 was placed at $2.6 million: Avondale had

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33 Ibid.,

34 The Cincinnati Post and Times Star, July 28, 1967. "Firebombers strike Giant Furniture Store."

35 The Cincinnati Enquirer, October 21, 1967. "Hate Peddlers Blamed in High School Riot."

$861,250 in damage; Evanston - $79,875, Madisonville - $41,805, Millvale - $12, 775; and, West End - $6, 645. There were 253 riot connected criminal offenses. A total of 404 individuals were arrested.[36]

Cincinnati was certainly not the only city hit by riots during the summer of 1967. Newark, Rochester, Detroit, Seattle, Atlanta, Toledo, Plainfield, NJ, Cambridge, MD, New York, NY and San Francisco were all affected. All in all, there were 90 racial disturbances over the three months of the summer of 1967.[37] According to The Enquirer, common elements to all the riots were: "roving bands of negro youths, sweltering summer nights, charges of police brutality, window smashing, bottle hurling, looting and fire - bombing."[38]

For many months, officials of Cincinnati tried to figure out the cause of the riots. Some argued that Black unemployment and under-employment were the prime factors behind them. In the Black areas of Cincinnati joblessness among Blacks was 3 to 4 times the city average.[39]

As 1968 approached, tensions between Blacks and Whites

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[36] JCRC., Box 18, file #2. The Cincinnati Post and Times Star, September 20, 1967.

[37] JCRC., Box 18, file #2. The Cincinnati Enquirer, September 24, 1967.

[38] Ibid.,

[39] JCRC., Box 18, file #2. The Cincinnati Enquirer, September 26, 1967.

peaked. Sparking the tensions was an underground newspaper known as The Newsletter, distributed to Cincinnati teenagers. It detailed the case of H. Rap Brown, described as a political prisoner "...being held in New York as a political prisoner of the racist U.S. government." The newspaper stated that there was a historic pattern of imprisoning Black people who worked for liberation. According to The Newsletter; "...the racist news media of Cincinnati started a poll asking for opinions on whether Black people should be allowed to hear H. Rap Brown. The Black says 'the hell with your poll.'"[40]

The Newsletter responded angrily towards Black preachers saying: "Where were you when we were beaten by White racist dog police! Where were your big yapping mouths when racists such as George Wallace and Robert Shelton spoke in Cincinnati?"[41]

The Newsletter also called for the Black youth to respond with violence. "The only way the honkie police force can be wakened from their sick and inhuman ways of enforcing injustice is to make them pay for this action personally.....a group of four or five brothers can retaliate against this criminal element in very meaningful ways. Black power is for Black people to live and White

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[40] JCRC., Box 18, file #2. The Newsletter September 7, 1967.

[41] Ibid.,

power is for White people to die - White is nothing."[42]

By September of 1967, State Representative William Bowen questioned if Cincinnati had gotten the message of the June riots. He noted that the only positive step that Cincinnati had taken since the riots was to undertake a study of unemployment. Bowen noted that the police were quick to enact an anti-loitering ordinance, which in his opinion was just a clever way to keep Blacks off the streets.[43]

On September 27, the City Council voted 7-2 to maintain the ban on loitering. The ban forbade 3 or more people from congregating on a sidewalk, street corner or other public place where they might be an annoyance to passers by or residents. The Black community was up in arms over this ordinance. One Black leader called it "...unconstitutional and directed solely against the Negro way of life."[44] Clearly, Blacks were the ones most affected by this ban, especially in those areas where the riots broke out.

Many scholars studied riots in other cities in order to gain insight into the causes of Cincinnati's unrest. A study of the Haugh riots in Cleveland in 1966, for example,

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[42] Ibid., paragraph written by a nine year old Cincinnati boy.

[43] JCRC., Box 18, file #2. The Cincinnati Enquirer, September 27, 1967.

[44] JCRC., Box 18, file #2. The Cincinnati Enquirer, September 28, 1967.

showed on the basis of census data that ghetto conditions had deteriorated, unemployment was higher and people's income and poverty levels were worse in 1965 than in 1960. Those economic units with the lowest earning potential (female headed households and the elderly) had increased dramatically in the Black community. Those economic units with the greatest earning potential had decreased in numbers.[45] Thus, economic tensions in the Cleveland Black community contributed profoundly to the outbreak of the Haugh riots.

Critics were quick to apply these conclusions in Cincinnati. Clyde Vinegar, director of CORE, stated that: "....We've been asking for a center for young people, and what do they offer us? An old synagogue at Rockdale and Harvey!"[46] Vinegar was referring to Rockdale Temple, which the congregation had opened up to serve as a meeting place for Black youth. The location of the meeting house may have influenced some Black youth into feelings of an anti-Jewish nature.

Another Black leader cited poor housing as the major source of dissatisfaction that led up to the Cincinnati

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[45] JCRC., Box 18, file #2. The Cincinnati Enquirer, September 29, 1967. Quoting an article which appeared in "Washington University Magazine."

[46] JCRC., Box 18, file #2. The Cincinnati Enquirer, September 29, 1967. "Critics Cite City's Lack of Interest in Plight."

riots. He blamed the City Council for doing nothing, and suggested that Cincinnati needed a leader like New York's Mayor John V. Lindsay.[47]

In early 1968, the JCRC finally published their interpretation of the Cincinnati riots entitled "Why Did It Happen?" For two years prior to the riots, the authors recalled, a group of clergy warned that unrest was imminent. They pointed out that in the summers of 1965 and 1966, Black leaders worked hard to prevent riots from occurring. But proponents of non-violence gradually lost credibility with the Black community, while those who preached violence were applauded. Moreover, the study concluded that the riots themselves brought results. Scores of new jobs were created on the city payroll, government purse strings loosened and a Negro aid to the City Manager was named.[48] Thus, the JCRC concluded, Blacks achieved a great deal through violence.

The report also found that Blacks and Whites alike were being misled by educators: "Children are taught of the American dream; of freedom of the individual, progress of society and the opportunity for each person to go as far as his/her abilities will carry him/her. The status of the Black in America and in Cincinnati prove that this is

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[47] Ibid.,

[48] JCRC., Box 18, file #2. "Why Did it Happen?" A report on the riots written for the JCRC by Grant G. Cannon, Robert B. Bect and Charles M. Judd.

hogwash."[49]

Black riots, according to the report, were a response to disillusionment. They were a way of saying that: "You can deny us tranquility and all it means, but don't forget baby, we can deny it to you . If we can't have it, no one can."[50]

The report suggested that Blacks were condemned to an "eternal childhood" in American society, for they were kept out of the decision making process, and not even consulted on how to make their own lives better. It explained that the riots, while a drastic measure and a violation of law and order, reflected a view on the part of Blacks that without a shared feeling of justice, then law and order had no import.[51]

Blacks, according to the report, viewed law and order as a codeword for White efforts to maintain tranquility. Blacks, on the other hand, sought justice. The report cited the case of a Black girl accused and convicted of stealing two dozen napkins and $60 from a White woman. She was convicted and sentenced to two years in prison. At the same time, a Black man was accused and convicted of murdering another Black man. He was given a suspended sentence and

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[49] Ibid.,

[50] Ibid.,

[51] Ibid.,

served no time.[52] If that was how Blacks perceived the value that society put on their life, it is no wonder they resorted to violence, the report claimed.

A question was raised in the report as to whether the "occurrences" in Cincinnati were actually riots (spontaneous in nature), or revolts (a planned, orderly attack). The orderly destruction that took place suggested the latter possibility. The businesses targeted for destruction were White owned businesses in Black owned neighborhoods, Black owned businesses in White owned neighborhoods and Black owned stores which were "White oriented," like a Black owned hair styling salon which specialized in hair straightening.[53]

The report of the JCRC concluded with an assessment of the needs of Cincinnati's Black community. The authors addressed a series of questions to Cincinnati's Jewish community: "How many Blacks are employed where you work? How many Blacks are on T.V. or work at the paper? If a Black and a White approached you for a job, each with the same skills, whom would you hire? Do Blacks get the same rate on a car or house loan? Have we done anything to de-segregate the schools? If you were a Black and you found these problems unanswered year in and year out, would you

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[52] Ibid.,

[53] Ibid.,

revolt or at least feel like burning down the town?"[54] Thus, the JCRC report acknowledged that the Jewish community, as well as the community at large, were to blame. The conditions many Blacks lived under were deplorable and the riots - according to the report - were, from the Black perspective, the only way out.

The JCRC study was, at once, both sympathetic and paternalistic. Well-meaning as it was, it viewed Blacks as objects, or as bad children. While it outwardly blamed others for the plight of the Blacks, its subliminal message was that Blacks were not responsible for their own actions. In time, this paternalism would, for different reasons, be rejected by Blacks and Whites alike.

After the riots, the Cincinnati Jewish community stepped up its involvement in the civil rights struggle. The motivation for involvement, however, had changed. At Rockdale Temple, David Hachen - the new rabbi - invited many Black speakers to the congregation, including Betty Shabaz, the wife of slain activist Malcolm X. One local Black minister (whose church was literally down the block from Rockdale and Harvey) stated that he was entering the Temple for the first time in his life. Hachen admitted later that he tried to cultivate a relationship with the local Blacks for very practical reasons: "...so they wouldn't tear down

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[54] Ibid.,

the Temple while we were still in it."[55]

Clearly, the motivation for civil rights involvement was no longer the altruism of the 1950's, but simply fear. If it was to survive, Rockdale Temple needed to be considered an integral part of the community, involved in helping to solve Black problems.

The Jewish community was among the first to protest proposed anti-riot ordinances in Cincinnati. It charged that they were discriminatory as well as unconstitutional. Bernard Rosenberg, chairman of the JCRC in 1968, wrote to city hall and protested that the new anti-riot act defined a riot on the basis of the powers invoked to quell it. Rosenberg wondered who would make such a determination and argued that law and order needed to be coupled with justice to reach the root cause of frustration without just looking to punish.[56]

The Jewish Federation of Cleveland responded in a like manner. It publicly opposed a riot control bill because it felt that it jeopardized Blacks' freedom of speech and assembly.[57]

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[55] From a conversation with Rabbi David Hachen, January 23, 1990.

[56] JCRC., Box 18, file #8. Letter from Bernard Rosenberg, Chairman, JCRC. February 5, 1968.

[57] JCRC., Box 18, file #8. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 26, 1968. "Cleveland Federation Warns Riot Control Bill Threat to Democratic Rights."

On April 4, 1968 Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis. Disturbances and looting broke out again in the streets of Cincinnati, most notably in Avondale. On April 8, the national guard was called in. Once again, the major destruction occurred at the corner of Rockdale and Reading Roads. The heaviest damage was sustained by the Segel Furniture Co., with damages estimated at $100,000. A curfew was placed on the city as looting, burning and rock throwing continued. The damage due to fire-bombing was placed at $100-200,000. One hundred and fifty citizens were brought before the courts.[58]

What started this riot? Apparently, Sergeant Russ Jackson and a Mr. James Smith were standing in front of the English Jewelry Store warding off looters with a shotgun. A group of five Blacks surrounded Smith and one grabbed the barrel of his gun. The gun went off, shooting and fatally wounding Smith's wife. Rumors spread that a White cop had killed a Black woman. As word of the rumor hit the streets, riots broke out that spread from Avondale into Mt. Auburn and Evanston.[59]

What occurred in the courtroom during the week of April 8th further outraged civil rights activists. Three fourths

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[58] JCRC., Box 18, file #8. "A Chronological Synopsis of Events in Cincinnati, Ohio - April 8-10, 1968."

[59] The Cincinnati Enquirer, April 9, 1968. "Guard Moves on Rioters, Curfew Slapped on City. Violence Rips Avondale Area; Two Killed."

of all the cases brought in were for curfew violations. Bond was set at the astronomical figure of $10,000. Those convicted of curfew violation received one year in the workhouse and a $500 fine. Every case ended in a verdict of "guilty." All of the defendants were Black and all of the judges, police officers and prosecutors were White.[60]

This did not go unnoticed. On April 10, Cincinnati Councilman John Gilligan (a candidate for the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senator) criticized both the justice system and the judges. While the judges responded, terming the charges "a political stunt," Gilligan persisted, and, on April 12, Mayor Eugene Ruehlmann lifted the "emergency proclamation."[61]

Tensions continued to rise into the summer of 1968. Blacks and Jews now seemed to be worlds apart. "Jewish organizations, known for strong backing of the negro cause, see negro anti-semitism in every level of the community," The American Israelite reported in a lengthy analysis. The article continued by stating that Black leaders hoped that Jews would not fall into the trap and withdraw support.[62]

A revealing anti-semitic article was published in an

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60 JCRC. Box 18, file #8. "A Chronological Synopsis of Events in Cincinnati, Ohio April 8-10, 1968."

61 Ibid.,

62 JCRC., Box 18, file #5. The American Israelite, July 15, 1968.

underground Black Cincinnati newspaper called the Lincoln Heights Speaker, in December of 1968. It detailed alleged Jewish activities on Christmas. "I want to pass along a story I heard the other day," the author began. "Most of the Jewish merchants celebrate Christmas day by taking the family down to the store. They gather around the register, and with joined hands, while dancing, they sing 'what a friend we have in Jesus'."[63] Perhaps more interesting than the piece itself - an old anti-semitic piece of folklore - was the fact that the JCRC felt it to be significant enough to warrant immediate attention. Jews were nervous and taking no chances.

Many theories were put forth as to why Black anti-semitism was on the rise. One pointed to Jewish migration patterns as a factor. Jews allegedly had a habit of moving into and out of neighborhoods quickly. While they moved to the suburbs, they retained their property and stores in the neighborhoods they vacated - thus, it was argued, arousing resentment, especially when the newcomers to the neighborhood were Black.

The fact that many of the Jews did not take care of their property, and were labelled "slum-lords," did not help. Many Jewish merchants that remained also charged high prices, interest and carrying fees - to offset losses from

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[63] JCRC., Box 18, file #5. The Lincoln Heights Speaker, December 16, 1968.

theft and non-payment. Thus, the poor Black found the stereotype of the miserly Jew validated.[64]

Another theory pointed to tensions between Jews and middle class Blacks. As Blacks reached positions of prominence in business, they allegedly found Jews who had gotten there first, and, now, were their bosses. This, according to the theory, instigated anti-semitism among some Blacks.

Yet another theory held that Black nationalism caused anti-semitism. Blacks nationalists found it easy to identify with the arabs and to see Jews - everywhere - as "oppressors" who opposed all peoples of color. Some Black nationalists went so far as to say that "...Hitler made one mistake when he didn't kill enough Jews."[65] The damage done to Jewish merchants during the riots throughout the country (1966-1969) were interpreted by some Black nationalists as "justice."[66]

A study by Gary T. Marx found that a majority of Blacks who were anti-semitic saw Jews as no different from Whites. If anything, he showed that there was a slight tendency to see Jews as better that other Whites. The

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[64] JCRC., Box 18, file #5. "Black Anti-Semitism Crisis; Myth or Threat." NIP Magazine, January, 1969. Article written by Bob Antonio, sociology and anthropology departments, Notre Dame University.

[65] Ibid.,

[66] Ibid.,

problem, as Marx saw it, was that the Jew came to symbolize those Whites whom the Black was forced to deal with on a daily basis, and therefore became subject to particular hatred.[67]

After decades of frustration and oppression, the Black community had made a stand through violence. The riots certainly woke up the community to the injustices Blacks suffered, but they also fractured the once strong Black-Jewish alliance. Whether anti-Jewish hostility was really a motivation for the systematic destruction of Jewish property in the riots is unclear. This same question was asked in Philadelphia and Rochester with no definitive answer discovered. What may be more important is that many Jews believed this to be the case. In the decades that followed, they neither forgave nor forgot.

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[67] Ibid.,

CONCLUSION

By all rights, there should be an inseparable bond between Jews and Blacks based on a shared history of slavery and persecution. According to this "Exodus motif," Jews and Blacks came up out of slavery "in Egypt" and went into the "Promised Land" of tranquility and opportunity. For Blacks from the south and for Jews from Europe, that promised land was Cincinnati.

Both Blacks and Jews had to "break-in" to Cincinnati's predominantly White Christian community. This adjustment was easier for Jews, who soon thrived in the garment industry and dry goods business. For many, not withstanding the prejudice and discrimination they occasionally faced, Cincinnati proved to be the fulfillment of their dreams.

Blacks had more trouble. They experienced discrimination in every facet of their lives. Their employment opportunities were limited, their housing and schools were segregated and they faced prejudice from the White masses. Friendships rarely crossed the color line in Cincinnati; segregation was the rule.

In the early 1940's, both the Jewish Community Relations Council (previously concerned only with discrimination against Jews) and the American Jewish

Committee began to battle for Blacks' civil rights. In 1946, the JCRC began a drive for a Fair Employment Practices bill in Cincinnati. While the arguments were directed at securing rights for Blacks, it was clear that Jewish self-interest was also a concern. Jews believed that a society that offered fair employment and civil rights to Blacks, would be a society that would guarantee Jews' own economic security as well.

Beginning with the push for FEP and continuing through the desegregation of Coney Island, the fight for fair housing and the desegregation of the schools, and other civil rights struggles, a clear pattern emerged: a handful of Jewish leaders -- usually the same leaders -- vigorously supported the civil rights causes, pulling others along with them. Meanwhile, the majority of the Jewish community was apathetic.

Nowhere was Jewish disinterest more apparent than in the integration of Cincinnati's "Jewish" neighborhoods. As Blacks moved in, the JCRC and a few local rabbis urged members of the Jewish community to accept integration. Instead, the primary Jewish reaction was one of fear, followed by flight.

"White Flight" in general, and "Jewish flight" in particular, was a source of great tension between Blacks and Jews. Indeed, Blacks received mixed message: on the one hand, prominent Jews supported their right to have equal

access to any community in town; on the other hand, Jews were upset when Blacks moved into their own neighborhoods. Although there were many civil rights leaders within the Jewish community, the words and deeds of the masses led many Blacks to a somewhat different perception of what Jews really thought.

What distinguished Jews from other minorities was the fact that as they moved out of "changing" neighborhoods, they retained their old businesses and apartment buildings. Soon, many Blacks were paying rent to Jewish landlords and purchasing their merchandise from Jewish-owned stores. In some cases, both landlords and merchants were unscrupulous, leading to anti-Jewish prejudice and stereotyping.

Tensions further increased as the synagogues fled from "changing" neighborhoods. Perhaps the most controversial moves were those of Rockdale and Wise Temples. With their reputations for civic involvement, Blacks may have expected more from them than from other congregations. Although both congregations explained that a synagogue should be near its constituents, it is clear that the prime motivation for both exoduses was pure, unadulterated fear. Jews believed that with the coming of the Blacks, poverty, deteriorating schools, and crime would not be far behind.

Blacks and Jews also clashed on the issue of school segregation. While many Jews favored desegregation in theory, in practice their enthusiasm was underwhelming. Nor

were Jews willing to go along with Black calls for school boycotts; to boycott an educational institution violated everything that Jews held dear. In reality, most Jews were happier if their children did not attend school with Black children, fearing that Blacks would lower the standards of their children's education. The parents also feared that Blacks would present a danger for their children.

In a sense, the prophecy was self-fulfilling. Black unrest culminated in Cincinnati (as it did in many other communities) in destructive riots. In turn, the riots confirmed Jews worst fears about Black crime and violence. When Jewish owned shops were destroyed in large numbers, Jews cried anti-semitism, claiming that Jewish stores were destroyed while other White owned stores were not. Whether the charge was true or not, Jews believed it -- and held Blacks responsible.

Tensions currently exist between the Black and Jewish communities in Cincinnati. The roots of these tensions stretch back long into the past -- a past which was less idyllic than many believe. While neither community is wholly at fault, I am disappointed, even disillusioned by the evident lack of Jewish responses to Black suffering and oppression. The much vaunted Black-Jewish alliance actually existed only at the elite level, between a relative handful of Jewish and Black leaders. While Jews may well have done more than other groups, the historical record, as outlined

here, is not one to be proud of. Hopefully it does provide us with insights upon which we can build stronger interracial bridges in the future.

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