

**Beyond Self Interest: The Seeds of the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs**

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## Abstract

This thesis is an institutional history of the early years of the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs (JCUA), an organization envisioned by Rabbi Robert Marx to serve as a Jewish partner to groups of people in Chicago seeking to help themselves, while helping Jews to better understand the challenges and problems of urban life. Founded in 1964, the JCUA was forged during a period in Chicago when the city became a battlefield of competing social interests. Powerful business and political leaders insisted that change on behalf of those who sought to improve the conditions of the urban poor could not be advanced by legislation to shape community mores.

Working with leaders of other faiths, Rabbi Marx insisted that the Jewish community had a moral obligation, based upon Judaism's prophetic tradition, to assist people residing in urban neighborhoods, even though most Jews had already fled to the suburbs by the mid-1960s. An examination of the early period of the JCUA underscores that the battles that were fought to advance Civil Rights in the area of housing, eventually pitted Jew against Jew. The JCUA eventually broke from its parent organization, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, under growing pressure from certain Jewish interests representing real estate investments that conflicted with the JCUA efforts.

By providing staff persons to assist local community efforts, the JCUA was able to provide a positive and constructive Jewish presence in the urban communities. Even without the full and direct support of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Rabbi Marx's efforts in the 1960s planted the seeds for what has become a model for Jewish service to help urban communities organize themselves, bringing about solutions to the systemic problems of the urban poor.

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Rabbi Robert Marx is one of the finest rabbis whom I have ever had the good fortune to meet. He demonstrated not only zeal for ideas, but for people. If I make a difference in this world, one person at a time, it is in no small way due to the lessons learned from Rabbi Marx—an example of a very fine human being and an inspiring teacher and guide.

The truly genius among us are the ones who recognize their own weaknesses as the basis of their most profound strengths. Thank you, Lew Kreinberg, for symbolizing this virtue.

Many, many thanks to my friends and family. In particular, I am very thankful to my parents and my fiancé, who have patiently supported me throughout this entire endeavor.

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## **Introduction**

As the recipient of the prestigious Slingshot Award, the JCUA was selected as one of 50 leading organizations that deal with concerns in Jewish life such as identity, community and tradition. In addition to recognizing the impressiveness of being around since the 1960s and still being innovative, one of the Slingshot evaluators also shared: "If I had to pick one Slingshot organization guaranteed to be relevant 10 years from now, it would be JCUA."<sup>1</sup> The Jewish Council of Urban Affairs (JCUA) was founded in Chicago in 1964. Conceived by Reform Rabbi Dr. Robert Marx, the JCUA brought a Jewish commitment to social justice in Chicago's disadvantaged urban areas. Originally founded by the Chicago Federation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the JCUA consisted primarily of representatives of Reform congregations. The JCUA's interest in the urban sector reflected two prevailing, not mutually exclusive, motivations that embodied Jewish priorities. Jews had previously populated the exact communities that were now densely populated by non-Jews, and certain Jewish former dwellers of these areas, and their Jewish associates, continued to fill what Marx and others considered to be precarious roles as real estate profiteers. The JCUA, by establishing itself as a visible partner to minority groups living in these impoverished communities, could work both toward the eradication of discriminatory practices as well as improve the image of the Jewish people. Also, even beyond a self-serving need to stifle antisemitism, the JCUA felt that the now suburban Jews of Chicago had a responsibility to assist the poor who lived in the same neighborhoods where they had once lived. The JCUA has never been a social service agency. Instead, it provides consultation and services to help local communities organize themselves in order to meet the challenges and problems of urban life. Providing technical and other forms of assistance, the JCUA engages the Jewish community in

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<sup>1</sup> Jewish Council of Urban Affairs, "JCUA Named One of North America's Most Innovative Jewish Nonprofits," <http://jcuanews.wordpress.com/category/about-jcua/> (accessed 5 January 2011).

efforts to bring justice to society and help groups in the urban setting help themselves. Generally, the JCUA lends a staff person, at no cost to community partners, to work with a local community (frequently on site at the community organization). By rendering assistance to community organizations made up primarily of minorities, the JCUA forms deep relationships with the leaders of these organizations. Involved directly in the urban community, the JCUA serves as a bridge between these communities and the Jewish congregations that are no longer embedded in the city. The JCUA is also committed to help Jews understand the challenges and problems of urban life through education, and provides or supplements initiatives of the social action committees and religious schools of Jewish congregations.

An overview of its accomplishments over the past 50 years reflects the JCUA's success. In the 1960s, the JCUA worked with a number of leading efforts that mostly dealt with housing-related issues. The following decade, the JCUA worked with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to form a summer "mizvah corps" that brought youth to the city to learn, and to put their Jewish commitment to work. Also in the 1970s the JCUA addressed employment discrimination issues with a program that helped Hispanic members of the 18<sup>th</sup> Street Development Corporation learn a trade. In the 1980s, the JCUA amassed considerable resources to address issues of homelessness and hunger. During this same period, the JCUA also put forward a leading dialogue group to assist in creating a better relationship between African Americans and Jews. More recently, the JCUA was the early catalyst behind a focus on immigration issues, most notably fighting forced deportation and unfair employment practices in a kosher processing facility in Postville, Iowa.<sup>2</sup> The JCUA has now even served as a model for non-Jewish organizations such as the Islamic Network Action Center. "You might not believe that a Jewish organization played a critical role to help write the strategic

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<sup>2</sup> Jewish Council of Urban Affairs, "Achievements," [www.jcua.org/site/PageServer?pagename=who\\_achievements\\_2009](http://www.jcua.org/site/PageServer?pagename=who_achievements_2009)[www.jcua.org/site/PageServer?pagename=who\\_achievements\\_2009](http://www.jcua.org/site/PageServer?pagename=who_achievements_2009) (accessed 7 January 2011).

plan for a Muslim organization that services the indigent populations on the South Side of Chicago. It's true though," Rami Nashashibi, the head of the Islamic Muslim Action Center declared.<sup>3</sup> The JCUA also maintains a large ongoing cross-cultural encounter group between Jews and Muslims, where young professionals come together to experience one another's backgrounds through music, dance and art.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is to explain how the JCUA came into existence in the 1960s and to look at how its early foundation was established. The thesis begins by examining the climate and conditions that contributed most significantly to the JCUA's creation. It explores the circumstances of Chicago's African American and Catholic communities, as they related both to the city's urban landscape and to the Jewish community. Additionally, the first chapter provides an overview of the powerful interwoven political, business and policy interests that frequently disadvantaged urban dwellers—an agenda that the JCUA and its community allies sought to confront.

The next chapter of the thesis presents those leaders of the JCUA whose vision impacted its mission, with a particular focus on Rabbi Robert Marx and a construct he termed "interstitiality." According to Marx, Jews were positioned between the powerful elites of society and the urban masses that lived in terrible housing conditions. This "middleman position" was both caused by and contributed to antisemitism. Marx conceptualized this Jewish condition of "being in the middle" in part based upon his earlier experiences examining the role of Jews in Southern communities. His analysis of interstitiality—its historical basis and its continued effects—is a vital basis for how the JCUA's mission developed.

The JCUA's early organizing efforts focused on Selma and the March on Washington.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Rami Nashashibi, June 11, 2009, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>4</sup> Jewish-Muslim Community Building Initiative, "What We Do," <http://jmcbi.webnode.com/what-we-do/> (accessed 5 January 2011).

Later battles in Chicago itself that involved marches with Martin Luther King and then a legal battle that focused on predatory housing practices illustrated the JCUA's capacity to agitate against establishment interests. When the focus moved away from the South and towards the economic discrimination that was occurring in Chicago, the distinctive organizing qualities of the JCUA became apparent. In 1968, the JCUA became independent of the UAHC, although it continued to be deeply aligned with the Reform movement and continued to share resources and staff with its Reform parent organization. The JCUA's break from the UAHC reflected an impetus to involve a larger cross section of the Jewish population so Jews from all backgrounds, not only Reform, might unite behind its mission. Additionally, the JCUA's eventual independence from the UAHC also reflected its aggressive commitment to the city, even when that meant coming into conflict with other Jews.

Deeply committed through relationships to their community partners and championing the cause of the urban poor, the JCUA became a symbol of a prophetic spirit in the modern age, a spirit that Marx believed sought

...to translate and apply the ideals, concepts and precepts of Judaism as a way of life to the problems of the contemporary urban society, and in particular, to the problems of individuals, masses, ethnic groups and governments striving to achieve and maintain a society in which each person, regardless of race, religion, social or economic position is judged on individual merits, and in which the personality and humanity of each person is recognized, stimulated, developed and protected.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Marx, JCUA Progress Report, "A Progress Report," 1964, Robert Marx Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.



## **Chapter 1: Roots**

The JCUA, founded by Robert Marx in 1964, often found itself in the position of having to counter the misconception that it was a radical, left wing, obstructionist group. In fact, the leaders of the JCUA believed that the organization was sometimes viewed as operating with actual hostility toward the broader Jewish community. In 1975, reflecting on the JCUA's first ten years of accomplishments, Marx described these attitudes: "In looking back over these ten years, it would be nice to say that the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs has operated in perfect harmony and with the total support of the Jewish community. Unfortunately, this has not been the case."<sup>1</sup> By addressing root causes of oppression, particularly facing African American Chicagoans, the JCUA confronted powerful individuals with deep connections to the business and municipal power of Chicago. The Jewish community of Chicago was diverse, and some believed that their own self-interest was not furthered by challenging the housing discrimination which faced African Americans. This chapter describes the difficult history of housing for African American Chicagoans, and also lays out the favorable climate of interfaith relations and community organizing work upon which the JCUA would build and leverage relationships between Jews and non-Jews—relationships that would ultimately help to galvanize support for economic social justice goals.

### ***The JCUA and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations***

The JCUA was accused of being an oppositional group notwithstanding its own consistent attempts to be viewed in a more traditional light. Certainly, the JCUA defined itself as espousing a vision that sought to embody the core Jewish values of social and economic justice and equality for all people, and has regularly maintained a "prophetic philosophy" to confront economic injustice and

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<sup>1</sup> "JCUA Internal Memo," 1985, JCUA, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.

to challenge the greed of economic exploiters. As outlined in their by-laws, the purpose of the JCUA was

to translate and apply the ideals of life to the problems of contemporary society, and, in particular, to the problems of individuals, masses, ethnic groups, racial groups, religious groups and governments striving to achieve and maintain a society in which each person, regardless of race, religion, social or economic position is judged on individual merits, and in which the personality and humanity of each person is recognized, stimulated, developed and protected.<sup>2</sup>

This mission not only led to struggles with the greater non-Jewish community, but also resulted in friction with the Jewish community at large, a problem upon which Marx reflected later in life:

I may have taken too much of myself when I assumed that my ideas of justice were the ideas of the whole Jewish community. Yet I wanted to believe that. I wanted to believe that when I recoiled at the thought that people could segregate one another, dominate one another, oppress one another, the Jewish community would be repelled and shocked that that process could go on in South Africa. I might say, also, in other parts of the world. I might have assumed that this was a way of speaking from the entire Jewish community. I found, so much to my sorrow, that this is not always true. Yet I continued to hope that I can speak in this way and that it will convince people that no matter where it occurs, whether in South Africa or the United States or former Soviet Russia or even in Israel, that there's a sense of justice.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ellen Pichney, "Inter-Ethnic Movement in Chicago: The Jewish Council on Urban Affairs: Agency for Cooperation," *Jewish Currents* (February 1979): 7.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 27, 2010, Saugatuck, Michigan.

To this day, the question why the JCUA encountered resistance from the Jewish community remains an interesting one. If the JCUA, following the prophetic concepts of justice and equality, attempted to improve the conditions of those who lived in the inner city, and was, as Marx claimed, committed to social justice, what were the particular reasons they did not receive the full support of the Jewish community in their efforts?

As Marx pointed out, the problems that the JCUA addressed in the inner city were not created overnight. Marx and the JCUA sought to confront the systematic root causes of discrimination and injustice, and challenged the concept that only discrimination that confronted Jews directly was a "Jewish issue." Thus, to understand the battles that the JCUA fought, it's important to recognize the history of the social injustices that occurred in the non-Jewish community. Marx asserted:

My saying that an issue is not a Jewish Council on Urban Affairs issue does not mean that it is not a Jewish issue. There was a professor at Rutgers a few years ago who wrote a paper entitled Rwanda is not a Jewish issue, meaning that the Jewish community should only deal with issues that concern the Jewish community. That has not been my position. Any issue of injustice is a Jewish issue.<sup>4</sup>

The JCUA faced a situation that was rooted in the multi-generational experiences of urban Chicago's African American and American Jewish communities. Replete with violence, reinforced by a set of unjust discriminatory laws, and buttressed by urban planning that exacerbated the lamentable living conditions of the poor, the "powers that were" all the while claimed to operate in the general public interest. Community organizers and religious leaders stepped into this absence of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

responsible leadership, and sought to shield the exploited poor from the power structure's urban renewal plans.

As the JCUA confronted the questionable morality of the city's political power structure and worked with its inter-religious partners, it maintained relationships with the organized Jewish community. Particularly, it operated within the structure of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations—the associative body of reform congregations in Chicago. As the JCUA sought to remove the root causes of poverty through political change, it is no wonder that certain elements of the Jewish community, particularly those who believed they might benefit from the status quo, might oppose attempts at reform. Nonetheless, JCUA leaders consistently sought to influence and agitate rather than to break away from their primary partner, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Marx described this early collaboration with the UAHC:

What is so often forgotten is that the JCUA, for the first year of their existence, was a corporation sole. It didn't have a board of trustees. I was both the president and the director and that sounds like a bad idea, which I decided it was because we didn't have the maximum reach that we could have had. But it was part of the UAHC. It was an activity. It was a committee of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. And as its work expanded and it became more controversial, it simultaneously became the type of organization with its own board of trustees, with its own president. In other words it started out as a committee and it ended up as an organization.<sup>5</sup>

Established in 1873 as a national organization meant to bring congregations together, the UAHC had been instrumental in the creation and support, in 1875, of American's first seminary to train American Rabbis, the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, where Robert Marx was ordained.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

By 1943, proportional to the relative size of the Union, the UAHC as an organization had diminished in its centrality to a scarcely visible entity. Michael Meyer, in fact, a historian of Reform Judaism, has noted that it was “lodged in a warren of office cubbyholes in downtown Cincinnati.”<sup>6</sup> When a decision was made to move the headquarters of the UAHC to New York with a new building on 65<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, and was placed under the leadership of Maurice Eisendrath, the Union was transformed into a dynamic center of energy.”<sup>7</sup>

Between 1943 and 1965, the Union budget ballooned to reach the needs of expanding programs, as membership grew from 60,000 to 200,000. Encouraged by Eisendrath, these new programs, which eventually included the establishment of the JCUA, focused on social activism. In 1948, buttressed by the growth in the movement, the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the UAHC developed a joint Social Action Commission. Originally led by Al Vorspan and Rabbi Eugene Lipman, the Social Action Commission was soon provided with a paid staff by the Union, and not long after its founding began to function more independently, beyond the immediate direction of the CCAR. Eisendrath was also a key proponent for the creation of a national social action center, the Religious Action Center (RAC), which was first approved by the UAHC in 1959 and then again in 1961.<sup>8</sup>

Utilizing a network of regional offices, the Union began to orchestrate a vigorous national program to deepen social consciousness on a congregational level. According to Balfour Brickner, who reported to Eisendrath and served for 20 years with Al Vorspan as co-director of the National Commission on Social Action, a focus on civil rights strengthened the relationship between inter-religious affairs and social action at the national level. In addition to his leadership role with the National Commission on Social Action, Brickner also served as the National Director of the

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 355.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

Commission on Inter-religious Affairs. Marx commented on capable Chicago rabbis who supported social action initiatives:

As I look back on it, I had nothing but a very, very high esteem for the rabbis of the city of Chicago who were very supportive of things we were trying to do. There were several scholar rabbis in the city. The caliber of the Chicago rabbinate, I think, was very high. I felt blessed that, by and large, there was a wonderfully cooperative spirit. There was Herman Schaalman who was certainly a scholarly rabbi friend of Elie Wiesel's, an innovator in the camp movement. There was Ernst Lorge and Carol Wiener who were refugees from Nazi Germany as was Herman Schaalman. There was that German group of rabbis and Frank Rosenthal and Rabbi Stoyer, all of whom were receptive to what we were trying to do. So there were plenty of rabbis who spoke in the intellectual tradition.<sup>9</sup>

Marx maintained a correspondence with, reported to, and planned with Al Vorspan, Balfour Brickner and Maurice Eisendrath while serving as the leader of the JCUA. It was this national leadership that had re-assigned Marx to Chicago from Cincinnati in 1961. In Chicago, there was more opportunity to use the instruments of Jewish social action and interfaith activity to intensify existing community efforts and bring them to new frontiers.

### ***The Ecumenical Climate***

Chicago's Catholic clerical body had proven its ecumenical sensitivity not only with community efforts and alliances in the city, but also demonstrated its influence at the very highest inter-workings of the institutional policies of the Catholic Church worldwide, especially at the Vatican. A direct relationship can be seen between the progressive atmosphere of Vatican II and the

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 27, 2010, Saugatuck, Michigan.

Catholic leadership in Chicago in the person of Cardinal Albert Meyer,<sup>10</sup> who, in 1958, was named head of the Chicago archdiocese. Two years later, Meyer ordered all-white Catholic schools to accept African American children and fully supported the Catholic Interracial Council, which sought to effect changes in Catholic attitudes towards race and racial integration. Reflecting his general opinions on race, Meyer stated: "We must remove from the church on the local scene any possible taint of racial discrimination or racial segregation, and help provide the moral leadership for eliminating racial discrimination from the whole country."<sup>11</sup> It was this same inclusive attitude that Meyer brought to Vatican II.

Meyer was recognized as the de-facto leader of the contingent of American Bishops, having gained the respect of the Bishops in the Vatican Council of Vatican II. Despite being known for his reserve, the leader of the Chicago archdiocese was outspoken in favor of progressive reforms during deliberations at the Vatican Council. The overall tenor of and growing interest in inter-religious activities, particularly between Jews and Christians, was in part emboldened by the adoption of the Catholic Church's Ecumenical Council's Schema on October 15, 1965. Promulgated by the Pope into official church doctrine, a core passage that condemned antisemitism read: "...the Church rejects every persecution against any man, mindful of the common patrimony with the Jews, moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, deplores hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism directed against any Jews at any time and by anyone." The text then went on to declare that, "what happened to Christ in His Passion cannot be attributed to all Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor to all Jews of today and that Jews should not be presented as rejected by God."<sup>12</sup> In this same ecumenical spirit Vatican II also drove Meyer's instrumental role in

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<sup>10</sup> "Cardinal's Council Role Lauded at Services," *Chicago Sun Times* (April 14, 1965): A4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Vatican, "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*," Proclaimed by Pope Paul VI, October 28, 1965, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), (accessed 21 January 2011).

establishing the Chicago Conference on Religion and Race in which Roman Catholic, Protestant and rabbinical agencies attempted to work across religious lines against racial discrimination. The Chicago Conference on Religion and Race came not only to help foster inter-religious relationships on a local level in Chicago, but nationally as well. As Marx stated, recalling the 1963 Conference: "The first thing I did when I came to Chicago was to go to a conference on religion and race which was the convening moment of this... Cardinal Meyer was there. I was involved in it. Heschel was one of the speakers as was Martin Luther King."<sup>13</sup>

In their prepared remarks at the Conference, Heschel and King both quoted the biblical prophet Amos: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."<sup>14</sup> Heschel, who was a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, and formerly a professor at Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, would go on to partner with King in their shared effort to overcome the inequalities of discrimination. By helping to create the Chicago Conference on Religion, Meyer had established a forum where local and national leaders, such as Heschel and King, could come together to address social issues of concern to the city and the larger national debate.

The UAHC in Chicago built upon the growing ecumenical relationship between the Church and the Jewish community, a relationship that extended beyond Catholics and Jews to other Christian leaders as well. The best evidence of the leadership role of the Catholic Church to foster this ecumenical network was the creation of the Inter-Religious Council on Urban Affairs, a group of Protestants, Catholics and Jews. Msgr. Egan of the Catholic Archdiocese was the prime mover behind the formation of the Council. Marx commented on the importance of the IRCUA: "...the Inter-Religious Council on Urban Affairs (IRCUA)...was so critically helpful in all of our early

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 27, 2010, Saugatuck, Michigan.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Turck, *The Civil Rights Movement for Kids: A History with Twenty One Activities* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2000), 106.



work because it represented the possibility of a multi-faceted inter-religious community working cooperatively on issues of justice.”<sup>15</sup> It was with the IRCUA that the core connection with the UAHC was fostered. Reflecting on his first impressions of Egan and the Inter-Religious Council, Marx recognized their value and knew he had “got into something which was to change [his] life directly.”<sup>16</sup>

As Marx alludes to above, together he and John Egan would go on to serve as allies in many future battles. Working for the Church, John Egan had been involved in addressing some of the urban issues facing the Church since 1957. Cardinal Stitt, the Cardinal of the Chicago Archdiocese who preceded Cardinal Meyer, first tapped Egan to do a study of housing problems within the African American community. Egan’s study on housing was undertaken with the help of the Industrial Areas Foundation, headed by Saul Alinsky, a well-known urban organizer. Alinsky had grown up in the ghettos of Chicago and pioneered a powerful grassroots social movement called “community organizing,” the purpose of which was to help the most oppressed and exploited elements in the country take control of their own communities and their own destinies.

From an early stage, Alinsky had challenged the Monsignor to decide if he was going to remain dispersed within the institutional hierarchy of the Church or operate with a more focused, and independent, approach: “Make up your mind, Jack, whether you want to be a priest or a bishop,” Alinsky demanded. Egan and Alinsky developed a deep relationship, and soon, as the two became partners in a variety of projects, Egan began to serve as a key catalyst in the strengthening of several urban community groups. Most notably, Egan supported Alinsky’s Industrial Organization, which assisted community-building efforts such as the Woodlawn Organization and the Northwest

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 27, 2010, Saugatuck, Michigan.

<sup>16</sup> Margerie Frisbie, *An Alley in Chicago* (Franklin: Sheed and Ward, 2002), Ch. 18, archives.nd.edu (accessed 19 January 2011).

Community Organization.<sup>17</sup> Marx described how Alinsky's organizing style differed from that of the JCUA:

We've always had a very interesting relationship with Saul Alinsky and his organization. As you know, Saul Alinsky helped us, we suspect helped us, secure the funds that started the JCUA. We have always respected Saul as an organizer and been cautious about some of his tactics.

We felt his organizing techniques might be very helpful on the West Side of Chicago. The Archdiocese was pressing to have Alinsky there. Alinsky worked very closely with Egan, who was a good friend, but as I've indicated many times in the past, our friendship did not prevent our disagreeing very often about the role of the industrial areas foundation. In other words, can you admire somebody's organization techniques and at the same time be cautious of some of those techniques?

Any misunderstanding between my philosophy and that of the industrial areas foundation is that whenever I hear the officers of the industrial areas foundation speak, they seem to be saying, "Let's organize first. Let's get the power. Then we can decide what action we want to take." My philosophy has been let's decide what our goals are, let's decide what our dreams are and then organize around those. And that's been a crucial difference that has been prevalent for many decades, in my thinking.

Let the community decide what it wants to do. And we felt that way even today. My problem was never with Alinsky. As I've said very often, he was in many

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<sup>17</sup> Maureen Hellwig, "An Urban Church Memoir: An Interview with Msgr. Jack Egan," *Pragmatics: The Journal of Community-Based Research* 1, no. 3 (Fall, 1998): 10.

ways a good friend of mine. Our problem has been with the remnants of Alinsky who might want to come into areas where there are already existing organizations.<sup>18</sup>

As Marx, Alinsky and Egan worked together on a number of social issues, an ever-stronger ecumenical spirit developed between the Catholic Church and other religious groups in Chicago. As Marx commented:

In Chicago, it is possible to have a laboratory of social sciences in creating justice in a way you can't do in many other cities because there is, first of all, a desire among the religious people of Chicago, the religious leadership of Chicago, to work together. At least there has been. And that's critical. When religion focuses upon its own successes and welfare and neglects the common will, when it neglects working together for the people and the city, then religion is in trouble. But in Chicago, we were blessed for many years in that we could work together in remarkable ways.<sup>19</sup>

Even with the strong ecumenical spirit that supported social action, it was a challenge to engage suburban congregations, both Jewish and Christian, on the issue of housing. The National officer of the United Church of Christ was actually quoted as saying: "Especially in the main line Protestant denominations, upper middle-class people feel most threatened concerning race, open housing, any form of dissent by young people...Many communities want the churches to be a refuge where they can escape from the world."<sup>20</sup> Even while Marx played an instrumental role in creating a

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 27, 2010, Saugatuck, Michigan.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> An Address to the Jewish Federation of Dallas, "The Jewish Response to the Revolutions of Our Times," January 1969, Balfour Bricker Collection, 776/5/172, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Catholic-Jewish dialogue, he realized that many interfaith encounters were not necessarily based on social action. He stated:

The Catholic-Jewish dialogue was created a few years after the JCUA was created.

The Catholic-Jewish dialogue stemmed from our work with the inter-faith community rather than through the social justice community. In other words, some of the Catholics and some of the Jews that were involved could not have cared less about social action. They were concerned about better relationships between Catholics and Jews.<sup>21</sup>

At this time, reluctance to have religion engage with leading social concerns was not only evident in the attitudes of some religious leaders, but was also a growing trend in American society as a whole. In the spring of 1957, Brickner cited a Gallup poll that showed public opinion slightly to favor the Church's expression of its views on social and political questions.<sup>22</sup>

### ***The Background of Chicago's Jewish Community***

Given the various challenges in confronting the most systematic discrimination in Chicago, the importance of an existing network to support ecumenical activity cannot be overestimated. Much of this groundwork had been laid prior to Marx's appearance in Chicago through efforts led by the Catholic Archdiocese. Nonetheless, while not as large as the Catholic community, the Jewish community of Chicago also had deep roots in the urban landscape. The JCUA consistently asserted, as has been noted, that Jews in Chicago had a responsibility to help those in the inner city because they themselves had once lived in these same troubled areas. Marx suggested that the Jews might not have been fully aware of the complexities of their ties to the inner city: "My task is to try and help

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 27, 2010, Saugatuck, Michigan.

<sup>22</sup> An Address to the Jewish Federation of Dallas, "The Jewish Response to the Revolutions of Our Times," 30 January 1969, Balfour Bricker Collection, 776/5/172, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

people see the connections which they may not want to see between what they're doing and the problems."<sup>23</sup> The precarious role of Jews in these areas was a manifestation of historical trends and influences that had developed over two generations. According to Marx, "Anti-Semitism became a 'catch word' for anti-white feeling. And, again, it lent itself to an understanding of the interstitial analysis. It was easy to fall back upon the idea of traditional historic prejudices and to associate any white exploiter with somebody who was Jewish. That was a great concern to us."<sup>24</sup>

In addition to antisemitism, Chicago's Jewish community was also affected by both its size and mobility. While in 1951 more than 95 percent of Jews lived in the city of Chicago, by 1971 close to half of the population had migrated to the suburbs, with the most precipitous decline occurring between 1951 and 1963, the years leading up to the establishment of the JCUA. For more than a generation prior to the early 1960s, Chicago's Jewry had settled within the city limits. As far back as the 1930s there were already 300,000 Jews in Chicago, comprising 9 percent of the city's population. In fact, Chicago had the third largest Jewish population of any city in the world—exceeded only by New York and Warsaw. And the strength of the Jewish community in Chicago was not only its size, but also its stature.<sup>25</sup>

Lawndale, an area three miles to the west of Maxwell Street, was, by 1930, home to 110,000 Jews, and was affectionately referred to by some residents as "Chicago Jerusalem." The greater Lawndale area stretched from California Avenue (2800 West) to Tripp Street (4232 West) and from Washington Boulevard (100 North) to Eighteenth Street. Lawndale and the West Side would later be the focus of the largest concentration of the JCUA's early organizing efforts. Lawndale was also filled with an overwhelming concentration of Jewish institutions that reflected the vitality of Jewish life. Within one single stretch of road in the heart of Lawndale, Douglas Avenue, there were a dozen

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 27, 2010, Saugatuck, Michigan.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Irving Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1996), 193.

synagogues, among them Anshe Kenesses Israel Congregation, which later became an African American Church and a focal organizing center in which the JCUA was involved in 1960s. The famous “Russiche Shul,” another large congregation, was founded in 1875 by immigrants from Russia and located on Twelfth Place and Clinton in Lawndale’s Maxwell Street Area.<sup>26</sup>

In 1947, capitalizing on its liberal atmosphere, over 1400 African Americans settled in Lawndale. These African Americans were able to get modest mortgages to finance their purchases, and several even paid off their mortgages early. For a moment, interracial community living almost seemed possible, but such an ideal was merely that—an ideal. As more and more African Americans sought out housing in Lawndale, the area became what was described by one Chicago organizer as the time as integration in Chicago: “a term to describe...the period of time that elapses between the appearance of the first Negro and exit of the last white.”<sup>27</sup>

### *African Americans in Urban Chicago*

In their struggle for living space, African Americans filled the vacancies created by an exodus of Jews from North Lawndale. The housing conditions that led to the creation of dense and desperate urban enclaves were a result of a variety of discriminatory practices that accompanied the African American migration to urban Chicago. By understanding how the ebbs and flows of African American migration were interwoven with the discriminatory practices that existed between the early part of the twentieth century and the 1960s, it is possible to appreciate the systemic forces that contributed to the tensions that developed in Chicago between Jews and African Americans. Marx, expressing the universalism of his concern for justice, especially his concern for racial equity, commented: “I’ve always found it meaningless to bait the question of ‘should Jews be concerned

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>27</sup> “Chicago Housing Called Midwest’s Most Segregated,” *Chicago Sun Times* (Dec.7, 1962): 38.

with Judaism or with justice in our society?’ My answer is that we have to be concerned with both, and to be concerned with both is to be concerned with Judaism.”<sup>28</sup>

During the Great Migration of 1916-1919 approximately one-half million African American southerners migrated northward, spurred largely by new opportunities for employment—a demand for labor which had arisen because of the exclusion of foreign white immigrants during World War I. Between 1910 and 1920, Chicago’s African American population grew from 44,103 to 109,458 (a 148% increase), with concentrated growth between 1916 and 1919.<sup>29</sup> Many of these African Americans were fleeing the south to seize control over their destinies. A Kentuckian migrant’s comment reflected the overall attitude of many of his fellow newcomers to Chicago when he stated that he “was tired of being a flunky.”<sup>30</sup> Ambitious men and women flooded Chicago and poured into what had been much less densely populated African American neighborhoods.

Up until the turn of the nineteenth century, African American enclaves had already existed in a less concentrated consolidation, and it was in these areas that the urban ghettos now formed. Much of the population resided in a narrow stretch of land on the South Side, known as the Black Belt, while much smaller enclaves existed on the West Side, Englewood, and the Near North Side. As with immigrant communities, African Americans were “pulled” by the opportunity to live in areas populated by those of similar immigrant backgrounds and in close proximity to familiar and supportive cultural institutions.<sup>31</sup>

African American Chicagoans, because of the racially volatile atmosphere, were less likely than members of other ethnic groups to share public spaces. One important reason for the emerging density of the Black Belt was the violence encountered by any African American who tried to cross

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 27, 2010, Saugatuck, Michigan.

<sup>29</sup> St. Claire Drake, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1945), 338.

<sup>30</sup> Marvin Holli, *Ethnic Chicago* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing, 1995), 313.

<sup>31</sup> James Grossman, *Land of Hope* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 119.

Wentworth Avenue at the Black Belt's western edge. A line separated African American and white working class immigrants, particularly in any expansion to the west. Between 1917 and 1921 there were fifty-eight bombings by whites seeking to maintain the racial integrity of their neighborhoods.<sup>32</sup>

By 1919, despite surplus housing in other parts of Chicago, including in working class neighborhoods adjacent to the ghetto, African Americans, as degraded victims of housing discrimination, were facing a severe housing shortage. Chicago experienced a terrible set of riots this year. The racial conflict began on July 27, and ended on August 3. During the riots, dozens of African Americans died and hundreds were injured. Included among named causes of the Race Riot of 1919 were the African Americans' terribly overcrowded housing conditions, racial prejudice, economic competition, political corruption, exploitation, political inefficiency and newspapers that misrepresented actions of African Americans as precipitating violence. African American Chicagoans during World War II inherited a history of racial violence, where whites commonly attacked blacks, particularly following economic crises brought about by housing tensions. In *Black Metropolis*, historian St. Claire Drake remarked: "Half-forgotten memories of the Great Migration and of the Race Riot [of 1919] and its aftermath were revived among Negroes and whites. The Negro was once more becoming a 'problem' and racial conflict seemed to loom in the offing."<sup>33</sup> Such a pattern of violence, one that stemmed from racial tensions over housing, may explain why there was an escalation of riots over the city's racial boundaries in the 1960s—a precedent for violence had already been established. Marx described his reaction to the anger of a white mob during a riot in Marquette Park in 1966. "I didn't have a physical fear, but rather a fear of how

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<sup>32</sup> Allen Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of the Negro Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 211.

<sup>33</sup> Drake, *Black Metropolis*, 91.



people could be transformed into a mob. How individuals can be transformed into a mob. That's what happened. That's what was frightening."<sup>34</sup>

Although anger in the black community did not arise solely from discriminatory practices in housing, when the JCUA and the Civil Rights Movement would, in the 1960s, choose primarily to focus on housing, they were merely addressing a situation that had only become worse since the early twentieth century. Preceding World War II and up through the 1940s, there was an increasingly severe shortage of housing for African Americans. The African American population grew due to immigration while forces of segregation led to increasingly higher rates of consolidation. In 1940, over three quarters of African Americans lived in areas that were more than 90 percent black and almost half lived in areas that were more than 98 percent black. Sociologist David Wallace described the condition as, "very close to being as concentrated as it could get." Expansion only occurred through new construction on vacant land rather than through the "invasion" of white property.<sup>35</sup>

Whereas African Americans were becoming more isolated from the white population generally, a large number of whites found themselves living in technically "mixed areas." Fifty-three percent of the city's blacks lived in exclusively African American census tracts in 1950, compared with only 49.7 in 1940,<sup>36</sup> and, as overcrowded areas became more overcrowded more people moved into the Black Belt than were permitted to leave. This overcrowding pressured some African Americans into previously all-white areas. What the Chicago Commission on Human Relations hailed as a reversal of the city's march toward complete segregation<sup>37</sup> was actually something quite different. The numbers only reflected a redefining of racial borders after a period of relative stability.

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 27, 2010, Saugatuck, Michigan.

<sup>35</sup> Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4.

<sup>36</sup> Duncan and Duncan, *The Negro Population* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 96–97.

<sup>37</sup> Fourth Chicago Conference on Civic Unity: Abridged Report of Proceedings (Chicago: Chicago Commission on Human Relations, 1952), 34.

In reality, in the 1940s and 1950s, the boundaries that had been drawn during the Great Migration were shattered.

During World War II, African Americans pushed to the periphery of the white population's existing neighborhoods, and, again, the resulting pattern of violence was in many ways a repetition of previous tensions that had surfaced in the earlier part of the century. Violence ranged from arson and bombings to angry white mobs often numbering into the thousands. From May 1944 through July 1946, there were forty-six assaults on black residences and 29 arson bombings that resulted in three deaths. On the first and second of July in 1944, 2,000 – 3,000 whites gathered to protest the presence of a black doctor who had purchased a home in Park Manor, an area in the traditional path of African American expansion beyond the Black Belt. Yet, despite their efforts, neither the white ethnic nor the white middle class communities were able to retake black communities, nor to prevent the black community's further encroachment. Such efforts were left to the combination of Downtown business interests, as well as institutional and political leaders, working in conjunction with federal planners. Facing a desperate struggle to prevent the complete encroachment of African Americans upon the downtown business district, the city's most powerful interests sought to use a combination of political and economic might to maintain their continued prosperity.

In the name of the public interest and motivated by a sense of vulnerability, the city's institutional leaders executed an aggressive political campaign that sought to “redevelop” the “slum areas.” One realtor put it this way, “Unless something drastic is done, you will write off State Street in fifteen years.”<sup>38</sup>

The President of Armour Institute of Technology, an entity with strong interests in the downtown area, declared, “It eventually became clear that we really had only two choices—to run

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<sup>38</sup> Adam Cohen, *American Pharaoh* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2001), 175.

away from the blight or to stand and fight.”<sup>39</sup> To combat the problem and "turn around "the downtown area, these establishment leaders sought a vigorous “redevelopment” operation to attract a solvent population and strengthen the tax base. Marshall Field and Company, Chicago Title and Trust Company, Michael Reese Hospital, Illinois Institute of Technology, and the University of Chicago, some of the most significant private interests of the city, all led large-scale projects to tear down decaying neighborhoods. Leading Chicago business people were also responsible for urban renewal initiatives. In 1956, the Chicago Central Area Committee was formed to advance initiatives to facilitate urban planning. Its leadership was the "who’s who" of Chicago’s businesspeople.<sup>40</sup>

Urban planning took place through the cooperation of public officials and the private sector, all in the name of the public interest. Asserting they were not responsible for shaping community mores, these establishment players, according to Marx, Kreinberg and other community organizers, colluded both to relocate African Americans from downtown and then to establish real estate practices that restricted where African Americans and Jews could live. Marx stated: “There were those who argued that change had to come about slowly. This was the role played by the political structure and the business community. People have to be *taught* to live together, runs the argument.”<sup>41</sup> The city government absorbed the cost of assembling and clearing land for private redevelopers, and African Americans who were living in these neighborhoods were removed from downtown. Private stakeholders would then purchase the property at lower than the cost of acquisition. Over time, these properties would be developed for middle-class housing and institutional expansion.<sup>42</sup> The Chicago Housing Authority attempted to rid Chicago of its worst housing conditions by clearing and rebuilding slums. In most cases, city planners determined to

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Marx, “Chicago Summer,” *Bulletin of the Chicago Board of Rabbis* 7, no. 1 (September, 1966): 1. Robert Marx Collection, Chicago History Museum. (Attachment 1)

<sup>42</sup> Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 106.

build large-scale high-rises, as opposed to smaller, scattered developments. The high-rise solution conformed to urban planning architectural designs made popular by European architect Le Corbusier. The architecture favored vertical aggregation as the centerpiece for housing units. Supposedly, this would allow for shared terrains of open thoroughfares.<sup>43</sup> The result of these twin prerogatives of urban planning design and economic scalability was the construction of the largest public housing projects in America. As one example, a four-mile procession of high rises called Robert Taylor homes, which became a focus of the JCUA's organizing activity in the 1980s and 1990s, were built along Chicago's State Street, all within the Black Belt. When fully occupied, these 28 identical, 16-story high rises, contained over 4,400 apartments and housed 27,000 people.<sup>44</sup>

These over-crowded and ill-designed high rises reinforced the desperate conditions of the Black Belt and were an impetus for black relocation to Lawndale and other neighborhoods. In 1990, of the top 10 poorest neighborhoods in the nation only one existed outside of Chicago. All of the others—Stateway Gardens, Robert Taylor Homes (Units 1,2,3), Rockwell Gardens, Harold Ikes Homes, Cabrini Green, Loomis Courts and Dearborn Homes—were in the predominantly African American neighborhoods developed by the urban renewal projects undertaken by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Politics and Business***

The most distinguishing feature of post-World War II ghetto expansion was that it was undertaken with government intervention and buttressed by private backers. Marx did not buy into the idea that bureaucratic projects were in the best interest of the people who lived in the affected

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<sup>43</sup> Mardges Bacon, *Le Corbusier in America* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 118.

<sup>44</sup> Hunt Bradford, "What went wrong with public housing in Chicago? A history of the Robert Taylor homes," *Journal of Illinois State Historical Society* (Spring 2001).

<sup>45</sup> "Nation's Poorest Citizens Living in Chicago Housing Developments: Study," *Jet Magazine* (Feb 13, 1995).

communities: "We found there was great exploitation on this side of Chicago and we wanted to see if we couldn't experiment with any sort of a project that would keep the deterioration of that part of the city from becoming more serious."<sup>46</sup> If plans for public housing were constructed around the interest of powerful business and political leaders, Daley was at the nexus of these forces. As Mayor of Chicago from 1955 until 1976, he created what was known as the "Chicago Machine," and derived his power from his dual role as mayor and party chairman. Through his ability to centralize the Democratic Cook County Party, Daley could reinforce his domination over the distribution of jobs, not to mention leverage 50,000 city workers and patronage employees for 400,000 votes. In just his first year as Mayor, patronage jobs increased 47 percent. This fortification of the patronage system led not only to a consolidation of Daley's power in Chicago, but nationally as well.<sup>47</sup>

Through domination of the Democratic machine, Daley was able to implement his plans for urban Chicago. All urban housing projects were undertaken by a segregationist team in charge of the Chicago Housing Authority, whose director, Alvin Rose, once openly suggested that the reason housing projects were not built in white areas was because blacks would move in. Under Daley, the shift was clear: no attempts would be made to integrate public housing projects.

Coordinated planning between federal and state officials, supported by a powerful collusion of municipal and business interests, exacerbated racial tensions by creating a "second ghetto" on top of the racial boundaries that had existed prior to the 1940s. Of the 688,222 new homes built in the Chicago metropolitan area in the fifteen years since the end of World War II, the overwhelming number were single-family homes built in the suburbs. In comparison, within the central city, all new construction was undertaken as part of government programs, public housing or private institutional plans. There was "no greater problem" facing race relation workers, the conference of

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 27, 2010, Saugatuck, Michigan.

<sup>47</sup> Adam Cohen, *American Pharaoh* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2001), 453.

the National Association of Intergroup Relations Officials warned in 1952, than slum clearing and redevelopment.

The way in which these programs are conceived and carried out will...largely determine the physical framework and....greatly influence the socio-psychological atmosphere in which the anti-discrimination struggles must take place for decades to come....As the bitter displacement experiences of racial minority groups have led them to fear, too many city officials are disposed to employ slum clearance and urban redevelopment projects to preserve and extend, rather than to loosen up, the city's racial pattern in housing.<sup>48</sup>

### ***Seeking Alliances to Fight the Forces of Discrimination***

Both the Jewish community and, to an even larger extent, the African American community, had been impacted by a form of social manipulation. Drawn to Chicago in search of better opportunities, both communities had settled in areas where they were supported by immigrant institutions and a familiar culture that was sensitive to their backgrounds. Over time, certain pressures, aimed to prevent African Americans from moving into white neighborhoods, resulted in violence and an intensification of poor living conditions. These two groups came to be pitted against one another with the JCUA seeking to pinpoint what they believed was the ultimate culprit: immoral rules that prevented open housing, and other discriminatory practices.

The history of Chicago race relations involved repeated patterns of violence, and there was plenty of anger to go around. Cooperating through a network of interfaith relationships, the JCUA would seek alliances that restored dignity to people who had been the subject of discrimination, and seek reform that challenged the underlining causes of oppression. The JCUA gave particular

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<sup>48</sup> Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 254.

attention to historic areas, like Lawndale, where Jews had lived in the urban West Side of Chicago. Marx explained, "Chicago's West Side is termed underprivileged, but the term is misleading in that it tends to leave the impression that the only thing that is needed is philanthropy or charity."<sup>49</sup> As the head of the Reform movement in Chicago, Marx was well positioned to help build a framework for Jewish involvement, and, along with Lew Kreinberg, he strove to apply the Jewish value of justice to the urban setting.

The notion of justice challenged the assumption that African Americans simply *allowed* their communities to deteriorate. Justice also demanded that people rise above the belief that basic inequality was inevitable. For Marx, justice, in part, meant building real interpersonal relationships between Jews and the poor of the inner city. Making clear that he did not seek to replace charity, Marx summed up this larger notion of justice:

There will always be a need for charity. Human beings are fallible. They stumble and fall. They suffer losses. There will always be a need to give and to help. But to help others is not to admit the inevitability of poverty itself. There is a difference between these unpredictable events, and the perpetuation of social conditions, which lead to systemic and mass social suffering. There will always be human tragedies; but the tragedy of mass human poverty is not one that is inevitable.<sup>50</sup>

By taking advantage of an ecumenical climate, which fostered relationships between Jews and non-Jews, the JCUA would confront the municipal and business interests that supported discriminatory policies. In doing so the organization would come into conflict with portions of the Jewish community whose interstitial position led them to support, either explicitly or through inaction, some of the powerful and discriminatory interests the JCUA most wished to dislodge.

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 27, 2010, Saugatuck, Michigan.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Marx, "The Poor Shall Always be Among You," undated, Robert Marx Collection, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.

## **Chapter 2: The JCUA Gains Momentum**

Before coming to Chicago, Marx had observed the responses of Jewish communities in the south to issues of social justice. Even during his earliest years in Chicago, Marx participated in Southern, as well as local, civil rights battles. These experiences provided Marx with more evidence that his concept of Jewish "interstitiality," which will be further explored in this chapter, was indeed a productive construct as he tried to reach out toward and engage the Jewish community in efforts toward societal change. Marx had critical support as he developed the JCUA, in particular from the Merrill Foundation and Lew Kreinberg, whose participation and leadership will be explained. Together, Marx and Kreinberg developed a mission for the JCUA that capitalized upon the ecumenical climate in Chicago and sought alliances with community organizations that directly advocated on behalf of the urban poor.

### ***Marx's Earliest Encounters in Chicago***

When Marx arrived on the scene in Chicago, he inherited a position on the Inter-religious Council on Urban Affairs, an organization of ecumenical leaders working on issues of racial and economic justice. The Jewish seat on the council had been left vacated by Rabbi Richard Hirsch, who had built his own legacy dedicated to helping the powerless in society. With experience as a congregational rabbi at Temple Emanuel in Chicago from 1951–1953, Hirsch went on to serve a congregation in Colorado before being assigned as the director of the UAHC Chicago Federation. Perhaps due to his leadership of the social action agenda in Chicago, Hirsch was next promoted to the position of founding director of the Reform movement's Religious Action Center in Washington,



the flagship of the movement's strategy to influence national policy.<sup>1</sup> It was when Hirsch left Chicago for Washington that Marx took over his social action role on the Council.

Egan, a Catholic representative on the Council, recalled that Marx immediately fit into the group. On July 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of 1961, in the year that Marx first came to Chicago, Egan participated in a wade-in at Rainbow Beach. Television cameras recorded the protestors and brought attention to the de-facto exclusion of blacks from public spaces, in this case a south side beach. Leaders from the inter-religious council joined with members of the NAACP Youth Council who had organized the demonstration. Despite the presence of the police, gangs of white youth attacked the demonstrators with stones. Egan indicated that his relationship with Marx was "cast in steel" from this moment onwards.<sup>2</sup>

The violence that erupted at Rainbow Beach was far from an isolated incident. A *Time* magazine article from the same year highlights the Rainbow Beach wade-in as reflective of heightening tensions between Africans Americans and whites, not only in Chicago, but the nation. The article is quick to point out, however, that Chicago logged more incidents in 1960 than any other city in the country. Additionally, although the Rainbow Beach incident occurred on the South Side, the most harrowing violence occurred in the West Side neighborhood of Lawndale, the exact community where, as we saw in Chapter 1, the JCUA would later focus its efforts. The *Time* reporter describes Lawndale in 1961:

In Chicago's Lawndale district on the west side of the city, the dark, slum-speckled streets breed a tale of terror. One night, six Negro boys jumped out of the dark and lashed a 69-year-old white man with bicycle chains. Another gang waylaid a 12-year-old white boy in a schoolyard and bludgeoned him. Four white men dragged

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<sup>1</sup> Jewish Agency of Israel, "Biographical Sketch of Rabbi Richard Hirsch," [www.jewishagency.org/](http://www.jewishagency.org/) (accessed January 15, 2011).

<sup>2</sup>"Powerhouse," *Chicago Daily News* (15 December 1962).

a Negro from his car, beat and robbed him, then for good measure smashed the car against a pole. Last week, in the face of continuing brutality, 79 extra policemen patrolled Lawndale's deserted streets, some of them paced by a snarling police dog. On Cermak Road, the boundary between the community's white and Negro neighborhoods, stores shut down or were empty of customers. Said a police sergeant: 'In my 30 years here, there has never been such a rash of racial violence.'<sup>3</sup>

The leadership efforts of the UAHC Chicago Federation paralleled the efforts of Jews throughout the country who were working on issues of racial and economic justice. Yet, Marx felt that there needed to be a still more organized Jewish voice speaking on the issues in Chicago. Marx summarized his reasons for establishing the JCUA:

It was incorporated into the reform Chicago Federation. When I say they welcomed this, of course there were segments of the community that felt we should leave well enough alone. That social action should be a committee. And it was my vision that social justice was more than the activity of a committee and that work needed to be done with community organizations. We had been working with them through the Inter Religious Council on Urban Affairs and it was a natural outcome of all of these activities. One, the sympathy of the Chicago Jewish community for social action. Two, the fact that it had sort of been bifurcated into a committee of most congregations whereas we felt it should be a central activity. And three, the fact that communities were asking us for help. And four, there was a model of what we could be doing in terms of some of the work our Protestant

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<sup>3</sup> *Time Magazine Online*, "Races: Tales of Terror," <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,938173,00.html> (accessed 18 January 2011).

and Catholic communities were doing, particularly the city missionaries' society which became the Community Renewal Foundation in terms of supporting individual areas. In the creation of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, it seemed to be something that needed to be done at the time.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Funding the JCUA and Meeting Lew Kreinberg***

Marx's largest obstacle to reaching this goal, a dearth of financial support, was removed with a single phone call. In August, 1964, Marx picked up the phone in his office and listened carefully while he was informed that the Merrill Trust had provided a modest grant for his work on urban problems. Unaware of what "modest" might actually imply, Marx was stunned when he received the check from the Trust, made out personally to him. Marx described the occasion,

It was a hot, August day in 1964. I got a telephone call from the vice president of Merrill Lynch...and he said, "Rabbi, I have a check for you. Can I stop over to your office?" And I was delighted. I had no idea what he was talking about. And the vice president of Merrill Lynch stopped over that afternoon and presented me a check made out to me in the amount of \$15,000.00. After fighting off all of the covetous thoughts of what I could do with that \$15,000.00, I decided that we needed to start something that would really express what we were trying to do in the city.<sup>5</sup>

There were no specific instructions about how to use the money; only the implicit understanding that the generosity reflected an approval of Marx's efforts to further Jewish

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 24, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

engagement in the urban landscape.<sup>6</sup> On the very same day that Marx received the check from the Merrill Trust he received a call from a colleague who recommended that he meet a young, bearded graduate of University of Wisconsin. “We have this young man here. He is looking for a job. He is a political science graduate of the University of Wisconsin. Do you have any ideas, Rabbi Marx of what we could do?” Marx replied: “Send him over.” This is how Marx met Lew Kreinberg, who indicated that he had been a good student in the classroom, but wanted to be more involved in the real world. He was looking for a job that would make a difference.<sup>7</sup> Meeting Kreinberg and receiving the money from the Merrill Trust on the same day was uncannily serendipitous, and Marx continued to describe the receipt of the check as a “great mystery” (although he admitted a suspicion that Saul Alinsky, a pioneer and legend of community organizing, was somehow behind soliciting the donor of the check to the JCUA).<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting that Merrill, a non-Jew, was such a generous supporter of Jewish contributions to social justice. Of course, this wasn't the first time Jews had received support from non-Jews, especially for ecumenical work. Yet, Merrill's personal story deserves special attention insofar as it is an unusual interweaving of a non-Jew's concomitant support of both the African American and the Jewish communities. Throughout his life, Merrill had supported a variety of Jewish causes. One in particular, though, might best reflect the depth of his connection to Jews on a personal level. As a soldier in the Fifth United States Army during World War II, Merrill had rescued an orphaned teenage Jewish boy named Bernat Rosner, whose parents had been killed in the Holocaust.<sup>9</sup> In fact, with support from Merrill, Rosner immigrated to the United States. Later,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> “Powerhouse,” *Chicago Daily News* (15 December 1962)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Yardley, *An Uncommon Friendship* (London: University of California Press: 2001), 153.

Merrill sponsored Rosner's university education and eventually Rosner became an executive in one of Merrill's companies.<sup>10</sup>

Likely, Merrill's gift was meant to spur the Jewish community to take a larger interest in the issues facing African Americans. Merrill was a leading supporter of the African American community throughout his lifetime. Among the many African American organizations with which Merrill was involved, his notable leadership at Morehouse College stands out. A historically African American institution of higher learning, Morehouse has educated many African American leaders and the ranks of its illustrious alumni include Martin Luther King. It should then not be altogether astonishing that the same man who provided such integral support to the African American community should also have played a key role in the development of the first grassroots Jewish organization effort focused on urban issues. It is further notable that Merrill had played such a central role both at Morehouse and at the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs, two organizations close to the hearts of King and Marx, respectively, and that he would be instrumental in King and Marx joining forces in the Civil Rights Movement. The type of support that Merrill provided to the college was seen as remarkable—even as part of a larger providential force. In a commemoration address in 1961, the President of Morehouse College stated:

I cannot close this address without publicly paying tribute to Charles Merrill, chairman of the Morehouse Board of Trustees. If the Morehouse salaries are fairly competitive, give large credit to Charles Merrill. If we have sent able students to the best professional and graduate schools, give credit to Charles Merrill through the Early Admissions Program. If our faculty is widely traveled, salute Charles Merrill. If six-odd Morehouse students have studied and traveled in Europe, let us give thanks to Charles Merrill. If Morehouse is on the verge of being accepted as

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 199.

worthy of membership in Phi Beta Kappa, let us take our hats off to Charles Merrill. It has been an act of God that Charles Merrill came into our lives.<sup>11</sup>

It is with almost the same sense of divine intervention that Marx regarded Merrill's initial contribution of 15,000 dollars and Lew Kreinberg's appearance on the very same day. With the new funds, Marx hired Kreinberg, and together Marx and Kreinberg formed a relationship that would become absolutely integral to the JCUA.

Kreinberg did not grow up in an especially religious family, which is a bit unusual for a man who would devote his life to a Jewish organization. Yet, when one considers that the Jewish organization was devoted to urban issues, the reasons behind his journey with the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs become more discernable. Although Kreinberg's family moved to Highland Park when he was young, he had terrific memories of visiting his grandfather's clothing store, Berry and Benson's, on the West Side, near Roosevelt and Halsted. It was a store full of activity where "you could buy a good blue serge suit with two pair of pants for under \$40. " Kreinberg had a romantic feeling for his grandfather's old neighborhood, and an appreciation of its street life. Now, in the 1960s, the neighborhood, along with the institutions the Jews had built there, was crumbling before his eyes. In fact, many of these institutions had been transformed into fixtures that embodied the problems of discrimination. For instance, the Jewish People's Institute (JPI) in Lawndale had been the cultural center for Chicago Jewry. Later, when Kreinberg joined the JCUA, the JPI belonged to the Chicago Board of Education, and had become one of the segregated elementary schools that were representative of the poor educational environment that proliferated on the west side.<sup>12</sup>

Kreinberg approached the JCUA not only through the frame of his life experiences, but through a more academic lens as well. As a student at the University of Wisconsin, Kreinberg had

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<sup>11</sup> Eddie Colston, *Dr. Benjamin E. Mays Speaks* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), 172.

<sup>12</sup> Melvin Holli, *Ethnic Chicago* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B Erdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 158.

been influenced by the ideas of William Appleman Williams. Similar to other Midwestern "Progressives," such as Eugene Debs, Williams was a "typical liberal with distinctly conservative traits."<sup>13</sup> Many consider Williams the "preeminent historian and critic of Empire in the second half of the "American Century."<sup>14</sup> Williams's *Contours of American History* and *Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, two of the most influential scholarly books of his age on the subject of Empire, were published when Kreinberg was his student at the University of Wisconsin. In his widely acclaimed works Williams asserted that America had an obsession with growth, and that policy leaders made decisions based on an expansionist mentality.

Kreinberg applied Williams's theory to the urban sector, where he saw the "imperialist" need to control others as another manifestation of our national adolescence. Attempts by policy leaders to build and build were also driven by an American, and largely Protestant, predilection continuously to raise the economic level. The JCUA co-leader saw how the American idealization of ever-increasing consumption related to the urban landscape: urban policy makers were reinforcing a notion that people are programmed to want more of everything, "in," as Kreinberg put it:

a future that will provide less, less energy, less lumber, less hot air in winter, less cool air in summer. Less everything that people consume. We are redesigning the city for a set of appetites that are doomed. This standard of living is behind us, the way of living is ending. The big buildings are headstones not touchstones. When the city bulldozes old houses for new apartment buildings, it destroys the possibly useful for the obviously useless.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, s.v. "Williams Appleman Williams," (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> Kelly Boyd, *Historians & Historical Writing* (Chicago: Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 1240.

<sup>15</sup> Robert McCloy "You Don't Have to be Jewish to Love Robert Marx and Lewis Kreinberg," *Chicago Reader* 14, no. 14 (1985): 5.

Just as Roosevelt had advanced the New Deal in order to preserve the frontier of American investment expansion, more contemporary American leaders used the pretext of "neighborhood development" to exaggerate the need for the expansion of urban planning initiatives. But according to Kreinberg, Chicago was not a city of neighborhoods and never was.

Chicago is a city of factories, railroads converging on a bog, bankers counting the take, steel, gadgets, profit and loss. Neighborhoods come so far down the list [of the urban power elite] that they are off the page. Nobody came to Chicago to found a neighborhood or to save the lakeshore for swell parks. Nobody came for the weather. People talk of neighborhoods because they offer a sense of personal boundaries in the miles of city. But the neighborhoods, the old neighborhoods, are not the tail that wags. They are located on the ass end of the dog.<sup>16</sup>

The solution to Chicago's urban dysfunction, for Kreinberg, was not expansion, but rather the empowerment of those already living in the city. Urban policies aimed at renewal were disingenuously crafted to improve neighborhoods, but were in actuality only an expression of a frontier mentality which failed to hear or respond to people's needs. In essence, organizing provided a new vision for the future that went beyond the notion of endless consumption and control. Kreinberg offered:

Our cities have been barbarous and if we choose to tame them it will be a new thing. If neighborhoods are to be stable and nourishing and all the things we claim for them in our folklore, we must change them. People in them must have more power than they have been granted in the past, and humans in them must have more commitment to these small areas than they have ever made in the past.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



For Kreinberg, the purpose of the JCUA was to respond effectively to the issues of the city by listening to and organizing the people who lived there.

### ***Marx's Religious Views: How They Shaped His Work***

Even though they shared a deep commitment to the poor, Marx, likely because of his clerical orientation, presented and applied his commitment in a more religious context and language than Kreinberg. Marx approached his passion for social change through a deeply informed understanding of the role of religious communities, particularly the Jewish community, within the larger fabric of society. Speaking of the obligations that religious communities held toward society, Marx declared:

I am not suggesting that the religious community must be the enemy of the city building department or urban renewal department, or city hall. I am suggesting that the Church and the Synagogue—in an age of automation and bureaucracy, have a unique and primary role to play. Their focus is on people. When, at the same time and as a result of the growing alliance of cities with Federal Government, religious institutions discover that the Federal Government subsidizes middle class white people to live in suburban areas as result of its FHA loan policy, while confining lower class Negroes to ghetto areas through its urban renewal policy, then the religious community must be concerned and must be involved. In the name of God, it must be involved.<sup>18</sup>

Marx believed that the problem standing in the way of social engagement for most congregations was that study and action were considered distinct areas of Jewish life. Without a synthesis of the realms of study and action in temple life, both failed to elevate religious community.

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Marx "Religious Communities and Urban Power Structures," Lecture delivered 11 October 1966, University of Michigan. Chicago History Museum, Robert Marx Collection, Chicago, Illinois.

As Marx offered: "The adult education people are irrelevant and the social action people are impotent. The problem is that the two are seldom connected." The answer to the segmentation of study and action was not merely to "throw an occasional Biblical passage into a discussion." Marx continued: "'Are ye not like the Ethiopians unto me?' may not be quoted as often as 'Let Justice rise up as waters' but both are no more than slogans at a time when radical social change and conflict confront the congregation and community." Even more, he lambasted not only the social actionists who served as "sloganists," but also those who failed to take seriously the importance of their role in the congregation. Rather than being seen as on "the meshugah side of the lunatic fringe," Marx asserted that the social activist must be especially sober—aware that "motivating people to act requires hard work and teaching, sometimes even courage."<sup>19</sup>

### ***Marx Develops his Concept of Interstitiality***

While a graduate student at Yale, where he was taught by famous thinkers such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Max Weber and F.S.C. Northrop, Marx developed a conceptual framework which he termed, "Jewish interstitiality." Meaning "within the spaces," interstitiality refers to the historical condition of Jews as "a people in between"—often a people used by the power structure to achieve its goals at the expense of the masses. Marx explained:

The Jewish community, we concluded, was truly interstitial, truly located between the parts of the social structure of western societies. Neither part of the masses nor of the power structure, Jews were uniquely positioned so that they fulfilled certain vital, yet dispensable functions, for the society of which they were a part.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> The Jewish Council of Urban Affairs. Robert Marx, "The People in Between," [www.jcua.org/site/DocServer/6047The\\_People\\_in\\_Between.pdf?docID](http://www.jcua.org/site/DocServer/6047The_People_in_Between.pdf?docID) (accessed 13 January 2011). (Attachment #2)

Marx described the Jewish tendency—arising from a fear of antisemitism—to withdraw and become isolated, and explained how this reaction can, in time, cause Jews to remain silent when confronted with societal injustice. This is the dynamic which Marx saw at the base of the Jewish interstitial role. What is significant here is that the Jewish community responded to the forces which were structuring it in a negatively interstitial role, not by fighting those forces, but by cooperating with them... When the chips were down, Jews allowed their spokesmen to be those who would be most tractable and responsive to the interests of the non-Jewish power structure.<sup>21</sup>

Marx encouraged Jews to act with what he declared to be an affirmative capacity of their interstitial role—the capacity to live up to their moral heritage and, instead of becoming tools of the power structure, to dedicate themselves to helping the powerless. The choice between positive and negative interstitiality is profound, and the consequences of this choice are significant. Marx postulated: “Interstitiality may be negative or it may be positive. It may lead to the gas chambers or to prophetic heights that enable Jewish people to rise above parochialism or nationalism.”<sup>22</sup> Yet, no matter how profound the significance of an interstitial concept might be to understand current events, Marx also asserted the concept's limitations:

It's everything. [referring to the significance of interstitial analysis on shaping the JCUA] Remember, the interstitial role is philosophical. To understand that is to understand. My assumption is that thought affects action. If you understand trends and the way people are thinking, then you will understand the movements of the world. My problem is that I can understand this retroactively. The difficulty is to see how it will affect what you do in the future. My interstitial analysis helps me

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 24, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Robert McCloy “You Don’t Have to be Jewish to Love Robert Marx and Lewis Kreinberg,” *Chicago Reader* 14, no. 14 (1985): 5.(Attachment #3)

understand anti-Semitism and the fad. Will it help me understand what Jews ought to do?<sup>23</sup>

### *Interstitiality and Marx's Experience in the South*

It was in his capacity as UAHC director in Cincinnati that Marx was able to apply his ideas to a first-hand analysis of how American Jews were addressing tensions in the South. In 1957 he had been given a mission, by Al Vorspan of the Social Action Division of the UAHC, to investigate the conditions of Jewish communities in the South, particularly how Jews in the South were addressing racial tensions. An analysis of the study that Marx prepared, entitled: "The Jews of the South and Their Attitudes Toward Integration" reveals a sophisticated understanding of the intermediate role of the Jewish position between African-Americans and whites.

Marx began his analysis by explaining that Southern Jews are "middle-men, not only politically, but economically and socially as well." In his estimation, the South maintained sharply defined status roles. Therefore, the situation for Jews as middlemen in the South, in contrast to the situation in the North, was exacerbated. Marx noted that the rabbi in Jackson, Tennessee, refrained from speaking on the issue of integration even though he believed it to be morally right. The rabbi, when he said: "I don't want to embarrass my congregation," also expressed the attitude of some of his non-Jewish colleagues who held sentiments such as: "If I spoke the way I feel, I would lose fifty percent of my congregation."<sup>24</sup> Marx also described an experience in Jackson which he viewed as fulfilling the classic description of the Jewish interstitial role. African Americans were attempting to integrate the city's buses, sitting in seats normally reserved for whites. When an African American who had been jailed for breaking the law was released on bond, a popular rumor developed that the

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 24, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Report to the UAHC, 1957, by Robert Marx, "The Jews of the South and Their Attitudes Towards Integration," 7, Robert Marx Collection, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.(Attachment #4)

owner of Kisber's Department Stores, who was among one of the three "old" Jewish families in Jackson, had paid the bond. In actuality, Jonas Kisber was out of town during the incident. Simultaneous with the rumor that Kisber favored African Americans, his store was boycotted for not hiring African Americans.<sup>25</sup>

While rabbis in some communities had the opportunity to play a marginal role to advance integration, for other rabbis it was impossible. Attitudes in the various southern Jewish communities ranged from outwardly supportive, (usually led by the rabbi or some intellectuals) through ambivalence, to—to a lesser degree—violent opposition to integration. In all the communities that Marx encountered in the south, even in cases where integration was accepted as inevitable, outright antisemitism was at the root of Jewish fear that supporting African Americans might lead to them being labeling as communists, or worse.<sup>26</sup>

The rabbi of Little Rock Arkansas was the founding member of the local Urban League.<sup>27</sup> Whites were at first hesitant to join the organization, but, in time, respected members of the white community showed a willingness to participate. Yet, despite the rabbi's leadership, the Jewish community as a whole, according to Marx, played a passive role. He indicated that the prevailing Jewish attitude could be heard in reflections such as: "this is a problem for the courts and the legislature," or, "the Negroes must fight their own battle."<sup>28</sup> In contrast to the situation in Little Rock, the rabbi in Cleveland, Mississippi would not have even had the opportunity to advance any liberal thinking. Said one congregant to Marx: "If our Rabbi spoke in favor of integration, he would not last five minutes here."<sup>29</sup> In Jackson, Mississippi, Jews were concerned because the governor had invited a rabid fascist to a state function, and asserted that they had been assailed as

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 6.

communists, and left out of the Chamber of Commerce. The Rabbi, who had served the community for seven years, had never been asked to give the invocation at the Chamber, even though several Protestant ministers and Catholic priests had had the honor. The Jews of Jackson were also aware that the lessening of their influence in local organizations had been accompanied by attacks on the Anti-Defamation League, known for its integrationist attitude.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to his observations about other southern cities, Marx offered that in New Orleans there was a concerted effort by three Reform congregations to exert “behind-the-scenes” support for integration. In particular, members of the temple communities participated in organizations friendly to integrationist activism, including Save Our Schools and the Committee on Public Education. In response, several Sisterhood members who volunteered to drive white children to integrated schools were attacked, and several windows were smashed. The activists were terrorized and threatened: “We’ll get your kid.” When Reverend Forman walked his child to school, or when Father Drolet walked white children to school, they were met with disapproving fellow white Christians, accusing them of being “Nigger lover[s].” Marx aptly pointed out: “But when a Temple Sisterhood member walked children to the school, she was called “Dirty Jew.”<sup>31</sup>

In all his accounts of the South, it is clear that Marx believed Jews existed in a perilous state and, although they were self-consciously aware of their minority status, they may not have been particularly aware of the implications of how they addressed that status. Southern Jews sensed that if they stood up for African American rights they would be depicted not as “courageous,” but as working on behalf of Jewish national organizations that sought to undermine local interests. Marx cited Robert Morton, a sociologist who used the stereotype of Jews as a classic example of how

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 8.

moral virtues are virtues only if they are held by a proper in-group. When outsider groups—such as Jews—hold "moral" views, they, instead, are held in contempt. Merton explains:

We are prepared to observe how the very same behavior undergoes a complete change of evaluation in its transition from the in-group Abe Lincoln to the out-group Abe Cohen or Abe Korokawa. We proceed systematically. Did Lincoln work far into the night? This testifies that he was industrious, resolute, perserverant, and eager to realize his capacities to the full. Do the out-group Jews or Japanese keep these same hours? This only bears witness to their sweatshop mentality, their ruthless undercutting of American standards, their unfair competitive practices. Is the in-group hero frugal, thrifty, and sparing? Then the out-group villain is stingy, miserly and penny-pitching. All honor is due the in-group Abe for his having been smart, shrewd, and intelligent and, by the same token, all contempt is over the out-group Abes for their being sharp, cunning, crafty and too clever by far.<sup>32</sup>

As the governor of Mississippi expressed at the time: "There is a certain class of people in New Orleans today who are licking their chops at this situation. They are the most dangerous people in this country today—the Zionist Jews. You have no idea the influence and the campaign they are conducting to raise funds to see this desegregation through."<sup>33</sup>

In their apparent resolution to invert their values, some Jews abnegated their traditional ideals. In so doing, they embodied an inferior version of themselves and no longer acted in a responsible capacity on behalf of the greater society. The malleability of the image of the minority group provided an opportunity whereby Jews could reject their own sense of themselves. All of this

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Merton, "The Self Fulfilling Prophecy," *Antioch Review* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1948): 201.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Marx, Report to the UAHF, 1957, "The Jews of the South and Their Attitudes Towards Integration," 7. Robert Marx Collection, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois. (Attachment 4)

was motivated by a false hope that the problem of antisemitism would disappear, if only Jews would stop acting, well, Jewish. Marx, of course, insisted that such an approach to mitigate the causes of antisemitism was ineffectual, and proposed an alternative course. He stated:

... the entire Jewish community (both Southern and Northern) would do well to realize that neither by remaining inconspicuous nor by becoming “less than average,” will the problem of anti-Semitism disappear, for prejudice is in itself a need of people who feel insecure and frustrated.<sup>34</sup>

Marx recommended, in response to antisemitism, that (1) “they [Jews] should not picture themselves as primarily concerned about their own interests,” and that (2) “they [Jews] must picture their attackers as disloyal to America.”<sup>35</sup> Rather than fade into the background or assume a less active role, Marx encouraged Jews to confront all manifestations of discrimination as a threat to the American way of life, and all related violence as a degradation of the American respect for law and order. Marx states:

The Jewish community of America is convinced that its goals and ideals are identical with those of the nation as whole. By simultaneously picturing prejudice in all of its horrifying dimensions and degrading the prejudiced personality, American Jews may be able to retain in clear focus the ideals which have been their birthright for four thousand years, and at the same time render a great service to the country in which they live.<sup>36</sup>

From this 1957 analysis, a considerable amount might be discerned about how Marx later approached his work in Chicago. Marx reflected on the impact of his Southern experiences to shape his later work:

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 17.



They [southern Jews] also had to live in the white community. They were interstitial, they were between the parts. So the trip allowed me to get a framework of what I had in mind as the interstitial role. When I got to Chicago and could do so, I could create something like the Jewish Council, or help to create it. This analysis of interstitiality could receive a practical outlet.<sup>37</sup>

In the south, Marx focused on the intermediary position of Jews as expressed through the malleability of their perceived status and roles. Jews in the South, because of the extremity of their conditions, *could* be led to confront the threat of a prejudicial environment by blaming themselves. Alternatively, they could choose to act according to their traditional moral values and confront their assailants.

### ***Chicago and the Interstitial Analysis***

In Chicago, Jews could avoid their interstitial role by focusing on negative comments by African Americans towards Jews, and, through distancing themselves from a group that was more discriminated against than they, move closer to the entitled majority. In Chicago, Jews were placed in a very precarious position because their marginal status was shaped by forces that also discriminated against the African American urban poor. Again, Jews could either suppress their own need to challenge the power structure that enforced their marginality, or, alternatively, they could use their interstitial capacity to confront the discriminatory practices that kept them underrepresented among the city's powerful elite.

In his analysis of the South, Marx constantly demonstrated how the power arrangements of southern communities affected Jews' ability to respond adequately to their traditional role of being

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Rabbi Robert Marx, October 17, 2010.

“the people in between.” In the South, as later in Chicago, Marx viewed this failure in a broader historical framework, one that had had tragic implications. He stated:

What is significant here is that the Jewish community responded to the forces, which were structuring it in a negatively interstitial role, not by fighting those forces, but by cooperating with them...When the chips were down, Jews allowed their spokesmen to be those who would be most tractable and responsive to the interests of the non-Jewish power structure.<sup>38</sup>

The JCUA was in part established to address the interstitial capacity of the Jewish people in Chicago, and it was in this role that it elicited suspicion from those Jews who had aligned themselves with the interests of the powerful non-Jewish elite. The methods that the JCUA used reflected certain important precepts of Judaism. Marx referenced Maimonides' injunction that one should, “anticipate charity by preventing poverty” and “assist the reduced fellowman, either by a considerable gift or a loan of money, or by teaching him a trade, or by putting him in the way of business, so that he may earn an honest livelihood; and not be forced to the dreadful alternative of holding out his hand for charity.”<sup>39</sup>

### ***The JCUA and Tzedakah***

The JCUA also applied the principle that the notion of righteousness, for Jews, is a basic human responsibility to help others; that there is a distinction between *tzedakah* and the more usual understanding of charity. *Tzedakah* implies that giving, in the Jewish tradition, extends beyond only helping people financially, but also takes into consideration an obligation to help others in ways that

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Marx, Report to the UAHC, 1957, “The Jews of the South and Their Attitudes Towards Integration,” 15, Robert Marx Collection, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois. (Attachment 4)

<sup>39</sup> Robert Marx and Lewis Kreinberg, “The Jewish Council of Urban Affairs: A Progress Report,” 1964, 1. Robert Marx Collection, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois. (Attachment 5)

protect the receiver's self-esteem. Moreover, Jewish charity includes the notion that all human beings must personally identify with the suffering of others. Such an understanding of respect for others, and obligation, was reflected in the non-paternalistic orientation of the JCUA as it strove to build real, trusting relationships with people, across boundaries. Marx explained:

The Jewish Council on Urban Affairs has much to learn—from the city—and the poor, themselves. Suburban structures too are intimately related to the social, political, and economic patterns in the inner city. It is our hope that the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs may be the channel for the establishment of meaningful relationships with the modern metropolis, relationships that will make our faith the effective instrument for fashioning a community in which all of the children of God may live together as brothers.<sup>40</sup>

The JCUA also reached across the various movements of Judaism to coordinate shared goals, and searched for expertise from a range of backgrounds. In their first newsletter, Marx explained the make-up of the board and how it functioned:

At JCUA meetings, a leading industrialist sits down with a professor of urban geography and the dean of a law school; an outstanding attorney talks about the problems of the slums with an architect and a city planner. Here, too, distinctions between Conservative, Orthodox and Reform Judaism become less important than the challenge to all branches of Judaism; so it is only natural that a Conservative and Orthodox as well as a Reform rabbi serve on the Board of the Council. The

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Marx, "A Progress Report" Robert Marx Collection, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois. (Attachment 5)

small Board covers a wide cross section of the Jewish community. What unites us is its conviction that Judaism's voice in the metropolitan area must not be muted.<sup>41</sup>

In its first progress report, coauthored by Marx and Kreinberg, the following areas of focus are outlined: (1) the establishment of a dialogue with various community organizations; (2) work with specific communities on problems of mutual concern; (3) the contribution of staff personnel to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to assist in community oriented projects, such as tutorial programs and Mizvah Corps; (4) development, with the City Missionary Society and other inter-religious groups, of programs dealing with housing problems and (5) specific projects dealing with problems associated with slumlords. Established in the earliest days of the JCUA—within six months of its founding—these five areas, which will be described below, provide tremendous insight into both the short term and long term trajectory of the organization.<sup>42</sup>

*(1) The establishment of a dialogue with various community organizations:*

Rather than using a go-it-alone method, the JCUA worked in partnership with existing community-based organizations, partnering with grassroots community organizing efforts such as the Austin Community Organization, the Southeast Community Organization and the Roger Parks Organization. JCUA members attended meetings with executives from these grassroots organizations, and worked to discover how the Jewish community might either play a direct role in these organizations' efforts, or simply express its commitment to justice and equitable community standards.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Jewish Council of Urban Affairs Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (1964): 7. Robert Marx Collection, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois. (Attachment 6)

<sup>42</sup> Robert Marx and Lewis Kreinberg, "The Jewish Council of Urban Affairs: A Progress Report," 1964, p. 2. Robert Marx Collection, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois. (Attachment 5)

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

*(2) Work with specific communities on problems of mutual concern:*

How the JCUA worked with specific communities reflected a variety of underlying focuses. First, the type of support that the JCUA extended was not limited to any single issue, whether that might be schools, housing or employment. Second, the JCUA provided capacity-building support to the community, particularly in the area of organization. Third, the presence of the JCUA in the urban sector helped address the "white-hatred" that African Americans particularly identified with Jewish stereotypes. By working with the local community, the JCUA lessened this general negativity towards Jews. For example, in the Woodlawn area, an outright grant was made to the community organization to conduct a pilot project on the African American/Jewish relationship. Fourth, the JCUA did not only built close and personal relationships with the African American community, but also contributed to the resolution of a wide variety of community problems that impacted Poles and Puerto Ricans. This too would guide later efforts, as the JCUA's bridge-building initiatives extended to a diverse group of ethnicities and nationalities, many of whom had demonstrated antisemitic sentiments.<sup>44</sup>

*(3) Contribution to the UAHC*

Another important aspect of the JCUA's operations was its interaction with synagogues. From the onset, the JCUA maintained a staff person who worked on social issues as well as coordinated tutorial training for lay leaders from the UAHC. Service learning was also extended to the temple through the summer Mizvah Corps. This initiative was intended to support a student work project sponsored by the National Federation of Temple Youth and the Chicago Federation of the UAHC, and aimed to involve the utilization of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs and its contacts with the Hyde Park and Woodlawn communities.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 4.

#### *(4) Housing Problems*

As has been previously noted, the JCUA worked on a wide variety of concerns beyond housing. Nonetheless, it should be recognized that "housing problems" were specifically identified as a separate category. This distinction reflected how housing, so central to urban concerns, became an issue of special emphasis for the JCUA. The breadth and depth of housing problems was central to the concerns of Chicago's numerous community organizations, and, as such, housing issues provided an excellent opportunity for the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs to plan its activities in cooperation with various other Jewish and community organizations, and, particularly, with religious programs sponsored by other faiths and denominations. For example, the JCUA identified the City Missionary Society, the Interreligious Council on Urban Affairs and the Community Renewal Foundation as three organizations with which it would work to improve housing with the leadership of the city of Chicago.<sup>46</sup>

#### *(5) Specific Projects Dealing with Slum Landlords*

Of special concern to the Jewish community was the problem of slum landlords, an issue which Marx viewed in an interstitial context. He stated:

We wish to emphasize that we do not feel that this is a problem that can be dealt with by the Jewish community exclusively. The seemingly high percentage of slum landlords who are Jewish should, however, cause us to be especially sensitive in this area. The JCUA is cooperating with the slum landlord problem and, where justified, has utilized synagogues and rabbis.<sup>47</sup>

The problem was not simply one *created* by Jews, but one which occurred because of an interstitial role whereby some Jews were aligned with more powerful non-Jewish interests that

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 5.

reflected the business and political elite. Only by addressing the slumlord situation as a manifestation of a much wider context of discriminatory practices that favored established interests could the issue be resolved. Therefore, the JCUA sought legal and zoning advice to confront slumlords who were skilled in delay tactics to avoid their responsibilities, and who were usually supported by Building Department officials to circumvent the desires of those who sought to improve the quality of their neighborhoods. The JCUA continued its ongoing work with the Inter-Religious Council of Urban Affairs to advance community interests, which sought to challenge the power of slumlords who, with the cooperation of municipal officials, controlled deteriorating dwellings, charged their occupants high rates, and guaranteed themselves excessive profits.<sup>48</sup>

In a circumstance where Jews, through an interstitial role, were actively engaged and functioned as stereotypes in the exploitation of under-privileged minorities—particularly African Americans and Puerto Ricans—the JCUA provided a mechanism for lay-leaders to set tangible, recognizable goals for direct action in humanitarian activities.

### *Jewish Involvement in the Civil Rights Movement*

Jews had played leading roles in the Civil Rights Movement since the early twentieth century, with Reform rabbis, in particular, providing leadership in the fight for equality. As the Civil Rights Movement progressed into the 1960s, the coalition of African Americans and Jews continued. Jews both helped to bankroll and occupied leading positions in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Freedom Rides of James Farmer and the Congress of Racial Equality.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Kaufman, *Broken Alliance* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1988), 19.

Marx was involved in the Civil Rights Movement before it turned its attention north to focus on economic discrimination. Earlier in the 1960s Marx concentrated on bringing equal rights, including equal voting rights, to African American citizens in the South. And even before King came to Chicago, Marx's leadership role there involved him with King in national civil rights efforts, including the marches in Washington and in Selma.

The March on Washington, attended by over 250,000 people, was the culmination of a series of civil disobedience demonstrations in 1963. Originally conceived to dramatize the desperate condition of blacks in the South, the marchers demands included an end to racial segregation in public schools, meaningful civil rights legislation—including a law prohibiting racial discrimination in employment—protection of civil rights workers from police brutality, a \$2 minimum wage for all workers, and self-government for the District of Columbia, then governed by congressional committee. These demands were later dropped to focus on a single goal: to pressure Congress to pass the Civil Rights Bill.<sup>50</sup>

Leading Jewish groups lined up to support the March on Washington. Indicative of the important role Jews played in the movement was a speech given by Rabbi Joachim Prinz that immediately preceded Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" address. Rabbi Prinz was the president of the American Jewish Congress and the former rabbi of a Berlin Jewish community that had been decimated in the Holocaust. He declared: "Bigotry and hatred are not the most urgent problems—the most important and tragic problem is silence."<sup>51</sup>

At the same moment that Joachim Prinz addressed the crowd, another German-born rabbi, Ernst Lorge—who had a Reform pulpit in Chicago—was marching alongside Rabbi Robert Marx.

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<sup>50</sup> Daniel Levine, *Baynard Rustin and the Civil Rights Movement* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 135.

<sup>51</sup> Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 310.



Together, Marx and Lorge helped an elderly African American who had collapsed by the side of the road. Marx described the scene:

So we went to Washington. Lorge and I did. There were over 100,000 people. The numbers of any Washington march are subject to estimate. But it was really a huge crowd of people. And it was a hot August day. Lorge and I were walking toward the reflection pond, where the speeches were to take place. There was a huge crowd of people. All of a sudden an elderly black man fell in front of us. Fell down. He was exhausted. Lorge and I stopped walking and we went and got water. We held him. His head was in my lap. We got water for him and he came to very quickly.<sup>52</sup>

After the man recovered, he shared this remark with the two rabbis as he smiled at the huge crowd passing by: "For seventy-five years I have lived in this country, and today, I became an American." As this African American voiced his joy and amazement, Marx recalled hearing King's words in the background: "I have a dream." Marx then reflected on this experience, "So people say to me, "Rabbi, were you at the civil rights march in Washington?" And I say, "Was I there? Did I hear Dr. Martin Luther King?"<sup>53</sup>

In the same year as the March on Washington, a local group of African-Americans in Selma, Alabama began an effort that eventually led to a momentous encounter between Southern segregationists and nonviolent protesters. Selma's population included 15,100 African Americans and 14,400 whites. Out of the eligible 15,000 African Americans in Selma, only 200 were registered to vote. This ratio of African American to white voters made Selma an ideal place to start a movement focused on voting rights, and in 1963 local African Americans formed the Dallas County

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Robert Marx, October 26, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Voters League to address voter registration. Local organizers were then joined by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which began voter-registration work. When, in February, police shot and killed a young African American man at a voting rights rally in nearby Marion, activists responded by calling for the March 7<sup>th</sup> march from Selma to Montgomery.<sup>54</sup>

Led by John Lewis of the SNCC and the Reverend Hosea Williams, an aide to Martin Luther King, some 525 marchers were met by a wall of state troopers as they began to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge. After refusing orders to stop, protestors were beaten by mounted officers equipped with whips and nightsticks. With the national press, including television, recording the violence, the protestors were then suffocated with tear gas.<sup>55</sup> One of the participants in the march who witnessed the violence declared, “I fought in World War II and I once was captured by the German army and I want to tell you that the Germans never were as inhuman as the state troopers of Alabama.” Because millions of Americans watched the event on live television, and were outraged by the excessive use of force, the day became known as Bloody Sunday. Representative James G. O’Hara of Michigan called the day’s events “a savage action, storm-trooper style, under direction of a reckless demagogue [a reference to Alabama’s governor, George Wallace].” President Johnson also declared that he “deplored the brutality.”<sup>56</sup>

In response to the violence, Martin Luther King Jr. announced that he and Ralph Abernathy would lead a second Selma-to-Montgomery march on March 9, 1965. Despite a national outcry, federal officials urged that the march be delayed, and a federal judge issued a court order to temporarily forbid the march, hoping to avert further violence. Undeterred, Martin Luther King called on “religious leaders from all over the nation to join [us] on Tuesday in our peaceful, nonviolent march for freedom.” Inspired by the protestors, Marx joined clergymen from all around

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<sup>54</sup> William T. Martin Riches, *The Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Macmillan, 2004), 84.

<sup>55</sup> Sara Bullard, *Free At last, The National Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 57.

<sup>56</sup> *Jet Magazine* 34 (April 18, 1968): 20.

the nation who responded to the call. On March 9, Marx, King and some 3,000 peaceful protestors set out on a second Selma-to-Montgomery march. They did not take the seriousness of their violation of a federal injunction lightly. Marx explained how his decision to march reflected the gravity of the moral necessity to defy the injunction, and made clear that he accepted the consequences of such action:

It was a serious decision and we were prepared to accept the penalty for disobedience of the law because, even though the law is very important, and the injustice was everywhere visible as the injustice of the injunction was apparent. Another factor is an awareness that at times there is a higher law than the law of man. Our decision to march regardless of the injunction was taken in great seriousness. This was really so different from what I have preached for so long that the process of law must be used to create the vision of a great society. When you go beyond them, it is serious.<sup>57</sup>

Dr. King and Marx did march on Tuesday. However, there was an agreement between King and the Justice Department that people would march only up to the point of confrontation. For King, this choice embodied a non-violent response to the injunction. King told the *Washington Post*: “As a nonviolent person, I couldn’t move people into a potentially violent situation.”<sup>58</sup> The marchers sang the movement’s anthem: “We Shall Overcome.” The group then prayed, and Abernathy thanked God for the marchers who “came to present their bodies as a living sacrifice.” King then directed his followers to turn back.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> “Chicago Clergymen Tell Their Selma Story,” *Chicago Sun Times* (March 10, 1965).

<sup>58</sup> America.gov, “Bloody Sunday in Selma,” <http://www.america.gov/st/peopleplace-english/2008/December/20090106140544jmnamdeirf0.1943018.html> (accessed 14 January 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

A third and final march to Montgomery began on March 19<sup>th</sup> and extended through March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1965. By the time the march reached the steps of the Alabama State Capital, the number of voting rights activists, both black and white, had swelled to 25,000. Five months later, in August, Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which banned literacy tests, poll taxes and other hindrances designed to impede black enfranchisement.

### ***The Southern Marches and Chicago***

The Selma marches had an impact on the organizing climate of Chicago. Many of the primary event organizers in Selma gained experience there that they would later apply as primary organizers in Chicago. Jesse Jackson, for example, had gone to Selma to serve as an assistant to Rev. Dr. Ralph Abernathy, and within 8 months Jackson was appointed National Director of SCLC's Operation Breadbasket, with headquarters in Chicago. James Bevel and James Forman were also leaders in the Selma to Montgomery marches, and they, with Jackson, would later work cooperatively in Chicago.

The marches provided a springboard from which Marx could make an appeal to the Jews of Chicago. In the months after Marx returned from Selma to Chicago, he wrote and preached about the events that he had witnessed in Alabama. The Selma march had clearly made a profound impression on him. As a rabbi leading a Jewish organization, Marx sought to translate the events in Selma into a language that spoke to the Jewish experience. What were the challenges facing the *Jewish* community, and how should the *Jews* of Chicago respond to the struggle for civil rights?

One way that Marx related the Selma experience to Jews was to re-tell the struggle for civil rights within the frame of a Jewish narrative. He explained how participating in Selma provided a transcendent opportunity to experience his own Judaism:

The point is that we felt like rabbis at this moment. We were not talking; we were doing. We were not insisting that we be consulted by the planning committee or that we bring our greeting to the Bar Mitzvah and his family. Rather, we recognized that it was possible for us, too, to stand at Sinai. We recognized that there were Egyptian taskmasters and that they had to be repulsed before good could triumph over evil. We would weep over their loss, but only after their hatred had drowned.<sup>60</sup>

In the modern world, through a struggle against discrimination, Jews could sense a covenantal attachment to the ancient Jewish heritage of redemption. Participation in the civil rights struggle not only meant living out Jewish values beyond the temple, but also supported a renewal of Jewish vibrancy within the sanctuary. Marx suggested that engagement with the civil rights struggle provided an opportunity for Jewish prayer to find purposeful relevance. He compared praying at Selma to his aspiration for what he viewed as the full potential of Jewish prayer.

Marx began by explaining how praying at Selma provided the worshipper with a set of circumstances that captured a moral imperative. He stated:

Prayer springs from real needs. Real prayer is the result of neither complacency nor success. It comes naturally and earnestly when man is in trouble, when he needs help.' Out of the depths I called unto the Lord. He answered me with great enlargement.' Our worship in Selma Alabama was real because it was related to real despair, to genuine needs. There was injustice. There was persecution. There was suffering. No one could offer the pallid palliative: 'Well, there are two sides to

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Marx, in a sermon: "The True Believer in Selma and Chicago," 1965, Robert Marx Collection, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, Box 11, Folder 4.

every story.' There were not two sides. There was one side. And so men could pray.<sup>61</sup>

In another reflection, Marx continued with the theme of the power of prayer that he had witnessed in Selma:

The Negro community of Selma prayed potently. They sang 'We Shall Overcome' until the rafters of Browns Chapel Shook with the fervor of the hymn. What made this hymn and their prayers so powerful was the conviction that undergirded them. They seemed to be saying: 'We shall indeed overcome.' Black and white together, we shall overcome some day.<sup>62</sup>

Marx also advocated for civil rights by engaging core concerns of the Jewish community. The Jewish community was diverse. In Chicago alone, the Reform movement represented 50,000 of 300,000 Jews. To a large community, with many fractured elements, the struggle for civil rights provided an opportunity for unity, agreement and joint cooperation. Also, beyond unity, the Jewish community was grappling with problems of continuity. With the holocaust still a recent memory, Jews were especially concerned with growing rates of intermarriage and felt an imperative to engage the next generation. Jewish engagement with civil rights provided a way to reach youth who were disenchanted with religious institutions, and provided an opportunity to find common cause. Marx encouraged the community to action:

The Jewish community is not united. We are small and we are not united. When it comes to action we are paralyzed by a fear that we will offend someone. We must not be afraid. We are now losing our best young people. They are joining the civil

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

rights movement and the Peace Corps. They are tired of bones without meat, of resolutions without resolution, and of conversation without conviction.<sup>63</sup>

Rather than divorcing God from politics, organized religious institutions—ones that were capable of interreligious and non-denominational cooperation—might provide unprecedented sources of political power. If Jewish organizations could engage this way, Jewish life could be reinvigorated by a broad-based and more youthful population.

Marx believed that the racial crisis in America provided an opportunity for Jews to apply their heritage of justice and faith to the contemporary setting. Building upon a framework of interreligious and community relations that moved beyond superficial and inspirational resolutions, the JCUA built a meaningful mechanism of social action that could bridge the gap between temple lay leaders and direct activism. Marx had refined his understanding of the interstitial role of Jews during his earlier observations in the South, when he was sent there as a UAHC representative from Cincinnati. Not long after arriving in Chicago, when, along with Lew Kreinberg, Marx founded the JCUA, he viewed the organization as fulfilling a positive interstitial role on behalf the Jewish community. The JCUA opposed characteristic urban renewal initiatives advanced by establishment interests, and focused on grassroots, non-paternalistic community-based relationships which would directly respond to the voices of those living in the urban sector. While leveraging the support and power of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in Chicago to advance its goals, the JCUA also struggled with Jewish leaders from within the same parent organization which he sought to influence.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

### **Chapter 3: Tangled Allegiances and Hard Won Success**

During its early years, as the JCUA worked to counter the image of the Jewish slumlord and continued the developing cooperation between African Americans and Jews, the organization established itself as a constructive force in the fight against systematic exploitation of the urban poor. Foremost among the initiatives in which the JCUA played a leading role were the Chicago Freedom Marches, led by King and the Contract Buyers League. Eventually, the success of the JCUA to shed light on Jewish predatory practices would eventually cause organizational distress with its parent organization, the UAHC Federation of Chicago.

#### ***An Early Stage of Reform Unity in Chicago***

Even prior to King's move to Chicago, the Union of Hebrew Congregations, of which the JCUA was a part, had made housing a primary focus of their social action plan. As a result of this effort, the presidents of thirty-two Chicago Reform congregations adopted the Chicago Federation of the UAHC's twelve-point action program to promote open housing, employment opportunities and the elimination of slums. This twelve-point program was similar to plans utilized by the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations, including Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and the United Church of Christ. Almost foreshadowing the open-housing marches, led by the national civil rights leaders in Chicago, the program encouraged congregations to "actively involve themselves with civil rights and community groups." The program language continued, "It is not enough for us to assume an isolated responsibility; it is imperative that groups seeking to deal with the problem of open occupancy unite."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Gruenberg, "Reform Jews Urged to Push Open Housing, Fight Slums," *Chicago Daily News* (February 23, 1967). (Attachment 7)



In addition to a focus on open housing, the new program's 12 points included key organizing steps that reflected the JCUA's concerns. Among the 12 actions steps were injunctions

- To discuss with “various professional and public personalities, both within the congregation and outside of it, what they are doing to pursue the goal of an open society.”
- To develop working teams to achieve individual housing, job and school opportunities for Negroes. Such groups could, among other things, actively seek homes that Negroes may purchase in urban and suburban areas.”
- To work with the Chicago archdiocese, as well as the Church Federation of Greater Chicago and other Protestant groups, to further open housing programs
- To conduct seminars “involving the poor” on poverty, broken families and juvenile delinquency.
- To “seek to establish communication with other groups and synagogues.
- "To set up a “timetable for action and “an inventory of resources”—professional people within congregations— “with the knowledge and political power necessary to achieve an open city”<sup>2</sup>

### ***The JCUA and Martin Luther King***

When Dr. King came to Chicago in 1965, his primary goal was to address issues facing the educational system. He had been invited to Chicago by Al Raby, the convener of the Coordinating Council of Chicago Community.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

In 1966, following this success and fresh from other civil rights victories in the South, King and the SCLC then chose to embark on what became known as the Chicago Freedom Movement. The focus would now shift from schools to housing. In the battle against poor housing conditions, the Chicago Freedom Movement concentrated the core of its efforts on what became known as “open housing”—the right of people to live where they chose.

Changes to open occupancy practices were fought by the Real Estate Board, which represented a wide range of powerful interests as well the interests of a number of Jewish real estate investors. A confrontation between civil rights leaders and realtors was inevitable, and the merged interests of the Mayor and business leaders stood against the demands of civil rights leaders, who were supported in varying degrees and at various times by religious leaders such King, Archbishop Cody and Marx.

At first, Daley was unwilling to meet with Dr. King and civil rights leaders. Soon, though, despite the efforts of King and the Chicago Freedom Movement to embrace non-violence, a series of riots developed in the summer of 1965, which Daley was eager to prevent from spreading. In an effort to quiet the unrest, the mayor met certain demands, including the provision of swimming pools and open hydrants on the West Side during the hot summer months. But ultimately, the West Side riots only turned events toward another, and far more profound, manifestation of social unrest.

Utilizing a practice that had been successfully employed in the South, King and other civil rights leaders sought to dramatize the extent of the white population's resistance to open housing. In a series of marches that were intended to be non-violent, civil rights advocates marched in white residential neighborhoods where white realtors refused to serve African American clients. Marx, who had been asked by the city, along with other clergy, to serve as a peace-keeper of sorts, attended a July 30 march:

What I saw in Gage Park seared my soul in a way that my participation in no other civil rights event had done. I was afraid then and I am afraid now. I saw how the concentration camp could have occurred, and how men's hatred could lead them to kill. I saw Catholic priests reviled and nuns spit upon. I found myself—a rabbi—standing guard like a policeman, over a pile of bricks, for fear that grown men and mothers dragging little children around with them, would seize those rocks and throw them at the demonstrators. I saw teenage boys and girls ready to kill.<sup>3</sup>

At a march the following Friday, Marx determined that he could no longer just be an observer. He had been supportive of open housing initiatives for years, and was determined to confront the perpetrators of hatred. This meant that Marx now had to part ways with some of his fellow clergy, because the Archbishop had asked that demonstrators seek a means to confront injustice other than to march. Marx, who had been supportive of the open housing marches from the beginning, did not agree. If such hatred was now exposed, it was clear to Marx that he must not allow others to wrongly invalidate the righteous conscience of the marchers by attempting to frame the civil rights advocates as provokers of violence. By standing with the marchers, Marx would help condemn the real perpetrators of violence—those who would deny open housing to African Americans. Addressing a congregation, Marx declared:

Some of you, as I have said, will accuse me of helping to create violence. To this, I must respond that I am not inciting to violence, but rather it is those who prohibit free men from peacefully marching who do the inciting. And in the final analysis, perhaps it is better that I receive a scar from a rock thrown on a Friday afternoon,

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<sup>3</sup> American Judaism, "I was on the Wrong Side of the Street," p. 26, Robert Marx Collection, Box 8, Folder 9. (Attachment 8)

than for a million Negro children to bear the scars of a lifetime, knowing that they cannot live where they want to live or travel where they want to travel.<sup>4</sup>

True to his prediction, Marx was indeed hit by a brick as he marched with King on Friday afternoon. Not severely injured, Marx declared:

This time, for me at least, I was on the right side of the street. To be hit by a brick is, I assure you, far less painful than to watch from a neutral distance a hatred that you can do nothing about to prevent. It was so much easier to accept this hatred than to watch it. The marches had done their job. The hatred was exposed. It was real and it was raw.<sup>5</sup>

The clashes ultimately led to a summit conference in August of 1966, which Marx attended, between civil rights leaders and members of the power establishment. The city agreed to Fair Housing Ordinances, to place welfare recipients in available housing anywhere and not just in the ghetto, to build no more high-rise family dwellings in high density areas, and to relocate families forced to move because of urban renewal into the best available housing, regardless of location. Most significantly, the Real Estate Board reversed its opposition to the philosophy of open occupancy. Many, however, viewed the Chicago Freedom March as a failure, and saw the concessions merely as empty promises—not as program that could be enforced.<sup>6</sup> When King and the marchers left the city, Marx and his co-religionists continued to fight for fair housing practices.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *The Bulletin of the Chicago Board of Rabbis* 7, no. 1 (September 1966): 7. (Attachment #1)

<sup>6</sup> James Ralph, *Northern Protest* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 170.

### *The JCUA and Chicago's West Side*

The JCUA's ongoing grassroots organizing initiatives, which had begun in 1964 before King came to Chicago, focused on the West Side.. Lew Kreinberg, during his first two years on the staff of the JCUA, worked for the West Side Federation, a community-organizing group. A large part of Kreinberg's role was to help highlight housing problems.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the support it received from the JCUA, The West Side Federation was also supported by Egan, Rev. Daniel J. Malette, Rev. Douglas M. Still, director of social welfare for the Church Federation of Greater Chicago, Rev. Donald Benedict, director of the Chicago City Missionary Society, and John McDermott, executive director of the Catholic Interracial Council of Chicago. At the center of the efforts was Shelvin Hall, the Chairman of the West Side Federation.

When Shelvin Hall arrived in Chicago in 1955, his church, Friendship Church, had 200 members and 87 cents in the treasury. When Friendship Church moved to Douglas Boulevard in 1962, Hall, pointing out the growing strength of his congregation, remarked that the church paid \$80,000 cash for the building on Douglas, and was able to borrow \$30,000 more for renovation. The church, which was incidentally a former synagogue, now became the organizational center for the activity of the West Side Federation, whose offices were in its basement. "If it weren't for Friendship, there would have been no Federation," Reverend Hall declared.<sup>8</sup>

As the work of the Federation progressed, tensions with the city and the democratic machine escalated. An inter-religious request for \$450,000 to organize the community was blocked by the city's own antipoverty Urban Progress Center, and was later killed through the opposition of combined municipal interests led by Deton J. Brooks Jr., director of Chicago's antipoverty agency, and supported by Sears Roebuck and Company and Ryerson Stell Company, the two leading

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<sup>7</sup> Kreinberg, *Jewish Council on Urban Affairs Newsletter* (January 1967). (Attachment 6)

<sup>8</sup> James Bowman, "Friendship Baptist: Still on the Move" *Chicago Daily News* (November 12-13, 1977).

employers in the West Side Lawndale neighborhood. The municipal interests feared that the clergymen would bring Alinsky to the West Side: "If he comes in, he'll make us out to be the villains of the West Side. His Lieutenants out here have already threatened to turn the neighborhood against us." The issue had, in fact, gone as far as Washington, where Daley and other mayors had demanded that the federal government not allocate grants directly to community groups. The mayors, led by Daley, believed that such federal action undermined their authority. The Interreligious Council attempted to overrule the local veto and grant the \$450,000, but with no result. The application to the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington was held up by a Federal agency.<sup>9</sup> Despite this disappointment, the community organizing work of the JCUA and others at the West Side Federation continued, supported by more modest grants, and manpower, supplied by the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs and other affiliated bodies of the Inter-religious Council.

A final, but critical element of Kreinberg's work was his capacity to be a Jewish presence in the community, working on behalf of community interests. Hall expressed what he believed was a representative sentiment of African Americans communities towards Jews:

All of us black people who lived in the neighborhood hated Jews, not because they exploited us, but because we had been taught at home and in Sunday school that Jews were 'Christ killers.' With the Jews thus singled out for us, we made them fair game for ridicule. We black children used to run to the Jew's store and shout, 'Jew, Jew, Jew, What do you chew?' There are many more folk ditties, some mean, others filthy, all of them cruel. To hold an attitude of an antagonism or destruction

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<sup>9</sup> Frank Sullivan, *Chicago Sun Times* (September 11, 1965): 34.

toward Jews was bred in us from childhood; it was not merely racial prejudice, it was a part of our cultural heritage.<sup>10</sup>

Given such an orientation, the JCUA's people-to-people organizing approach on the West Side might stifle the further spread of antisemitism, and encourage African Americans, despite the sensitive issue of the Jewish slumlord, to separate Jews from the larger monolithic white establishment.

The JCUA also operated in an area of Chicago known as Kenwood-Oakland, whose boundaries extended from 35<sup>th</sup> to 51<sup>st</sup> street, and then from Cottage Grove Avenue to the Lake. Forty-seventh Street was considered "the dividing line;" "the invisible line;" "the Mason-Dixon line." At this time, deteriorating conditions existed in North Kenwood, while South Kenwood and its southern neighbors of Hyde Park and the University of Chicago were vibrant communities.

Robert Gordon was assigned by the JCUA as a full-time loan to the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (KOCO). Kenwood was an example of an urban area where Jewish populations had not yet completely fled the urban landscape. Within Kenwood, there remained several Reform temples, particularly in Hyde Park, including: Isaiah Israel (Rabbi H.G. Perelmutter), K.A.M. Temple (Rabbi Jacob Weinstein), Rodfei Zedek (Rabbi Ralph Simon) and Sinai Congregation (Samuel Karff). Reflecting the further coordination of the JCUA's efforts with area temples seeking to address racial tensions brought about by changing racial demographics, Gordon's work was paid for through contributions from the above temples.<sup>11</sup>

Gordon's work primarily involved preparing base maps and Land Use Maps. These were tools by which community organizers could plan housing advocacy efforts using their own criteria, rather than ideas developed by a municipal authority. Such an effort helped form the basis for

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<sup>10</sup> Letter from Sherman Hall to Marx, August, 1965, as indicated in a memo from Elliot Lehman to the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs, 1966. Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>11</sup> *Jewish Council on Urban Affairs Newsletter* 1, no. 1, p. 3. Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.

collecting data and assembling tenant unions, which could then aim their efforts at condemnation proceedings. Gordon also helped to devise a housing survey that would enable block-by-block organizing efforts. As with Kreinberg, Gordon did not determine the strategy for KOCO, but served at the discretion and direction of local community members. Bob Lucas, a leader of KOCO, recalls that an architect hired by the JCUA assisted his organization and was remarkably sensitive to the preferences of the community. "He came as a collaborator not as an outside expert."<sup>12</sup>

Like Kreinberg, Gordon confronted antisemitic attitudes and felt that his presence helped calm tension between African Americans and Jews. In 1971, KOCO leadership remarked of Gordon:

White, Jewish, capable, dedicated, Bob Gordon [the JCUA staffer] has stood out in the councils of KOCO as the constructive Jewish presence. The leadership of the community, more understanding than the average resident harboring any anti-Semitic attitude, certainly is aware that the JCUA and its staff members were there as a positive image.<sup>13</sup>

Lawndale was filled with graffiti, gangs and inequitable housing practices, including abuses of a system called Contract Buying. Contract Buying was originally intended to aid low-income individuals obtain mortgages, but now permitted sellers to retain the title to a property until the buyer had paid a certain portion of the purchase price. Rather than resorting to a method of resistance well-known in Chicago—rioting—Lawndale's citizens chose to confront housing injustice by organizing and fighting through the court system. The JCUA helped to lead this effort, and rallied members of the Jewish community behind those who were victimized.

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<sup>12</sup> Elias Pichevy, "The Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, agency for cooperation," *Jewish Currents* (February, 1979):

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



### *Antisemitism and Interstitiality Complicate Housing Reform*

Jews were not only reformers. Marx viewed that on both the South Side and the West Side, Jewish landlords were responsible for much of the price gouging.

The Jewish slumlord, the contact seller, the merchant, the Jewish politician in an all black area may be marginal remainders of what was once a proud Jewish community. Their presence in the slum areas is a reality to which we cannot close our eyes.<sup>14</sup>

Marx and his colleagues, of course, were hoping to correct a situation that had deep and tangled roots in the structure of society, and their concerns went far beyond the predatory role played by certain Jews. Nonetheless, for Marx, these Jews occupied an important although marginal role. As the remainder of a community that had fled to the suburbs—neither part of the power structure nor of the masses—those Jews who remained were *viewed* as part of the power structure because they were white. As slumlords and real estate agents, they served as middlemen to the insurance companies and mortgage brokers who capitalized on the interest collected by the discriminatory housing market. They also helped to perpetuate the ghettoization of African Americans.

The Jews who participated in this negative interstitial role were highly vulnerable. By following predatory practices Jewish real estate agents and slumlords represented the power of the system that designed the discriminatory racist housing rules without themselves belonging to that system. As Marx wrote:

We have come to understand the traditional historic role which Jews play caught between the larger structures of society. We have come to understand how—no matter who wins the game of social survival, the Jew always loses. We have to

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Marx, "The People in Between," p. 12. (Attachment #2)

come to see how a handful of slumlords can become surrogates for thousands of Jewish doctors, attorneys, housewives and children.<sup>15</sup>

Whether or not there was any truth to the claims of certain Jewish middlemen that active antisemitism, rather than discrimination, was at the root of any challenge to the justice of the factors that led to the middleman position, the business practices of these Jewish middlemen could certainly provoke or increase antisemitic attitudes. The JCUA, serving as a key partner in the organizing effort known as the Contract Buyers League (CBL), played a critical role in preventing the spread of antisemitism in these volatile neighborhoods.

### ***The JCUA and The Contract Buyers' League***

The Contract Buyers League was organized by a group built on the ecumenical ties of Chicago's social justice community, and was well-suited to benefit from the organizing capacity of the JCUA. The relationships that Marx had established with fellow clergymen on the Interreligious Council of Urban Affairs, as well as the relationships JCUA staff members had with organizers on the West Side, fostered the partnership between the organizations.

The CBL began when an African American woman named Ida Wells, with the support of John Macnamara, decided to confront one of the sellers. The sellers were those engaged in real estate sales to African American families on the west side of Chicago, who handicapped Africans by unconscionable contract financing, thereby depriving African American purchasers of acquiring equity in their homes. Ida Wells, an African American buyer, describes her pivotal encounter with her own contract seller:

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Marx, Annual Report, p. 2. (Attachment 5)

Before I left home that morning, I was very concerned over whether I was right or wrong. This has always been a problem with me: being afraid to really step out because I was afraid to be wrong. So I prayed a prayer before I left home that morning. I am not a real religious fanatic, but I do believe wholeheartedly in God because I feel I would not have made it this far if not for a true and living God. That morning I went into my closet and closed the door to shut out everything. I asked the Lord to show that day whether I was wrong between the time I left this house and returned. I said, 'If I'm wrong in expecting this man to do something, then I won't bother him anymore. But if I'm right, I want You to show me and I'll fight on.'<sup>16</sup>

The above statement reflects two very important qualities of the CBL'S organizing on the West Side, and suggests the type of role the JCUA would come to play in the CBL's efforts. As the language above reflects, many organizers saw their struggles in religious terms. They were also somewhat intimidated by the concept of an organized structure. In many ways, the tactics of the CBL seemed more similar to those of wealthy suburbanites fighting zoning changes than to the kind of approach urban dwellers would be likely to take confronting a white power structure. The JCUA helped provide the African American community on the West Side with the skills and training they would need to capitalize on the organizing capacity of their religious communities. Through the work of Lew Kreinberg, the JCUA organized teams of lay leaders from Temple communities who attended meetings on the West Side and encouraged residents to join the fight. Because it was important as well that the sellers did not feel isolated and marginalized, Marx also invited CBL leaders to speak at area Temples.

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<sup>16</sup> James McPherson, "The Story of the Contract Buyers League," p. 54. (Attachment 9)

The JCUA's work with the CBL was also supported by an array of other groups, from law students to religious associations to organizing concerns. While the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Chicago, John Cody, never endorsed the project, Egan and Macnamara, two Catholic priests, helped to draw large numbers of Catholics to support the CBL.

The JCUA voted to support the efforts of Robert Marx in the fight to support African American buyers who had been denied equal access to the mortgage and insurance resources of Federal lending institutions. Beyond merely providing support to Marx as individuals, the members of the JCUA pledged their *institutional* support to the Contract Buyers' League:

Those buyers are engaged in a variety of actions, including litigation in the courts, to secure negotiation of the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs. While many of the legal questions surrounding these transactions are still unresolved, we are unanimously unified in our convictions that the moral injustice involved demands our support of the Contract Buyers' League. We, therefore, uphold the actions of Rabbi Robert J. Marx in this matter and pledge our continuing endorsement and support of the Contract Buyers League.<sup>17</sup>

Support for the CBL was also extended, in January 1969, by an affirmative vote at a full delegates' meeting of the Chicago Federation. This powerful backing placed Marx fully at the helm of institutional Jewish opposition to the Contract Buyers League and in a confrontational position against influential members of the Jewish community who had interests in the very practices the Contract Buyers League sought to reform.

While there is no direct written account of what prompted parts of the Jewish community to oppose Marx and the JCUA, it is possible to *suggest* motivations, as Marx did:

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<sup>17</sup> JCUA Pledge, June 1969. (Attachment 10)

I would be less than frank were I not to admit that there are people here in Chicago and in our movement who are dedicated to the abolition of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs. These are men who have some financial connection with contract sellers whom we have opposed. The contract sales problem is a painful one, as you know, because it illustrates the depth of how our system uses one minority group against another.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Organizational Complications***

Bernard Sang and Sidney Cole were board members of the Chicago Federation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and, in 1969, both men had been elevated to vice presidents of the UAHC's national committee. For a time in 1968, Marx had been selected by Solel Congregation in Chicago to serve as their rabbi during the absence of Arnold Wolf. In a letter from September 20, 1968, Marx describes Sang as “unhappy” and “in distress” over the situation. The sour nature of the relationship between Marx and Sang later extends to Marx’s work in conjunction with the JCUA, where Sang and Cole continued their opposition to his leadership.

Although the exact motivations for Sang and Cole's negativity toward the JCUA may be unclear, Cole’s contentiousness towards Marx is documented. In a letter to a rabbinical colleague, Roland Gittlesohn, the President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, uses strong language to characterize Sang’s hostility towards Marx:

Thank you very much for your letter of 13 February and a copy of your communication of the same date to Maurice Eisendrath. I assure you that Maurice does not need any added influence from me in bringing all possible pressure to bear on Bernard Sang and anyone else involved in the attack on Bob Marx because

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<sup>18</sup> Marx to Eisendrath, March 23, 1969. (Attachment 11)

of his superb work in the Chicago area. I am nonetheless sending a copy of this response to Maurice so that he will know of my willingness, even eagerness to supplement his efforts if he thinks there is anything further I can do. I am in complete agreement with you that Bob must be fully upheld in this altercation.<sup>19</sup>

As we will see, Cole's vitriolic attitude towards Marx would be repeatedly evident throughout this period. In contrast to Cole, Gittelsohn, in a 1970 letter, shows support for Marx and reflects the stance of the President of the Union, Maurice Eisendrath, who, in a letter to Marx, voices strong support for the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs:

Let me say that I admire the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs and its work. I am proud of the fact that our national and regional leadership had a share in its creation and that you, our colleague of the Union staff, provided that driving force which made it a meaningful, vital institution. Its program is an expression of those ideals which are central to the constellation of my own convictions. Its goals are in full harmony with the goals of our Union, because social action, religious action is one of the three pillars on which our national program is built.<sup>20</sup>

In the same letter, Eisendrath seems to caution Marx that such a focus on his leadership of the JCUA might compromise his overall ability to perform effectively in the full capacity of his role as leader as the Chicago Federation of the UAHC. Realizing that the JCUA had become independent of the UAHC, Eisendrath provided his impressions of the Federation-Council relationship. Both he and Marx were agreed it was necessary to evaluate the efficiency of the organizational relationship between the Council and the Federation, and Eisendrath did not question the depths of Marx's commitment to the Council. However, after suggesting that Marx remain involved in the Council in

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<sup>19</sup> Roland Gittelsohn to Rabbi Martin I. Silverman, February 19, 1970. (Attachment 12)

<sup>20</sup> Eisendrath to Marx, February 24, 1970. (Attachment 13)

the ongoing role of day-to-day administration, the leader of UAHC does seem concerned about the difficulty of balancing an extraordinarily full set of responsibilities. He said to Marx:

... once effected, no one will be able to question and measure the extent of your personal involvement in the Council's work. It will be your duty to advance it as the Director of our Federation. This does not mean, of course, that it can become your sole or overly dominant concern. Many other duties must be met—in the realm of Jewish education, and camping, and worship and service to our congregations. These will be your continuing responsibilities and indeed they always were.<sup>21</sup>

Marx had also, from the organization's inception, been involved in fundraising for the Council. Now, especially given the independence of the Council, Eisendrath worried that the more targeted focus of the Council might in some ways impede Marx's ability to fundraise for more general efforts of the Federation.

In this connection, I must caution you not to work for the JCUA's financial well-being at the expense of the financial strength of our Union. We simply cannot go into competition with ourselves. Congregations and members of our congregations must support the Union as a whole, through MUM and RJA (membership dues paid to the Union), before their support for the Council is accepted. This holds true for every other aspect of your regional work whether it be your marriage counseling service or a youth service, whether it be a religious school for retarded children nor the Olin-Sang Camp Institute. I know that such local activities have an appeal far more intense than the appeal of a distant national organization. But prospective donors must be made to know the folly of supporting a single program

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

without supporting the source from which it emanates. This will not always be easy to implement, but your every effort in this direction is urged.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Organizational Discord and the South Side Campaign***

On Chicago's South Side, a proposed "payment strike" led to the threat of evictions. In response, publicity arose about challenging the constitutionality of the Illinois law, which permitted evictions under these circumstances. Over five hundred South Side buyers had been withholding contract payments for many months, and had deposited those funds with the CBL. This, of course, created serious financial pressure for builders. Some questioned the CBL's tactics, and, in fact, eviction proceedings were brought against CBL members which both State and Federal courts refused to stay. Although Eisendrath did not take a position on this matter, he pointed out that Marx's relationship with the Council could potentially cause problems for Marx, because, if he did not agree with the entirety of the Council's support for the tactics employed on the South Side, he could have to declare opposition to the CBL. On the other hand, Eisendrath leaves open the possibility that Marx could still support the Council and its endorsement of the Contract Buyers League *without* needing to voice his support in full.

The South Side issue is beyond the realm of my competence for judgment. I simply do not know what the facts are. I must say this, however: it is possible and proper to support the program of an organization generally even while denying support for one of its particular activities. To put this more concretely, the Council's endorsement of the Contract Buyers' League does not relieve you of the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



obligation to disassociate yourself publicly from a particular action whose validity and justice you do not perceive.”<sup>23</sup>

Eisendrath’s letter further articulated certain specifics as to what he, as the national president of the UAHC, believed should be an adequate spelling out of Marx’s relationship to the Jewish Council within the context of his responsibilities as a full time professional director of the Chicago Federation. These included an understanding that Marx would:

- Resign as President of the JCUA prior to May 15, 1970
- Maintain administrative involvement in the JCUA as would reflect the obligations of an executive director of an organization
- Have the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors of the JCUA, if elected
- Desist from ongoing fund raising for the JCUA or any other agency, group or fund which is not an official agency of the UAHC or which does not have prior approval of the National Board of the Union.

Additionally, Eisendrath stipulates certain additional suggestions concerning the relationship between the UAHC and the Council:

- The JCUA may rent space in the Chicago Federation offices subject to an agreed monthly rental established by the Union
- The JCUA must reimburse the Union for any and all services rendered
- The JCUA will be subject to an audit by the UAHC, paralleling a procedure followed by other organizational entities sharing the UAHC facilities<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Memorandum of Preliminary Draft of Meeting Held at the Chicago Federation UAHC, at 3:00 PM on Thursday 9, 1970; In attendance: Eisendrath, Marx, Friedman, Altheimer, Sang and Cole. (Attachment 14)

At first glance, one might consider these actions to be punitive, especially as they were applied to Marx's involvement with the JCUA. However, in response to Eisendrath's letter, Marx welcomed all of these suggestions.

I would welcome a closer relationship to the UAHC. I would welcome having a representative of the UAHC on our Board, and closer administrative coordination, including the setting up of our books in accordance with national procedures, and subject to their audit. I would welcome a lay president, and hope to effectuate a change in the presidency of the Council in the very near future.<sup>25</sup>

Some might claim that Marx's acquiescence to Eisendrath might have been born from political necessity and expediency rather than out of genuine agreement. But Marx provided a fuller framework for the convictions he shared with Eisendrath for the overall approach:

When I decided to create the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs several years ago, it was done because there was no adequate mechanism for allowing religious institutions to deal with the complex problems of urban living in the Chicago Metropolitan area. At all times we were conscious that what we were trying to do expressed the spirit which you have represented so courageously in our Union over the years. The JCUA was created to put our religious action program into a practical urban setting. At no time, either at its beginning or now, was the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs intended to be divorced from the UAHC.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, if any personal animosity or friction existed between Eisendrath and Marx, not a trace of it can be found in the correspondence between these two passionate leaders of social action. Marx was effusive in his praise. His letter begins "I hope it is not gratuitous of me to say that

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<sup>25</sup> Marx to Eisendrath, March 23, 1970. (Attachment 11)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

there is no one in the rabbinate that I admire more than you.” His parting words in the letter reflect a similar admiration: “Finally, Maurice, let me assure you of my continuing dedication to the work that you and our Union have delineated. There is nothing closer to my heart than the strength of our movement. To be an instrument in the process of search for justice and the living God of our faith is all that I desire.”<sup>27</sup> From this letter's opening to its closing, Marx shares his unbridled support and affection for his colleague and the leader of the Reform movement.

Despite whatever may have been proposed to limit Marx's role with the JCUA or to create some amount of division between the JCUA and the UAHC, Sang, a powerful lay leader of the UAHC who had previously confronted Marx, continued to express his displeasure, and objected to any appearance of a relationship between the JCUA and the UAHC.: “I completely object to the JCUA occupying the offices of the Chicago Federation with or without rent or payment for services. It is my feeling that so long as the activities of the JCUA are conducted from the offices of the Chicago Federation, nothing has been accomplished.”<sup>28</sup> Later, in a letter to Eisendrath, Sang attacked Marx for participating in a fundraising dinner on behalf of the JCUA.<sup>29</sup>

Those such as Sang, who were unsupportive of the position of the JCUA on the CBL issue, were enraged by the JCUA's next step. In their support for the buyers and employing a strategy that would become a hallmark of JCUA organizing, the JCUA orchestrated a coalition of Jewish organizations, in this case, a powerful group, which lobbied the President of the United States. Written on JCUA letterhead (with Marx still listed as President on May 27, 1970-- 12 days after the agreement that he would resign) the letter reads:

The undersigned organizations urge your intervention in a serious conflict which  
has reached crisis proportions in the eviction and impending eviction of hundreds

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Sang to Eisendrath, April 1969. (Attachment 15)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

of black families from their homes on the west side of Chicago. We turn to you with the conviction that you will want to avail yourself of all the power of your high office to seek a just solution. We urge you to call together such regulatory bodies of the federal government as the Federal Housing Administration, the Federal Savings and Loan Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Community Relations Service, the US Commission on Civil Rights, the US Department of Justice and such other arms of the Executive as can give assistance to a creative resolution of this matter. We urge you to call upon these and all other parties in this dispute to join in an effort to right a serious wrong visited upon thousands of decent, hard-working people who otherwise must come to the inescapable conclusion that practicing the time honored American virtues may bring rewards to our white citizens but not to black Americans.<sup>30</sup>

The list of organizations that signed the letter were some of the most visible and powerful in the country, including the American Jewish Congress, the Chicago Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Labor Committee, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs, the Jewish War Veterans of the United States and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Jewish Council of Urban Affairs letterhead, May 27, 1970 to the President of the United States, Rabbi Robert Marx, listed as President, Howard Gilert, Mrs. Saul Sherman and John Alschuler as Treasurer. Board of Directors included John H. Alschuler, Alan J. Altheimer, Robert H. Asher, Dr. Arnold Black, Charles R. Feldstein, Harold E. Friedman, Mrs. Jerome Fript, Howard N. Gilbert, Ralph Helstein, Hebert Heyman, Louis Kahnweiler, Robert Kamin, Joseph Kellman, Howard Landau, Eliot Lehman, David Lelewer, Dr. Julian Levi, Daniel Levin, Arnold Levy, John Macasi, Robert Mann, Robert Marx, A. Abott Rosen, Bruce Sagan, Erwin Salk, Mrs. Saul Sherman, Rabbi Ralph Simon, Irwin Steinberg, Sol S. Weiner, Mrs. Paul Weltman, John Wineman; Assistant Director, Rabbi Robert A Seigal, Director of Planning, Robert Gordon, and Community consultants, Steven Bloomfield, Jeanette D'Arcy, Leo King and Rabbi Lawrence Kushner. (Attachment 16)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

A notable absence on the list of signatories was the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. In contrast to the Chicago Federation of the UAHC, the Jewish Federation represented the broadest and most comprehensive assembly of Chicago's Jewish organizations. The executive director of the CBL, Jim Rice, offered an explanation for the Jewish Federation's absence:

Any further involvement in this issue, particularly by major Jewish organizations, can only help to create further confusion and division in our community. Although the letter does refer to the problem of Contract Buyers on the West Side, an intervention by the national administration would almost certainly involve both the South Side and West Side buyers...in which case the whole issue would be boiling even higher than at the present time.<sup>32</sup>

Rice's concern supposedly stemmed from a desire to not further escalate tensions. Nowhere in the letter was there an indication of the injustice or inequity concerning the buyers. This reticence speaks volumes—the Jewish Federation simply did not want to take sides on such a controversial question, because any position, due to a Jewish presence on both sides of the issue, would be certain to alienate members of the Jewish community. When Bob Engelman, responding to Rice, stated: “Jim is concerned about the issue boiling over...,”<sup>33</sup> he got at the heart of the difference between the Jewish Federation and other organizations that had signed the letter. He stated: “I understand the special pressures on the Federation from certain of its contributors which inhibit it, but this is no reason for others of the Jewish agencies not to take action, if indicated.” The Jewish Conference on Urban Affairs was instituted by the Federation to provide a “Jewish presence” among the various groups trying to solve the problems of the inner city, and a majority of its participating agencies believed that the current situation constituted an appropriate occasion for such presence.”

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<sup>32</sup> Letter from Engleman to Rice, February 1969. (Attachment 17)

<sup>33</sup> James Rice, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago May 28, 1970 to Bob Engelman of the ADL. (Attachment 17)

Engelman almost suggested the preposterousness of Jim's position. "Jim is concerned that the issue will boil over... the issue has already boiled over." An entire front-page article concerning the controversy appeared, above the fold, in the *Washington Post* on August 4, 1969. The article gave a detailed explanation of the issues involved, and was but one example of the visibility of the CBL fight. At this point not only had tensions reached a feverish level, but the significance of the CBL issue had gained national recognition. Many in the Jewish community felt that only a neutral force with sufficient resources, such as the federal government, could perhaps reduce the conflict to a level where it would not damage the Jewish community. The situation was complex, because the fact that most of the sellers in the evictions were Jewish contributed to an exacerbation of racial tension. In a federal court motion to disqualify Judge Will from hearing the case, it was asserted that the judge would be prejudiced against the sellers in favor of the black plaintiffs because the sellers were Jewish. Engelman continued to believe that validation of the African American position by Jewish organizations would cause the African American community to view Jews more positively, and to see that the Jewish community was far from monolithic in its attitude toward urban reform.

### ***How Successful was the Contract Buyers' League?***

Whether or not as a direct result of the letter filed by the Jewish organizations referenced earlier, the Attorney General of the United States did file a brief on behalf of the buyers. In addition to the government's filing, the JCUA was joined in a coalition of efforts with principal leaders that included Catholic seminarians, Catholic organizations, and three universities—Yale University Law School, Dartmouth College and Notre Dame, which were giving students academic credit for working with the CBL. The basic principle underlining their fight was that the buyers' contracts should be renegotiated so they would pay what the building was worth at the time it was bought.

Racial restrictions for FHA financing and stipulations allowing only certain properties to be sold to African Americans, according to restricted covenants, left only a few areas where African Americans could purchase homes. In general, banks and savings and loan institutions refused to make loans in certain areas of the city that coincided with African American sectors, so even buyers with substantial down payments could not purchase. Speculators secured mortgages, and thereby created an unequal playing field. Moreover, Illinois endorsed a device known as the land trust, which allowed interest holders to hide their identity and negotiate through middlemen, further advancing the capacity of speculators to take advantage of unwitting buyers.

Overall “societal conditions” are of critical significance in an evaluation of the ultimate success of the CBL's efforts. Following nine months of attempted negotiations and demonstrations, the CBL chose to withhold contract payments, and within the first three of these months, CBL accounts held over a quarter of a million dollars. Eventually, in 1970, the CBL won a decision in the Illinois Supreme Court which gave buyers the right to defend against an eviction. In time, however, the CBL lost Federal suits, representing the South and West sides, respectively. The jury foreman actually stated in a public interview that he hoped the verdict would help to reverse “the mess Earl Warren made with *Brown v. Board of Education*.”<sup>34</sup> The Judge on the West Side case mentioned to the jury, in chambers after the case was over, that he thought the jury had reached the proper verdict: the case was about economics, not civil rights. The logic of this conclusion, though, is highly questionable given that the federal government admitted to the practice of contributing to racial discrimination at the time when most of the contracts were written. In a U.S. Commission on Civil Rights entitled “Housing,” the following charge was made, “The FHA indeed encouraged racial discrimination. Its explanation for doing so was the widespread idea that the property value of a

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<sup>34</sup> John Tucker. *Trial and Error: The Education of a Courtroom Lawyer* (New York: Carol and Graff Publishers, 2003), 288.

residential neighborhood suffered when the residents were not of the same social, economic and racial group.” Yet, despite the courts' decision in favor of the sellers, the efforts of the CBL were far from unproductive.<sup>35</sup>

Over the course of the court battles, more than four hundred buyers renegotiated their contracts on CBL terms that saved more than six million dollars. Additionally, students working on behalf of CBL efforts accumulated data that correlated banks' lending patterns with racial living conditions. This data later became the basis for local ordinances that set the stage for federal legislation of the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (1975), which requires tracking and disclosure of mortgage loans, and the Community Reinvestment Act (1977), which states that all federal financial institutions have an obligation to meet the credit needs of their local communities (community groups can utilize these two pieces of legislation as a basis to force financial institutions to make significant reinvestments in local communities.)<sup>36</sup>

### ***How Successful was Marx's Project?***

From the vantage point of the JCUA and its inter-religious partners, working together had led to successful social change. In altering the societal conditions that had enabled speculative practices, the JCUA and its partners also succeeded in eliminating the framework that had produced the exploitive capacities of the interstitial, Jewish middlemen. Furthermore, by drawing in other Jewish organizations on the side of African American buyers and maintaining a Jewish organizing presence in the West Side, the JCUA undoubtedly reduced antisemitism.

Despite such successes, both Marx and Egan, the two clerical principals who toiled at the forefront of these efforts, paid a heavy price for their leadership. In Egan's case, the Cardinal in

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<sup>36</sup> Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), 370.



charge of the Inter-religious Council of Urban affairs reduced Catholic members on the board from 12 to 3, and its financial support diminished—from \$24,000 to \$6,000. Egan, a founder of the council, was one of those eliminated.

Marx had a fate similar to his Catholic counterpart's, and was forced out of his area of influence in Chicago; the UAHC Director in Chicago and the creator of the JCUA was reassigned to the JCUA's national headquarters in New York. Being placed in New York, in charge of the largest Union office in the country and working directly under the leaders of the movement, Marx had difficulty determining whether the decision by movement leaders to relocate him was a promotion or a demotion. Regardless, Marx did recognize that the work he had initiated helped the Jewish community come to terms with its own vulnerabilities. Reflecting on his reassignment he said:

In many ways I'm going to New York because of this issue. When we fought them [the sellers], some of the people in high places got very angry at me. So that when New York says to me, 'We need you here—we want your talent—and besides we think that there are a couple of key enemies you have in Chicago that would make it uncomfortable for you to stay there,' that's because of the contract sales issue. That's how involved we were, fighting within the Jewish community. Now you don't like to be a rabbi fighting Jews. Martin Luther King taught me one thing: If you're a black man, you don't fight other black men; you fight the enemy. I don't like fighting Jews, but I want the Jewish community to see how a couple of guys have been hurting them.<sup>37</sup>

Within a few years, Marx would return to Chicago. Although he never again led the day-to-day operations of the JCUA, he did continue to serve as the symbolic representative of the

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<sup>37</sup> James McPherson, "The Story of the Contract Buyers League," p. 61. (Attachment 9)

organization. What the JCUA had built in the 1960s, fostered through the Chicago Freedom Movement, ongoing efforts on the West Side, and the Contract Buyers League, served as the organization's foundation for many years to come. As previously mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, the JCUA has used their “middleman” position to foster hundreds, if not thousands (the precise number not having been document) of coalition groups with community based organizations over the years. For the next 50 years, the JCUA’s mission built upon its early demonstration that Jews could use their “middlemen” position for positive social change that benefit the masses rather than conform to antisemitic, powerless and short-sighted self-serving “middlemen” who enabled unfair predatory and discriminatory unfair housing practices towards African Americans.

## Conclusion

When Rabbi Marx reflected in 1968 on whether rabbis should be involved in social conflict, he recalled the reasoning opponents to the idea offered: “Keep your mouth shut, Rabbi. The people who are supporting you and your breed don’t want you involved in controversy. If rabbis would be more religious then our problems would be solved and our young people would be retained for Judaism.”

But Marx chose not to be silent, and was especially vocal about those Jews whom he felt were either directly or indirectly involved in perpetuating the dismal situation of the urban poor. “In truth, much more than a few bad apples are our concern. There are Jewish institutions now operating in black areas. The 24<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> wards, which are 98% black, are run by Jewish absentee politicians. There are Jewish social agencies, ostensibly serving the poor, but not always acting in the best interests of either the poor or the Jewish community.”<sup>1</sup>

Another of Marx's concerns was how to involve Jewish suburban congregations in urban issues, though even most Chicago Jews had, at this time, already migrated to the suburbs. Marx argued that study and action were not two separate and distinct areas of Jewish congregational life. Building upon the receipt of a Merrill foundation grant, Marx created the JCUA as an initiative of the Chicago office of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations partially in the hope that congregational involvement in social action might strengthen other synagogal aims as well.

The JCUA pursued the enlargement of social action programs, and sought to extend the role of the “religious institution” beyond the strictly “religious” roles to which congregational communities were often confined. Such a role demanded that Jews, as official spokesmen of Jewish institutions, should be involved in the conflicts of civilization. Such a focus on contemporary issues might also excite congregational members to view current issues through traditional or historic

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<sup>1</sup>“ Should Rabbis Avoid Social Conflict?” (Attachment 18)

Jewish attitudes. Marx said: "The problem with the synagogue today is not that it is bereft or that is neglected. Rather that it is boring. Future planning committees talk about building parking lots. They are cut off from the real issues of our day."<sup>2</sup> The particular conflict which Marx sought to focus upon was the condition of the urban center.

During the 1960s, according to Marx, some may have believed that the Jewish community, because of its relatively small size, was not able to have a real influence on broader societal conditions. Marx countered this assumption with his assertion that Jews have always had a pivotally historic role, and that the responsibility to fill this role continued to the present. He insisted that Jews existed as a "People in Between"—a people who lived between the governing elite and the masses. According to Marx, Jews sometimes served to further the exploitation of the masses on behalf of the elite. He referred to this as a "negative interstitial role." Marx also believed that Jews could play a prophetic and "positive interstitial role." In the positive role, Jews work with non-Jews toward a transformation of the social structure. In so doing, Jews can contribute to the elimination of elite power-structures that exploit the masses—in this case, the African American residents of Chicago's ghettos.

Marx spoke out about how Jews, in the negative interstitial role, would engage in "questionable" urban renewal projects—whether as slumlords, real estate agents or as Jewish builders and developers—acting on behalf of more powerful non-Jewish insurance agencies, developers or creditors. Marx felt that the Jewish presence in the urban center as landlords and merchants constituted a powerful exploitive force. Operating on behalf of their own self-interest, Marx believed that these Jews became involved in urban projects that establishment non-Jewish interests were unwilling to undertake. Thus, antisemitism reinforced a set of societal conditions wherein Jews already fulfilled a negative interstitial pattern. Jews, serving as a critical in-

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

between people who relied on the support of a few power elites to take advantage of the masses, exploited the even more marginalized African Americans who lived in Chicago's ghettos.

A positive interstitial role challenged this tendency to remain silent on social issues. As seen in his writings on community and on his experiences in the South during the 1950s, Marx believed that a positive interstitial role required an honest encounter with the source of negative interstitiality. Jews, according to Marx, had to confront an internalized feeling of weakness and vulnerability brought about by a fear of antisemitism. But, according to Marx, Jews did not have to submit to these fears. He exclaims, "Nonsense! We are not that small, and we are certainly not weak! If justice arouses antagonism, then will silence avert it? If a sick majority is to once again turn against its Jews, will obsequious silence prevent it?"<sup>3</sup>

Although most Jews had left Chicago's inner city by the time Marx created the JCUA, Marx still felt that Jews had a moral and Jewish responsibility to contribute their knowledge, skills and means to the organizations in the inner neighborhoods. By providing volunteer and professional support to local community groups, the JCUA provided critical assistance to these organizations while simultaneously demonstrating a positive Jewish presence in the inner-city. Fifty years later, the JCUA's presence continues to be felt, and extends well beyond its initial engagement with the African American community to Latino, Hispanic, and Muslim communities, just to name a few. Throughout the years, the leaders of these minority communities have been aware that the support of JCUA staff members has contributed to a more "positive image" of the Jewish community.

The JCUA's ecumenical spirit, which has been the source of such deep bridge building efforts over the years, arose in part from the deep impression left upon JCUA leaders by their experiences marching in Selma and Washington. Another source of the JCUA's longtime

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<sup>3</sup> (Attachment 18)

support of interfaith dialogue and interfaith community organizing was the ecumenical climate—fostered particularly by John Egan of the Catholic Archdiocese—that existed in Chicago when Rabbi Marx came on the scene.

Within only a few years of its creation, the JCUA already demonstrated its capacity to play a prominent role as a bridge-builder, partner and social-change agent on behalf of non-Jewish community based organizations. The JCUA, in fact, soon became a victim of its own success, as some Jewish members of the JCUA's parent organization ( the UAHC) eventually felt threatened by the JCUA's efforts.

Both under pressure from its parent organization and seeking more flexibility, the JCUA eventually became independent from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in Chicago and Marx's involvement with the JCUA dramatically curtailed, as Marx continued to work for the Union. Soon after, Rabbi Marx, its leader, was re-assigned by Maurice Eisendrath, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to the New York office. Marx later wonders whether this removal was a demotion or a promotion. More likely—and not inconsistent with Marx's point of view—the move may have been a savvy political maneuver to protect Marx from an overwhelmingly challenging climate wherein he could no longer effectively operate.

It is worthwhile to consider, in light of its history, how the JCUA's record of success might apply to the future of American Reform Judaism. The JCUA has demonstrated 50 years of involvement in social action, particularly in the area of Jewish involvement in urban issues, social action-related education, coalition building, interfaith dialogue and organizing. The early years of the JCUA may provide critical insight for how Marx's theory of interstitiality served as a powerful interpretative tool which deepened American Reform Judaism's awareness of its prophetic mission. By becoming more directly involved in bridge building efforts that then

aimed, and today continue to aim, to engage the issues of the urban city, Jews may sense an opportunity for service that awakens a sacred prophetic mission to look beyond self-interest and to care for all people, particularly the urban dispossessed.

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# שמיני

## The Bulletin of the Chicago Board of Rabbis

### *Chicago Summer*

by Rabbi Robert J. Marz

*Director, Chicago Federation, Union of American Hebrew Congregations*

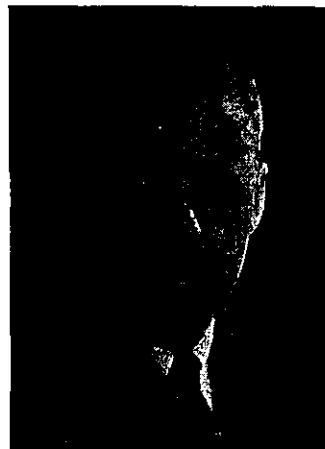
During the summer of 1966, Chicago became a vast battle field of conflicting ideological goals, of self-serving interests and of diverse social theories. Dr. Martin Luther King and his friends, both Negro and white; Mayor Daley and the power structure of the city; religious leaders of the three faiths acting through the Chicago Conference on Religion and Race — all played their roles. Sometimes the action took on the appearance of a tragi-comic soap opera; at other times, it was a game played in deadly earnest.

There were those who argued that change had to come about slowly. This was the role played by the political structure and the business community. People have to be taught to live together, runs the argument. Open occupancy, the Chicago Real Estate Board insisted all summer and for many summers before that, cannot be legislated. Until people desire to live together, realtors merely act as the servants of their clients and sell to whom the clients direct them.

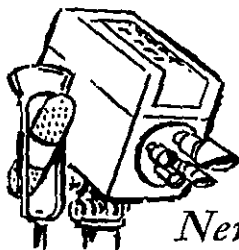
*The officers and staff of the Chicago Board of Rabbis extend sincerest Rosh Hashanah greetings to all members, praying that the New Year be a year of divine blessings and peace for them and their dear ones, for Israel and all humanity.*

That the same argument, when applied to buses and schools in the South, had crumbled before the legislative will of the Congress without catastrophic results, carried little weight with the realtors. They persisted in asserting that they were not responsible for shaping community mores all the while they were shaping community mores by telling Negroes and Jews that they would hardly be comfortable living on Kensington Road or Marlborough Place.

The Mayor, however, being astute in the uses of power, knew what he wanted his role to be. He did not hesitate to utilize it to coerce either the right or the left — Civil Rights Leaders or realtors,



(Continued on Page 3)



# TORAH on TV

## News of the Broadcasting Commission

PROGRAMS: SEPTEMBER 11 THROUGH OCTOBER 9, 1966  
TELEVISION —

- 8:30 A.M. — SUNDAYS — WBBM-TV, CHANNEL 2 — THE MAGIC DOOR  
A series of programs for primary grade children.
- 10:00 A.M. — SUNDAYS — WMAQ-TV, CHANNEL 5 — THE ETERNAL QUEST  
September 11 — Rosh Hashanah Program with Rabbi Herschell Saville, Cantor Moses Rontal, B'nai David Choir.  
September 18 — Yom Kippur Program with Rabbi Samuel Karff, Sinai Temple Quartet, Hans Alten, cantorial soloist.  
September 25 — Sukkot Program with Rabbi Burton Cohen.  
October 2 — Simhat Torah Program with Rabbi Burton Cohen.  
October 9 — Jewish Mysticism.
- 11:00 A.M. — SUNDAYS — WBKB, CHANNEL 7 — KUMZITZ  
September 11 — The Jewish New Year — Rabbi Sholom Singer, Cantor Jerry Frazes.  
September 18 — Day of Atonement — Rabbi Ralph Simon, Cantor Maurice Goldberg, Rodfei Zedek Choir.  
September 25 — Art Roberts, popular WLS Disc Jockey, takes over as the new host and begins a series of youth discussions based on the Look Magazine survey of "Youth — 66."
- 12:30 P.M. — SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, WGN-TV, CHANNEL 9  
NEW YEAR — NEW LIFE — Rabbi William Frankel.
- 2:30 P.M. — MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, WGN-TV, CHANNEL 9  
REPENTANCE MEANS RETURN — Rabbi Karl Weiner.
- NBC MEDITATIONS — WMAQ-TV, CHANNEL 5  
WBKB REFLECTIONS — CHANNEL 7  
WBBM-TV REFLECTIONS — CHANNEL 2  
WGN "FIVE MINUTES TO LIVE BY" — CHANNEL 9
- RADIO —  
TUESDAYS AT 9:30 P.M. — WGN (720 kc) — ADVENTURES IN JUDAISM

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## Chicago Summer

*(Continued from Page 1)*

though at no time did he feel compelled to invoke the same forces of power that were mobilized to pass the 1966 Bond Issue. Thus, in every face to face encounter, and despite his rhetorical liabilities, the Mayor invariably emerged right, if not invariably just.

Arrayed against the Mayor and business leaders, were Martin Luther King, Albert Raby and their advisors both white and Negro, counseling moderation or the opposite thereof. Some felt that Black Power was the only response that the Democratic power structure would understand. Others, like Dr. King, argued that only moral conviction congealing in response to the visible manifestation of evil could produce the truly open society.

Between the two stood the Conference on Religion and Race, trying to achieve justice through the use of political power and moral suasion, neither of which it knew how to estimate, but both of which it knew how to invoke with fervor and conviction.

Perhaps the most difficult role was that played by Archbishop Cody. In both his official position and his personality, he symbolized the conflicting tensions which prevailed in the community. In early July at Dr. King's mass rally at Soldiers Field, the Archbishop sent a lengthy message in which he pledged the full resources of the Archdiocese to the achievement of a city with open housing and job opportunities for all. Archbishop Cody was not himself present at the rally (his message was read by Bishop Wycislo), but without a bit of false modesty, I can suggest that he was much more present than I, who actually was there to represent the Chicago Board of Rabbis and the Jewish community. The Archbishop's pledge made headlines and Dr. King could count on a valuable ally. Two weeks later, the Archbishop was calling on marchers into all-white neighborhoods to declare a moratorium on this type of activity which was arousing the

resentment of the community of the uncommitted. The Archbishop, while defending the right to march, asked Civil Rights leaders to earnestly examine their consciences and to seek alternatives to the type of activity which was dividing his parishes in so many sensitive areas.

Toward the end of July, a series of riots on the West Side brought ambiguity to the Civil Rights struggle. Even the confusion, however, that led many to mistake the rioters with the Freedom movement, produced valuable insights into the injustices and frustrations that lead to riot.

The West Side riots were touched off — as are all riots — by events that in themselves, and under other conditions, are barely marked by the chroniclers of human events or even by the daily newspapers. A woman beaten up because she tries to steal a bottle of liquor, a fire company's hook and ladder that careens into a crowd of people because the tiller man of an all-white crew in a Negro area is absent or drunk, a boy shot while running away from a policeman — these are the events that spark a riot. These incidents, however, do not begin to touch the depths of hopelessness and despair which lead the rioter to believe that he has nothing to lose that is worth saving — not even his life.

The West Side riots began because of a fire hydrant. Children in the Negro areas on those 96 degree days could not turn on the hydrants. The adults who did so were arrested. Their "brothers" driving home through the adjacent Italian area saw that here the hydrants were on, and there were no arrests. Negroes also knew that whenever their children tried to use the only swimming pool in the area (one located in the adjacent neighborhood), broken glass would mysteriously appear on the bottom of the pool, forcing it to be closed for the day.

When the riots broke out, Dr. Donald Zimmerman of the Presbytery, arranged for Archbishop Cody and myself to meet with Mayor Daley. With us at the private session were staff members of the Conference on Religion and Race and of

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## Chicago Summer

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the city administration. Our goal was to ask the Mayor to respond to the incidents that had led to the riots, the use of the hydrants and charges of police brutality, and to address himself to the deeper problems — a general feeling on the part of many West Side residents that they have no access to the political power necessary to change the environment within their communities.

This meeting with the Mayor took place on Thursday. At that time, after two days of rioting, the Mayor was still referring to events on the West Side as "juvenile incidents." Twenty-four hours later, after a horrible night of burning and looting, the Mayor had called for the National Guard, had asked the religious leaders to issue a plea for peace and calm and was visibly disturbed by what had happened in the city he unquestionably loves and defends.

The Mayor was also now willing to meet with Dr. King, Mr. Raby and the representatives of the three faiths and to listen to concrete proposals to end the disturbances. Dr. King, himself, had called a Friday morning meeting of religious and communal leaders to which he had invited the Mayor (a City Hall representative did attend this meeting) and during which steps required to end the rioting were suggested and evaluated.

Now, at the Friday afternoon meeting at his office, the Mayor told the Freedom Movement leaders and religious representatives that reducing systems had been ordered for West Side hydrants (to control the water pressure) and shower heads would be placed on many of them so that they could be turned on for the children of the area. In addition, the Mayor announced that he had asked officials in Washington for funds to construct swimming pools on the West Side, that precinct assistants would be available in each station to deal with citizen complaints about the police, and that a Blue Ribbon Committee would be set up to review police procedures.

The irony of the situation becomes apparent when one contemplates the vic-

tories that all three parties were able to claim, whereas the actual victory belonged to the National Guard. The Freedom people were able to point to tangible changes in city policy. The Mayor was able to "trump the ace" of his opponents by announcing the creation of insignificant, yet eagerly sought, innovations and simultaneously emerge as the man who had brought an end to the riots. The religious leaders, too, could draw comfort from the feeling that their intervention had brought two opposing forces together and that they had focused attention on some vexing aspects of a deeper social unrest. The only losers were the rioters, themselves, who had gained little but promises, and the storekeepers and merchants, many of them Jewish, who could only look forward to renewed hostility as the disparities between wealthy and poor, between black and white and between the dweller of the area and the merchant from the outside, grew deeper and more painful.

That there was anti-semitism during the West Side riots there can be no doubt. But was the anti-semitism directed against white men in general, the visible manifestation of whom happened to be Jews who worked but no longer lived on the West Side, or was it, as I suspect, another unpleasant residue of the interstitial role of the Jew — his being caught between larger social forces which all too often tend to press him into marginal endeavors and social situations.

Of a different and far more profound character were the results of Freedom Movement marches into all-white residential areas. Having been given a victory which he did not initially seek in a riot situation with which he did not wish his movement to be identified, Dr. King now consciously set out to utilize community tension to fulfill his goal of an open city. Using the technique that he had employed so successfully in the past, King planned a series of demonstrations aimed at dramatizing the extent to which the metropolitan community really excludes and rejects its Negro citizens.

The marches into all-white neighbor-

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# Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot Thoughts

By David Graubart

Presiding Rabbi of the Bet Din of the Chicago Region of the Rabbinical Assembly

## ROSH HASHANAH

Because the Shofar blasts arouse mercy and bring Israel to the attention of their Father in Heaven, it was customary to make elaborate preparations for the Tekiot. Thus, the functionary who sounded the Shofar was wont to go to the Mikveh for immersion, accompanied by the reader of the Musaf service. In the interim, the congregation read Mishnah and recited Psalms in order to dedicate their hearts to penance.

The sage would thereafter preach to the congregation. The sermon would not treat of familiar Aggadic material, no matter how sweet and pleasant, for that is incongruous with the spirit of the day. He would speak of penitence, in consonance with what the rabbis said in Ta'anit, Chap. 2, Mishnah 1, with reference to the return of the people of Nineveh. He would often weep during his sermon.

—"Mateh Ephraim,"  
quoted in S. Y. Agnon,  
Yamim Noraim

\* \* \* \*

This is a day of distinction, sacred to all segments of Jewry, even those who are throughout the year alienated from Judaism. What is really the significance of this day?

Man seeks change; he abhors routine. Thus, he sets up for himself distinctions between seasons and years in order to afford himself an opportunity for renewal. Rosh Hashanah gives him another chance.

All nations of antiquity celebrated the new year at a specific time. In Scripture there is no real reference to Rosh Hashanah, but we have the Talmudic tradition which tells us that Rosh Hashanah was observed on the first day of the seventh month (Rosh Hashanah, 2b, 16a, and elsewhere; see especially Tosafot 27a, Kiman).



Rosh Hashanah harks back to the past and looks to the future. This is expressed in the Malkiot, Zikronot, and Shofarot. Malkiot suggests God's sovereignty and the supremacy of the spirit over matter; through Zikronot we remember the past and our failures, and through Shofarot we look forward to the future.

—J. L. Graubart,  
Devarim Ki-Ketabam

\* \* \* \*

## YOM KIPPUR

Yom Kippur is not bestowed upon us as a gift; we must acquire it with our own deeds. "For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall you be clean before the Lord." For on this day shall atonement be made for you — on condition that, from all your sins shall you be clean before the Lord. Your cleansing yourselves is a pre-condition of atonement.

—Ibid.

\* \* \* \*

The celebrated Rabbi Jacob Ornstein of Lemberg was lenient in ritual matters, while his associate, Rabbi Herzl, was known to be a rigorous decisor in the law. One Yom Kippur eve, the latter said to Rabbi Jacob, "May we be privileged to be inscribed for a good year," to

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## Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot Thoughts

(Continued from Page 5)

which Rabbi Ornstein replied, "I do not have to pray for this, because if through my leniency I made *Kosher* what was *terefa*, I sinned in the area of man's relation to God, for which Yom Kippur offers forgiveness; but you, my colleague, who are almost always severe in your decisions declaring everything *terefa* and forbidden and causing losses to fellow-Jews, you are sinning in the area of man's relation to his fellow, for which Yom Kippur offers no forgiveness."

—"Shemuot Tovot,"  
quoted in Agnon's  
*Yamim Noraim*

\* \* \* \*

### SUKKOT

Is it only *Sukkot* that we celebrate during this festival, or do we observe here a series of holidays? This *Regel*, this pilgrimage festival, is different from the other *Regalim*, the other two pilgrimage festivals.

*Pesah* is *me'or ehad*, of one, caliber. It is simply and purely the Passover. Similarly, *Shavuot*, which is the Feast of Weeks. *Sukkot* consists really of several holidays. The first two days and four intermediate days are *Sukkot*; then comes *Hoshana Rabbah*, a kind of mystical festival. *Shemini Atzeret* is truly a *hag bifene atzma*, a festival by itself, and *Simhat Torah* stands alone, as the festival of the rejoicing of the Law — a mosaic of holidays, a festival of festivals.

\* \* \* \*

*Sukkot*, with its prescribed reading of the Book of *Kohélet*, also stresses penitence as do *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. It speaks to us of God bring-

#### ATTENTION!

Statements for dues and synagogue contributions have been mailed to the membership. All are requested to remit the amounts due as soon as possible. Your cooperation in this matter will be appreciated, and will help to carry on the important schedule of activities of the Board.

ing "every work into the judgment concerning every hidden thing" (Eccl. 12:14). The reference is not to ritual matters, but to ethics and morality (see *Hagigah* 5a). We have not yet sufficiently exploited our sources in the area of the ethical. The *Musar* school of Rabbi Israel Salanter attempted to show that in the relation of man to his fellow, *Torah* may be observed, and that *Derek Eretz* is also *Halakah* . . . Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov even in his day suggested that the Law of the Lord is perfect, not having been touched as yet for its great lessons in the area of ethical living.

## Chicago Summer

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hoods were non-violent. They were conducted after intensive testing had revealed that Negroes were not being served by white realtors in these areas, any more than Negroes had been served by white restaurant owners in the South. But the impact of the marches, constitutional though they were, was explosive.

On Sunday, July 30, the Conference on Religion and Race was asked to help organize clergy in the Chicago Lawn area, so that they could influence their parishioners and congregants to respond to the march in a non-violent way. The endeavor was a futile one. White residents of the area were afraid and enraged. Clergymen were reviled as traitors. They were cursed and spat upon. I have never felt so helpless as I did on this black Sunday. The most meaningful thing I could do all day was to stand guard over a pile of bricks hoping that those who attempted to pick them up and throw them at the marchers would mistake me for a police-man.

The marchers walked on one side of

PLAN TO ATTEND THE NEXT  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
CHICAGO BOARD OF RABBIS  
Wednesday Morning, October 19th  
9:30 o'clock

at the  
Board of Jewish Education Building  
Guest Speaker:  
MR. AVRAHAM AVIDAR  
Consul General of Israel

## Chicago Summer

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the street and I walked on the opposite side. I saw them stumble as they were hit by rocks and bottles. I saw them bleed and I saw them flinch as they accepted the deeper wounds that the taunts and the faces of hatred inflicted. I was on the wrong side of the street.

The next Friday afternoon I joined Dr. King and I marched back into Chicago Lawn. This time, for me at least, I was on the right side of the street. To be hit by a brick is, I assure you, far less painful than to watch from a neutral distance a hatred that you can do nothing to prevent. It was so much easier to accept this hatred than to watch it. The marches had done their job. The hatred was exposed. It was real and it was raw. How could it be treated?

The Archbishop asked for the Freedom leaders to search their souls and to seek alternatives to the marches. And perhaps, from his point of view, he was right in doing so. The marches had touched sensitive areas of his flock and had inflamed community sentiment. How could such hatred exist in Chicago? No one questioned its reality in Munich or Warsaw, but when it appeared on the faces of the children of the Lithuanians, a whole community pounced on Dr. King as the provoker of violence. Only a few voices of conscience condemned the real perpetrators of hatred. Rather the community issued an injunction against those whose only offence was to expose the reality of hatred by having asked for the right to be shown a house, just like any other American citizen. Nor did the very white liberals who had applauded sit-ins in Southern restaurants and wade-ins in Southern swimming pools, and sleep-ins in Southern motels, see the disparity in their liberalism now that the action was in Chicago instead of in Birmingham, and they were calling for a moratorium on marches rather than for an escalation of them.

By the middle of August, a feeling of crisis had seized both the religious and business community. Liberals, divided sharply over the impact of the marches, and friends found themselves not talking

to one another. Eugene Callahan, the capable and dynamic leader of the Conference on Religion and Race, returned from his vacation, and after hurried consultations with the Archdiocese and other religious representatives, issued a call for a summit conference of religious, civic and business leaders to be held on August 17.

The group that gathered that morning at the headquarters of the Episcopal Diocese and again nine days later at the Palmer House Hotel, represented a classic example of how a community power structure can be mobilized to face a crisis. Present, in addition to leaders of the three faiths, were the Mayor and his top advisors; Martin Luther King and Al Raby, (as well as the directors of groups which had been advising the Freedom Movement, such as the American Friends Service Committee, the Catholic Interracial Conference and the Urban League); the President and Past-President of the Real Estate Board, the President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the heads of the Chicago's leading labor movements. An impressive, national figure, Ben Heineman, President of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, had been recruited to chair the meetings.

Despite the skill of the Chairman, it soon became apparent that the different groups had come to the meeting with different agendas. The Mayor wanted an end to neighborhood marches and repeatedly cited a report by Police Superintendent Orlando W. Wilson, purportedly showing that crime had gone up as a result of civil rights demonstrations. Parenthetically, no one raised the question of how crime was affected by the creation of ghetto conditions, or limited job opportunities, and no one called for statistics on the robbery involved in the fact that the Negro family must pay much more for an apartment in the ghetto than for comparable accommodations in all-white areas not presently accessible to Negroes. The Mayor quickly promised to meet all of the requests of the Freedom people. He was anxious to offer tangible promises with regard to high-rise apartments and enforcement of

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the city's open housing ordinance. He was equally astute at identifying efforts to challenge the political power structure of his administration — a challenge which the Freedom leaders have offered with increasing frequency as the deeper sources of opposition to their program, has become unmasked.

The agenda of the Freedom leaders called for an open city as speedily as possible. The marches, they argued, showed that without drastic action on the part of all community leaders, Chicago would remain a city of separation. So skilled in the techniques of marching and demonstrating, Dr. King's group could never seem to transplant this ability to the conference table, where more concrete proposals on their part could have been anticipated. Thus, during the negotiating sessions which followed the initial August 17th conference, the details of an open housing program either were not, or could not be, spelled out in detail by the Freedom leaders.

And what was the agenda of the religious leaders? It soon became clear that the goals of the representatives of the various religious representatives were not identical. Was their goal the suspension of marches or confrontation of the hatred the marches had revealed? Or was it the creation of an open city? All three of these goals were at various times enunciated and given varying degrees of significance, depending upon the perspective from which one spoke.

The decisions finally reached at the August 26th summit conference may well be historic. The price for the suspension of neighborhood marches was a high one. The city agreed to pursue the enforcement of the Fair Housing Ordinance, to place welfare recipients in available housing anywhere in the city (and not just in the Negro Ghetto), to build no more high-rise family dwellings in high density areas, and to relocate families forced to move because of urban renewal into the best housing, regardless of location. Labor pledged itself to a crash program of training Negroes for jobs in the trades, and leading institutions committed themselves to provide mortgage

money to all qualified families, regardless of race, and anywhere in the metropolitan area. The Real Estate Board, in a reversal of its traditional stand, agreed to drop its opposition to the philosophy of open occupancy, although the carefully worded conditions it placed upon this agreement lead one to wonder about the extent of the commitment the realtors had really made.

The religious community, too, found itself endorsing a program of action rather than preachments. Active support of open housing, a crash educational program, the establishment of housing centers to help find housing for minority families were among its commitments. In addition, the Chicago Conference on Religion and Race agreed to form a separate and continuing body composed of leaders of various segments of the religious, business and political community, to inaugurate education and action programs required to achieve open housing.

Were the results of the summit conference merely paper agreements intended to avert a crisis, or did they represent real transformations of community attitudes? Were the people committed to change and freedom? Or were religious and communal leaders merely talking to themselves in a vacuum, with no one to listen and no one to respond? Was the agreement merely a conspiracy of the elite or could those present really speak for their people? It is not enough to say that only time will tell. Only people will tell. Only institutions really committed to the fulfillment of their often verbalized, but seldom actualized, goals will tell.

As a rabbi, I am keenly aware of two goals that may sometimes be in conflict, but that I am convinced must be reconciled. One is the interest and welfare of the Jewish community. The other is the moral imperative of my faith and my God.

The marches of the Freedom movement revealed deep patterns of apathy and fear. It is shockingly clear that Americans have not learned how to live together. Poles still live with Poles, Italians with Italians, Jews with Jews and Negroes with Negroes. The open society

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is an often enunciated, but seldom realized, dream.

This affects the Jewish community in vital ways. Jews are still separated from their brothers, both black and white. As Negroes try to move into white areas and are rebuffed, either through physical violence or social manipulation, the pressures on the Negro ghetto intensify. Negroes gradually are forced to move into white communities adjacent to the ghetto. Often these communities are inhabited by Jews, for experience has shown that Jewish resistance to Negroes is different in structure and certainly less violent than that of many other groups. But because the ghetto has nowhere to expand, integrated living in these new areas of settlement rapidly succumbs to the ghetto psychology. Jews begin to flee. Those that remain are often caught in the interstitial roles that prove so damaging to the image of the Jewish community. This accounts for the seemingly large number of Jewish slum landlords and credit merchants. It is not evading responsibility for these immoral roles to suggest that if the city were truly open, in terms of both employment opportunities and jobs, the conditions which breed these marginal people would be under greater control.

Secondly, there are those who have argued that, as Jews, we should discourage civil rights marches because they have solidified hatred and brought members to the Nazi party. If this is true, they have also helped us to see the potentialities for violence that are actual and real, and they have challenged us to meet this violence in new and imaginative ways. The hatred I saw in Chicago Lawn seared my spirit. It must have been like that experienced, to a much greater degree, by my people in Germany. I could feel for them anew, and wounds seemed to be opened once again. Yet is this a reason for becoming inactive, for remaining silent?

What the presence of George Lincoln Rockwell revealed, and revealed with profound impact, is that the frustration of lower, middle-class people is real, and

that it is dangerous. We must recognize the sense of futility that confounds these people, and we must begin to deal with this futility. But we cannot say that, because it once again turns upon the Jewish scapegoat, Judaism can do little but cry for help and call "foul."

The Jewish role is a moral one. Its task is to raise the questions that will put the problems of our society in a moral perspective. Neither as pawns to civil rights leaders, nor as instruments of the political power structure, but as the people of God, the Jewish community must remain true to its heritage. Its goals are clear. As God is the father of all men, justice is the birthright of all His children. In this sense and in this time, must Judaism and Jews "Seek justice wherever it may be found."

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## Have You Heard?

RABBI SAMUEL E. KARFF, Chicago Sinai Congregation, has been named a member of the Board of Trustees of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Rabbi Karff has also been appointed Visiting Professor of Hebrew Literature at Notre Dame University, South Bend, Indiana.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI MORRIS A. GUTSTEIN, Congregation Shaare Tikvah, and Treasurer of The Chicago Board of Rabbis, has been appointed Visiting Associate Professor of Jewish History at the College of Jewish Studies and Director of the Chicago Jewish Archives.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI ULRICK B. STEUER, Temple Beth-El, Hammond, Indiana, has been appointed an Instructor in Sociology at the Northwest Campus of Indiana University.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI PHILIP L. LIPIS, North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Highland Park, served as a chaplain this summer at the Recruit Training Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina. Rabbi Lipis holds the rank of Commander in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

RABBI ERNST M. LORGE, Temple Beth Israel, was one of five rabbis invited to West Germany at the request of the Permanent Conference of the Ministry of Education to meet with German teachers and students in order to add to their knowledge of Jews and Judaism.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI LEONARD C. MISHKIN, Associated Talmud Torahs, and RABBI LOUIS KATZOFF, North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Highland Park, participated in the meeting of the National Council on Jewish Education in America held this summer at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI SEYMOUR J. COHEN, Anshe Emet Congregation and Vice-President of The Chicago Board of Rabbis, attended meetings of the Jewish Materials Claims Conference and also the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture held in Geneva this summer.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI SIMON G. KRAMER, President of the Hebrew Theological College, Skokie, is the author of a recent book entitled, "God and Man in the Sefer Hasidim."

(Continued on Last Page)



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# The Scenes of Life — Rosh Hashanah 5727

By A. Aaron Segal

Rabbi, Congregation Temple Israel, Springfield, Illinois

In the air conditioned  
Financial parlors  
Of ticker tape and stock quotes;  
With blackboards of electronic intensity,  
Note Quotations:  
5704 — Warsaw & Company — Down  
5708 — Independence Incorporated — Up  
5727 — World Limited — ?  
There stands the cantor.  
The stewardess above measureless miles  
of cloud,  
Serving hors d'oeuvres  
To the jet multitudes,  
Listens to — Haftorahs.  
In the densely populated cage of rats,  
Being pierced with hypodermics,  
A hand is extended  
Gaging blood pressure data,  
Oxygen consumption,  
Cancer palpations,  
Upon that arm  
Wind seven strips of Phylacteries.  
In the sonorous reverberations  
Of the thundering business center,  
The city pierced with sirens  
Of ambulance and squad cars, and  
multiple crashes;  
Heightened by commercial store music,  
and pedestrian transistor radios,  
There breaks forth the tremolo of the  
Shofar.  
While men are assembling invoices,  
And sales forces move their commodities,  
Into shopping carts, homes, trucks and  
warehouses,  
One tone floats unnoticed by the passerby,  
"Kol Nidrei V'esorei Ush vsei — "  
All the scenes of life!  
In Washington, In Moscow, In Haiphong,  
In Jerusalem,  
From Rechov Bialik to my street,  
The daily, metropolitan pulse-beat,  
Would drown out the Cantor, Haftorah  
chants, Shofar;  
Would obliterate the leather-stripped  
tefillin encasements,  
As antiquated superstition,  
None applicable to the most perfect era  
in 1,968 years of human civilization.

Where is the Torah?  
Is it insured under the vigilance of bank  
vaults?  
Will it be hidden under H-Bomb shelters?  
Will its ashes clutter our sidewalks?  
What happened  
That modern nations cheat, kill, and ruin  
lives,  
Destroy cities?  
Who are the agents,  
Undermining confidence in law,  
The ruthless men propounding violence?  
Behold the hand extended with a gun;  
Behold the hand extended with  
phylacteries.  
Behold the mouth consuming L.S.D.;  
Behold the mouth consuming Matzo.  
Behold the body wrapped with stolen  
garments  
Behold the body wrapped with Prayer  
shawl!  
Behold the laws of the lynching mobs;  
Behold the laws of Moses.  
Lord of Infinite harmony  
We beseech you  
Speak to our world  
Though it be through soothing summer  
winds, and refreshing rains,  
Bringing abundance to the multitudes  
who hunger;  
Speak through the sick, discouraged and  
abused,  
As we behold a revival of their  
confidence.  
Speak, O Lord, though it be symbolically  
Through the Shofar, Haftorahs,  
Concordant with cantorial pleas,  
For Divine intonation  
Into the endless cries of war turmoil, and  
hospital chambers;  
Speak with balm  
Deep into the agonies of personal hurts.  
Lord who discerns  
Our Shofar's plea,  
Let the songs of David  
Bring our era calm.

Amen.

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*Have You Heard?* (Continued from Page 10)

RABBI MOSES A. SHULVASS, College of Jewish Studies, was appointed an Associate of the Center for Jewish-Christian Studies, recently established by The Chicago Theological Seminary. Rabbi Shulvass was also re-elected to a fourth two-year term as a member of the National Committee of the Jewish Book Council of America.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI MILTON KANTER, Skokie Valley Traditional Synagogue, was honored by his congregation at a dinner program.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI KARL WEINER, Temple Judea, Skokie, has been elected Chairman of the Rabbinical Fellowship of the Northwest suburbs.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI IRA SUD, Temple Ezra, has been elected Vice-President of the Northside District of the Zionist Organization of Chicago.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI JACOB J. WEINSTEIN, K.A.M. Temple, has been reelected President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

Among the newly elected officers of the Chicago Rabbinical Council are: RABBI MILTON KANTER, Vice-President; RABBI MELVIN RUSH, Cong. Anshe Yanova, Recording Secretary; RABBI LAWRENCE MONTROSE, Skokie Central Traditional Synagogue, Skokie, Financial Secretary; and RABBI WILLIAM B. GOLD, Cong. Beth Sholom of Rogers Park, Treasurer.

\* \* \* \*

CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES TO:

RABBI and MRS. DAVID POLISH, Beth Emet Synagogue, Evanston, on the marriage of their daughter, Judith, to Mr. David Shenker.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI and MRS. JOSEPH L. GINSBERG, Lakeside Congregation, Highland Park, on the marriage of their daughter, Janet, to Mr. William Flappan.

\* \* \* \*

RABBI EPHRAIM H. PROMBAUM, Co-ordinator of Chaplaincy for The Chicago Board of Rabbis, has been appointed a member of the Committee on Hospital Chaplaincy of the American Hospital Association.

*(file - The "Jewish Community")*

THE PEOPLE IN BETWEEN  
by  
RABBI ROBERT J. MARX

#2

Every generation provides terrifying examples of how the Jewish community plays a role that is almost predestined, that is almost always tragic, and that is invariably enacted as if the actors were unaware of the tragi-comic parts that have been assigned to them.

Our studies at Yale University several years ago led us to seek a new definition of the position of the Jewish community, one that would account for the ways in which Jews historically are trapped into positions which they neither control nor understand. The Jewish community, we concluded, was truly interstitial, truly located between the parts of the social structure of western societies. Neither part of the masses nor of the power structure, Jews were uniquely positioned so that they fulfilled certain vital, yet dispensable functions, for the society of which they were a part. To affirm interstitiality is to do more than merely to modernize the traditional "Scapegoat" theory of Jewish History. Interstitiality may be negative, or it may be positive. It may lead to the gas chamber or to prophetic heights that enable Jewish people to rise above parochialism or nationalism.

The Jewish community must understand interstitiality, must understand it completely and clearly, and then begin to act on the basis of its comprehension. We must first recognize that there are forces at work in every diaspora community that would keep us from understanding the interstitial role, and from acting once we comprehend.

When we say that Jews are "caught" between the parts, we are stating a truth that is simple and negative. We are saying that Jews have allowed themselves to be placed<sup>?</sup> in a position that is beyond their control. It is easy to recognize this as true when we examine the history of the Jews in the middle ages, when certain basic limitations were placed upon Jews in terms of their ability to own land, sell new clothing, and move freely from community to community. While being deprived of these privileges, Jews traditionally filled an economic vacuum. They encouraged trade and commerce. They brought with them capital, and they lent money to kings and bishops.

The interstitial nature of this role becomes apparent when we realize that the Jews fulfilled a really useful function. They did not just happen to settle in Spain or Poland or Germany. Propelled by persecution and impelled by the dual prospect of freedom and opportunity, Jews always remained the outsiders in European society. As a result of their trade connections, their knowledge, and the diversity of their skills, their presence became not only desirable but frequently necessary.

Writing in 1673, Louis XIV's finance minister Colbert was able to suggest that the Jews brought with them economic advantages so significant that to want to expel them was unthinkable. "What might not be of advantage to the particular inhabitants of Marseilles is of great importance to the kingdom as a whole. The establishment of the Jews has never been forbidden by commercial consideration, because business generally increases wherever they are, but only by religion. Since, at this moment, commerce is the only issue,

there is no reason to pay any attention to the arguments which have been advanced to you against the Jews."<sup>(1)</sup>

It is amazing to see how repeatedly Western civilizations suppressed theological anti-Semitism as they rationalized their need for Jews in terms of economic expansion. The pressures of historic anti-Semitism, however, prevented Jews from seeing how they were being used and also from turning interstitiality into the prophetic function it has always been capable of assuming. In other words, instead of recognizing the role into which they had been cast, Jews played the part either with gusto, or as in America, with incredible naivete. We can understand this acceptance on the part of the Jews as we recognize the usefulness of George Herbert Mead's concept of the "generalized others." For Mead, society in general forms judgments of individuals or groups. These individuals or groups then accept and internalize the judgments to the point where they become part of the social self.<sup>(2)</sup>

The classic example of interstitiality has been described for us by Simon Dubnow. Polish Jews in the seventeenth century were prohibited by the feudal landlord from owning land, from engaging in banking or the lumber business, or from entering into any area of dominant economic activity. They were, however, encouraged to enter two professions that could only lead to the alienation of the masses - selling liquor and collecting taxes. Many Jews, cut off from other avenues of employment, became agents of the landlord or pan. The victims were the peasants or "khlops", and they became accustomed to venting their anger and frustration not upon their true oppressors



but upon the highly visible Jews who stood between them and the pan. The number of Jews occupying these marginal roles may have been small just as the number of Jewish slum landlords in 20th century urban America is small, yet they came across to both peasant and pan as a third force acting as an intermediary agency. "Thus the Ukranian Jew found himself between hammer and anvil; between the pan and the khlop, between the Catholic and the greek Orthodox, between the Pole and the Russian. Three classes, three religions, and three nationalities clashed on a soil which contained in its bowels terrible volcanic forces - and a catastrophe was bound to follow. (3)

What we have characterized as typical of 17th century life in Poland is also relevant to 20th century America. Just as surely as the Jew then was caught between peasant and pan, so is he caught today between black and white. Just as then he was caught between Catholic and Greek Orthodox, so today, he is caught between Catholic and Protestant, between business and labor, between blue collar workers and white collar workers. In every way, he is interstitial.

In a small Tennessee town, a few years ago, the local buses were integrated as a result of state legislation. A city statute, however, sought to defy the state and force negroes to sit only in the rear of the buses. A few negroes sat in the front of the bus and they were arrested. Someone put up the required bail money and they were released. In the lobby of the all white hotel in that town, this is what you could hear: "Don't go to Cohen's department store, Cohen's the one who bailed them out." (Cohen was in the Bahamas at the time and was not involved in any way.) That same day, however, you could go over to Cohen's department store and this is what you would have seen: Negro pickets parading in front of the



universal hatred because of his useless wealth and of contempt be-  
 (4)  
 cause of its lack of power.

Failure to understand the interstitial role in which Jews have historically been cast could well lead to renewed persecution and helplessness. An ability to understand it could lead to the creation of real power - power that is prophetic and just, that saves the oppressed and that gives mission and purpose to Jewish existence. We trust that these words are more than rhetoric. Our civilization needs an independent voice. It needs religious traditions such as Judaism that are able to challenge conformity patterns, that are supportive of democracy, and that continually question the improper uses of authority.

With these assumptions underscored, it is now necessary to see how ~~American Jews have become victims and not masters of their in-~~terstitial role.

1912 was a very interesting year in American history. Three seemingly disparate events occurred in that year. The last of the continental states (exclusive of Alaska) was admitted to the United States; the income tax amendment to the constitution was adopted; and a little society in Boston was founded to seek legislation that would end the flow of immigration to the United States. In retrospect, these three events are connected. The United States had expanded westward as far as it could go. With the admission of Arizona and New Mexico, the frontier era of U.S. history was ended and with the end of this epoch came the fear that the period of American expansion had come to an end. The income tax was seen as a means of generating funds that the nation would now need in order to con-

duct its business. Fears about the ability of America to sustain its economic and geographic expansion spurred the conviction that it was now time to limit the immigration of foreigners and particularly - of Jews. That is what the Immigration Restriction League set out to do.

The Immigration laws of 1923 curtailed the admission of Jews and other "less desirable" immigrants to this country. It did not stop the Irish or the English. It did stop Jews.

To a certain extent, Jews helped in this process, despite the protestations of the official agencies. Writing to the Alliance Israelite Universelle in 1892, Jacob Schiff advised the Alliance ~~to send new immigrants directly to San Francisco~~ rather than to New York. "While there too, the Russians are not wanted; if they come, they will be taken care of."<sup>(5)</sup>

Just as the Jews of Berlin at the end of the 18th century felt threatened by the immigration of East European Jews, and just as the Jews of Marseilles resented the giving of citizenship to the Jews of Alsace, so did many Jews in the United States play into the hands of those members of the power structure who felt that the time had come to limit the number of Jewish immigrants to this country. The Board of Managers of the Associated Hebrew Charities of Chicago thus passed a resolution in 1886, condemning the "transportation of paupers into this country and Canada by European societies....all such as are unable to maintain themselves should be forthwith returned whence they came."<sup>(6)</sup>

What is significant here is that the Jewish community responded to the forces which were structuring it in a negatively interstitial

role, not by fighting those forces, but by cooperating with them. It is true that the official pronouncements of Jewish agencies have traditionally favored liberalizing immigration laws but one wonders at the degree of support given to their positions. When the chips were down, Jews allowed their spokesmen to be those who would be most tractable and responsive to the interests of the non-Jewish power structure.<sup>(7)</sup>

It is essential for Jews to understand that the "outside" forces dominating Jewish life operate independently of "bad" people. They have a reality that transcends individual action. By and large, our defense agencies have not understood this truth but have preferred instead to concentrate on "bad" people, or on patterns of individual prejudice as found in authoritarian personalities.

What vast sums of money are spent by the Jewish community of the United States to fight George Lincoln Rockwell types. What tremendous sums of energy are spent agonizing over Black anti-Semitism. These are both misleading issues. In the first place, individual anti-Semites when divorced from the larger social fabric of which they are a part invite a false analogy to Nazi Germany. In the second place, anti-Semitism on the part of a minority group is not nearly as dangerous as when a majority group seizes upon it as a way of maintaining its power.

Much more needs to be said on the subject of anti-Semitism. It is a social instrument that is often misused. The striking Jewish teachers in New York city were not above using anti-Semitism as a way of forcing group solidarity within their own ranks. Anti-Jewish statements by individual black men were given wide circulation

by the striking groups seeking to gain Jewish support for their position.

Furthermore, the fear of anti-Semitism has often been utilized by respectable Jewish agencies to maintain their preeminence and to garner support for their programs.

While this process goes on together with more subtle uses of anti-Semitism, the more threatening aspects of anti-Semitism go unattended. What the Jewish community has to fear most is a severe economic depression similar to the one which affected Germany in the 1920s and 30s, a major conflict between social classes, and an inability to escape from the negative dimensions of interstitiality.

That depressions pose a threat to Jews hardly need be labored. In every economic crisis of contemporary civilization, the Jewish community has suffered. The decline of Spain as a result of the bloody clashes between Moslems and Christians led to the expulsion of Jews in 1492. Hitler's rise in response to a seemingly insoluble financial crisis was accompanied by prompt action to direct the anger of the people away from the government and on to the incredulous Jews of Germany. The great depression in the United States was accompanied by all kinds of anti-Semitic activity including the renaissance of the Ku Klux Klan and the publication by Henry Ford and the Dearborn Press of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and other anti-Jewish tirades.

The racial crisis in America threatens Jews not because a few black militants may say some unkind words about Jews. Rather it is threatening because of a failure to deal with the interstitial role and because the Jewish community remains unable to deal with the

marginal Jews who remain in the Ghetto. This applies to Jewish ghetto institutions such as hospitals and social agencies as well. But the greatest threat lies in the ways the white power structure may respond to Negro social unrest at some future time when it finds itself unable to cope with this unrest. Turning the Jews over to the mob may be as entertaining as turning the Christians over to the lions - and much more contemporaneous.

While Jews worry about Black anti-Semitism, white power structures use this fear to carry out one other aspect of the negative interstitial pattern. As Hannah Arendt points out in her Origins of Totalitarianism, Jews have traditionally relied on the power structure rather than the masses for protection. Traditionally, they have relied upon the support of a few power elites rather than upon the understanding of the masses. This syndrome can be documented in countless crises ranging from the relationship of Samuel Ibn Hanagid in the Grenadan court of King Habus to the function of Jewish politicians in 20th century America. This syndrome extracts its price from the Jewish community.

We know of instances in which urban political leaders have called in Jewish builders or developers, have pointed out to them the virulence of Anti-Semitism, and then have asked them to handle urban renewal projects in the inner city that other builders might be reluctant to undertake. Here is a use of anti-Semitism in its most subtle form. The Jewish builder, because of anti-Semitism, is encouraged to undertake a project which is not only financially risky but also invites the wrath of the indigenous poor who view the project as a form of negro removal. In this way, the interstitial pattern

is deepened. The Jewish builder does the "dirty work" of the power structure and invites the enmity of the disinherited.

In a recent meeting with some rabbis, we tried to indicate how certain exceedingly powerful social institutions were at work to maintain Jews in the precarious position which they occupy. We found it difficult to convince even a group as intelligent as this one was that there are indeed forces at work on the American scene which exert a tremendous yet unperceived influence upon Jewish life.

Jews, for example, do not belong to the key social clubs in which basic decisions are made about the future of our cities. A study of the 200 leading corporations leads one to the conclusion that Jews play a very small role in the giant corporate structure, Jews are significantly absent in the management of the giant utilities and insurance companies. They sell a great deal of insurance, of course, but they do not share in the basic decisions as to where resources shall be placed. Of the 50 largest banks in the United States, Morris B. Abram recently reported "45 of them do not have one single solitary Jew in a senior management position. But, you may say that there are Jews in the pipeline to senior management, Of these 50 banks, 38 of them had no Jews in middle management. And, in fact, while in senior management the percentage of Jews was 1.1 per cent of the total; in middle management the percentage was .9 per cent of the total." Mr. Abram concluded that in view of the fact that 8 per cent of American college graduates from whom these employees are drawn are Jewish, and 15 per cent of the Ivy League College graduates from whom recruiters prefer to draw top management personnel are Jewish; the discrimination is obvious.



It is fascinating and frightening for this writer to sit on a board composed of the Presidents of the Utilities, the Banks, the Insurance Companies and to hear a report presented (not for discussion but simply for information) which outlines the areas of Chicago which will be opened for experimental integrated living. All of them are Jewish. Yet, in none of these decisions was the Jewish Community involved.

The point is not to suggest that integrated living is less than a desirable goal. It is rather to document ways in which basic decisions are made without Jewish participation in the process. Jews do not kill Negroes when they move into Jewish areas. This is one reason why Jewish communities are often target areas for integrated living. That Jews have historically recognized the right of any man to live where he chooses may well be a source of satisfaction. The very liberalism of the Jewish community, however, deepens the interstitial crisis. The slum landlord, the contract seller, the ghetto merchant, the Jewish politician in an all black area may be the marginal remainders of what was a once proud Jewish community.

Their presence in slum areas is a reality to which we cannot close our eyes. These are the men who play the interstitial role with the most heavy hand. They are in a position where they emerge not as marginal, but as characteristic. It is doubtful whether anyone will ever question how a telephone company exploits poor people by tempting them to spend more money than they should on fancy telephones or long distance calls. The Jewish ghetto merchant, however, despite his own conceptualization of his role, is almost invariably placed in a position where his business ethics will be questioned

because of the prices or interest he charges or because of the temptations he places before his customers.

Utilities may be every bit as exploitive of Black people as a result of the temptations they place before poor people and as a result of their poor record of investment in ghetto personnel and resources. Yet, they will not be attacked. They will not be attacked because their position is not marginal and their power is not vulnerable. Utilities have indeed conducted studies in which they show how much they take out of various ethnic and racial communities in terms of income and how much they return in terms of salaries. The difference between what is returned to the white community and what is returned to the black community is an astounding tale of discrimination all by itself. And yet, the utilities will not be attacked by the Black community; Jews will be unless we can begin to explain how interstitiality operates.

Indeed, strong power structures are remarkably immune to criticism compared to the Jews whose role is more visible and whose motives can be easily distorted. Thus, the widow left with property in a changing neighborhood as her sole source of income, can suddenly find herself attacked as a slum landlord. The merchant who pictures himself as a hero for remaining in a neighborhood that has changed from white to black, who feels that he performs a humanitarian function in lending credit to those who are poor risks, emerges in the public eye as a credit gouger and a thief.

Yet, the slum landlord and the ghetto merchant are characteristic symbols of the interstitial people. They remain in our inner cities after Jewish institutions leave and after Jews have long since departed the scene as community residents and "good neighbors."

A priority for the Jewish Community then would be to provide a positive Jewish presence to a wide variety of inner city neighborhoods, both white and black. Staff members and resource people to deal with schools, with urban renewal, with consumer practices and with a thousand other community issues is the price that Jews may expect to pay for their interstitiality. Such a project has now been undertaken and its initial successes have been more than encouraging.

In the meantime, those few Jews who are indeed exploitive must be dealt with immediately and prohibited from causing further damage both to the people they exploit and to Jews in general who will reap the whirlwind they are sowing. Surely there will be those who will rebel at this point and ask: Who is to determine what is exploitive and what is normative? But the question presupposes a Jewish community that is powerless. Our answer is that Jews need not be morally powerless. As a community they can study the issues, learn the facts and make the decisions that are prophetic and not merely expedient. When this process can take place, then Judaism will indeed be relevant to the 20th century, and the interstitial role becomes positive rather than negative.

The importance of these suggestions becomes even more apparent when viewed in the light of contemporary anti-Semitism. A reading of Hitler's Mein Kampf shows how far anti-Semitism has moved out of its theological cradle. Hitler spoke of the Jews not as Christ killers, but as a morally unfit people. The stereotype of the credit merchant or the slum landlord, of course, lends itself to a general picture of Jews as unfit people. It

is all too easy to suggest that these stereotypes ought to be ignored because they are the fabrications of sick minds. The awful truth is that the inability to counter these stereotypes with effective action and prophetic concern can be fatal. "As far as the Jews were concerned," writes Hannah Arendt, "the transformation of the 'crime' of Judaism into the fashionable 'vice' of Jewishness was dangerous in the extreme. Jews had been able to escape from Judaism into conversion; from Jewishness there was no escape. A crime, moreover, is (8) met with punishment; a vice can only be exterminated."

It would be nice, of course, if all people could understand that Jews are individuals, and that they resist the social role that has been assigned to them. Some are good and some are bad; some are tough and some are soft. Theodore Roosevelt seemed to be trying to say this when he rebuked the humorist Arthur Train for the way he had described Jews in a magazine article. "That was an admirable story of yours in the current McClure's," Roosevelt wrote. "Will you, however, permit me one criticism, not in reference to this story, but to other stories that should go with it. In this story there is a native American scoundrel, which is all right. There is also a meaner Jew scoundrel which is all right. But there are native American representatives of manliness and decency; and there also ought to be a Jew among them. It is very important that we shall not give the impression that we are attacking all foreigners qua foreigners. There are exceedingly bad Jews, and exceedingly bad old stock native Americans. There are exceedingly good men who are Jews, and other exceedingly good men who are native old-stock Americans... I hope you will make the emphasis with all possible insistence as between all men who are good Americans, and all who are bad Americans; and that you will be careful to see that your readers clearly understand that there are Jews

and Gentiles . . . . on both sides." (9)

While it remains as important as ever, for Roosevelt's insight to be shared with all people, it is particularly important that Jews themselves understand what Roosevelt was saying. In any oppressed people self hatred is an inscrutable problem. The persecution of Jews over the centuries has produced an intensity of self-hatred that is searing. In contemporary literature particularly this form of self-hatred becomes apparent.

We cannot tell writers what to write, nor believers what to believe. We can only suggest that the roles that have been assigned to us transcend our individualism and seek us out whether we will it or not. For those who wish to identify with a tradition which is ancient and great, a tremendous task becomes quite apparent. The survival of mankind requires the presence of a people that is truly interstitial, that rises above nationalism and parochialism and is concerned with moral issues and with the pursuit of justice. The task before us is to understand the relationship of Judaism to the larger society in which Jews live. It is to deal courageously with the judgmental forces of that society. It is to be relevant and prophetic. It is to say "Here am I. Send me."

Footnotes to: "THE PEOPLE IN BETWEEN"

- (1) Quoted in Arthur Hertzberg, The French Enlightenment and the Jews, p.23.
- (2) George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society, p.154.
- (3) Simon Dubnow, History of the Jews in Russia & Poland, Vol.1, p.142.
- (4) Hannah Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, Part one, p.15.
- (5) Quoted in Robert J. Marx, Changing Religious Patterns of Reform Religious Leadership, 1890-1957, p.33.
- (6) Ibid, p.27
- (7) Proceedings of the workshop on Equal Employment Opportunities, sponsored by the American Bankers Association, New York, September 26, 1967, p.11.
- (8) Hannah Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, Part one, p.87.
- (9) Quoted in E. Digby Baltzell, The Protestant Establishment, p.152.



# Morx and Krenberg

The Morx and Krenberg archaeological sites, located in the Tyrol region of Austria, are among the most important prehistoric sites in Central Europe. The Morx site, a large circular enclosure, is believed to be a fortified settlement from the Bronze Age. The Krenberg site, a smaller circular enclosure, is also believed to be a fortified settlement from the same period. Both sites have been excavated and are now open to the public as museums. The Morx site is located in the village of Morx, and the Krenberg site is located in the village of Krenberg. The Morx site is a large circular enclosure, approximately 100 meters in diameter, with a thick wall and a central area. The Krenberg site is a smaller circular enclosure, approximately 50 meters in diameter, with a thick wall and a central area. Both sites have been excavated and are now open to the public as museums. The Morx site is located in the village of Morx, and the Krenberg site is located in the village of Krenberg.

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#17

THE JEWS OF THE SOUTH AND THEIR  
ATTITUDES TOWARD INTEGRATION.

Rabbi Robert J. Marx

By now it is a well accepted fact that the 1954 Supreme Court decision regarding school integration inaugurated a new era in the social life of the South. The Negro, encouraged by the forcefulness of the Supreme Court's pronouncements, found himself shaking off the lethargy which for generations had induced him to accept, without question, his inferior status. The development of such techniques as the boycott and the sit-in, served notice to the dominating whites that at least a segment of the Negro group could no longer accept the status quo. In response, the white community sought to invent new mechanisms which would enable it to conform to the new interpretation of the law, and yet retain the status quo. The removal of schools from state and local controls, and efforts to regulate, through a cleverly devised system of "appeals", the number of Negro students admitted to white schools, represent attempts on the part of the white community to preserve the old order in the face of the new.

In the current tension, the Jews of the South find themselves occupying the same intermediate position that has characterized their role so often in the past. Jews are primarily a middle-class group. Not infrequently do they find themselves standing between other groups in situations of tension. This "interstitiality" or intermediate role may be said to characterize not only the Jew's position in the Negro-white encounter, but also his role in the current dialogue between Protestant and Catholic. The fact that at times the Jewish minority supports the Protestant position, while at other times it takes its stand beside the Catholics, is entirely in keeping with its interstitial role. Jews can endorse the Protestants on issues such as birth control and opposition to public funds for private education,

and at the same time overwhelmingly endrose a Roman Catholic over a Protestant for the presidency of the United States.

Jews occupy the role of the middle-man, not only politically, but economically and socially as well. In the South, where status has traditionally been more sharply defined than in the North, and where "knowing one's place" has always been an early lesson in life, the tensions involved in the middleman's role often become clearly, if not painfully, perceptible.

On a recent visit to the South it was not difficult for me to see ample evidence of the difficulties confronting the Jewish minority. It will be suggested that some of these difficulties are complicated by an inadequate and incomplete analysis of what Jews can do to alleviate their own discomfort.

To document the problem, let me analyze very superficially the attitudes I found in five different Southern communities:

1. JACKSON, TENNESSEE. In this community of 34,000 people, the schools are not integrated. An effort to desegregate city buses was recently declared to be in violation of city law. The rabbi in Jackson, who firmly believes that integration is morally right, nevertheless refrains from speaking on the issue. "I don't want to embarrass my congregation," he said. At a recent minister's league meeting, the rabbi asked his colleagues, "You know how I feel about integration. How do you feel?" After moments of silence, one finally replied, "If I spoke the way I feel, I would lose fifty per cent of my congregation".

In Jackson there is a small group of "intellectuals" who are seeking to better racial relationships. Twenty-six couples meet together irregularly to discuss the problem. Fourteen of these couples are Negro, and twelve are white. Of the twelve

white couples, two are Jewish. Both of the Jewish families are new to Jackson, having moved there from Northern states.

An unpleasant incident characterized efforts at integration in Jackson. Members of the Negro community attempted to integrate the city's buses by sitting in seats normally reserved for whites. On the third day of the sit-in, a group of Negroes were arrested. After spending the night in jail, they were released on bail. Shortly after this incident took place, the Jewish community became conscious of a whispering campaign directed against the <sup>Jewish</sup> owner of one of the leading department stores in Jackson. It was rumored that the bail money for the jailed Negroes had been supplied by Mr. Jonas Kisber of Kisber's Department Store. It is significant that Mr. Kisber is the head of one of the three "old" Jewish families in Jackson. He and his family have long been active in the Temple. In actual fact, Mr. Kisber was out of town at the time of the arrests and had nothing to do with supplying the bail money. Jonas Kisber found himself in the strange position of being boycotted by Negroes who criticized him for his failure to hire Negro employees, while at the same time he was being boycotted by many members of the white community for allegedly having assisted the Negro integration effort.

2. LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS. The contrast between the urban attitudes of the majority of the citizens of Little Rock and the "backwoods" attitudes which prevail in the State House is in ample evidence in this capital city of Arkansas. Despite many obstacles, there has been a growing belief that integration is a reality, and there are indications that some progress in this



direction has been achieved.

The rabbi of Little Rock was active in founding an urban league, made up of both white and Negro representatives. At first, no whites would join this organization, but now respected members of the white community show a willingness to participate in ever-increasing numbers. The buses in Little Rock have now been integrated.

In Little Rock, initiative for progress in the direction of racial equality must be taken by the Negro. Subtle barriers, however, have been set up to prevent him from taking too much initiative. If a Negro wishes to attend the white school he may legally do so, but he must submit a formal petition before he is admitted. The mechanisms devised to control the applications are so permeated by red tape and delay that the vast majority of Negroes are discouraged from applying.

Except for the rabbi and a few other "intellectuals", the Jewish community of Little Rock has played a passive role in the Negro's struggle. Statements to the effect that "this is a problem for the courts and the legislature", or, "the Negroes must fight their own battle" seem to characterize the prevailing attitude of the Jewish community.

3. CLEVELAND, MISSISSIPPI. The Jewish congregation of Cleveland, Mississippi is actually comprised of Jews who live in this small community of 10,000 people, as well as a large number of Jews who live in the rural areas within a seventy--five mile radius of Cleveland. The Jews here are strongly opposed to integration and resent hearing of statements made by national Jewish groups on the subject of Negro rights. A leading member of the community

flatly proclaimed that: "If our rabbi spoke in favor of integration, he would not last five minutes here."

The character of the Jewish community is almost entirely mercantile, with the rabbi being the only professional man in the congregation. Business conditions, these people feel, are damaged by deviance on the part of Jews from the status quo, and Jewish store owners feel threatened by the possibility that one of their members might "step out of line" on the integration controversy.

In their efforts to erase the impression that Jews are a liberal thinking people, many members of the Cleveland congregation attempt to out-do their Christian neighbors in their rejection of Negro aspirations. In a discussion of a religious camp for the Southern region of the country, the following dialogue took place between various members of the Temple board:

Board Member A: "We want a camp so we can teach our philosophy of Judaism. You know what I mean by our philosophy of Judaism?"

Board Member B: "Segregation".

Board Member A: "Right".

There was general agreement with this appraisal of the need for a religious camp in the South.

4. JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI. In Jackson, as in every other Mississippi community, there has been no integration. The Governor of the State recently invited a rabid fascist to tour Mississippi and to give a series of talks in which he compared integrationists to Communists. The Jews of Jackson feel threatened by this act of the governor and are suspicious that his guest is as anti-Semitic as he is anti-Negro. His attacks on Communists have been accompanied by tirades

against the Anti-Defamation League and other national Jewish organizations. Those who desired changes of any kind, it was feared, would be identified as Communists. The rabbi in Jackson has been warned not to talk about Negro rights.

The Jewish community of Jackson feels that its relationships with the general community have worsened over the past several years. Fifteen years ago the Temple was invited to join the Chamber of Commerce, and it did so at a considerable annual financial outlay. Those members of the Temple who belong to the Chamber of Commerce then and now are cognizant of the lessening of Jewish influence in this important community institution. They point out that fifteen years ago Jews were involved in the decisions of the Chamber of Commerce. Now they are left out. They are not invited to serve as officers. Whereas Protestant ministers and Catholic priests have been asked to invoke Chamber of Commerce dinners, the rabbi, who has served the community for the past seven years, has never once been invited to officiate in any capacity.

5. NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA. Recent efforts to integrate two schools in New Orleans have produced a rash of violent outbursts by groups which are predominantly lower-class. It soon became apparent that rabble-rousers from outside of New Orleans were lending their voices to the irate mothers who threw rocks and stones at white and Negro children attempting to enter the schools. Along with these physical manifestations of racial prejudice, there have been other more subtle reactions to the current tension.

Archbishop Joseph Francis Rummel, who has been identified with efforts to achieve integration within the parochial

schools has significantly refrained from issuing statements within recent months, and one frequently hears reports that "he has been silenced".

The rabbis of the three Reform congregations in New Orleans have attempted to exert their influence in support of integration through "behind-the-scenes" activities. Though the Temples have not participated in an organized way in the recent tension, members of the three Temples have been identified, through organizations such as S.O.S. (Save Our Schools), and C.O.P.E. (Committee on Public Education), with efforts to foster the cause of desegregation. The cars of several Sisterhood members who volunteered to drive white children to the integrated schools were attacked and several windows were smashed. Some Sisterhood members who participated in the S.O.S. program received threatening anonymous telephone calls. "We'll get your kid", they were told.

Out and out anti-Semitism has also become manifest during the recent crisis. Leander H. Perez is the district attorney of one of New Orleans' neighboring parishes, St. Bernard-Plaquemines. He is a powerful and feared political leader. In December, the New Orleans Times Picayune carried as the by-line of its report of a recent Perez speech, the words: "Attorney Calls 'Zionist Jews' Dangerous". In his speech Perez was quoted as saying: "There is a certain class of people in New Orleans today who are licking their chops at this situation. They are the most dangerous people in this country today -- the Zionist Jews. You have no idea the influence and the campaign they are conducting to raise funds to see this thing (desegregation) through".<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) New Orleans Times Picayune, Dec. 13, 1960.

Although the majority of Jews in New Orleans feel that integration is inevitable, their attitude can best be summed up as ambivalent. "We know that integration is right" said one Jewish communal leader, "but we are not happy about it". There is also a strong Jewish minority violently opposed to integration. At a congregation dinner meeting at which I spoke, a heavy-set man came up to my table, shook a finger in my face and said, "We don't need to warn you not to talk about integration tonight, do we? It's the Union (UAHC) that has created anti-Semitism down here by talking too much."

## II - Evaluation.

Jewish attitudes in the South differ from community to community. Size and location are important factors. In the rural areas of the South, where communal opposition to integration is solid, Jews find themselves taking a position in solid support of the segregationist attitudes of their white Christian neighbors, who monopolize the status positions. In larger communities, however, where a combination of urban attitudes, migrations from other areas of the country, and intellectual ferment have created a more favorable climate for efforts at integration, Jewish attitudes are more diverse. Here a majority of Jews feel that, at least from an intellectual point of view, the cause of the Negro must triumph in the end.

As a group that occupies the middle position in so many areas, it might be expected that the Southern Jewish community should find its role in the integration problem especially vexing. Georg Simmel has pointed to the deceptively simple truth that

"the middle element often finds itself in conflict with both the higher and the lower ones".<sup>(2)</sup> The ramifications of this social fact have often created nightmarish experiences for Jews throughout their history. Both the Polish peasantry of the 17th Century, and the German working classes of the 20th Century gave vent to their pent-up frustrations by attacking, not the upper classes who were actually dominating them, but the Jewish middle class, who appeared to them to be responsible for their misfortunes.

In Jackson, Tennessee it is easy for the Negro to place the blame for his disabilities upon the Jewish merchants, with whom he comes into daily contact, for in their stores the Negro most keenly feels the inequalities of the social system in which he lives. It is to the Jew that he must turn when he seeks credit. When he cannot pay his bills, the Jew is pictured as responsible for his troubles. Similarly, the white Christian community, somehow or other, made conscious of Jewish sympathy with the idea of racial equality, and aware of national pronouncements by Jewish organizations on the subject, reacts more intensely to Jews who favor integration than to members of other groups who take a similar stand.

It may be useful to point out the importance of the concept of status in the current tension. People whose status is changing are more likely to be prejudiced than those whose status is static. Tests have been devised which would indicate that upwardly and downwardly mobile groups are more prejudiced than non-mobile groups.<sup>(3)</sup> In terms of American life, rural communities

(2) Georg Simmel, The Sociology of Georg Simmel, p. 235

(3) Walter C. Kaufman, "Status, Authoritarianism and Anti-Semitism" American Journal of Sociology, Jan. 1, 1957, p. 380

are now downwardly mobile, and prestige is associated with a move to the larger cities. It might be expected, therefore, that prejudice would be a more characteristic response of those who feel themselves dwelling in the declining rural areas and of the newcomers to the larger cities, than of those whose economic and social patterns are fairly stable.

Before fashioning some tentative suggestions as to how Jews can attempt to cope with the prejudice which surrounds them, it is, perhaps, wise to examine briefly some reactions which take place within the Jewish group itself. My purpose in presenting these reactions is not to formulate any value judgments, but to seek to understand why Jews react the way they do. It is characteristic of minorities to fear group solidarity. Thus, we may expect the Jews of the South, or for that matter, of any region, when confronted by a perplexing situation, to be fearful of any organization which purports to represent Jewish solidarity. As Melvin Seeman has pointed out, "Minority groups exhibit a strong resistance to any clearly identifiable group action on the group's problems. Members of such minorities have often argued that the approach to any sort of a group problem must lie in 'individual goodness'".<sup>(4)</sup>

What is significant for us in this analysis is that the burden of the attack by these Jews critical of their own national organizations is not directed against the content of the organization's pronouncements, but rather against the fact that the organization purports to speak for the entire group. To document this in another context, those who attack the establishment of a

(4) Melvin Seeman, "The Intellectual and the Language of Minorities" *American Journal of Sociology*, July, 1956, p. 92

Washington Social Action Center very seldom indicate their hostility to the statements or the ideas which such a Center would advocate, but rather to the fact that it would advocate at all, and that it would seek to speak in the name of the entire group. What makes this situation all the more paradoxical is that Jews, in seeking to avoid the impression of group solidarity, will often undermine the very characteristics which as a group they have traditionally valued most highly.

Similar to this problem is the failure of the Jewish community to understand that anti-Semitism is, in its etiology, a non-Jewish problem. In their failure to discern this, many Jews become anti-Semitic and are often more destructive in their self-hatred than the social forces at work in the non-Jewish community.

The theory that anti-Semitism is not directly related to what the Jew does is supported by an interesting observation of a member of one of the New Orleans Temples, who did not recognize the implications of what he was saying. In arguing that national Jewish organizations created anti-Semitism by their public pronouncements, he pointed out that in the New Orleans school crisis when Reverend Forman walked his child to school, he was called "Nigger lover". When Father Drolet walked with white children to school, he was called "Nigger lover". But when a Temple Sisterhood member walked children to the school, she was called "Dirty Jew".

We must certainly be concerned by the fact that acts which individual Jews perform evoke rejection of the entire group, whereas these same acts, when committed by Christians, evoke only



rejection of the individual. We must be equally concerned, however, about the influence that such repeated responses by the Christian majority must have upon the Jewish minority.

Robert Merton has brilliantly analyzed the pitfalls of being a member of a minority group. The minority group member may be damned for accepting the values of the majority, and at the same time be damned for not accepting them. We have been dealing with the problems the Jewish group faces when it is suspected of not accepting the values of the Christian southern white community. It is equally important to understand how the Jew may be equally vulnerable even though he accepts these values. To use Merton's illustration, if Christian in-group member Abe Lincoln studied into the night and saved every penny, he was practicing the finest of American virtues in that he was industrious, eager to develop his capacities to their fullest, and determined to become a finer human being. But if Jewish, out-group member Abe Cohen studies far into the night and saves every penny, he is a bookworm, sharp and dangerous in his financial practices.<sup>(5)</sup>

What is of concern to us here, is that Jews often accept this inversion of values and allow their responses to become distorted. At a time when Americans are abandoning the farm, for example, to seek the "better life" of the city, Jewish groups are urging their adherents to settle on farms so as to negate the stereotype of the Jewish urban dweller.<sup>(6)</sup> Jewish groups have actually expressed concern over the number of Jews in the field of medicine. This concern is voiced at a time when medicine ranks higher in social prestige than any other profession, except that of

(5) Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, p. 166.

(6) *Ibid.*, p. 191.

Supreme Court Justice, and at a time when the nation suffers from an undersupply of doctors.<sup>(7)</sup>

In the area of Social Action, too, this inversion of values is seen to prevail. In-group member Abe Lincoln's espousal of Negro rights might be regarded as courageous and virtuous. Advocacy of the same goals by Jewish individuals and organizations is seen as dangerous and traumatic.

The apotheosis of this inversion of values produces a philosophy in which Jews reject themselves and their traditional ideals. It leads to Kurt Lewin's comment that: ".....as far as the behavior of the Jewish group is relevant, it might well be argued that in the long run more serious trouble develops from their superior than from their inferior performance. In Germany it was the economic, social and cultural achievement of the Jews that gave momentum to the anti-Semitism. If there were any sense in the attempt to regulate the qualities of Jews, one would have to prescribe this: To avoid anti-Semitism, don't train Jewish youth in superior qualities; make them all average or, even better, below average!"<sup>(8)</sup> Blaming oneself for the prejudices of others leads to an abnegation of the uniqueness of a group and of its responsibilities toward civilization.

It would be interesting to study the degree to which the Jewish inversion of values and its accompanying Jewish anti-Semitism stems from a frustration on the part of the Jewish community in its efforts to combat prejudice. From a psychological point of view, when a person feels under attack and incapable of combating the attacker, he frequently rationalizes his situation by blaming himself.

(7) Ibid., p. 191

(8) Kurt Lewin, Resolving Social Conflicts, p. 182.

The battle against prejudice can never be successfully joined until the real enemy is at least seen, if not overwhelmed. We have already noted that the desire of the Southern Jew to remain inconspicuous in any situation of social tension, is characteristic of minority group attitudes. But the entire Jewish community (both Southern and Northern) would do well to realize that neither by remaining inconspicuous nor by becoming "less than average," will the problem of anti-Semitism disappear, for prejudice is in itself a need of people who feel insecure and frustrated.

It becomes important, therefore, for the Jew to know his attacker and to plan accordingly.

We have long distinguished between psychological and physical anti-Semitism. The former excludes Jews from country clubs and from certain colleges and professions. The latter takes the form of pogroms, riots and concentration camps. This distinction between various types of anti-Semitism might be refined to help us deal with the anti-Semite himself. There are those whose prejudices express themselves in manifestly physical ways; while others express their prejudices in their thoughts and social and economic choices.

In their studies of the authoritarian personality, T.W. Adorno and his associates have pointed to the connection between aggression and anti-Semitism.<sup>(9)</sup> The authoritarian, aggressive person is more inclined to be prejudiced than the passive, democratic person. Aggression, however, takes many forms, and it may be helpful to examine it in its most violent manifestations.

Suicidal and homicidal tendencies are both aspects of

(9) T.W. Adorno, et al., The Authoritarian Personality, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950)

aggressive feelings. A study of these tendencies indicates that the child who comes from a lower class home, who is punished in a physical way by beatings, and who is introduced to violence around him, is inclined to express his own feelings in a physical way. He becomes the potential murderer.<sup>(10)</sup> Children from upperclass homes, however, whose punishment is more often psychological than physical, who are reprimanded not by a beating or physical violence, but by being sent to their rooms or by being deprived of something they desire -- these children often direct their aggressive feelings inwardly against themselves. They are potentially suicidal. Both, however, are authoritarian personalities and are aggressive; they are equally capable of expressing prejudice and anti-Semitism. Those who desire to deal with anti-Semitism should take into account the variety of aggressive feelings. Exclusion from country clubs and the gas chambers of Buchenwald are manifestations of different types of aggression.

The purpose of these last few paragraphs has been to suggest that the battle against anti-Semitism must be waged on many different levels. To say that education alone is the answer is a gross over-simplification of the problem. We have discovered that to know someone is not always to love him. Knowing someone better may often make us hate him.

There are some techniques, however, which the Jewish community, and, particularly, the Jews of the South may be able to utilize in their effort to maintain their own dignity and to strike off the tentacles of anti-Semitism. In addition to the educational and psychological approaches to the authoritarian personality,

(10) Martin Gold, "Suicide, Homicide and the Socialization of Aggression", American Journal of Sociology, May, 1958.

a study of degradation ceremonies might well prove useful to the Jews of the South.<sup>(11)</sup> A degradation ceremony is an act in which the status of the denounced party is lowered. The prejudiced person must be so down-graded in the eyes of his own contemporaries that his effectiveness will be weakened or destroyed.

An effective degradation ceremony is based upon two factors: 1. The denouncer must picture himself not as acting according to his own personal, unique experiences, but in the interests of the greater community. 2. The person to be denounced must be pictured as standing opposed to the legitimate values of the civilizations. In their practical application these rules would suggest that the Jews of the South must not picture themselves as primarily concerned about their own interests, but with the values of America. Secondly, they must picture their attackers as disloyal to America.

To bring this into sharper focus, we might suggest that in the South the most effective weapon of the anti-Semite has been the accusation that the Jew is a Communist. The Jewish community has tended to retort by saying that its antagonists are Fascists. We are aware that in America, in the year 1961, it is generally regarded as much more dangerous to be a Communist than to be a Fascist. The Jewish approach to the problem of prejudice, therefore, might well be to indicate or to clearly portray the prejudiced person as a Communist. If the degradation act is to be effective, however, Jews cannot wait until they are confronted with a crisis and then engage in name-calling. A preventive attack on the anti-Semite requires a patient and organized program aimed at identifying

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(11) Harold Garfinkel, Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremony, American Journal of Sociology, March, 1956.

the anti-Semite with what is harmful to America. It is the anti-Semite who is really destroying America. He is opposed to law and order and to the democratic process. In the past, Jews have found such violent attacks on their antagonists to be distasteful. It is time to realize that in the battle against the disease of anti-Semitism, no rational techniques will be as effective as those which emotively identify the prejudiced personality with the most pernicious aspects of American life.

The Jewish community of America is convinced that its goals and ideals are identical with those of the nation as a whole. For the Jewish community, out of fear, to abandon its ideals is a perversion of Judaism and a betrayal of the American way of life. By simultaneously picturing prejudice in all of its horrifying dimensions and degrading the prejudiced personality, American Jews may be able to retain in clear focus the ideals which have been their birthright for four thousand years, and at the same time render a great service to the country in which they live.

THE JEWISH COUNCIL ON URBAN AFFAIRS

A PROGRESS REPORT

By: Rabbi Robert J. Marx  
Lewis Kreinberg

The Jewish Council on Urban Affairs represents an effort to translate and apply the ideals, concepts and precepts of Judaism as a way of life to the problems of contemporary urban society. It is committed to helping individuals, ethnic, racial and religious groups, as well as government and social agencies achieve and maintain a society in which each person, regardless of race, religion, social or economic position is judged on the basis of individual merit.

In addition, the JCUA seeks to bring an awareness of and a concern for the problems of the inner city to the Jewish community. During the first period of its existence, the JCUA has sought to work in particular neighborhoods. This goal is entirely in accord with the Economic Opportunities Act of 1964 which encourages the type of program in which the poor help themselves. This also accords with the insights of the great Jewish philosopher Maimonides, who recognized that the highest degree of charity was "to anticipate charity by preventing poverty." To do this Maimonides suggested techniques that are relevant to our times, "namely, to assist the reduced fellow-man, either by a considerable gift or a loan of money, or by teaching him a trade, or by putting him in the way of business, so that he may earn an honest livelihood; and not be forced to the dreadful alternative of holding out his hand for charity."

The JCUA seeks to help groups and individuals realize their

highest potentialities. It also seeks to bring to the Jewish community itself an awareness of the need to plan its own future and a recognition of the opportunities in the modern metropolis for fulfilling the Messianic vision of Judaism.

The following list represents a summary of the contributions and commitments of the JCUA:

1. The establishment of a dialogue with various community organizations.
2. Work with specific communities on problems of mutual concern.
3. Contribution of staff personnel to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to assist in community oriented projects, such as tutorial programs and Mitzvah Corps.
4. Development with the City Missionary Society and other inter-religious groups of programs dealing with housing problems.
5. Specific projects dealing with problems of slum landlords.

After only a few months of experience, it is possible to begin an analysis of JCUA and its effectiveness. To be sure there have been many frustrations and disappointments, but the achievements which have already become apparent must not be minimized.

1. Community Organization - As a result of the first six months of activity, the JCUA has established a close working relationship with the Northwest Community Organization, the West Side Federation, the West Side Organization, the South of Roosevelt Planning Association, and the Woodlawn Organization. It has also cooperated with several other organizations, such as: The Austin Community Organization and the Southeast Community Organization, and the Rogers Park Organization. The pattern of the relationship involves attending meetings,



meeting with executives to explore problems of concern, and interpreting the programs to the Jewish and general communities. In some of these areas contacts have been established as a result of a community controversy in which the Jewish community may be directly or indirectly involved. In others, it has simply been a matter of expressing the concern of the Jewish community for inadequate efforts to create justice and higher community standards.

2. Work With Specific Communities on Problems of Mutual Concern

It has been our experience that the problems of our various communities differ from area to area. In one it may be schools, in another housing, and in a third, employment. Often the lack of organization itself presents a problem area in which the JCUA can be helpful. It is painful to report that in some of these communities anti-Semitism has become a problem. The presence of a Jewish concern has proven useful in creating a better climate of inter-religious understanding. In the Woodlawn area, for example, an outright grant was made to the community organization to conduct a pilot project on Negro-Jewish relationships. Wide coverage was given to this gift in the Negro press and a photograph taken at the presentation appeared in the Chicago Defender.

In the Northwest Community Organization where there are very large numbers of minority groups, including Poles and Puerto Ricans, the Director of Research of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, made a useful contribution to the planning and the resolution of a wide variety of community problems. The services of board members of the JCUA were also enlisted in behalf of the community.

3. Contribution to UAHC - The Director of Research of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs serves in a dual capacity. It has long been felt that the Chicago Federation of the UAHC needed a staff person working in the area of social concern. When the grant making available the JCUA staff was awarded, the JCUA offered to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations the services of a staff member to work exclusively in this area. The offer was accepted and, as a result, the director of Research has been able to coordinate for the UAHC a wide variety of programs in the area of tutorial training and contacts with various community organizations. Through his associations, he has helped make the tutorial program of the Chicago Federation and its member congregations more meaningful.

In addition, plans for the summer Mitzvah Corps (a student work project sponsored by the National Federation of Temple Youth and the Chicago Federation of the UAHC) involve the utilization of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs and its contacts with the Hyde Park and Woodlawn communities.

4. Housing Problems - It must be emphasized that the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs does not work in isolation, but rather plans its activities in cooperation with various other Jewish and community organizations, and particularly, with religious programs sponsored by other faiths and denominations. The housing program of the JCUA is an example of cooperation with the City Missionary Society and the Interreligious Council on Urban Affairs. The JCUA has conducted a program aimed at improving housing within the city of Chicago. This program is aimed primarily at lower and middle class groups and is simultaneously motivated by a desire to maintain the stability of the inner city by preventing an outflow of upper middle class inhabitants. The housing project has developed a wide variety of techniques that have proven most useful.

In cooperation with the Community Renewal Foundation, an interreligious group, we have participated in a program rendering legal assistance to both tenants and owners of deteriorating properties. The project seeks to spell out the rights of groups involved in conflict and provide the mechanism for the type of assistance that will create better housing. In addition, the JCUA has helped recruit a group of attorneys who will assist in providing free or low cost legal services to those unable to secure legal assistance on their own.

A receivership project financed by a Federal Housing Act grant in the amount of \$209,000.00 has enabled the Community Renewal Foundation (with the JCUA) to embark upon a program of temporarily relieving distressed owners of their properties in order to make improvements necessary to put the residence in conformity with the building codes thus making it a more desirable place in which to live. This appears to be one of the more effective ways of making attractive housing available for the poor.

5. Specific Projects Dealing With Problems of Slum Landlords  
Of special concern to the Jewish community is the problem of slum landlords. We wish to emphasize that we do not feel that this is a problem that can be dealt with by the Jewish community exclusively. The seemingly high percentage of slum landlords who are Jewish should, however, cause us to be especially sensitive in this area. The JCUA is cooperating with community organizations in dealing with the slum landlord problem and, where justified, has utilized synagogues and rabbis.

In addition, the JCUA has been working with the inter-religious community in helping community organizations face the slum landlord problem on a city-wide basis. Slum landlords often operate in various areas of the city. Many of them, although certainly not all, have a wide variety of deteriorating dwellings from which they derive excessive profits. They are often skilled in the uses of time to avoid fulfillment of their responsibilities. By legal delay, changes of ownership or half-hearted compliance with Building Department officials, it is possible to circumvent the desires of those who seek to improve the quality of their neighborhood. Only when the problem is confronted in its widest ramifications, only when expert legal and architectural advice is available, can the various delays and difficulties which often becloud this issue be avoided.

A report on the activities of the JCUA would be incomplete without pointing out some of the problem areas which now confront us. At this moment in history the federal government, as well as municipal governments, has seen fit to declare a war on poverty. While poverty is not a new concern to religious institutions, especially the Jewish community, a new emphasis and major concern is being demonstrated by federal legislation. It is urgent that the religious communities continue to function and be critical in the area concerning poverty. This statement is based upon the experience which the JCUA staff has learned from the poor people in the city of

Chicago. The concern of the Jewish community at this time has to be not only with structure but with the poor people.

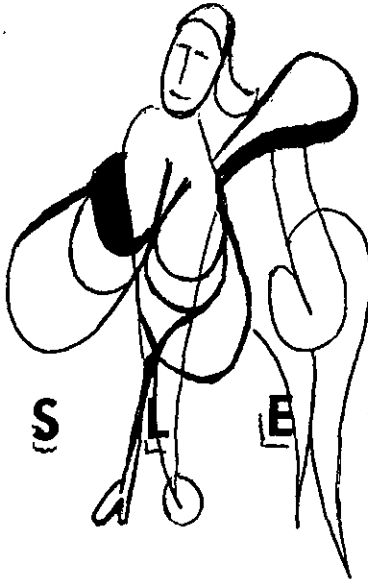
The Federal government has made it quite clear through the office of Economic Opportunities that it intends to have the poverty program include the poor to the greatest possible extent. It is important to recognize the impact of this in that the poor, themselves, have traditionally regarded efforts at overcoming poverty as directed towards agencies rather than towards people. The Jewish Council on Urban Affairs is dedicated to helping the people themselves rather than creating artificial structures or sustaining any given establishment, including those of the Jewish community.

To this end, we feel that the Jewish community has a responsibility, both in areas where Jews live in the Metropolitan community and in areas where they do not live. The Jewish community earns its sustenance as a result of the life of the inner city. It must, therefore, voice an interest and concern, it must bring to bear its rich tradition, and identify with some of the problems which confront the inner city. It would be perhaps crass, but not unrealistic, to point to the huge investment of Jewish resources within the inner city. To abandon these resources, developed over long years of dedicated service and commitment, would be a tragic waste. The responsibility of Jews in the area in which they live to participate fully in the structure of their own community is clear. It is equally imperative for Jews to make a contribution in the communities in which they work.

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(SCLC)

# JEWISH COUNCIL ON URBAN AFFAIRS



N E W S L E T T E R

VOL. I--NO. 1

JANUARY 1967

"WE ARE HERE TO BRING JUDAISM'S COMMITMENT TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE INNER CITY. THE PHILOSOPHY UNDER WHICH WE OPERATE IS VERY OLD. IT IS THAT JUDAISM IS RELEVANT. IT IS THAT JUDAISM HAS SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF OUR TIMES. THE PROBLEMS, HOWEVER, ARE VERY NEW. THEY ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT AND INCREASINGLY COMPLICATED.

"THE JEWISH COUNCIL ON URBAN AFFAIRS (JCUA) CAME INTO EXISTENCE BECAUSE SOME OF US WHO ARE JEWISH FELT THAT OUR FAITH AND OUR TRADITION HAD NOT ACTED TO MEET THE CHALLENGE ON THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE AS EFFECTIVELY AS IT SHOULD. TO MEET THIS CHALLENGE, WE HAVE BROUGHT TOGETHER THE BEST MINDS THAT WE COULD FIND AND HAVE MARRIED THEM TO A FAITH THAT DEMANDS THAT 'THOUGH WE MAY NOT COMPLETE THE TASK, WE ARE NOT FREE TO DESIST FROM IT.' "

--Statement of Purpose  
Rabbi Robert J. Marx



IN ACCORDANCE WITH MAIMONIDES' PRINCIPLE THAT THE HIGHEST FORM OF CHARITY IS THAT IN WHICH THE POOR ARE ENABLED TO HELP THEMSELVES, THE JEWISH COUNCIL ON URBAN AFFAIRS PROVIDES STAFF TO COMMUNITY GROUPS ONLY AT THE REQUEST OF THE COMMUNITY ITSELF.

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For the past 2½ years Lewis Kreinberg of the JCUA has been on loan as staff to the West Side Federation. The Federation consists of over 50 organizations representing different segments of the community and includes the areas of East Garfield Park, West Garfield Park, North Lawndale and the Near West Side.

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For the last 2 years my staff responsibilities for the West Side Federation (WSF) have varied from planning demonstrations to highlight the problems of housing, to standing guard with the residents over their property when they were evicted. While the degree of drama varies from situation to situation, the condition primarily remains the same. The people on the West Side are poor and the leadership that exists there lacks the resources to effect visible change. My responsibilities as defined by the Executive Council of the WSF have been to try to find handles on problem areas so that community leaders can turn their problems towards some type of constructive solution.

I have been concentrating for the last 6 months on the future of the West Side and what it will look like in 10 years. This has required taking a physical inventory as well as analyzing those institutions which are already present on the West Side. It is apparent, now that the Mayor has revealed the comprehensive plan, that a renaissance is not only possible but probable in this area that lies about only 15 minutes from the Loop. But, current findings suggest that while the land will be renewed, the poor people may again be ignored. It has

not been the intention of the Federation to obstruct renewal or to be naive enough to think that they alone can rid themselves of the slums and, yet, the history is plain--most of the residents who now reside on the West Side have been removed from slum and blighted areas into rapidly depreciating areas. "Moved by progress, but never renewed by it" causes the kind of cautiousness among leaders which makes them suspicious of those institutions which the white middle class hold so dear. The University of Illinois' potential for contributing to the solving of urban problems cannot be real until it addresses itself to the immediate disease surrounding its walls. The soaring profits of Sears are unsafe until the neighborhood children can imagine themselves moving up the management ladder at Sears.

Planning for specifics which could make these dreams real have brought us in contact with the City of Chicago--its Building Department, its Corporation Council, its Housing Authority, its Committee on Urban Opportunities. We have also been meeting with Draper and Kramer, The Community Renewal Foundation, the Maremont Foundation, the University of Illinois. While resources to deal with plans affecting the West Side are scarce, we have been able on a volunteer basis to attract interest among lawyers, architects and CPA's. While volunteers will never solve the vast problems which I have tried to define, they do fill temporary needs and until these problems are defined as serious enough for a professional comprehensive program, they are the spark of life to most organizations on the West Side.

--Lewis Kreinberg

On October 1, 1966, the JCUA hired Robert Gordon, architect-planner, to go on full-time loan as staff to the Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization (KOCO). The boundaries of the Kenwood-Oakland area extend from 35th St. to 51st St., Cottage Grove Ave. to the Lake. KOCO is the local community organization composed of leaders from the area, various committees of community residents and a delegate body of community residents. Mr. Gordon's presence is at the request of KOCO and as a result of the contribution of 4 Hyde Park-Kenwood synagogues: Isaiah Israel (Rabbi H.G. Perelmutter) K.A.M. Temple (Rabbi Jacob Weinstein) Rodfei Zedek (Rabbi Ralph Simon) Sinai Cong. (Rabbi Samuel Karff).

Mr. Gordon has been in direct contact with the rabbis of these congregations throughout the project.

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The first 3 months I have been working with KOCO have been filled with many changes, as the organization is trying to find itself. The removal of the former staff director clarified many of the problems of structure within the organization. It is now clear to the delegates that many of the misunderstandings were due to the lack of a written constitution and description of job roles and responsibilities. Another problem was the lack of a budget. This made it difficult to know how far they could extend themselves in terms of staff. For this reason, they have put off hiring an office manager-secretary. As a result, the office exists now as a meeting hall, with most of the work being done in the field.

In order to come to grips with these problems, the delegates have approved a budget and are now in the process of amending and changing the first rough draft of their constitution.

During this early period of KOCO's growth, there has been one consistent and functioning commission. This is the Housing and

Urban Renewal Commission (Rev. Herbert Eaton, chairman). I have been working very closely with Rev. Eaton and the Commission in developing long-term plans for renewal in the Kenwood-Oakland community and also short-range plans to relieve some of the conditions of housing in the area. The Commission members have recently drafted up a group of principles for planning Kenwood-Oakland which won unanimous approval from the delegates. I have prepared Base Maps (see next page) and Land Use Maps for the Commission which have been the basis, or tools, by which they have been able to make their own decisions.

In the short range, I have developed a simplification of the Housing Code of the City of Chicago which contains the code numbers. This will make it possible for the tenants themselves to check off code violations and present them directly to KOCO's Legal Aid Service without the intermediate step of an architect. This will form the basis of tenant unions, receivership programs, and condemnation proceedings. It will be another tool for the community to be in a position of helping itself. This program has been enthusiastically endorsed by the delegates and on December 17, a massive housing evaluation survey was officially begun in Kenwood-Oakland. There will eventually be at least one representative of each block, who must reside on the block, who will compile these surveys. More important, however, is that this will begin a block-by-block communication which can be translated into many other types of programs and benefits for the area.

Serving in this capacity has demonstrated, I believe, that the Jewish interest in the community is not purely business but, rather, is in line with the ancient tradition that demands that "thou shalt not separate thyself from the community."

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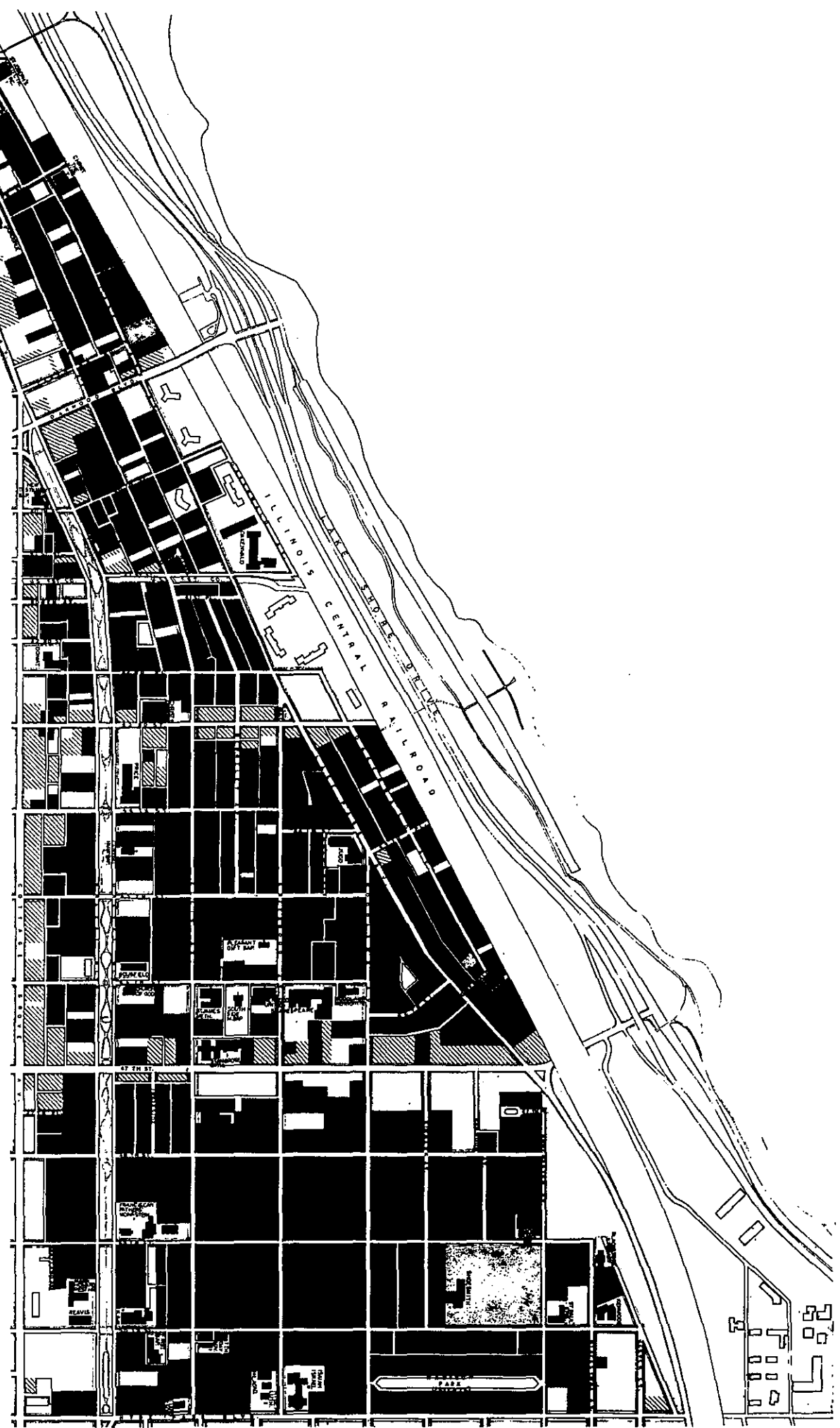
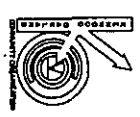
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LAND USE MAP





In November 1966, the JCUA hired a new resource person in the area of civil rights-- Pat Novick. Miss Novick is working with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, specifically with the Chicago Freedom Movement, and relating her experiences to the Jewish community:

businessmen is growing stronger in the Lawndale community all the time. Hopefully, our Jewish community as a whole will take some concerted action to deal with this problem.

--Pat Novick

\* \* \* \* \*

My first assignment for JCUA was with the Lawndale Union to End Slums, an organization connected with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, to aid them in a program of tenant organizing. This assignment consists of searching titles of slum property, consulting with tenants, researching information on low income housing, attending and organizing meetings, relating to slum landlords, and making inquiries into general availability of Lawndale community resources. The main strategy of the union organization is to organize tenants toward rent strikes in an effort to force landlords to rehabilitate their property. This is done through collective bargaining agreements which are negotiated in the same way as any union-management contract.

During this period I developed close personal relationship with many of the tenants and we began to discuss problems of anti-Semitism in the ghetto. This anti-Semitism is different in that it consists of a general white hatred and that it is directed towards a particular economic group identified by the Negro community specifically as the stereotyped Jew. My presence in Lawndale mitigated this image as a result of my personal contacts; however, the general discontent with Jewish

#### HERE IS THE JCUA BOARD

A most unique combination of business, professional and religious leaders constitutes the Board of the JEWISH COUNCIL ON URBAN AFFAIRS. Each Board member was carefully selected because of some particular talent or interest. Although members of the Board may possess wealth or stature, this is not the criteria for which they were chosen. One question was asked of them-- Were they dedicated to the ideals of Judaism and did they believe that Judaism had something to say to contemporary men?

At JCUA meetings, a leading industrialist sits down with a professor or urban geography and the dean of a law school; an outstanding attorney talks about problems of the slums with an architect and a city planner. Here, too, distinctions between Conservative, Orthodox and Reform Judaism become less important than the challenge to all branches of Judaism; so it is only natural that a Conservative and Orthodox as well as a Reform rabbi serve on the Board of the Council. The small Board covers a wide cross section of the Jewish community. What unites it is its conviction that Judaism's voice in the metropolitan area must not be muted.

## JCUA LEGAL COMMITTEE

The Lawyers Committee of the JCUA has been providing legal services to community organizations for more than 2 years. These organizations include The Woodlawn Organization and the West Side Federation.

The matters handled are at two levels. One level involves giving "desk advice" that helps prevent problems arising. Some of these are: legal evaluation of a proposed new FHA insured project, preparation of incorporation papers for neighborhood organizations, and determination of existence of housing code violations in an apartment building.

The other level involves participation in litigation. This includes: participation as a friend of the court in housing code violation suits, provision of counsel for tenants conducting rent strikes, and helping local neighborhood organizations find a means to rehabilitate the 1321 South Homan Building which was taken over by Dr. Martin Luther King.

In the months ahead, the Committee hopes to aid in drafting legislation that will be proposed to the 1967 State Legislature to revise the housing and credit laws of the State. It also will conduct a study with accountants and real estate men, evaluating the operations of one of the most widely known slum operators and slum financiers operating on the West Side of Chicago.

## RABBI MARX ATTENDS WASHINGTON CONFERENCE ON ECONOMIC FRONTIERS

On December 4 and 5, Rabbi Robert Marx, director of the Chicago Federation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and president of JCUA, attended a Washington Social Action Conference on Economic Frontiers--A Challenge to Conscience. The program was sponsored by the Religious Action Center of the UAHC whose director, Rabbi Richard Hirsch, formerly served as head of the UAHC Chicago office. Speakers included Rabbi Jacob Weinstein, president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and Rabbi of K.A.M. Temple, as well as Leon Keyserling, Walter Reuther, Robert Theobald, Bayard Rustin and Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath.

A focal point of the conference was a discussion of the guaranteed minimum income which has been espoused by Mr. Theobald. Mr. Rustin movingly noted that what was needed in our urban communities was not a guaranteed minimum income, but guaranteed employment. Only when our society removes the obstacles that prevent Negroes from achieving full and productive employment will we be able to begin to deal with problems such as family stability and slum living conditions.

Rabbi Eisendrath, president of the UAHC, pointed out that there is always opposition to religious institutions taking stands on controversial matters. It is easy to be in favor of justice in the abstract. Our task now is to bring the forces of the Jewish community to grapple with the complex moral and social issues that beset contemporary society.

## H E L P ! ! ! !

1967 fund raising plans are now in the making. It is estimated that \$25,000 will have to be raised to meet our modest budget, most all of which consists of the salaries of our field and office staff. The professionals we talk to indicate this is a trifling sum; but, right now it looks like Fort Knox. It is intended that various foundations and individuals will be contacted.

In the meantime, if somebody is looking for a 1967 tax deduction tell them about JCUA.

# REFORM JEWS URGED TO PUSH OPEN HOUSING, FIGHT SLUMS

A 12-point action program to promote open housing, employment opportunities and Jewish faith in the Chicago area.

The program was adopted by unanimous action of the presidents of 32 Reform Jewish congregations in the Chicago area.

The 32 congregations include from 50,000 to 60,000 persons, said Rabbi Robert J. Marx, director of the Chicago Federation and Great Lakes Council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

There are about 400 Jewish congregations in the Chicago area.

It asks that the social action committees within the congregations develop support among the members for local, state and national legislation "correcting social injustice."

The program adopted by the group for Chicago follows similar ones adopted by the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations including the Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and the United Church of Christ.

**THE REFORM** Jewish program upon the congregations to discuss "with various



Rabbi Robert Marx

professional and public personalities, both within the congregations

what they are doing to pursue the goals of an open society."

Another phase of the action program outlines the creation of "working teams to achieve individual housing, job and school opportunities for Negroes.

"Such groups," says the statement, "could, among other things, actively seek homes that Negroes may purchase in urban and suburban areas."

The teams should "secure pledges from those surrounding these homes to welcome neighbors."

that would make possible the presence in the community of people of all races."

**OTHER** points in the program ask congregants to:

- Work with the Catholic archdiocese, the Church Federation of Greater Chicago and other Protestant groups to further open housing programs.
- Conduct seminars "involving the poor" on poverty, broken families and juvenile delinquency.

Other Jewish congregations are also working on the problem.

"seek to establish communication with other group synagogues."

- Set up a "timetable for action" and an "inventory of resources"—professional people in the congregation to provide knowledge and political clout necessary to achieve an

## I Was on the Wrong Side of the Street

Last August Rabbi Robert J. Marx, director of the Chicago Federation of the UAHC, wrote a letter to congregants and friends. It is not only a letter; it is a superb document. We reprint it without further comment—it speaks for itself.

August 5, 1966

My dear friend:

I am writing this letter on Friday noon. In a few minutes I will be doing something about which I have grave misgivings, but I have to share what I am about to do with you and the reasons I must do it.

Last Sunday, at the request of the Chicago Conference on Religion and Race, and the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, I went out to Gage Park to see what I could do to bring peace and order into that troubled area. My job was to help organize the clergymen of the area on an interreligious basis, to meet the problems that confronted their community.

For weeks Negro couples have been going to visit realtors in Gage Park to see if they could rent homes—homes that were offered at the same or lower cost as they would have to pay in the heart of the Negro ghetto. These homes were not made available to Negroes. They were made available only to white people.

After meeting with the clergymen on Sunday I joined them on the streets, and in Marquette Park, in an effort to disperse the people who threatened the marchers: in an effort to bring the religious idea that all men should be able to live together in peace—to this part of the city. What I saw in Gage Park seared my soul in a way that my participation in no other civil rights event had done. I was afraid and I am afraid now. I saw how the concentration camp could have occurred, and how men's hatred could lead them to kill. I saw Catholic priests reviled and nuns spat upon. I found myself—a rabbi—standing guard like a policeman, over a pile of rocks, for fear that grown men and mothers dragging little children around with them, would seize those rocks and throw them at the demonstrators. I saw teenage boys and girls ready to kill.

I was on the wrong side of the street. I should have been with the marchers. It is not enough for me to say that Christians of good will should have been with my people in the concentration camps. That they were not is no rationale for avoiding issues today. We should have learned from that experience.

This afternoon I will join Dr. King and others who will be going back into the Gage Park area. This time I will be on the right side of the street.

I know that there are many of you who will disagree wholeheartedly with this action, undertaken by the director of a not insignificant organization.

Some of you may accuse me of helping to incite violence. With all my heart I believe those who feel this way are wrong—though I understand this feeling.

You may accuse me of stirring up trouble, of not understanding the passions people feel when they are afraid of losing their homes and their neighborhoods. You may be right. But there is a far greater problem as I see it. As long as the hatred we have experienced in Gage Park is not met by responsible community leadership, our city is not a safe place in which to live. Surely our homes will remain attractive and pleasant. But there will always be a hidden fear. We will always be running. We will

be running from Lawndale and from South Shore. We will run from Rogers Park and Highland Park. We have been running for 2,000 years. We must stop running now.

Some of you, as I have said, will accuse me of helping to create violence. To this, I must respond that I am not inciting to violence, but rather it is those who prohibit free men from peacefully marching who do the inciting. And in the final analysis, perhaps it is better that I receive a scar from a rock thrown on a Friday afternoon, than for a million Negro children to bear the scars for a lifetime, knowing that they cannot live where they want to live or travel where they want to travel.

You may ask what my trip this afternoon has to do with Judaism. Is it not a waste of my time and of your money? I pray that you do not feel this way. That you see Judaism as relevant to the problems of our times, that you see a need for prophetic voices in our age (though Heaven knows mine is not), that you are willing to take a few risks to make Judaism's dreams of a Messianic world come true.

You may think that I am insensitive to the criticism that I know has been voiced on many occasions over my involvement in civil rights causes: Why don't I spend more time on Judaism? Why do I dissipate so much of my energy on a cause that is not ours? I am aware of these criticisms, and I am pained by them: for you see, I feel that freedom is Judaism, that Passover is not 3,000 years old—that it is today, and that we are part of it. I feel even more deeply that unless Jews—Jews who are devoted to their faith and their synagogues, as I am devoted to my faith and my synagogue—unless all of us are involved in the crucial issues of the world, Judaism will not exist in future generations for our children and our children's children. And perhaps it ought not to exist.

Leaders of the civil rights movement have tried to capture Judaism's vision of a city that is truly open to all people, to all races, to all religions. They have come to understand that their marches in selected and scattered areas of the city are a way of showing people who live there that hatred does exist. For when they come, the evil men mobilize; they throw rocks, they spit venom, and if they were free to do so, they would even kill.

What then is the good of this process? In the face of this demonstration the good men of the city also mobilize. They see what the problem is, and hopefully—hopefully—they take the action to face it. Whether on the west side or Gage Park men have to learn that it is not by striking out violently in the dark, but by sitting down together in the light of reason that they can resolve their problems. But when the light of reason fails, and when non-violent demonstration is met by such fanaticism and viciousness, then I have no choice but to join those who do believe in democracy, who do believe that silence cannot dominate truth.

Until Chicago and its suburbs are open to all people, then ours is a sick society, and will remain sick. And we will be sick—though we may not recognize the seriousness of our illness.

Let me close by hoping that I am not being overly dramatic. If I am, please write it off to the fact that on Sunday, in the face of all that hatred, I was, for the first time in my life, really afraid. I am afraid now. I do not seek your approval for what I am about to do—only your understanding, and from some of you, your blessing.

Sincerely yours,  
Rabbi Robert J. Marx

#9

**"IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE  
THERE ARE MANY MANSIONS—  
AND I'M GOING TO GET ME  
SOME OF THEM TOO"**



**The Story of the Contract Buyers League**  
**by James Alan McPherson**

"... every human being's life in this world is inevitably mixed with every other life and, no matter what laws we pass, no matter what precautions we take, unless the people we meet are kindly and decent and human and liberty-loving, then there is no liberty. Freedom comes from human beings, rather than from laws and institutions."

—Clarence Darrow

Summation to jury in the trial of Henry Sweet, Detroit, 1926

## I People and Houses

**T**he way to Lawndale, on Chicago's West Side, is by el: a twenty-minute ride from the Loop to Pulaski Road, a twenty-minute ride back. In the early morning, and again in the evening, the cars running between the two sections of the city are packed with black workers. Airport attendants, maids, waitresses, janitors, truck drivers, factory workers: a cross section of the unskilled. These are people conditioned by urban living: nothing surprises them. In the rattling cars there is little laughter or talk, nor is there much complaining.

The community itself, Lawndale, is very much like any other black section of a major American city. About 180,000 people crowd into its 12 square miles. Whether it is called a ghetto or a community, the visible symbols remain the same: the sense of Elizabethan vitality and ferment painfully contrasting with the physical reality of spiritually dead loafers in colorful habits decorating the fronts of bars and stores and barbershops; children darting in and out of these shops or playing in gutters; mothers hauling plastic sacks of clothes to and from the laundromats, young women looking vacantly nowhere. The radio music which keeps it all alive blares into the street, sometimes overpowered by bull-voiced disc jockeys hawking cars and clothes and color televisions. Older women look down on the street, watching the children and just watching; a repossession notice, from downtown, floats along the pavement on the wind. The stylized movements of eyes and fingers and feet; the screaming colors; the pictures and posters of this year's politicians sloppily pasted over those from last year; the bourbon billboards; the uncleared lots and falling houses bearing the graffiti of resident groups—Vice Lords, Conservative Vice Lords, Disciples, Black Panthers. The storefront churches; the other houses struggling to survive; the sense of having seen it all or of having read about it all someplace before.

But something new and positive has started here that makes Lawndale more than just another ghetto. Along the streets intersecting Pulaski Road are hun-

dreds of old, but solidly constructed two- and three-flat houses which many of the residents hope to rehabilitate eventually. Tall, shabby, weatherworn brick structures, they suggest a stability that is foreign to the idea of a ghetto. Yet these houses, and the fight of Lawndale people to save them, are what make this particular ghetto a community and a symbol of national significance.

Sometime this year, amid the hoopla and glitter of the two national political conventions, the resurrection there of suppressed issues and the lavish promises for dealing with them, the fate of these people and their houses will be decided in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Two court cases argued by white lawyers, *Baker v. F & F Investment* and *Clark v. Universal Builders*, represent four years of cooperative activity by the people of Lawndale on the West Side of Chicago, joined by other black families from the South Side of Chicago. The cases bind over three thousand black families and their homes to a difficult question which must eventually be answered by the courts: has a businessman the legal right to make a profit from a market created by racial discrimination where the buyer has no other place to deal?

**T**he problem is common to every American ghetto. What has happened in Chicago has happened in other cities. But a popular movement to do something about it began in Chicago, and Chicago is the central stage on which the resultant drama is now coming to a climax.

Chicago is perhaps the most residentially segregated city in the country. Its reputation is based on a strong tradition of neighborhood towns or "ethnic states." Their people—Bohemians, Germans, Irish, Italians, Jews, Lithuanians, Poles—tended to settle together and defend their customs and their borders against newcomers. Black people were the ultimate newcomers. Lured up from the South by stories of higher wages, political freedom, the good life, they settled on the South Side and began testing borders.

By the end of World War I their own borders had been erected for them. Jim Crow ordinances and restrictive covenants were used to control any expansion. Specifically, the Chicago Real Estate Board's Code of Ethics cautioned: "A realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood . . . members of any race or nationality or any individual whose presence would be clearly detrimental to property values in that neighborhood." But the black influx continued, and by the 1940s the South Side could no longer accommodate the migrants. Sub-

## A caller might simply say, "They're coming."

scribers to the American Dream, they wanted the stability symbolized by home ownership. Some jumped the borders and spilled over into wherever housing was available: East Chicago, Chicago Heights. Some went as far as Gary, Indiana, and sat waiting for a chance to move back. At the same time, many whites were moving into the suburbs.

In 1948 the United States Supreme Court ruled racially restrictive covenants judicially unenforceable. In 1950 the Real Estate Board dropped the words "race" and "nationality" from its code, but the policy remained the same. In the mid-1950s when urban renewal began its demolition and removal program in black slum areas, a number of "panic peddlers" seized on the U.S. Supreme Court's 1948 ruling to "open up" and "turn" white residential neighborhoods over to eager black buyers. For most poor black families uprooted by urban renewal, as well as for those seeking to get out of other overcrowded black communities, the choice was a simple one: accept segregated public housing, challenge segregationist practices in white ethnic neighborhoods and depend on police protection, or attempt to buy one of the solidly constructed homes rapidly becoming available through a combination of panic peddling and the exodus of white ethnics to the suburbs. Many poor black families, like those in Lawndale, chose to follow the blockbusters.

Between 1958 and 1961, most of the southern part of Lawndale passed from white to black occupancy, with little enough push from the blockbusters. Some merely hired black women to walk their children through white neighborhoods, or paid black men to drive noisy cars through an area a few times a day. Sometimes it was a telephone call for "Johnnie Mae." Another caller might simply say, "They're coming." The whites sold, many at prices far below the appraised value of their homes. And very shortly, sometimes within the same week, the houses would be resold to eager black families at inflated prices and at very high interest rates on installment purchase contracts. These contracts differ radically from the mortgages with which most Americans buy their homes. They are like a department store "easy-payment" plan.

The terms of the contracts (standard forms were approved by the Chicago Bar) allow the purchaser to take immediate possession of the property, but give him no equity or title until the full contract price is paid. The purchaser is obliged to pay specified installments on the purchase price over a period of years, the deed and title to the property to be delivered upon completion of such payments. Also, like the restrictive terms of a conditional sales contract,

the seller has the right to reclaim the property and to keep all past payments if a single payment is missed. Since the buyer's equity in the property does not build up, he cannot obtain a mortgage unless a specific mortgage provision is written into the contract. And while the buyer is obliged to pay for insurance, taxes, and all repairs on the property, the seller usually selects the insurance company and can collect all claims for damages to the property. Most policies cover only the sellers' mortgage interest, and not the contract value for which the property was sold. In many respects the contract buyer's rights are as minimal as those of a renter. (In some cases, less: at least in a landlord-tenant situation, the landlord is responsible for the upkeep of the building.) Besides the contractual advantages, many sellers were permitted under Illinois law to conceal their identities through the device of the land trust. While a title and trust company kept record titles, the beneficiaries, identified only by trust number, maintained complete control of the property. An additional advantage was provided by the swift remedies of the Illinois eviction law (see box, page 69).

**M**ost realtors who purchased the homes from fleeing whites could get mortgage financing from the banks. But for purchasers like the Howell Collins family there was no such advantage. Mr. and Mrs. Collins, an elderly black couple, contracted to buy their duplex home in Lawndale on September 26, 1960. The seller had purchased the place one month earlier from a white family for about \$14,500, but sold it to the Collins family for \$25,500. The seller obtained a mortgage for \$12,000. The Collins family paid \$1500 down and signed a contract to pay the \$24,000 balance in monthly installments of \$191 (plus monthly deposits for insurance and taxes) at an interest rate of 7 percent for 19 years. Under the contract, they will pay a total of approximately \$45,000 for the building, including over \$19,000 in interest. If the Collinses had been able to get a mortgage and terms similar to those the realtor got, they would have paid a total of about \$20,000 for the home over a shorter period of time.\*

But the roots of the situation go much deeper than panic peddling. These black families were forced to buy on contract because they were excluded from Federal Housing Administration mortgage backing—in contrast to the availability of FHA mortgages for

\*These estimates are based on information provided by Collins in testimony before the Public Welfare Committee of the Illinois House of Representatives, and on the records of the Contract Buyers League.

**Situations similar to Chicago's exist in every major American city where the black population has been shut off from the broader housing market and excluded from FHA-backed mortgages.**

some blacks in some neighborhoods that have been black all along. From the FHA's creation in the 1930s, its policies, like those of the Chicago Real Estate Board, reflected a belief that property value in a residential area decreased when the residents were not of the same social, economic, and racial group. Besides including a sample restrictive covenant, the FHA underwriting manual of 1938 advised that "if a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial groups." Despite token reforms in this policy between 1947 and 1954, builders and lenders still remained free to make their own decisions. The agency's requirement that a building be judged "economically sound" before mortgage backing could be given favored new houses and not the used residential properties usually bought by black families. Finally, an FHA administrative procedure of "red-lining" black or changing areas of a city as "high-risk" placed another, circular restriction on potential black home purchasers: as soon as more than a token number of them moved into an area, the neighborhood could be labeled "high-risk" or "changing," and FHA backing of mortgages might terminate. Banks, savings and loan associations, the major homeowners' insurance companies—even the Veterans Administration—usually followed FHA guidelines.

Thus, besides being virtually restricted from the broader housing market, many black home buyers could not expect FHA backing of a mortgage if the purchased homes were not judged "economically sound" or if they were in areas designated "changing" or "high-risk." Despite the number of studies, beginning with Luigi Laurenti's *Property Values and Race*, which challenged the popular idea that "black people lower property value," these latter FHA policies did not change until after the 1967 riots, when FHA offices were instructed to consider all buildings in riot or riot-threatened areas as "acceptable risk." However, between 1938 and 1967 countless numbers of black home buyers who were unable to meet FHA requirements were obliged to rely on the use of installment purchase contracts.

Many Lawndale families, on the advice of lawyers, had signed contracts which would bind them to the houses without benefit of equity or ownership until the early 1980s. To meet the monthly payments some husbands worked at two and sometimes three jobs. Many wives were also forced to work, resulting in the destruction of their family life. Unsupervised children drifted into the street gangs in the area. In addition to the monthly payments, many buyers were

forced to pay for costly repairs on their homes as soon as the contracts were signed. One couple, it is reported, had been told by a seller that the building they purchased was free of building-code violations. Three weeks after the family moved in, a building inspector appeared and required them to spend another \$2500 to correct code violations.

In the period 1958-1961 more than one half the homes in Lawndale were purchased on contract. Chicago is not by any means the only city where black people have bought homes on contract. Situations similar to Chicago's exist in every major American city where the black population has been shut off from the broader housing market and excluded from FHA-backed mortgages. Baltimore is one; Washington, D.C. is another; Cincinnati is a third. In Baltimore, a grass-roots movement challenging similar practices sprang up about the same time the people of Lawndale began to organize. But the Chicago movement has gone the furthest, and the legal cases that have come to the point of resolution in Chicago are now the test cases for the country.

One day in early 1968, Mrs. Ruth Wells, a soft-spoken, attractive black woman in her mid-thirties, got up enough courage to go into a contract seller's office and ask why the sum of \$1500 had been added on to her contract balance for insurance. Three years later, her voice no longer soft, Mrs. Wells sat in the comfortably furnished living room of her home in Lawndale, and told a story that has now become fixed in black American folk history. "Before I left home that morning," she said, "I was very concerned over whether I was right or wrong. This has always been a problem with me: being afraid to really step out because I was afraid to be wrong. So I prayed a prayer before I left home that morning. I am not a real religious fanatic, but I do believe wholeheartedly in God because I feel that I would not have made it this far if not for a true and living God. That morning I went into my closet and closed the door to shut out everything. I asked the Lord to show me that day whether I was wrong between the time I left this house and returned. I said, 'If I'm wrong in expecting this man to do something, then I won't bother him anymore. But if I'm right, I want You to show me and I'll fight on.'

"When I got down there I asked to see the insurance policy. I said, 'You must have forgot! I don't live on North Shore Drive [an affluent white neighborhood]. I live in Lawndale. We don't have any mansions out there to be paying \$1500 for insurance. You



don't even pay that much a year in far better neighborhoods. I may be *living* here, but my *mind* didn't stop working after I started living here!" So the seller called the secretary and had her bring the policy. But when he went to pass the policy across the desk, his hand actually just trembled so until the paper was fluttering in the wind. And for him to shake so, not just from being nervous, this *had* to be something. I had forgot about the prayer, but the minute I saw his hand I *knew* I was right. It's as though someone had told me, 'Look!' *I felt so good!* When he offered to cancel the \$1500 I told him I had *changed my mind!* I got more *faith* sitting there in that man's office because I knew he was wrong and *he* knew he was wrong. I thought, 'Somebody done touched him and let him know. He's feeling something he's never felt before: *guilt!*' He's all trembling and shaking, really upset. And I thought to myself, 'I didn't upset him, but I know *who* did.'"

Mr. and Mrs. Wells bought the duplex for \$23,000 in 1959 from a real estate company. They paid \$3000 down and signed a contract which required them to pay the \$20,000 balance over a 15-year, 10-month period and which allowed them the option of obtaining a mortgage after 50 percent of the principal had been paid. This was done by late 1967. Mr. and Mrs. Wells then hired a black lawyer to negotiate the mortgage for them; but instead, he reported back that the seller would agree to the mortgage only after an additional \$1500 had been paid. "I asked him what the \$1500 was for," Mrs. Wells recalls. "He said he didn't know. Later he called back and said it was for insurance. Now, my contract itemizes my payments each month: insurance, taxes, principal, interest; and my total payment: \$201.40. Now, if I'm paying insurance in with the rest each month, I'm *not* in arrears with my payments. I was always before then normally a quiet person who wouldn't talk, especially to a stranger. But something just got in me and I was just fed up and tired. I don't care how hard I worked, how many hours I put in, I was still in the same boat."

**M**rs. Wells was not alone when she went into the contract seller's office. More than six months before the confrontation, John Redmond Macnamara, a thirty-year-old white Jesuit seminarian, and twelve white students had moved into Lawndale. Macnamara, a native of Skokie, Illinois, and then a student at the Bellarmine School of Theology, had spent most of the previous year in the community on a one-day-a-week basis as a member of a service project sponsored by the Presentation

Roman Catholic Church of Lawndale. The community-service project was started by Monsignor John J. Egan, the new pastor of Presentation Church and then director of the Office of Urban Affairs of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago. Macnamara and the other Catholic students moved into an old apartment on South Independence, a few blocks away from the Wells home, and began to walk the streets of Lawndale. They had no program to present. Instead, following Saul Alinsky's example, they listened to the people with only three ideas in mind: to discover what problems were facing the community, to provide services for bringing people together, and once the machinery for an organized and developing community was set up, to move on.

During the summer of 1967, despite harassment and intimidation by young black men in the neighborhood, the young whites visited all the families in a twelve-block area and listened to what the people said. There were many complaints against exploitation by merchants, high tax payments, the absence of city services, the lack of play lots for community children, and a general disinterest on the part of the mayor's office in reports of building-code violations.

As an initial project, the whites enlisted the help of young black people from the area to stage public demonstrations. On one occasion nine full cans of uncollected garbage from Lawndale were "dumped" on the plaza of the downtown Civic Center; during the first three days of July, children from the area were taken to a public park in Bridgeport—home of Chicago's Mayor Richard J. Daley—and allowed to play. There were a few fines for littering, and some Bridgeport adults threw rocks and bottles at the white students and Lawndale children. But afterwards the city began regular garbage collections and constructed one children's play lot in Lawndale. But by September, when most of the students were returning to college, the project had accomplished little else.

Father Egan introduced Mrs. Ruth Wells to Jack Macnamara. An outspoken priest rigidly dedicated to serving the Lawndale community, Father Egan had helped Mrs. Wells on past occasions. "I called him," Mrs. Wells says, "and asked if he could recommend a lawyer I could trust. I wanted to find out what steps I could take because I knew that something was wrong. I told him, 'If this man could just put \$1500 on my bill out of the sky like this, I'll *never* finish paying. It's just like blackmail, only I don't know what I've been blackmailed for. If I pay this, he could add anything else he wanted. My own lawyer

didn't even question the \$1500. He just *arranged* how I could pay it.' I told Father Egan, 'If I let him get away with this, I'll be paying for the rest of my life for *nothing*! I don't have anything, and I'm steady paying.'"

That same day Father Egan sent Macnamara and Sister Andrew, who had ten years of real estate experience before becoming a nun, to see Mrs. Wells. Already somewhat knowledgeable about the contract sales pattern in Lawndale, they advised her to invest \$45 in an FHA appraisal of the house. The estimate came back at \$14,750. Between the time the family bought the house for \$23,000 and early 1968, they had had the bathroom modernized, redone the kitchen, built new back porches for both apartments and had them enclosed, rewired the entire house, put on a new roof, and put in new front steps and a sidewalk. The students did a title search of the property and found that the seller had paid about \$14,000 for it. They encouraged Mrs. Wells to talk with the contract seller. After several attempts to telephone him at his office and home, Father Egan, Macnamara, and Sister Andrew accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Wells to the seller's office. There they stood in the background and allowed Mrs. Wells to do the talking. "I let him know how much I had found out about the property," Mrs. Wells says. "And I told him that I knew he paid less than the amount of [the official mortgage] stamps on the deed. He is a smart man. I don't mean smart because he outsmarted me, because I don't feel that I'm smart."

Mrs. Wells says the seller explained that insurance had gone up over a period of years. She asked why she had not been informed before. "He said he didn't want to *worry* me," she says. "I got more angry then than I was before I went down there. See, he's clapping me on the back with one hand and picking my pocket with the other. He had decided to add this \$1500 on when he saw that we hadn't faltered and were going to get the building on mortgage. I asked him how he slept at night. He said he slept very well except when he had worked a little too hard at the office." Mrs. Wells pauses to laugh. "I'm sure he does," she goes on. "He's getting checks in the mail every month, educating his kids, and if you're ragged and hungry that's *your* business! But I told him *why* I thought he slept pretty good. He said when he got ready for spiritual advice, he definitely would not come to me. I thanked him, and told him I wouldn't go to him either."

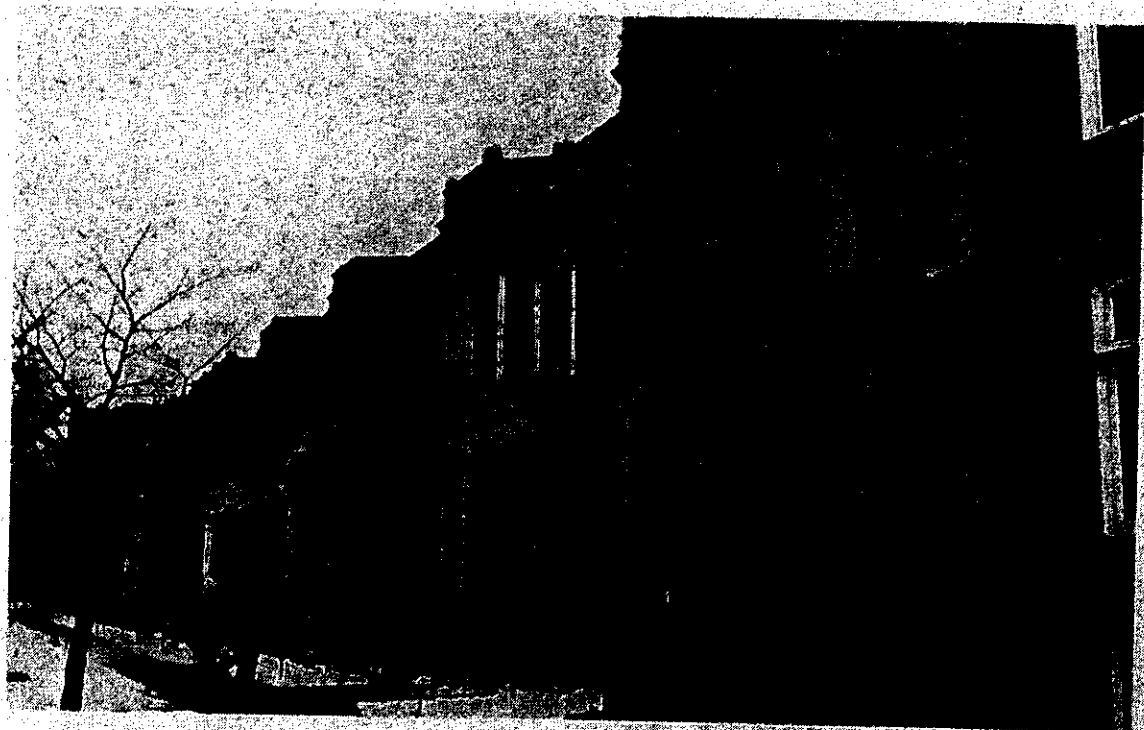
Then Mrs. Wells asked to see the policy.

Official records show that title to the Wells house was held by a local bank under a trust number. The couple paid \$3000 down and contracted to pay the

\$20,000 balance in monthly installments of \$175 for 15 years with a 7 percent interest rate on the unpaid balance, the maximum under Illinois law. The seller had purchased the property a little more than one month before by obtaining a mortgage for \$10,000 and paying the former owner \$3500 in cash. Two years later, after Mr. and Mrs. Wells had made improvements on the property, the seller refinanced and obtained a second mortgage for \$12,000. Although only about \$14,000 was originally paid for the property, and its appraised value in 1968 was only \$14,750, Mr. and Mrs. Wells will pay a total of \$36,250 for their home. Macnamara estimates that if they had been able to purchase the building on mortgage for \$14,000 and had made the same monthly payments at the same interest rates, they would have paid approximately \$21,000.

"We conducted about six weeks of research down at the Chicago Title and Trust Company," Macnamara says, "and discovered that about 50 percent of the buildings were being bought on contract by black people and that the prices of all these buildings were approximately the same, and that the sellers had picked these buildings up for \$10,000 to \$15,000 less than what they were being sold to black families for. What we did with this information was to go to people's homes to see if it was really an issue with them. We'd say, 'Did you know that the guy who sold you this house only paid \$13,000 for it?'"

But even if the buyers did not know, few of them would respond to Macnamara and the students. There is a stigma attached to contract buying, a certain implication of helplessness and ignorance. Public meetings were organized in the basement of Presentation Church, with twenty to twenty-five people in attendance. But they were silent. Few people wanted to expose their scars to a tall, blond white man with piercing blue eyes, surrounded by white helpers. "Jack would come by my house before every meeting on Wednesday nights," Mrs. Wells recalls of the early days, "but he wouldn't say anything. So I said to my husband, 'There's something he wants, but he won't say it.' My husband said, 'What do you think it is?' I said, 'He wants one of *us* to get up and talk.' He said, 'Well, what good would that do?' I said, 'The people don't trust them because they're white. But we're black and we're *in* it, and I feel sure all these other people might be in the same boat. But they won't say anything. They just sit there and *look*!' I didn't even know them then," she admits. "I didn't even know my next-door neighbor." Finally, Mrs. Wells volunteered to tell the people her story. At the next meeting she stood, held on to the back of a chair and told them about her own experience.



*Above, a West Side neighborhood of Chicago.  
Below, a buyer gets advice at the Contract  
Buyers League office.  
Right, a Wednesday night meeting of the League.  
Lower right, children on a West Side lot.*





Ruth Wells

**"I asked if any of them was in the same boat. Immediately practically every hand in the room went up with a question. And that's when the thing got started."**

ation and about her confrontation with the seller. "I said that the money for the appraisal was the best forty-five dollars I ever spent," she says, "and asked if any of them was in the same boat. Immediately practically every hand in the room went up with a question. And *that's* when the thing got started. So then I would get up every Wednesday night and I would tell it: 'Tell your family and your friends, your neighbors, the people you work with, if they bought on contract they should come out!'"

Each Wednesday night thereafter we got more and more people. On some nights we didn't even have standing room. That's when I found out that up until a few years ago most of our sisters and brothers, not only in Chicago but in many major cities in the United States, bought on contract and were being cheated. I'm not talking about people with eighth-grade educations either. I'm talking about black people with *degrees!*"

**T**he Contract Buyers League of Lawndale began in January, 1968, as part of the interaction between the meetings in the basement of Presentation Church and sessions in Macnamara's sparsely furnished apartment on South Independence Boulevard. Getting the estimated 3000 Lawndale contracts renegotiated became the issue for which the Presentation Church workers had been searching. The students set up filing systems in the apartment, and slowly gathered information. Other Jesuits and white college students passed through the apartment, and spread word of the organization. Contributions began to come in. At one Eastern girls' college the students gave up their lunch money for the League.

Young black men from the neighborhood, some of them gang members and others just curious, eased into the apartment, freeloading, disrupting, "raiding," threatening the whites. At one point gang members issued a deadline for the whites to be out of the community. The deadline came and passed, and the whites stayed on. During the riots following Martin Luther King's assassination, Macnamara's life was threatened, and one young black man did beat him severely. But when angry black people summoned the police, Macnamara refused to identify the attacker.

Thirty lawyers whose opinions were asked advised the League that nothing could be done. But the people made their own decision: they decided to picket the offices and suburban homes of the sellers and pressure them to renegotiate the contracts. The students traced the trust numbers on the deeds to the

beneficiaries. Once an identity was discovered, twelve or so people—Jesuits, nuns, students, and contract buyers—would picket the front of his office, or a few would go to his neighborhood and pass out leaflets to his neighbors explaining CBL grievances. In some instances they even met commuter trains as they rolled into suburban stations, carrying signs which told all passengers that their fellow commuter, Mr. X, was a slumlord.

Because they always informed the Chicago Police Department and the press before each picket attempt, there were no incidents of violence. The pickets were prepared to follow all orders from policemen and later submit any complaints to the Department's Human Relations Section. On a few occasions Chicago policemen accepted their leaflets. One very active white supporter likes to tell about the instance when one of the sellers threatened violence against the pickets. "The police came and the people had the experience that the law worked for them," he points out, "because the police told the realtor that they were there to protect the pickets and that he would be arrested if he continued to threaten them." The pickets also had the support of church and human relations groups, and a number of lawyers who advised them on the legal limitations of picketing. At one point, thanks to the presence of several FBI agents ordered to the scene by Thomas Foran, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, they were even able to picket outside the General Federal Savings and Loan office in Cicero, Illinois. According to an article in the *Chicago Defender* entitled "The Day Cicero Didn't Riot," some of the Cicero citizens even accepted their flyers and wished them luck.

In the spring of 1968 the major publicity began. Soon after one seller made a tentative agreement to renegotiate three hundred of his contracts, the *Chicago Sun-Times* ran a small story called "Money Miracle in a Chicago Ghetto." And although the seller later refused to renegotiate, the publicity continued. The *Daily News*, giving an example of what Father Egan had termed "a vile race tax," ran a long story on the troubles of a family of buyers named Peeler, and the \$16,000 house that will eventually cost them \$46,780 in principal and interest. In early July, Macnamara, Mr. Howell Collins, and several other contract buyers testified before the Illinois House of Representatives' Public Welfare Committee, receiving extensive publicity. There was talk of federal indictments being brought against officials of ten defunct savings and loan associations for "possible misapplication of federally insured funds"; there was talk of...

the identities of land trust beneficiaries to be made public; there were suggestions of a link between contract selling and the crime syndicate, and urgings to require the sellers and savings and loan officials to testify before the Welfare Committee. But the political publicity, some of which was prompted by the heat of that election year, died down. The buyers took a new step. They began pressuring the Chicago FHA office, denouncing its policies as the basic cause of their housing difficulties and demanding that it intervene in the conflict. The Chicago office, headed by Ernest Stevens, was apparently embarrassed by the FHA's role in encouraging segregated housing. In the mid-sixties it had discontinued the "red-lining" policies. Just at the time the conflict broke, a campaigning Richard Nixon had guardedly criticized the role played by FHA in creating black slums. "The FHA is largely limited today to safe mortgages," he said. "It should be turned in the direction of taking greater mortgage risks so that it can function effectively in slum areas where now it does little."

Pressured by the buyers, the Chicago FHA office expressed a willingness to grant mortgages to the buyers based on the current appraised value of the houses. But the CBL rejected the offer because it allowed the sellers to receive the full contract balances. According to Macnamara, the FHA offer protected the seller by "allowing him to get out of the deal and receive immediate cash after he has had the benefit of raking off the highest interest profits which come at the early stages of the installment contract." With the help of lawyers, CBL worked out its own "fair-price formula" based on the price paid by the seller for the property plus 15 percent of the cost, supposedly representing the amount of profit he should have received. But few of the sellers would agree to this method. Most were opposed to high settlements and what they termed the "shameful harassment" of them by the CBL.

**M**ost of the men who hold the Lawndale contracts are Jewish real estate salesmen or assignees who regard contract selling as a legitimate business. Like most white merchants in black communities, many of them remained behind in Lawndale after the other whites left. The sellers take pride in their ability to read the contract sales market, and many regard themselves as suppliers of homes for people who were shut out of the broader housing market. Ironically, many of them enjoyed close relationships with their buyers, and occasionally "carried" families that fell behind in payments. The emotional and psychological depths of the seller-

buyer relationship might have been touched by one of the first sellers who agreed to renegotiate. "I like the people on the West Side," he says. "I was good to them. I lent them money, did them favors, and acted as a father-confessor to them. I didn't know I was doing any harm to them. My office wasn't hit during the rioting because they knew I was all right. When this CBL thing started, they went to another seller first. I never figured they would come to me because I didn't think I had done anything wrong. But they did. I couldn't believe it when they said I had cheated people. I went home to my wife and said, 'Isn't this the American system, where we make as much profit as we can?' She said, 'Yes, you're right.' Two days later she said, 'No, *you're* wrong and *they're* right.' And pretty soon I said to myself, 'No, *you're* wrong.'"

There are three classes of businessmen involved in the Lawndale contract sales situation: those who actually negotiated contracts and receive all the profits, those whose real estate offices act as agents for investors in contract sales, and those in investment firms who bought contracts from sellers at discount. It is unknown how many contract sellers were actually engaged in blockbusting. Of the thirty or forty known sellers and trust beneficiaries, only a few have large numbers of contracts. Most have three hundred or less. And while most were able to get mortgage financing and refinancing of their initial purchases, a few paid cash out of their own pockets. Some of them attempt to justify the markup in prices before resale to black families by insisting that they spent considerable money rehabilitating the houses; and some complain that the tendency of black families to wreck the houses or abandon them after short habitation periods added a high-risk element to the business. Some are lawyers. All the sellers insist that they sold, or would have sold, homes on equal contract terms to both black and white people. And like the buyers, most of them denounce banks and the FHA as the real villains.

## II Religion and Race

**T**o understand the evolution of the Contract Buyers League, one must be aware of the religious configurations—and people—which surrounded it. The initial impression is of a coalition made up of blacks and Catholics fighting Jewish contract sellers. But there have been black and Catholic contract sellers and slumlords in Chicago, just as there have always been black, Catholic, and Jewish

**"We fought being dismissed because we wanted a Jewish commitment on the buyers' side."**

people who have opposed them. Indeed, the democratic and selfless interaction among the three groups during the life of the League was itself a dramatization of the best moments, and the best moral impulses, of the old civil rights movement.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Chicago, John Cardinal Cody, never endorsed or supported the CBL. The fact that the organization was born in a Catholic Church and drew a large measure of support from Catholic lawyers, students, suburbanites, and Jesuits probably resulted from Jack Macnamara's own Catholic background and connections. But beyond that was his personal magnetism. Tall, pensive, seemingly soft-spoken, but sharp-tempered, with frighteningly direct blue eyes, he brought to the League a special genius for organization and a gift for inspiring confidence in people.

Following high school he entered the Jesuit Seminary; after two years of study he dropped out and worked his way through Loyola College as an airport night-clerk; after one year of law school at the University of Chicago he went back to the seminary, and left again to teach high school in Cincinnati. He once said of himself: "When I was in college, I was the kind of person who would say, 'If I can make it, everybody else can too.'" But after deciding to live in Lawndale he received permission to postpone two additional years of seminary study. A quietly intense worker with his own ideas, he nevertheless encouraged the contract buyers to make their own decisions; and he advised all volunteers, lawyers included, to do the same. The black people respected him for this. When his church superiors asked him to leave Lawndale and resume his theological studies, CBL leaders responded with an appeal to the Society of Jesus in Rome, requesting that Macnamara be ordained as a Jesuit without further study so that he could remain in the community. "There was a man sent from God named John," the appeal stated, "to bear witness to the light. Jack is such a man. Some have compared him to Moses, who received his commission directly from God and who went to the Pharaoh, as Jack goes to the centers of power for us today, to say, 'Let my people go.'"

Not only are most of the contract sellers Jewish; many of the Lawndale houses eventually sold on contract were purchased from Jewish families. As it happens, a few years before Macnamara came to Lawndale the Chicago Jewish Council on Urban Affairs had become interested in the contract sales problem. In 1964 it financed a study project, an amalgam of black Baptists, Catholics, and Jews, called the Lawndale Peoples' Planning and Action Council. Under its director, Lew Kreinberg, the

council began researching the estate of a Jewish realtor who left hundreds of contracts after his death. Rabbi Robert J. Marx, former president of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, was instrumental in getting the council started; and when the contract sales problem became an issue, he attempted to rally the support of the Jewish community behind the buyers. He attended several CBL meetings, invited contract buyers to speak at his suburban synagogue, raised funds for the buyers, and attempted to pressure the sellers morally into renegotiating their contracts. As chairman of a newly formed Joint-Jewish Committee on Urban Problems, an amalgam of the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish Federation, and the American Jewish Committee, he condemned the West Side contract sales. Additional support for the buyers came from other members of the Chicago Jewish community, such as Gordon Sherman, then president of the Midas-International Corporation. (Sherman subsequently lost control of Midas to his father in a proxy fight, and now devotes most of his energies to a group called Businessmen for the Public Interest. But while head of Midas he made an initial contribution to CBL of \$5000 of his own money, and pledged the Midas-International Foundation to contribute \$25,000 for a two-year period.) A number of Jewish lawyers, accountants, and workers also volunteered their help.

But beyond the opportunity to give money, service, and moral support to the buyers, Rabbi Marx saw an opportunity to explore the causes of the frictions which, in the past decade, have developed between lower-class black people and Jewish merchants in their communities. The question he was trying to answer was the one posed by Professor Victor Rosenblum of Northwestern Law School, who examined the CBL movement in his Law and Social Change seminar. "Blacks and Jews have in the past been very close on the question of the civil rights movement," Professor Rosenblum observes. "These ties have been rich and deep and real. [But] a good deal of the business relationship, that has not been a good relationship at all, has been a Jewish relationship. . . . Are there explanations which enter the realm of sociology?"

In a speech entitled "The People In Between," prompted by his work on the contract sales issue, Rabbi Marx argues that, historically, the Jewish merchant or landlord in a diaspora community plays a middle role: neither part of the masses nor part of the power structure, in the context of the community he is nevertheless seen by the masses as a marginal and highly visible symbol of the power structure. "The slum landlord . . ."



merchant, the Jewish politician in an all-black area," he said, "may be the marginal remainders of what was once a proud Jewish community. Their presence in slum areas is a reality to which we cannot close our eyes. These are the men who play the interstitial role with the most heavy hand. They are in a position where they emerge not as marginal, but as characteristic. It is doubtful whether anyone will ever question how a telephone company exploits poor people by tempting them to spend more money than they should on fancy telephones or long-distance calls. The Jewish ghetto merchant, however, despite his own conceptualization of his role, is almost invariably placed in a position where his business ethics will be questioned because of the prices or interest he charges or because of the temptations he places before his customers."

Despite Rabbi Marx's sympathy for both sides in the conflict, both the sellers and their own supporters within the Jewish community were displeased with his support of the buyers. On occasion some sellers had attempted to raise anti-Semitism as an issue, making charges against both the contract buyers and some of their supporters. When the attitude of most Jewish community leaders remained unchanged, a group of the sellers sued all the CBL leaders, Macnamara, Father Egan, Rabbi Marx, and Gordon Sherman, charging the disruption of their business and claiming \$1 million in damages from each. Then, in a further attempt to rally Jewish solidarity behind them and give the appearance of a Jewish-black issue, the sellers dropped both Rabbi Marx and Gordon Sherman from the suit. "We fought being dismissed," Rabbi Marx explains in his Highland Park home, "because we wanted a Jewish commitment on the buyers' side."

Rabbi Marx talks candidly about his involvement: "We would bring in the contract sellers and try to talk to them about renegotiating their contracts," he recalls. "I remember one seller who came into my office. He said, 'Rabbi, I have to talk with you. I have to do something. I can't live with myself. My conscience can't take any more.' Now that man has renegotiated. The Jewish Council on Urban Affairs has not been in a position to say we've done this, because our whole emphasis has been to put resources into the communities in which we work, and they're black and white."

Rabbi Marx suspects that he has been made to pay for his involvement. In mid-1971 he resigned as president of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs and was subsequently invited to head the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in New York. According to him, the decision to move was not entirely

his own. "In many ways I'm going to New York because of this issue," he says. "When we fought them [the sellers], some of the people in high places got very angry at me. So that when New York says to me, 'We need you here—we want your talent—and besides we think that there are a couple of key enemies that you have in Chicago that would make it uncomfortable for you to stay there,' that's because of the contract sales issue. That's how involved we were, fighting within the Jewish community. Now, you don't like to be a rabbi fighting Jews. Martin Luther King taught me one thing: If you're a black man, you don't fight other black men; you fight the enemy. I don't like fighting Jews, but I want the Jewish community to see how a couple of guys have been hurting them."

**L**ike Rabbi Marx, Gordon Sherman found that support of the CBL caused many sellers to view him with suspicion. "There were always the insinuations," he recalls, "that mine was a double defection: that as a capitalist I was on the wrong side, and that as a Jew, how could I make anything conspicuous that might be held up in a negative light by non-Jews? The sellers must have seen me as an enemy, but they also saw me as some kind of nut. They'd say, 'He's one of us, and he should be on our side!' People in this society," he says, "are used to being on the *right* side, not because of what we believe but because of where life has put us. When they saw me spoiling for trouble on the *other* side and using my *means*—because the whole game is based on denying some people the means to fight back and so if someone *lends* them the means, it's like shipping arms to Russia—they didn't like it. I didn't have much contact, but the feedback I got implied that I was doing something very wrong and, secretly, that I was some kind of well-meaning nut."

Despite the efforts of some sellers to distort the issues, there was never any visible bias against them as Jews. Jack Macnamara is convinced that the mode of operation of the CBL prevented the emergence of any such conflict. "The black people never made an issue of it," he notes. "But the Real Estate Investors' Association tried to call it an anti-Semitic movement. However, the involvement of Gordon Sherman and Rabbi Marx and the support of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs and Jewish people in the suburbs showed that the charge was superficial."

Among the black contract buyers one can hear very few references to the ethnic identities of the sellers. Indeed, some buyers praise, in retrospect, the "smart Jew lawyer" who advised them against con-

**"We still marching round in the slave circle  
because we don't want to be hurt by society's  
slave chain.... Move out a little bit further!  
Nip the grass out there because it's pretty!"**

tract buying years before. Very few of the Lawndale people make distinctions between Jewish and other white Americans. This point was made, with some sly humor, by Clyde Ross, the CBL co-chairman, when his deposition was being taken by a lawyer for the sellers. According to Ross, he was asked whether he had ever spoken about the CBL at a synagogue. "I said, 'Hell no!'" Ross relates. "He said, 'Well, I happen to know that you made a speech in Highland Park at a Jewish synagogue.' I said, 'You see, all of y'all look alike to me.' I said, 'I don't know a Jew from a Polish or a Italian or a Irish. I don't know *who* I was speaking to down there. Only thing I know is that all y'all was *white*.' I said, 'You can call it what you want.' He got very angry, because he thought I should know what a Jew was. I don't know nothin' about no Jew. I thought it was a religion. And he's white. So he's a *white* man as far as I'm concerned." Ross pauses a bit before adding: "He got very angry because I put him down with the Polish."

"I think that when you get off on race you lose your point and your goal," Mrs. Ruth Wells says.

But there is an additional religious dimension involved, which may explain why a group of Northern, inner-city black people were able to maintain an organization as complex as the CBL for over four years. The Lawndale people are primarily Baptist. Most are middle-aged, and most are migrants from Alabama, Arkansas, and Mississippi. The structure of their Wednesday night meetings resembles that of a Baptist church service. In a sense, the CBL people have abstracted the form of Sunday morning storefront church meetings and reassembled it around an economic issue, in much the same way that Martin Luther King managed to reassemble the religious convictions of Southern black church people around political and economic issues during the early sixties.

**E**very Wednesday night during the first three years of the CBL, Mrs. Luceal Johnson and other Lawndale women would cook a communion dinner in Jack Macnamara's apartment. The atmosphere would be relaxed and gossipy, with contract buyers and white lawyers sitting down to plates of fried chicken. Then they would walk the few blocks to Martin Luther King Hall, in the basement of Presentation Church, for the meeting.

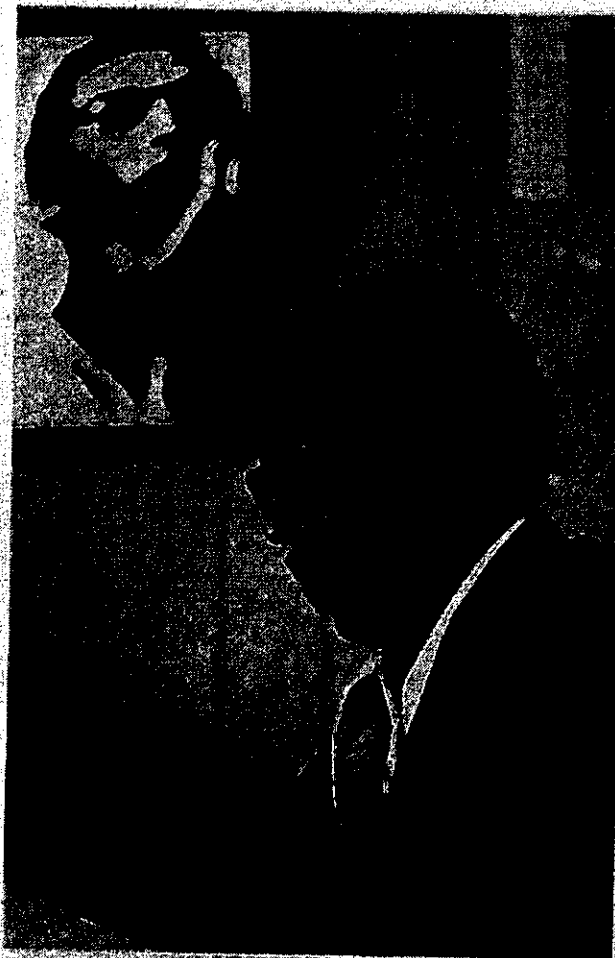
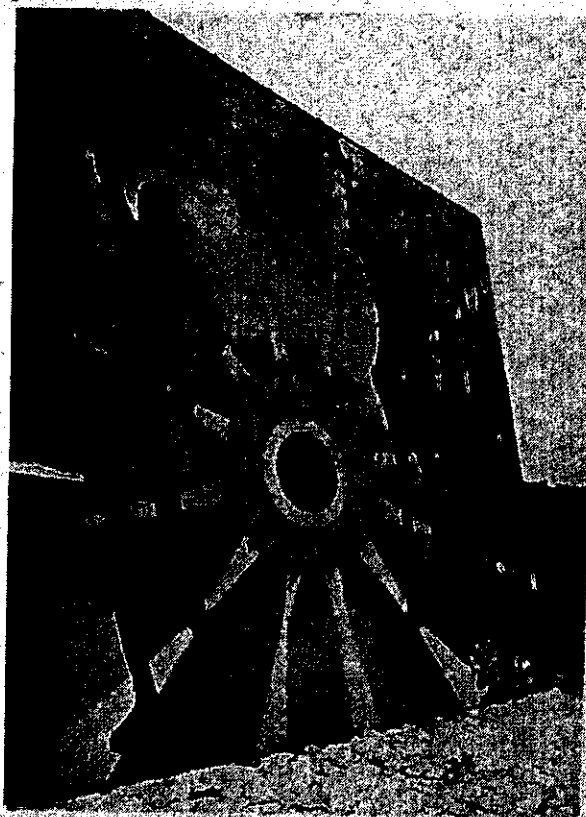
A long prayer, in the rhythmic, singsong idiom of a fundamentalist black minister, usually precedes each meeting. All prayers are spontaneous, asking God for guidance, offering thanks for the progress of the League, and usually including references to the

ers, judges, and recent incidents involving the League. The people sit silently with heads bowed during the prayers, but afterwards a hymn or spiritual might be sung by the entire audience. Then a progress report is given by either Charles Baker, the CBL chairman, or Clyde Ross, the co-chairman. Ross's deliveries, more free-wheeling than Baker's, usually weave in reports of CBL progress and failures with inspirational asides and references to the Old Testament. Besides a mastery of the evangelical idiom, Ross is able to evoke the mood of a black church sermon: the call and response, the repetition of certain patterns of words known by each member of the audience since childhood church services, the question-and-answer dialogue between minister and audience, the building of his speeches to an emotional epiphany which provides a cathartic sense of union between speaker and audience. He has talked of Moses delivering the people across the Red Sea, of Ezekiel looking down into the Valley of Dry Bones (both references are to Macnamara), and of Pharaoh's Army (the sheriff's deputies and security guards who eventually evicted a number of people from their homes). Easygoing, introspective, and more than a little concerned over his lack of formal education, Ross nonetheless undergoes an almost complete change of personality when addressing the CBL members.

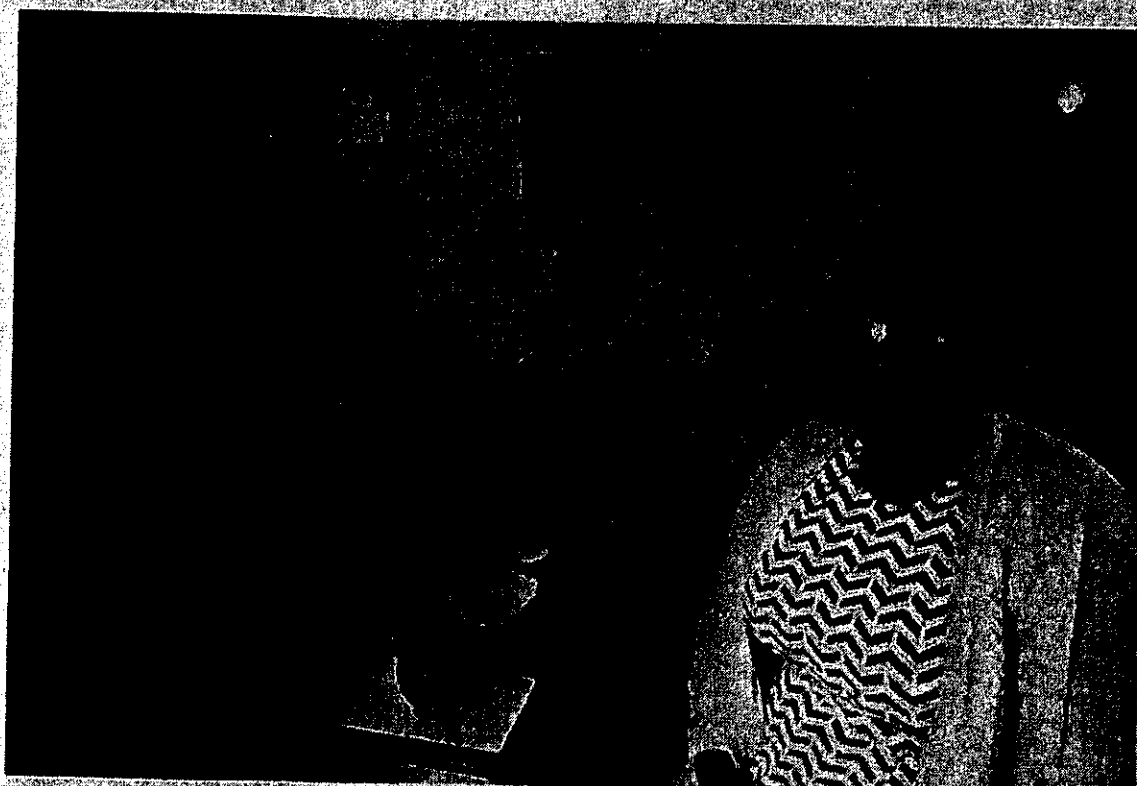
At one point, Ross offered the following speech at a Wednesday night meeting:

Let me tell you a story that I experienced when I was quite young. One of my chores around the family home in the South was to graze the cow. We had no pasture, so we had to graze the cow wherever we could find grassy areas. So we would put a chain around the cow's foot, and we would lock it down real tight, and then we would drive an iron peg down and fasten the other end of the chain onto this peg. The cow would go around in this circle and nibble all the grass she could nibble in this circle until there was no more. But one day I came back to water her and the chain was *off*, and she could have got away. But she was still going round in this circle because she was afraid of the pinch of the chain. That's the way some of us are right today. We can get *out*! We can get *out* now! But we *still* marching round in the *slave circle* because we don't want to be hurt by society's slave chain. We still feel it. We still feel it on our legs. We're loose! We are loose! Move out! Move out a little bit further! Nip the grass out there because it's pretty! Just move! The chain is gone. It's only *you* that think it's there. Move out! And stop these men from robbing you! And stop these men from persecuting you! Move out! And get some of this land that was





*Above, a West Side mural.  
Right, CBL co-chairman Clyde Ross.  
Below, buyer Mrs. Luceal Johnson.*



After a short speech by Baker, Macnamara, Mrs. Wells, or one of the lawyers, the people are expected to stand up and talk about their own experiences with contract buying, the situation of their own cases in the courts, or any contact with "their" seller. Even the white lawyers and workers are expected to do this. The testimonies are much like "witnessing," a process through which individuals share with other congregants the story of their journey from "sin" to salvation. But in the case of the CBL people, contract buying has been identified with sin, renegotiation with salvation, and the League itself as God's instrument of salvation. The shameless identification of oneself as a victim or "sucker," which was virtually impossible before the CBL started, is now a common occurrence. For example, one nervous, middle-aged black woman who was not even a League member, was moved to make the following statement after sitting through one of the meetings:

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. The best thing you can do is git you a lawyer who'll mean you some good and not the other man some good. We bought some property. The lot was \$650. The seller put us up a house and on the bill of sale it said "a complete house." We carried it to our lawyer and he said, "Well, he says a complete house." He didn't give us no gutters, no yard, or nothing. We went back over there and I said, "There ain't no gutters, the water's just running on down into our house." He comes back out, puts the gutters in and levels the yard and charges us \$6000 for that. I went back to the lawyer and he say, "He can charge you what he want for his work. He *did* give you a complete house." That's why I say git you a lawyer that's go'n do *you* some good and not the other fellow. So he can read all that fine writing that you not educated to read. And then you can git somewhere. Don't, they gonna beat you regardless of what you go by. Then he come tellin' me to sign a *quick deed* [quitclaim deed] after all that money we done paid.

On the other hand, some of the people whose contracts were favorably renegotiated after the lawsuits were filed returned to the meetings to state their respect for the instrument of their salvation.

Some part of this pattern reoccurs in all the meetings: a fragment of a larger ritual as old as the Black American Church. Participation in it involves a special kind of discipline, requiring a willed perspective on good and bad, maintained not because of an unawareness of political realities or even because of fear of retaliation, but because of a fierce determination to preserve one's own humanity and one's own belief in the ultimate perfectibility of man through the sometimes mysterious ways of God. The buyers, in their unitv. do not see the sellers in racial terms

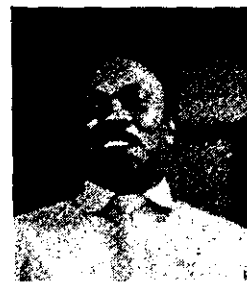
What they do see is that the sellers, as an outside force, have inadvertently provided them with an opportunity to assert their sense of community and of morality. In such a context, the positive force of black unity is more important than racial or religious bitterness.

**B**ut far beyond the specific economic and social issues, the CBL raises the question of the relationship between the rituals of the Black Church and black grass-roots political activity. How can one account for the appeal, among millions of black Americans, of the evangelical idiom used by Martin Luther King, or the modified and modernized use of that same idiom currently being used by Jesse Jackson? Or the apocalyptic impulses behind so much of militant black protest during the sixties? While some critics say that King paid too little attention to the possibilities of moral outcry as a means of achieving political goals far removed from Christian idealism, others note that many of those committed to achieving strictly political goals, unlike King, pay too little attention to moral outcry as an effective technique for reaching grass-roots black people. The difficulty arises from a failure to recognize one of the most powerful legacies of black slaves to their generations.

On one level this legacy is essentially moral. It involves a system of beliefs concerning the conception of God and His power as demonstrated in the myths of the Old Testament. Black slaves incorporated these Jewish folk dramas into their definitions of themselves centuries ago. As part of the group psyche they were passed along, mainly within the churches, from one generation to the next. Some historians and social critics have dismissed this intense identification with Old Testament personalities and myths as no more than an escape mechanism with which slaves protected themselves from having to face the brutal realities of their lives. But it was more than this. Slaves took on a sense of morality which allowed, or almost required, them to make judgments about the people and institutions which held them captive. A sense of optimism came with the religion which helped them to survive and which still functions, in a secular context, in spirituals and jazz and blues. The identification provided an almost omnipotent perspective, which made biblical codes the ultimate moral standards, and a sense of history and reality that was sometimes sharper than that of whites.

This is part of what was passed along within the churches. And the minister's responsibility

**"Most of our people are church people and nonviolent. But I'll tell you something: there's nobody in the world more violent than these people if you make them mad. And I'll tell you something else: there's nobody in the world who wants peace more than these people."**



Charles Baker

especially in the more fundamentalist churches, was not so much to be a moral example for his people as it was to reinforce this perspective every Sunday morning by spinning out, and relating to their present situation, one of the moral dramas from the pages of the Old Testament: good versus evil, right versus wrong, God's will versus man's. The result of this has been the creation of a broad level of black society that retains abstract moral codes which are sometimes in conflict with certain capitalistic freedoms and political restrictions allowed by American society. Traditional American standards of morality have never been adequate to define the values of black people who are on this level. But they are the ones who followed King the Christian, who called him Moses, and who now keep pictures of him on their mantels. They will walk out of their churches for any politician or leader—Nat Turner, Adam Clayton Powell, Martin Luther King, Jesse Jackson—who knows their style and who can converse with them in their idiom. Under the care of the right leader the appeal becomes political.

Charles Baker, the CBL chairman, takes all this for granted without really understanding the causes. "Most of our people are church people and nonviolent," he says. "They studied to be religious. You have to push them into a fight. Ninety-eight percent of them were born in the South. But I'll tell you something: there's nobody in the world more violent than these people if you make them mad. And I'll tell you something else: there's nobody in the world who wants peace more than these people, and they'd bend over backwards to get it. This kind of fellow's been taught all his life, 'Thou shalt not kill.' And he'd just hate to do something like that. But it hurts him when somebody misuses him."

**A** person who symbolizes both the grievances and the convictions of most West Side CBL members is Mrs. Luceal Johnson. A stout, handsome woman in her late fifties, she migrated to Chicago from Natchez, Mississippi, in 1940. When she and her husband bought their home on contract, they were led to believe that they would be allowed a mortgage after 50 percent of the principal had been paid. In point of fact, they did receive a mortgage; the seller simply allowed them to assume his own mortgage obligation and reduced their monthly contract payments. But when they attempted to borrow money on it to get their back porch repaired, the same lawyer who had advised them that they were getting a "good deal" on the contract sale informed them that the mortgage was worthless. He did, how-

ever, arrange another "deal" for them. Under its terms, they received a loan of \$1300 to pay off certain bills, and the lawyer "arranged" for a contractor to repair and enclose the porch. In return, the Johnsons will have to pay \$6000 for the loan and repairs. Mrs. Johnson has been a domestic for over thirty years.

"I makes my living scrubbing floors," she declares. "And I ain't ashamed to tell it because I makes it *honestly*. I makes an honest dollar. I'm still doing it, and it feel *good*! That's all I ever know to do. My parents weren't able to give me an education, but they did teach me to work. And they taught me all about being honest. And I work for real rich peoples that have been more than nice to me. They know all about the unjust things that go on in America, and they're in the fight too. Because they see America falling, and they're going to suffer too."

To Mrs. Johnson, the racial and economic implications of her involvement have been negated by larger religious and spiritual considerations. "I wasn't such a fool," she says, "that when I bought the house I didn't have a mouthpiece with me. But the bad part of the thing is that we just don't have what we need in our lives to go out and do something, white or black: we just don't have *love*. And this is the key point to everything. CBL just made a *step* in correcting it. We stepped out on God's word. We couldn't have man to depend on because man had let us down. We stepped out on *faith* that we *could* do something about this thing when God heard our cry. Because every time we get ready to spend a dollar we got to go by a man with no justice in his heart. We wouldn't have these problems if we recognized just a little of God's word. But now, we just like the Children of Israel: both sides, black and white. We're just the spit [spitting image] of them. And God will punish you when you walk away from Him too far. And we can't make the journey without Him. I don't care *who* says we can. And I don't care who you are or where you come from; you just as well stay in your pants, because God ain't go'n let you go too far. And this is the onliest thing I got to rely on; I don't put my trust in *no man no more*! Education is fine: all of these peoples that we're buying our houses from, they're overequipped with education. But there ain't no God-life in them, because if they *had* it they wouldn't be doing the things that they are doing. We're just lacking love in our hearts for one another. And the onliest way we'll win is we've got to have faith that we're fighting for the right thing. And then we can't pack no hate along with us in this fight. Can't get *mad* with the man. Just feel *sorry* for him!"

How did the CBL get started?

"God kept sending peoples to warn, just like He's doing today. He sent Amos, Hosea, He sent other men to warn the Children of Israel of their wrongdoings. Just like today every once in a while somebody springs up from somewhere. I had never heard of a Martin Luther King, but all of a sudden he jumped up out of the middle of nowhere and started telling America about the wrongdoing. And what did they do? They killed him because they didn't want to hear the truth. But you can't kill the truth. *You cannot kill the word of God!* So I think that prayer accounted for the organization of the League. Going on my job each day, I pray, 'Lord, keep me and help me to come up from under these burdens.'"

How do you know God caused the CBL to get started?

"You ask me if I believe God had something to do with CBL getting started? *Who else* had anything to do with it?! You can *rest assured* that *man* didn't! What happened in CBL happened *through* man! So I feel, and I'm sure that I'm right, that God heard our cry. You've got to give God the credit for these peoples who've come in here and put their lives on the line to work in this. This ain't no two- or three-dollar deal we messing with here. This is *millions* of dollars! And peoples will kill you about money; that's *all* they'll kill you about, *money!* So God heard our cry in Lawndale. Jack Macnamara come in and laid his life on the line, warned the peoples and told the peoples in figures and facts that they're being cheated. Then God blessed him with a whole lot of more peoples to come in and surround him to help in the fight. See, God will bail you out. He's bailing *us* out. But this ain't no situation to get hung up on color; getting hung up on some of *God's love* will bail *us* out."

What part of the Bible would you say is closest to what has happened in the CBL?

"I think of 'Love one another,' and the Commandments. If we love the Lord our God with all our hearts and all our souls and minds, and love our neighbors as ourselves, we done covered them Commandments. And 'Let not your heart be troubled; he that believes in God believes also in me.' And I think of 'In my Father's House there are many mansions,' *and I'm going to get me some of them too!* If I didn't believe these passages of the Scriptures, I would get right out there and raise hell with the rest of the peoples. But I'm not mad and angry. God blessed me with health to keep on working. . . . And if the laws and the judges and the peoples in the high places can't find no justice for me, I'm getting mine through Christ Jesus. I don't worry about it anymore. If I don't get *nothing* back, if I can just pay for the house

and get a clear title, I'll be just as happy as if they come and give me a lot of money. 'Cause I'm gonna spend it anyway."

**S**ome CBL people mythmake as they go along: thus, Jack Macnamara as Moses, or Ezekiel. He smiles with what may be embarrassment when questioned about his reactions to these biblical references. Some suspect that he subtly encouraged the people to view the conflict in a moral perspective. Macnamara denies this. "My own thinking," he says, "is that a truly religious act is usually also a political act, and a social act, and maybe even a legal act. I've always felt that there is a religious element in what's going on here which was really taught to me by the people themselves, while at the same time there are some things from my religious background which I have imparted to them. . . ."

"The other side of it," he continues, "is that the churches have really duped black people through the years. They teach a religious faith that Jesus will fix things if you wait long enough. I remember going to a black church a while back, and the thing that stands out most in my mind is the hymn they sang in the middle of the service: 'Jesus Will Fix It, After A While.' This really did violence to me personally because it seems to me the truly believing person believes that God will work but also that we have to do our part in it. Faith is really faith in ourselves and God being able to accomplish something together rather than simply faith that God will take care of everything if you wait long enough. But two things have impressed me. One is the attitude of the people toward the sellers. It's not one of bitterness and hatred. The other is—particularly at the beginning; it's not as strong now—there were people who turned down fantastic settlements, \$10,000 and \$12,000 settlements, until the seller would agree to renegotiate everybody's contract on the same basis. When I see that happening, then I see God, really alive, and can believe."

### III The Law

**O**nce CBL members began demanding renegotiation of contracts, most of the sellers joined together and organized the Real Estate Investors' Association. They hired lawyers, and each seller put approximately \$5000 into a fund in preparation for possible legal action.

But the CBL was also reorganizing

**"The other side of it is that the churches have really duped black people. They teach a religious faith that Jesus will fix things if you wait long enough. A hymn they sing is 'Jesus Will Fix It, After a While.'"**



*Jack Macnamara*

From the South Side of Chicago, in late 1968, came hundreds of young middle-class black people who had purchased newly constructed single-family homes from ten small companies doing joint-venture business under the collective name Universal Builders. Between 1960 and 1968, Universal had built and the ten companies had sold more than 1000 homes to black families, mostly on contract, and salesmen for the ten companies are said to have insisted, even to a family with a \$10,000 down payment, that contract terms were better than those allowed by a conventional mortgage. The South Side buyers had heard about the West Side CBL through the news media and through the oral communications network which links all black communities. The South Siders saw themselves at a similar economic disadvantage, despite their relatively higher incomes, better educations, and newer homes. And indeed, the financial practices of the companies were similar to those on the West Side.

The CBL expanded to accommodate the newcomers from the South Side. The word "Lawndale," which had been in its original title, was dropped, and it became simply the Contract Buyers League. Toward the end of 1968 it moved from Macnamara's apartment into an office on South Pulaski Road, the West Side's main avenue. The white workers and supporters formed the Gamaliel Foundation, a nonprofit "advisory" offspring of the Presentation Church Project, which solicited and contributed money for the support of the CBL. To ensure that the black contract buyers would maintain full control of the organization, four of them were hired to run the new office: Mrs. Ruth Wells, who had been actively involved all along; Mrs. Henrietta Banks, a sharp, gregarious middle-aged contract buyer; Charles Baker, an even-tempered buyer who was granted leave from the Campbell Soup Company's Chicago factory so that he could become a full-time worker as CBL chairman; and co-chairman Clyde Ross, a brooding man who was also granted leave by the Campbell Soup Company. But both organizations, the black buyers and their white allies, used the same office.

Money came from many sources. Besides the contributions from Gordon Sherman, Jesuits across the country, Catholic students, private citizens, and small foundations gave financial support.

But the most important contribution to the CBL resulted from the interest of Harold W. Sullivan, presiding judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County. Irish Catholic like Macnamara, and also a native of Skokie, Judge Sullivan responded immediately to Macnamara's request for lawyers. He organized a Lawyers Committee, and persuaded forty to fifty

Chicago lawyers to attend a dinner meeting at which Macnamara and several contract buyers explained the situation. As honorary chairman, Judge Sullivan advised the lawyers that "the legal profession has an outstanding opportunity to demonstrate its social conscience simply by aiding in the renegotiation of these contracts."

The most extensive commitment of free lawyer services came from Albert E. Jenner, senior partner of Jenner & Block, a leading law firm in Chicago. Although called politically conservative, Jenner & Block had a few years before permitted some of its younger lawyers to take on gratis criminal defense work, and had been considering the possibility of opening a free legal services office in a black area of the city. Albert Jenner has served as Chief Counsel for the Warren Commission and as a member of the President's Commission on Civil Disorders. Among the lawyers from Jenner & Block who volunteered were Thomas P. Sullivan, a hard-driving middle-aged trial lawyer with an excellent reputation, John G. Stifler, John C. Tucker, Richard T. Franch, and David Roston, all young and aggressive junior members of the firm.

**A**nother volunteer was Thomas Boodell, Jr., a young, soft-spoken Harvard Law School graduate. After four years of work in his father's small but prestigious firm, Boodell, Sears, Sugrue & Crowley, Tom Boodell decided to go on his own for a while. He tried his hand at magazine editing, spent some time camping out and thinking, and then heard about the contract sales effort. As a child in the suburbs, he had heard his father condemning contract selling at the dinner table. During the summer of 1968 he walked into Lawndale, attended the Wednesday night dinners and meetings, and got acquainted with the people. In the fall, he wrote a proposal to the Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs at the University of Chicago, asking that he be accepted as a Stevenson Fellow and allowed to begin research on contract selling. Boodell was accepted that same fall and received fellowships from both the Institute and the American Bar Foundation. "I had no idea of where it was heading at that time," Tom Boodell admits three years later. "One thing I observed when I first went out to Lawndale was that they didn't trust lawyers. But from the facts they showed me I felt there had to be some aspect of the problem that could be framed legally and taken into a courtroom setting, if they wanted that. So I just started thinking about it. I went to some of the meetings and sort of plodded along."

**The Supreme Court said in 1968 that abolition of "badges of slavery" required that a dollar in the hands of a black man must have the same economic power as a dollar in the hands of a white man.**

The CBL people, however, did not intend to plod along. In late November of 1968, after ten months of picketing, the sellers had not agreed to more than seven renegotiations. Charles Baker announced a payment-withholding strike. Since most of the sellers had to meet their own monthly mortgage, tax, and insurance payments on the buildings with part of the contract money they collected, the CBL's payment strike was calculated to apply economic pressures. Each month the League would collect money orders for the monthly payments, which each buyer would make out to himself, and put them in escrow. Those West Side buyers who had rented out flats in their buildings promised their tenants a 25 percent reduction in rents after renegotiation if they agreed not to pay them to the sellers. Charles Baker, speaking for most members of the strike, vowed that if the sellers repossessed the buildings, the CBL would discourage other black families from buying them. "The speculators need not fear that the buildings will burn down," he said. "We don't want them to collect money on the insurance we have paid over the years."

The strike lasted five months, despite threats of mass evictions. By the middle of January, 1969, 60 families had been sued for possession under the sellers' old protection, the eviction law. But more and more people joined the strike. By late March, 595 families had joined, withholding over \$250,000. At each Wednesday night meeting Charles Baker would announce the total amount withheld, and the people would cheer. "If you see a lot of these sellers leaving town," Baker said at one point while reading off the total, "this is why!"

Like the creation of the CBL, *Clark v. Universal Builders* and *Baker v. F & F Investment* result from the collision of two previously unconnected events: the payment-withholding strike by black contract buyers in December, 1968, and the U.S. Supreme Court's *Jones v. Mayer* ruling in June, 1968, which resurrected a section of the 1866 Civil Rights Act (p. 69), and said abolition of "badges of slavery" required that a dollar in the hands of a black man must have the same economic power as a dollar in the hands of a white man. Tom Sullivan, the Jenner & Block trial lawyer, and Robert Ming, a black lawyer who is a veteran of civil rights litigation, were the men who tied the Supreme Court's *Jones v. Mayer* ruling to the CBL's lawsuits. A slim, reserved Irish Catholic, Sullivan takes care to explain exactly how he came to file the suits. "Judge Harold Sullivan called and said there was a big emergency with possible evictions coming up," Sullivan (no relation to the judge) recalls. "I told him to have the CBL people come into

my office. In late November they came in. I met Jack Macnamara and some of the others for the first time. They explained the problem, and said the lawyers had told them there was nothing that could be done. I said, 'Well, I don't agree with that. I would be surprised if there were nothing that could be done.' At that time the *Jones v. Mayer* case had just come down and everyone was very much aware of the old 1866 Civil Rights Act. So I said I would look into it, with the idea of eventually filing some lawsuits. Shortly after that I got in touch with Bob Ming and asked if he would join me in the case. He said he would. So during December, Bob Ming, John Stifler, Tom Boodell, and I evolved what is now the basic lawsuit. And on January 6, 1969, we filed the West Side suit [*Baker*]; and a couple of weeks after, we filed the South Side suit [*Clark*]."

Both suits were filed in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. The West Side suit joined three classes of defendants: contract sellers, lending institutions which granted them mortgages, and the assignees of both the sellers and the lenders. Besides conspiracy and the alleged violations of civil rights, the defendants were charged with blockbusting, violations of federal antitrust and securities laws, unconscionability, usury, and fraud.

In the South Side suit, the ten companies and Universal Builders were charged with conspiracy, civil rights and federal securities violations, unconscionability, usury, and fraud. In both cases the statement of facts was essentially the same, as was the charge that both classes of sellers had exploited customs and usage of residential segregation and the artificial scarcity of housing for their own financial benefit.

Lawyers for both sets of sellers immediately filed motions that the cases be dismissed, charging that no claim upon which relief could be granted had been stated by the complaints. CBL lawyers filed memoranda in opposition to the motions. And in late March the Justice Department intervened, filing a small "friend-of-the-court" brief in support of the civil rights count of the West Side complaint.

For some time before its intervention in March, the Justice Department had been petitioned to enter the case. According to Jack Macnamara, Chicago supporters of the CBL had made several attempts to convince outgoing Attorney General Ramsey Clark to bring the weight of the Justice Department behind the buyers. Thomas Foran, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, for example, had supported the CBL from its beginning. Foran encouraged Thomas Todd, a young black Assistant U.S. Attorney, to get involved on the side of the buy-



ers. Another government supporter was John McKnight, former director of the Midwestern Office of the Civil Rights Commission.

Foran and Todd had sent a copy of the two com-

plaints to Ramsey Clark during the last days of the Johnson Administration, trying to get a commitment. But even telegrams and petitions from sympathetic congressmen were ineffective. Finally, in January,

### THE LAW AND THE COURTS—A Chronology

- **1827**—The Illinois Forcible Entry and Detainer Act—the state's eviction law—was passed as a speedy remedy for landlords against trespassing tenants, but amended in 1861 to include contract buying. Delinquent buyers could be sued for possession after being served with a thirty-day warning notice of demand for payment and intent to start forcible proceedings, with the further warning that the contract would be terminated and tax payments forfeited. Procedures in circuit court have been concerned with "issue of possession"; defendants' response has been limited to whether notice was received and whether money was owed. To appeal an eviction judgment and raise defenses, defendant must post, within five days of judgment, a full amount appeal bond covering all delinquencies and all payments to become due during time of the appeal (usually one to one and a half years). Most contracts required buyers to pay sellers' fees and costs in the event of these proceedings.

- **1866**—United States Congress passes the nation's first Civil Rights Act under authority of section II of the Thirteenth Amendment. Section I of the 1866 Act, now codified as 42 United States Code, section 1982, states that:

All citizens of the United States shall have the same right, in every State and Territory, as is enjoyed by white citizens thereof to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property.

In arguing that Congress had power under the Thirteenth Amendment to pass such a law, Illinois Senator Lyman Trumbull, sponsor of the Civil Rights Act, noted: "I have no doubt that under this provision . . . we may destroy all these discriminations in civil rights against the black man;

and if we cannot, our constitutional amendment amounts to nothing."

From 1866 until 1968, section 1982 was interpreted to prevent states, and not the private actions of individuals, from violating the civil rights of blacks.

- **1948**—United States Supreme Court, in *Shelley v. Kraemer* and companion cases, held that judicial enforcement of racially restrictive covenants violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Section 1982, considered in a companion case, was still noted to be applicable only against state action.

- **1968**—United States Supreme Court, in *Jones v. Alfred H. Mayer Co.*, dropped the legal and technical requirements and simply applied the constitutionality of section 1982 to bar *all* racial discrimination, private as well as public, in the sale or rental of property. The statute was construed as a valid exercise of the power of Congress to enforce the Thirteenth Amendment. Justice Potter Stewart: "At the very least, the freedom that Congress is empowered to secure under the Thirteenth Amendment includes the freedom to buy whatever a white man can buy, the right to live wherever a white man can live. If Congress cannot say that being a free man means at least this much, then the Thirteenth Amendment made a promise the nation cannot keep."

- **1969**—Hubert L. Will, Federal District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, denying a motion to dismiss two class actions brought by the Contract Buyers League against private parties, held that a cause of action had been stated under section 1982, as the 1866 Civil Rights Act was interpreted in *Jones v. Mayer*.

**"Now, the Justice Department is very quiet; everybody there is either sleeping or dead."**

1969, during the very first days of the Nixon Administration, Jerris Leonard, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, agreed to see Macnamara, Todd, and McKnight. They immediately flew to Washington. "One of the points I kept stressing to Leonard," Macnamara recalls, "was that kids in the neighborhood believed that going through the law wouldn't work, and the only thing that would work would be bombing the real estate people; and that it seemed important for an Administration concerned about violence to do its part in helping to prove to the people that justice can be obtained by going through the courts. At the end of the conference Mr. Leonard said to me, 'If we do come into this case you have a grave obligation to let the people know that we did come in.' I said, 'I have a grave obligation to let the people know if you do decide to come in or if you decide not to come in.' Mr. Leonard threw up his hands and said, 'All right. You've got me!'"

**T**he Justice Department, as a federal agency, was caught between the pressures on it to intervene and the probability that CBL lawyers would eventually join, as co-defendants in the lawsuits, the Federal Housing Administration, the Veterans Administration, and the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation. To prevent immediate embarrassment, a deal was made between the Department and CBL lawyers: if CBL would refrain for the time being from making the three federal agencies co-defendants, the government would intervene on behalf of the buyers. Thomas Todd wrote an initial forty-three-page draft of a government brief, of which ten pages were "really scathing about the FHA." But just before arguments on the motion to dismiss were to be heard and Todd was preparing to fly to Washington to get Justice Department approval of the brief, he received a call from Jerris Leonard. According to Todd, Leonard indicated that while the Justice Department was not opposed to the CBL issues, there was no money for the trip. "I asked whether he would see me if I came," Todd recalls. "And he said yes."

Thomas Foran contributed \$50, Todd paid \$50, and \$50 more came from other sources. Thomas Todd flew to Washington. "Were they surprised to see me?" Thomas Todd says. "I stormed around and demanded that they see me. At last one of Leonard's assistants came out and said that he would look at the brief. I have no doubt that he was a brilliant young law graduate, but in two hours he had cut my forty-three-page brief down to seven and there was

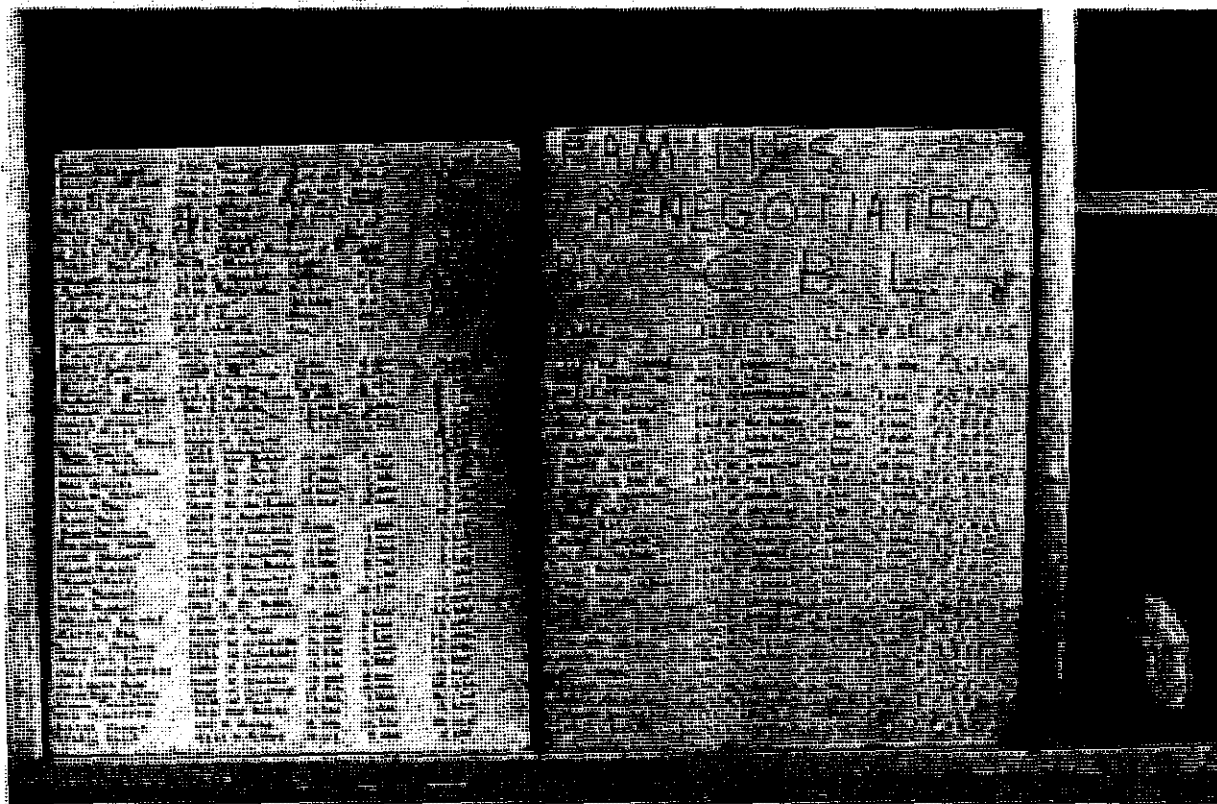
nothing left of it. The ten pages I had on the FHA had been dismissed in a sentence. I am a gentle person, normally, but I called him everything I could think of and accused him of having a robot mind and a computerized attitude. Now, the Justice Department in Washington is very quiet; everybody there is either sleeping or dead. But in the middle of it all I cursed him in the best street language. He said that we would rework it then. And we did. All night. The result was an eleven-page brief which said almost nothing. This was Leonard's doing. I flew back to Chicago on Thursday night. We had already sent out notices that we would be looking to intervene on Friday morning. Well, despite the reluctance of the Justice Department to get in, they had the press releases ready in Washington. And although we were not before the judge until 10:30 A.M., they had releases out saying we had been in at 9:30 A.M. They said this was an indication of what the Administration was going to do to help black people. But the brief said absolutely nothing. It got them a million dollars' worth of publicity."

The Justice Department's press release contained Attorney General John Mitchell's statement that the brief was "the federal government's first effort to break massive Northern housing segregation under the Supreme Court's ruling in *Jones v. Mayer*." Jerris Leonard noted at a Washington press conference that this was the first time the federal government had entered a housing suit, brought by private parties, at the district court level; and that it was also the first attack by the Justice Department on sales terms which are more onerous to blacks than to whites. He called the overcharges a "race tax," and indicated that the federal government was considering attacks on similar speculation in other cities, Detroit among them. "Anyone who rakes off a profit based on racial discrimination should have to pay it back with interest," he told the press.

**I**n late May, after an initial ruling that the cases could be filed as class actions,\* Judge Hubert L. Will of the federal district court delivered his opinion on the sellers' motion to dismiss. A brilliant, forceful judge, he had been under tremendous pressures from both sides since being assigned to the cases. Besides the publicity, the strike, the inter-

\*A class action is a suit in which representatives of a specific group of people file a lawsuit, on behalf of all those similarly situated, but too numerous to bring before a court, in which common questions of law and fact predominate over individual questions. The resolution of the lawsuit settles the interest of all parties similarly situated.





*Above, sign in CBL's Pulaski Road office window.  
Left, CBL worker Mrs. Henrietta Banks.  
Below, a South Side neighborhood.*



**"...there cannot in this country be markets or profits based on the color of a man's skin."**

vention of the Justice Department, heated outbursts in his court, and charges by West Side sellers that he was anti-Semitic, he was also to be criticized by local groups, including the Urban League, for proceeding with the cases too slowly. On the most crucial issue, the applicability of the 1866 Civil Rights Act as interpreted in *Jones v. Mayer*, he ruled that the buyers had stated a case:

What was true in *Jones* is true here also—the defendants call "revolutionary" what is simply a denial of their assumption that there is a necessary sanctity in the *status quo*. Defendants present the discredited claim that it is necessarily right for businessmen to secure profits wherever profit is available, arguing specifically with respect to this case that they did not create the system of *de facto* segregation which was the condition for the alleged discriminatory profit. But the law in the United States has grown to define certain economic bonds and ethical limits of business enterprise. . . . So we are hearing an old and obsolete lament. For it is now understood that under section 1982 [of the 1866 Civil Rights Act] as interpreted in *Jones v. Alfred H. Mayer Co.*, there cannot in this country be markets or profits based on the color of a man's skin.

In ruling that a civil rights claim had been stated and in answer to the defendants' contention that the claim alleged "hypothetical" discrimination, Judge Will noted that "defendants' position elaborated is that if property is sold to a negro above what can be demonstrated to be the usual market price, there is no discrimination unless the same seller actually sells to whites at a lower price. It should be clear that in law the result would be obnoxious. In logic, it is ridiculous. It would mean that the 1866 Civil Rights Act, which was created to be an instrument for the abolition of discrimination, allows an injustice so long as it is visited entirely on negroes."

He dismissed the charged violations of securities laws, as well as charges of unconscionability, fraud, and usury. But he refused to dismiss the savings and loan associations as defendant-lenders.

Over a year after Judge Will's opinion, Sullivan and Ming amended their complaint to join as defendants the Federal Housing Administration, the Veterans Administration, and the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation. Both the FHA and the VA were charged with complicity and discriminatory practices in the backing of mortgages. The FSLIC was charged with taking over a number of savings and loan associations, which had folded because of alleged backing of speculators, and holding over 800 mortgages on properties sold to black people on contracts which were still being administered at the same inflated prices. This time the federal government

filed a motion claiming immunity and asking to be dismissed. So far, this level of the litigation has not been resolved.

That is how the two CBL lawsuits, *Baker v. F. & F. Investment* and *Clark v. Universal Builders*, got into federal court.

**T**he buyers' payment-withholding strike had been ended by two agreements following the filing of *Baker v. F. & F. Investment* and *Clark v. Universal Builders*. The South Side agreement, made on March 4, 1969, required South Side buyers to continue making payments "without prejudice" directly to Universal Builders. The West Side agreement, made on April 3, 1969, required all striking buyers to continue making payments and required all sellers to deposit a portion of the monthly payments in escrow each month pending outcome of *Baker*. Because they were negotiated by lawyers and entered as court orders, the agreements bound a young, highly energetic black grass-roots movement and a small group of mostly white, relatively moderate lawyers to the same goal. The marriage was sometimes a strained one; the priorities were different. Few buyers wanted to continue making direct payments to the sellers, and favored mass confrontation tactics and economic pressure to achieve renegotiation. The lawyers confined their efforts to the legal arena, to winning the two cases. The differences in approach created tension, discord, sometimes mistrust. But there were even more fundamental problems.

One was the relationship between the black and white CBL workers and the young people of the West Side, which had been tense all along. Lawndale, with its resident street gangs, has one of the highest crime rates in Chicago. The gang members did not actively support the organization; some of them harassed white CBL workers, but they did not try to impede the CBL's progress. Charles Baker believes that CBL's presence has been responsible for a decrease in Lawndale gang activity. He attributes this to the fact that CBL is "working with the parents of the so-called gangs," and takes pride in pointing out that the CBL office window is the only one on Pulaski Road without an iron grating protecting it. In the window is a large sign listing the names and amounts of renegotiated savings of CBL families.

And there was tension in the loose alliance between West and South Side people. The alliance endured from late 1968 through early 1970. But there were growing differences. Besides dissimilarities in age and education, many of the South Side people

as occupants of newer homes, considered themselves removed from the original ghettos. All were committed to peaceful mass confrontation tactics. But some South Siders were embarrassed by the revivalist overtones of the West Side meetings. Most viewed their problem in strictly economic terms, and others were suspicious of the whites who surrounded, and possibly influenced, the lower-class West Side members. The South Side people held their own meetings in their own area of the city, but most of the decision-making seems to have been confined to the West Side office. The differences were further compounded by the semi-autonomous roles and styles of the two sets of leaders. Both Charles Baker and Clyde Ross of the West Side were former factory workers, both were from the same town in Mississippi, and both were paid employees of the Gamaliel Foundation. Relatively easygoing and cautious, they suggest the kind of participatory leadership common in the early days of the civil rights movement. Sidney Clark and Arthur Green, the two South Side leaders, were not employed by the Foundation; rather their involvement and speaking ability tended to project them as spokesmen. Clark, the buyer in whose name the South Side class action was brought, was the most vocal spokesman.

But there were also many areas of agreement between the two groups. Both mistrusted the legal process. Both worried that the involvement of lawyers might redirect or neutralize the energy of the organization. While most buyers were pleased by the filing of *Baker* and *Clark*, they did not feel that the two lawsuits were the only way of getting the contracts renegotiated, and they resented the end of the strike and the resumption of payments directly to the sellers. Some buyers say that the West Side sellers stopped discussing renegotiation of the contracts as soon as the strike ended, and also that they used offers of high settlements to the leaders in an attempt to undermine group solidarity, and offers of small settlements to encourage rank-and-file buyers to sign out of the plaintiff classes. In addition, a number of buyers with "permissive delinquencies" who had been "carried" by their sellers (many at good rates of interest) prior to the strike were now being required to pay up in full. Although the court-order agreement ending the strike had stated that delinquencies were to be amortized "over a reasonable period," the phrase was never clarified to the satisfaction of either side.

And so, over the objections of their lawyers, the buyers started a second payment strike. Of the numerous reasons now given by the buyers in justification of the second strike, three stand out:

A second strike would resume the economic pressure on the sellers while the pretrial process dragged on, and perhaps force them to renegotiate.

Second, once the suits had been filed and the first strike had ended, there was little the CBL could do to maintain its cohesiveness. Limited as it was to a single issue, the grass-roots movement was threatened with extinction once the lawyers moved the conflict into the courts. Most members lacked the time and skill to participate in the legal discovery work. Furthermore, the sellers' lawyers fought the buyers' having access to information obtained for purposes of the lawsuit. It was being used in CBL propaganda, they charged. Many buyers were bitter over the inequality of remedies available to the two sides, and they believed that without direct pressure on the sellers, both negotiation and the cases would fail.

Finally, the buyers wanted to use mass eviction publicity pressures to attack the state's eviction law. In 1968 an estimated 42,000 families, both renters and contract buyers, had been sued for possession under authority of this eviction law. One reporter estimated that in the first six months of 1969, 21,751 more eviction actions had been started. In August, 1969, a Chicago paper printed a story charging that the First Municipal District Court was an "eviction mill," with one judge sometimes ordering evictions at the rate of twenty a minute as landlords, their lawyers, or secretaries yelled "plaintiff" when defendants were called. Public attention was directed to the eviction courts.

The buyers had an additional reason for wanting to test the eviction law. In early 1969, Marshall Patner, an energetic, reform-minded lawyer who was then executive director of Businessmen for the Public Interest, had taken the case of a South Side family ordered evicted during the first strike. Since his days with Chicago Legal Aid, Patner had been slowly formulating arguments against the defense-and-appeal bond provisions of the statute; and during the eviction proceedings brought against Mr. and Mrs. Chester Fisher by Rosewood Corporation (one of the ten companies under Universal's name) he had attempted to raise the sales terms and conditions of their contract as a defense. The testimony was ruled "not germane to the issue of possession" and excluded. Patner then argued that the inability of the buyers to raise equitable defenses was a denial of due process and equal protection. Then, with a \$5000 appeal bond contributed to the Fishers from private sources, he took their case, *Rosewood*, to the Illinois Supreme Court. "Even before my work with Legal Aid," Marshall Patner says, "I was interested in the

forcible entry. I was doing some commercial work for a real estate firm under the eviction law. Most were hardship cases, but I did get into evictions eventually. I got to know the law much better than most people who would normally get in on the other side. From then on I was waiting for a chance to challenge it." Thus, when the CBL made its decision to call a second strike, Macnamara and a few of the CBL leaders were aware that *Rosewood*, directly challenging the eviction law, was pending before the court.

**T**he co-counsels, Sullivan and Ming, were strongly opposed to the second payment strike. When informed of the plan, they held a hurried series of meetings with the buyers and attempted to discourage it by describing in detail the remedies available to the sellers under the eviction law, and expressing concern over the possibility of violence during the evictions. Some South Side CBL members also opposed the strike, and objected to having to risk their own homes for people who were delinquent in their contract payments. But both sets of leaders and both sets of buyers voted to risk mass evictions in order to carry out the strike.

The second withholding strike began on July 19, 1969. The procedure was the same as before: each month the leaders would collect money orders for contract payments, which each striker would make out to himself, and place them in escrow. Any buyer who saved his own money was not considered part of the official strike. Many were fearful of going against the court order that had ended the first strike; nevertheless, they withheld the money. By the end of the summer, eviction proceedings had been brought against 261 of the 552 striking families. The hearings were summary: Under the eviction law, the sellers' lawyers simply alleged that each buyer had been notified of his delinquency, and the buyer's response was limited to two responses: whether he had received notice and whether he owed money. Bonds for those who wanted to appeal the judgments were set on the average of \$4000, but some were as high as \$7500. At first the cases were being handled by a number of volunteer lawyers and law students, some of whom attempted to raise the contract terms as defenses. But most of the lawyers eventually withdrew from representing the strikers either because they felt the strikers were wrong to live in the houses without paying or because they felt that the strikers had not been overcharged in the first place, or because they felt the futility of trying to break the eviction pattern. Most of the law students withdrew because of this same futility, and because of the pressures from the

judges. Subsequently, many buyers began representing themselves before the judges, and raised questions far beyond the scope of the issue of possession. One judge, in telling a woman that his hands were tied because the law required her to pay up or get out, said, "Young lady, I'm sorry to say this but somebody has led you down the wrong path and has misled you. And I know who." "You're right, your honor," the woman replied. "They misled me in Mississippi. I came up here to get a better place to raise my family. I was misled in Mississippi, but I was misled worse here because there they don't hide their hands. I came here to get justice and you are sitting up there agreeing with me and at the end you are going to shake your head and say, 'There is nothing I can do. My hands are tied.' I am being misled *here!*'"

Jesuits from all over the country raised \$250,000 to be used as a lump-sum appeal bond, but the court would not permit this, and the money was returned to the donors.

**T**he strikers began preparing for the evictions. In early December, 1969, former Cook County Sheriff Joseph Woods began the ordered evictions of South Side strikers. But as soon as his men had evicted Mrs. Elizabeth Nelson and nine children from their home and left the scene, a large crowd of CBL members, nuns, priests, rabbis, and other supporters moved the furniture back into the house. Sheriff Woods (a Republican who was then running for president of the County Board and who might have feared creating an issue which would allow the Democrats to mobilize black voters) then announced a moratorium on evictions until after Christmas. He also announced a policy of suspending future evictions whenever the temperature went below twenty degrees.

However, on January 5, twenty-five deputies attempted to evict another South Side family. This time more than two hundred CBL members and supporters were crammed inside the house when the deputies arrived. The deputies moved off and attempted a third eviction in another area. But again CBL members and supporters aborted the attempt by crowding into and surrounding the house.

Many CBL people take pride in disclosing the "map strategy" they used against Woods. Actually, both the sheriff's office and the CBL were involved in a ritual calculated to prevent violence on the eviction scenes. In fact, many CBL members believe that the evictions began on the more stable South Side because of the lesser danger of a confrontation between deputies and gang members there than in the West

**"You're right, your honor. They misled me in Mississippi. I came up here to get a better place to raise my family. I was misled in Mississippi, but I was misled worse here because there they don't hide their hands."**

Side neighborhoods. The CBL office would be warned beforehand, by "friends" inside the sheriff's office, of scheduled eviction sites. Word would go out to members and supporters by telephone that "Pharaoh is riding." Watchers would be posted to report the gathering and movements of the deputies to the group, which would be waiting on standby at 4 A.M. As soon as the intended house was known, buyers and supporters would rush to the house and surround it.

When the eviction party arrived at a house, one of the deputies would walk through the crowd, expecting to be blocked at the door. There would be some words exchanged about "obstructing a process of law," names would be taken, and the buyer would be cited for criminal trespass. The deputies would then leave the scene, and the cited striker would later surrender on his own and post bail. On one occasion a deputy was overheard telling a buyer who was blocking the door to his home: "Make it look good." It was a practical solution to a volatile situation, as demonstrated by the next eviction attempt.

On January 29, 1970, Sheriff Woods brought along two hundred deputies and Chicago Task Force Policemen. The movers were able to pick the lock, cut telephone wires, and put the furniture into the snow before CBL people could arrive on the scene. Sixteen security guards, hired by Universal Builders, were posted inside the house to prevent its reoccupation. But after the deputies and police had gone, CBL members and supporters trapped the guards inside the house. The guards fired some shots. Joseph Gibson, a South Side member of the strike, probably prevented the development of a more explosive situation by calming the crowd and then assuring the guards that they would not be harmed if they came out. The guards left the house. The crowd moved the furniture back. Soon after this attempt, Sheriff Woods announced that he would never again send two hundred men and spend \$25,000 of the taxpayers' money for a twenty-minute eviction, and ordered a halt to all eviction attempts until the courts had ruled in the cases of those families charged with criminal trespass. Universal Builders immediately sued Woods for \$7 million, and the circuit court threatened contempt citations.

In early February, 1970, two federal judges heard Tom Sullivan's arguments against the eviction law, but decided to abstain from passing on it because of Marshall Patner's case, *Rosewood*, which raised the same questions about the statute and was then pending before the Illinois Supreme Court. Then, in a remarkable display of legal red-tape cutting, Tom Sullivan managed to have a number of eviction cases

transferred from the circuit courts and consolidated with *Rosewood*. The court scheduled arguments in *Rosewood* for early March of that year.

There was also activity on another level. In early April, 1970, Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley agreed to intervene in the dispute. He had been petitioned to intervene once before, in early February. At that time an agreement had been worked out by lawyers for Universal Builders and Sullivan's group. But the South Side strikers, who were the ones under most imminent threat of eviction, had rejected the agreement because of the alleged political influence behind it and the fact that it did not mention renegotiation of the contracts. There were rumors that there were connections between high officials in Universal Builders and the Democratic organization, and some South Side people noted that before Mayor Daley came into the conflict, Universal Builders had not been in the mood for compromise. But it is just as probable that both Mayor Daley and Universal officials were concerned over the tension and potential racial conflict that the evictions might cause. Both Robert Ming and Tom Sullivan were equally concerned. When they presented the February agreement to the South Side strikers, tempers were high. And they were being criticized by both Judge Will and other lawyers for not keeping the people in line. Only about fifty South Side strikers accepted the first agreement.

There were additional reasons for them to request Mayor Daley to mediate a second agreement. By late February, Sheriff Woods had departed from the sham eviction ritual and gotten down to the serious business of actually clearing the houses. During the early morning two hundred deputies and policemen would arrive in buses, close off an entire South Side block to prevent CBL members and supporters from entering, and evict all striking families on the block. Each eviction took less than an hour: while the deputies and policemen closed off the street, professional movers went in and cleared the houses; then the deputies and officers moved back into the buses and drove off to the next eviction site, leaving at the houses security guards armed with shotguns. During the last few weeks of March and until the halt called by Mayor Daley before the second mediation session, Woods successfully evicted twenty-one striking families. Even while five hundred CBL members and supporters were downtown petitioning Mayor Daley to re-enter the dispute, Woods was evicting four more striking families.

On April 7 the sessions began in Mayor Daley's office. Buyers, sellers, and lawyers for both sides held separate meetings. Mayor Daley announced on tele-

vision, "What is now on the streets will be brought to the bargaining table, and settled there with the buyers and sellers sitting around it." The sessions were long. Reports from inside the office called them "fine meetings," "productive." The City Council passed a resolution endorsing the mayor's intervention. One CBL leader remarked: "I'd like to say something in favor of the mayor, this great mayor. He doesn't want anyone to leave these meetings, and he just keeps on hollering at you until you get an agreement."

Rumors went around: Mayor Daley was in contact with judges of the Illinois Supreme Court who were about to deliver their opinion in *Rosewood*; Mayor Daley was considering revoking the building license of Universal Builders if the latter did not call off the evictions; Mayor Daley would order Sheriff Woods to hold off the evictions until after the *Rosewood* decision had been handed down. Many buyers who engaged in this speculation were forgetting that Universal was no longer building houses, and that Sheriff Woods, a Republican and a county official, was acting under court orders. Many believed in the mayor's power to "control" the sellers, even if the courts could not. The faith that many lower-class Chicago black people have in Daley is one of his major political assets.

**O**n April 8, after two sessions, Mayor Daley announced a solution that was "fair to all." Even the CBL leaders, walking out of his office, called it a "very good" settlement. Both Sidney Clark and Arthur Green signed it. The press called it "A Nice Day's Work for the Mayor," and hoped that the buyers would accept and tensions ease. Since the agreement was between Universal Builders and the South Side buyers, Mayor Daley arranged a meeting between them at the Sherman House. Again Sullivan and Ming urged the strikers to accept. There was a one-week deadline.

The April agreement to end the payment-withholding strike was almost the same as the previous agreement. The strikers were to pay all withheld money and all future installments directly to Universal. In return, Universal would deposit \$50,000 in an account and claim it and all eviction costs only if the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the eviction law. If the court struck down the law, the \$50,000 would remain in the account, subject to court orders pending the outcome of *Clark v. Universal Builders*, and the striking buyers would not have to pay eviction costs. All contract sales would be reinstated, all eviction judgments vacated and Universal

would not charge penalty interest rates for past defaults in payment. (This second agreement differed from the first in that Universal also promised to put aside an additional \$500 each month pending outcome of *Clark*, and indicated that it might consider refinancing some or all of the contracts.)

A number of South Side strikers rejected the agreement because it contained no specific provision for renegotiation of the contracts. Both Clark and Green were criticized for signing the agreement, and soon joined other strikers in denouncing it. "I think the South Side people *lost* in the mayor's office," one participant observes, "by not insisting that they were in there not to stop the evictions but to renegotiate."

Two days before the agreement deadline, the Illinois Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Rosewood*. Avoiding the constitutional questions, the court reinterpreted the state eviction law to allow contract buyers to raise equitable defenses in eviction proceedings. The court did not pass on the appeal bond provisions of the act, and only the few buyers who had posted appeal bonds could take advantage of the decision.

The strike was never officially ended. But most of the South Side strikers finally accepted the proposed agreement, turned their escrow money over to Universal, and waited for the outcome of *Clark v. Universal Builders* in the federal courts.

In Lawndale a number of families continued to withhold, but the back of the group effort was broken. Sheriff Woods handled the West Side evictions carefully, moving only a few families at a time. But some CBL members and supporters continued to move families back into the houses. Most strikers agreed to pay, however, when Judge Will, before ending the two class actions, announced that he would dismiss all strikers as plaintiffs from the lawsuit.

**T**he seventy-to-eighty South Side buyers who rejected the agreement reached in Mayor Daley's office were eventually evicted by Sheriff Woods and his successor. Some moved back in and were evicted again, and again. The tension that had been building between the two sides of the organization now exploded into hostility and charges of "selling out." The core of South Side people who opposed ending the strike against Universal broke with the CBL and began their own organization, led by Sidney Clark and Arthur Green. This splinter group drew support from independent politicians, white students, and some vocal South Side businessmen. Neither Clark nor Green will



**"We are not compromising on anything. You people have struggled too long and too much. If anybody got any Uncle Tom ideas about sneaking in and messing up, you better just stay on out."**

of the group or his own involvement, but it is clear that the mood was bitter. South Side buyers sympathetic to the West Side people were excluded from the splinter group's meetings, and attempts were made to produce some sense of vindication for its members. At one point a group of them "sat in" at the governor's office to protest Universal's policies; on another occasion they "evicted" the head of the Chicago FHA office. Once, when some of those living in their houses under criminal trespass charges were ordered jailed for a few days, supporters from Jesse Jackson's Operation Breadbasket demanded to be locked in the cells with them. Sidney Clark expressed the mood of the group during a public meeting. "We are not in the business of compromising," he said. "We are not compromising on anything. You people have struggled too long and too much. If anybody got any Uncle Tom ideas about sneaking in and messing up, you better just stay on out of the way because this is a *for-real* movement here. Universal is going to renegotiate these contracts. Universal is *not* going to make the money it made before."

The group's bitterness and mistrust were accentuated by the intervention of another outside influence. In the summer of 1970 Sherman Skolnick, a white legal researcher who chaired an organization called the Citizens' Committee to Clean Up Corruption in the Courts, was invited to address one of the meetings. Skolnick brought along "fact sheets" bearing the title "Who Represents Who In the Contract Buyers League?" which were passed out to the audience. The sheets denounced a number of judges; among them was the name of Federal Judge J. Sam Perry, who had been assigned to hear *Clark v. Universal Builders* following Judge Will's release of it. Skolnick also listed Albert Jenner as a bank director and charged his law firm with torpedoing civil rights cases in the past. Skolnick alleged that Jenner's firm had volunteered its services to the CBL in order to turn the thrust of the grass-roots movement into the courts where it could be killed off, and that the possibility of having to renegotiate "25,000 contracts in the city of Chicago" threatened a number of banks holding mortgages from the sellers. "If they couldn't turn this grass-roots movement around, their banks would go under. They need this blood money to exist on," he told the group, and suggested that the Catholic Church and the Democratic Party were also involved in the attempt to "sell out" the movement. A class action, he said, was "the work of the devil" because of its binding nature on those not immediately involved in bringing the action, and suggested that both *Clark* and *Baker* were "sellout" cases. "You think that some lawyer like Jenner, who makes \$2500

a day as a bank director, is going to get up feeling for poor working people who work two and three jobs to make their payments?" he said. "The first thing that'll happen if you win is that his bank will go under. So which side is he on? . . . What the hell do they give a damn about *your constitutional rights*? You've got to deal with first things first. Get this picture: A *bank director* went to court in your name, Jenner, and the case went to other *bank directors* who sit in robes and call themselves judges, and they sit next to the flag and tell you about the Constitution and all that bullshit! The only ones who are not bank directors are *you*!"

What is most significant about this meeting is that the people seemed to *want* to believe him. In late August, 1970, nine South Side buyers, including Sidney Clark and Arthur Green, filed a complaint in the Cook County Circuit Court. They named as defendants Jack Macnamara, Albert Jenner, Tom Sullivan, Robert Ming, John Stifter, Charles Baker, a Catholic bishop of Chicago, the Archbishop of Chicago, the Gamaliel Foundation, Gordon Sherman, and several of the white workers. Sherman Skolnick drafted the complaint.

The allegations attacked every level that had contributed to the Contract Buyers League. The Catholic bishop was charged with being the beneficial owner of contracts through a connection with one of Universal's ten companies; the Gamaliel Foundation was charged with having an interest in safeguarding the relationship between the Catholic bishop and Universal, funneling money to the lawyers disguised as "litigation costs," and with financing the CBL in order to ensure that the organization did not get out of hand; Baker was charged with being an agent for the lawyers, who allegedly used him to solicit employment from Clark, Green, and other South Side buyers; Jenner, Sullivan, Stifter, and Ming were alleged to have falsely and maliciously purported to be the attorneys for South Side buyers during the negotiations in Mayor Daley's office, and were charged with failing to carry out their instructions; Gordon Sherman was accused of funneling money through the Gamaliel Foundation to the lawyers. The list of damages claimed by the plaintiffs included the interference with their rights to seek redress of their own grievances; blockading of their rights to solicit their own lawyers; the alleged compromising of their rights and destinies through control of the lawsuit; and personal claims for public humiliation and the disruption of their property and family lives. They asked \$5 million in exemplary damages, \$5 million in actual damages, and costs.

The filing of this case in 1970 was not only sym-

bolic of the growing mistrust of white motives which continues to isolate blacks and whites. It was a renunciation of three years of dedication, sacrifice, and personal pain on the part of both black contract buyers and the people who supported them. The breach between the two classes of black people was widened. Ironically, the people with fewer middle-class pretensions—the West Siders—retained their perspective. The lawyers were hurt and irritated. Sullivan, Ming, Stifler, and Jenner immediately withdrew from handling the nine plaintiffs, but continued to represent the eighty other South Side buyers who had been evicted but who did not join in the suit. But they requested an injunction to prevent the nine buyers and Skolnick from interfering with their preparation of the two major lawsuits. They also requested a hearing to determine whether they had properly and adequately represented the class of plaintiffs. At the hearing it was determined that they had. Subsequently, charges against Gordon Sherman and the Catholic bishop were dropped, but the charges against all the others remain unchanged. They denied the charges but did not move for dismissal, in order to avoid providing the plaintiffs with additional ammunition. The case is still pending.

#### IV How It Ends

**D**espite the bitter split that threatened the CBL, the entire experience has been a successful one. Speculation on the outcome of either of the two federal court cases would be premature, but it is worthwhile to define some of the legal difficulties which Sullivan and the other lawyers are likely to face.

In doing so, one might consider the statement of one of the South Side buyers who joined in the suit against Sullivan. "There are enough laws on the books now to protect adequately all the people in this country," he said. "You don't have to go into court and start begging and pleading about rights and all that." But in point of fact, there are relatively few laws on the books that can provide meaningful remedies for contract buyers. A tenet of American law is that courts are extremely reluctant to interfere in contractual relationships. This is probably the reason why the early volunteer lawyers eventually decided that nothing could be done for the buyers. Most lawyers recognize that only a radical reconsideration of the policy reasons and values that support the inviolability of contracts can help the buyers.

Both *Clark v. Universal Builders* and *Baker v. F & F Investment* are challenging the federal courts to make such a reconsideration. But the fact that an essentially commercial appeal has been made within the context of a civil rights complaint charging racial discrimination tends to make the problem even more complex. Beyond the reluctance of courts to interfere in commercial areas there is a fundamental weakness in the two CBL cases based on the Supreme Court's decision in *Jones v. Mayer* in 1968. The discrimination alleged in the two cases does not fit the conceptual model on which *Jones* was decided. In the usual civil rights case, as in *Jones*, a black plaintiff alleges that a white defendant's treatment of him was not equal to that which was actually given to whites. But in the two CBL cases no such allegations were possible because of a lack of evidence that the sellers had ever made more favorable contract sales to whites. And in ruling that the CBL complaints had stated a claim under Section I of the 1866 Civil Rights Act, Judge Will raised the point that may well symbolize the real significance of the CBL experience:

Defendants contend that this holding would mean that every non-white citizen has a cause of action . . . to either rescind or reform . . . a purchase or leasing of either *real* or *personal* property by the simple allegation that he was charged more than a white person *would have been charged* or that he received less favorable terms and conditions than would have been given a white person.

The essential words are "would have been charged." In the absence of evidence that the sellers actually charged or would have charged whites less for similar property, the conduct does not seem to fit the traditional conceptual model. Moreover, Judge Will's analysis assumes that property in a changing neighborhood would have some value in a white market. These ambiguities could result in the CBL's losing the two lawsuits. On the other hand, as one commentator suggests, Judge Will could have been moving toward a new theory of liability, merging both civil rights and commercial law, and dispensing with the old conceptual model.

There is already considerable pressure on the federal courts to develop some approach to commercial discrimination. In Baltimore, where a grass-roots movement similar to the CBL has grown up, a civil rights complaint, *Montebello Community Association v. Goldseker*, was filed about a year after the Chicago lawsuits. Besides *Montebello*, similar sales practices are being challenged in Washington, D.C., and the CBL office has received calls and visitors from many other cities.





*At a Wednesday night CBL meeting:  
Left, Tom Boodell.  
Above, Mrs. Ruth Wells.  
Below, other buyers.*



**"Repeatedly, lawyers have been forced to improvise and to push beyond the frontier... not because of their own ingenuity... but because the people said, 'Well, screw it, we're going to do it this way anyhow.'"**

Many people are convinced that without the two strikes and the evictions the courts would never have moved as far as they have in *Clark, Baker, Rosewood*, and related cases. Jack Macnamara is convinced of that much. "Everybody knows it," he says; "if they deny it, they're *blind!* *Nothing* would have happened if it hadn't been for the activities of the people! The people themselves created a situation which forced people to respond on a somewhat part-time basis." And Tom Sullivan says almost the same thing. "Repeatedly," he says, "lawyers have been forced to improvise and to push beyond the frontier, so to speak, *not* because of their own ingenuity or anything that they started, but rather despite themselves and over their objections that it couldn't be done, because the people said, 'Well, screw it, we're going to do it this way anyhow.'"

Among the buyers there is absolute certainty that nothing would have been done if they had not acted. In fact, many of the people who continued to withhold their payments after the major part of the strike was over did so because they did not believe that any relief would come through the courts.

**T**he Contract Buyers League survived the strike, but it is not the same organization. One reason is that Jack Macnamara has left. During the evictions he had to be hospitalized for exhaustion. In late 1970 he asked to be released from his Jesuit vows. In June, 1971, he married Peggy O'Connor, a CBL volunteer. It was a Catholic wedding, but Mrs. Luceal Johnson was asked to stand beside the priest and speak. The young black man who once beat Macnamara also attended. A few months after the wedding Macnamara took a job with Applied Resources Incorporated in New York, and left Lawndale. His leaving was in accordance with the original goals of the old Presentation Church Project: "To move on, once the machinery for an organized and developing community was set up, and leave the people to function on their own." During the three years of his involvement he had remained in the background, requiring the black members to make their own decisions. Macnamara's departure was probably an extension of this same determination to make the black people aware of their own potential to fight for themselves. In fact, he said as much to them before leaving. "All kinds of credit is given at CBL meetings," he told them. "People talk about all that white people are doing in supporting what you people are doing. They couldn't have done a thing without you. The real heroes of the CBL are not the white men, and it's about time that black people stopped saying thank you to

white men, except in a very general way, and started saying, 'It's about time you gave us what we had coming.' A lot of people have said that I have done a lot for the people. I think the real thing is that the people have done a lot for me. And I'd like to thank them."

But the people have also done a lot for themselves. Almost 200 buyers have saved close to \$2 million in principal and interest from renegotiated contracts. Some families have had their balances reduced by as much as \$40,000 under the CBL's "fair-price formula." Others have accepted smaller settlements from the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation, which took over a number of bankrupt savings and loan associations that had granted mortgages to speculators. Quite a number of other families have accepted smaller settlements from their sellers in return for signing out of the lawsuits. In many instances, according to CBL leaders, the sellers will also pay to patch up the outsides of the houses. An estimated 150 to 200 West Side people have announced themselves renegotiated and have dropped all contact with the CBL. Nothing within the power of the leaders has been able to make them disclose the amounts of their settlements. In some cases, Clyde Ross says, a family is told by the seller to remain silent because it is getting a better deal than all the others. The longer the West Side case is delayed, the fewer buyers there may be in the plaintiff class. In fact, when *Baker* is finally scheduled for trial, there might not be a plaintiff class.

Aside from their uncertain situations as plaintiffs, however, the CBL people have made a number of commercial accomplishments. The First National Bank of Chicago is now allowing Lawndale homeowners conventional mortgages at reasonable interest rates. And several insurance companies have been convinced by Clyde Ross that the underwriting of homeowners' policies in "high-risk" areas can be profitable. Although the coverage is still not available to all black families in Chicago, as of January, 1972, more than three hundred CBL families had obtained new policies with broader coverage at an average savings of \$100 in annual premiums. There is also some talk of receiving rehabilitation money from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. But despite over three years of meetings with HUD and city officials, nothing substantial has developed. "I don't know what will come of it," Charles Baker admits, "but the government has already approved the loan. The only problem is getting it by the city. But if they do let it by, we'll have \$100,000, and a lot of these people who have already been renegotiated might show up again."

Although the CBL is still functioning, it is ques-

tionable how much longer it will be able to exert the influence it once had. Through 1971 it was more an administrative than a mass activity organization. In the small office on Pulaski Road, Clyde Ross, Charles Baker, Henrietta Banks, Ruth Wells, and a few white workers helped the people who wanted to apply for mortgages or insurance. At the peak of its appeal, in early 1970, the Wednesday night meetings could draw up to six hundred members and supporters on a subzero Chicago night. Budding politicians, sensing the arrival of a strong grass-roots organization, would attend the meetings with leaflets and encouraging speeches. By the next winter, however, the meetings seldom drew more than one hundred people. And few politicians. In June, 1971, when CBL held its third annual benefit at Presentation Church, fewer than three hundred members and supporters were present. By the end of last summer the meetings drew only thirty to forty members.

But Charles Baker believes that the CBL is just as effective now as it was several years ago. "We're still serving our purpose," he says. "Our purpose was to get the people relief from the contracts. Even though some of them are doing it on their own, they wouldn't have done it if it hadn't been for us."

There is also the matter of the practical knowledge the people have gained from their experience. "The good part about it," says Mrs. Luceal Johnson, who will not receive anything even if Baker is successful, "is that nobody will ever cheat me again *the longest day I live!* Nobody will ever sit back on his fanny and say, *'Here come a sucker. Let's get her!'* Won't get me no more! I'm through being cheated. They got to get up and live off the sweat of their own brows. And I'm so sure they ain't g'on cheat me no more until I'll move into a *tent* before I buy another house and get it *unjustly*. I'll move into a *pup-tent!* And I'm going to teach my children to don't buy one the way I bought it."

Both Charles Baker and Clyde Ross, former factory workers, now understand the fine points about contracts, mortgages, insurance, and interest. So do a number of the others. Charles Baker, speaking of his hopes for the eventual rehabilitation of Lawndale, says, "Talk about *freedom*? Since I've been in this I've seen the perfect way you can get freedom: with *this!*" and points to his head. The lessons are not lost. A policy at the meetings is that when there are no further questions from the audience, one of the leaders will ask the audience questions:

"What would be the first step if you were going to buy another house to keep from getting gypped like you did last time?"

"Have it *appraised!*" is the collective response.

The lessons are not lost.

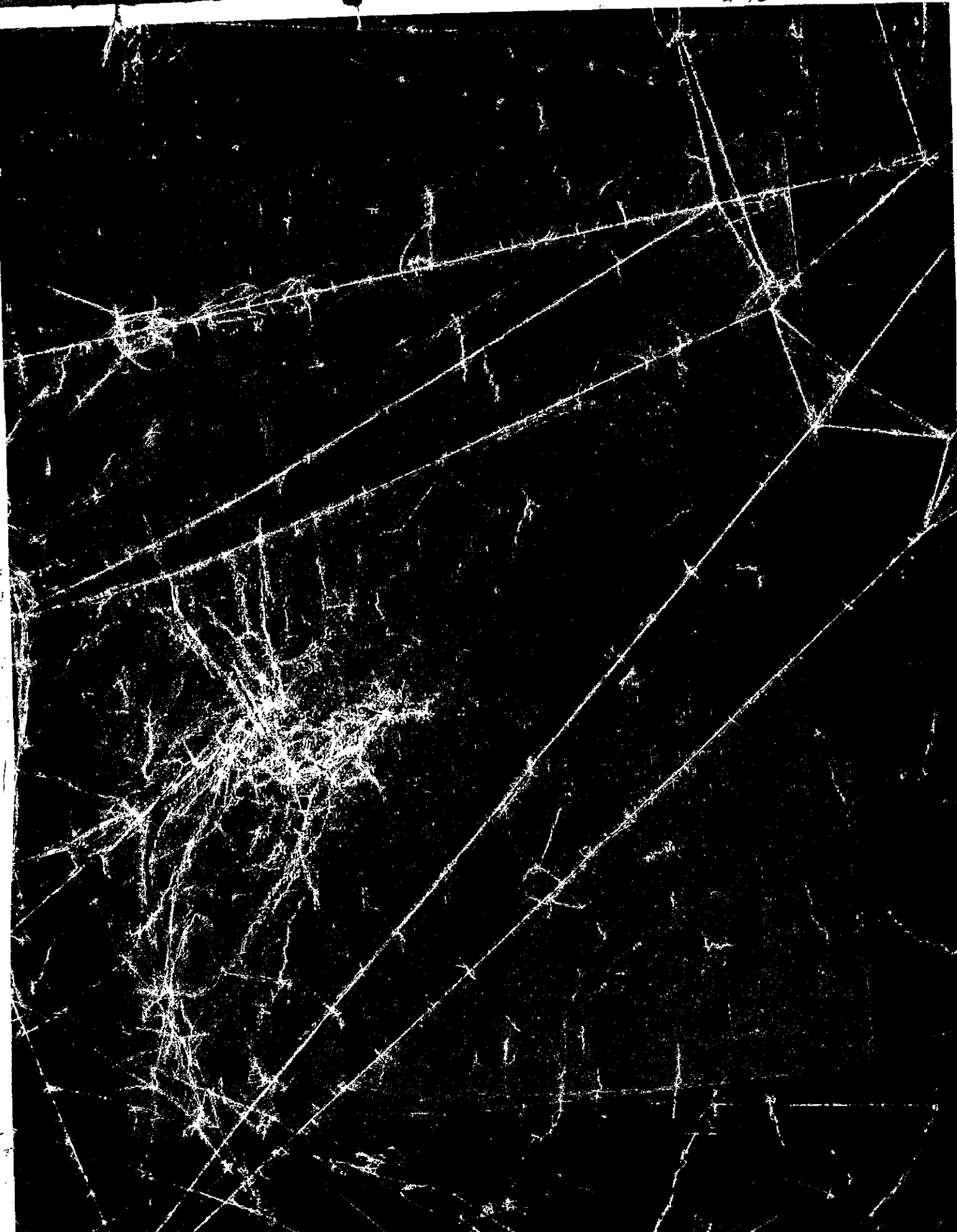
The circle widens. A group of Chicago lawyers, following Tom Sullivan's suggestion, has started a fund that will supply scholarships for black students who want to pursue careers in law. By the end of 1971 there was more than \$90,000 in the fund, and twenty black students were enrolled in Chicago area law schools. Ten more will enter in the fall of 1972. Sidney Clark, the former South Side leader, is already attending law school at night, on his own.

**O**n another level there is the matter of the whites who volunteered their help and support to the organization. Most of them were new to both experiences: the inner city and black people. Most of the Presentation Project workers had some initial difficulties with young black people in the Lawndale area, but all seem to have gained clearer perspectives on the nature of the many levels of tension between the two groups. One young man, Mike Gecan, a recent Yale graduate whose family lives in a "changing" area of Chicago's far West Side, has been trying to develop a white grass-roots organization to combat the fears aroused by the blockbusters who are said to be operating in the area. And one elderly white couple, regular attenders of all CBL meetings, say in response to the question, Why?, "It's the only thing left in the country that we know about where there's still a chance to see justice demonstrated." There are at least one hundred whites who no longer fear walking through the Lawndale community.

There is also the question of the money: the \$2 million in renegotiated savings and the inestimable amount that might result from the two lawsuits. Many of the people want to rehabilitate the houses and create businesses that will employ, and perhaps also rehabilitate, the young people of the community. "Don't tell me we can't operate our own businesses," Charles Baker says. "We've been operating the white man's businesses all our lives. You have to put your *own* business in your *own* neighborhood. People say they want Lawndale to be the best place in Chicago to live. There's nothing nice here now, but you've got a lot of vacant lots, and sooner or later somebody's going to start building. We got the best chance in the world to start out right, if we get citizen participation like we have in CBL." To implement this plan, the leaders have announced a project to buy some of the three hundred vacant lots in the area before urban renewal buys them and begins "relocating" the community.

Beyond the political and economic goals of the

#10



#11

March 23, 1970

Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, President  
Union of American Hebrew Congregations  
838 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York 10021

Dear Maurice:

First of all, let me express the hope that your trip to Israel was rewarding and inspiring.

Prior to your departure, you wrote to me about our Jewish Council on Urban Affairs and particularly about my relationship to that Council. I welcome the opportunity of responding to your comments and your suggestions, and I do so in the same spirit of friendship and loyalty to you and the Union that has prevailed in our relationship over these many years.

I hope it is not gratuitous for me to say that there is no one in the rabbinate that I admire more than you. When I decided to create the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs several years ago, it was done because there was no adequate mechanism for allowing religious institutions to deal with the complex problems of urban living in the Chicago Metropolitan area. At all times we were conscious that what we were trying to do expressed the spirit which you have represented so courageously in our Union over the years.

The JCUA was created to put our religious action program into a practical urban setting. At no time, either at its beginning or now, was the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs intended to be divorced from the UAHC. For these reasons, I welcome the suggestions contained in your letter.

Dr. Eisendrath

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March 23, 1970

To be specific, I would welcome a closer relationship to the UAHC. I would welcome having a representative of the UAHC on our Board, and closer administrative coordination, including the setting up of our books in accordance with national procedures, and subject to their audit. I would welcome a lay president, and hope to effectuate a change in the presidency of the Council in the very near future.

Harold Friedman and I have talked about setting up a meeting so that we might discuss in detail these plans with those who attended the meeting with you in New York. We now plan to meet on March 26 and I hope that our deliberations will prove fruitful. Following our meeting, I plan to submit the recommendations to the board of the JCUA for implementation.

I would be less than frank were I not to admit that there are people here in Chicago and in our movement who are dedicated to the abolition of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs. These are men who have some financial connection with the contract sellers to whom we have been opposed. The contract sales problem is a painful one, as you know, because it illustrates the depth of how our system uses one minority group against another.

Since you are aware of the broad dimensions of the contract sales problem, I do not need to share with you the depths of its pernicious affect upon poor people, nor do I need to develop for you the process by which homes worth \$12,000 were sold to black people for \$26,000 and \$27,000.

I do feel, however, that it is important to record that it was not the JCUA but rather the UAHC which originally challenged us to deal with this problem. At a full delegates meeting of the Chicago Federation in January of 1969, our delegates, after hours of debate, voted to support the Buyers in their efforts to renegotiate their contracts. The affirmative vote of support was overwhelming.

I share this with you because I feel that a major share of the opposition to the JCUA stems from its position on this issue. It is also important to note that the contention that the south side case should be treated differently has been rejected by both our Chicago Federation Social Action Committee, and by several of our congregations. With this letter I am enclosing the reasons developed by one of our congregations for maintaining that buyers in both the south side and the west side merited our support.

Rabbi Eisendrath

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March 18, 1970

In addition, the Joint Jewish Committee on Urban Problems of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago has just this past week expressed its concern that evictions should not take place and that the UAHC be sustained in their support of the contract buyers.

Finally, Maurice, let me assure you of my continuing dedication to the work that you and our Union have delineated. There is nothing closer to my heart than the strength of our movement. To be an instrument in the process of search for justice and the living God of our faith is all that I desire.

With all good wishes to you and Rita, I am

Devotedly,

Robert J. Marx

RJM:m

# CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

100 MADISON AVENUE

NEW YORK, N. Y. 10021

(212) AG 9-2811

February  
19th  
1970

Rabbi Martin I. Silverman  
Temple Mizpah  
1615 W. Morse Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60626

Dear Martin:

Thank you so much for your letter of 13 February and a copy of your communication of the same date to Maurice Eisendrath.

I assure you that Maurice does not need any added influence from me in bringing all possible pressure to bear on Bernard Sang and anyone else involved in the attack on Bob Marx because of his superb work in the Chicago area.

I am nonetheless sending a copy of this response to Maurice so that he will know of my willingness, even eagerness to supplement his efforts if he thinks there is anything further I can do. I am in complete agreement with you that Bob must be fully upheld in this altercation.

Ruth and I look forward to the pleasure of seeing you soon in Israel.

Cordially,



Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn  
PRESIDENT

/b

cc: Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath

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#13

838 Fifth Avenue - New York, N. Y. 10021 - (212) 249-0100

Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, President

February 24, 1970

Rabbi Robert J. Marx  
100 W. Monroe Street, Room 312  
Chicago, Ill. 60603

Dear Bob:

I regret that I did not have the chance to meet with you following our Executive Committee sessions. I would have much preferred the give and take of a personal encounter which the written word precludes. But the written word, at least, can be shared with others. Accordingly, I am sending a copy of this letter to all who attended our Wednesday luncheon so that they too will know just what my thoughts are. It might be well for you to meet with them, to discuss my recommendations and to consider the steps which must be taken to implement them.

Let me say at once that I admire the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs and its work. I am proud of the fact that our national and regional leadership had a share in its creation and that you, our colleague of the Union staff, provided that driving force which made it a meaningful, vital institution. Its program is an expression of those ideals which are central to the constellation of my own convictions. Its goals are in full harmony with the goals of our Union, because social action, religious action is one of the three pillars on which our national program structure is built.

By almost every reason of logic and emotion, therefore, the work of the Council should always have been a project of the Chicago Federation plain and simple, like every other Federation project, such as the camp or the counselling center, fully integrated in its overall work both on a programmatic and on an administrative level. I understand why a formal separation was effected: we wanted to give the J.C.U.A. somewhat greater flexibility, unrestrained by a national policy which cannot possibly address itself to the complexities of problems besetting individual communities; and we wanted to involve other segments of the Chicago Jewish community, not just our own Reform constituency, in its work.

This formal, and to some extent fictional, separation is at the root of much of our internal problem now as I see it. And I think that we can go a long way toward resolving these internal difficulties by recognizing the reality of the Federation-Council relationship and acting upon that reality rather than on the illusion of two separate and distinct entities. To put the matter somewhat differently, we are in trouble because we wanted to have our cake and eat it too, and we simply cannot have it both ways. If the J.C.U.A. is indeed in its own

Rabbi Robert J. Marx  
February 24, 1970

Page Two

orbit, free and independent, then the Federation, its resources and its staff cannot be so fully available to it. If the Council is a valid extension of the Union's own program -- as I earnestly believe it is -- why, then, we, that is to say, the Union nationally, must provide greater programmatic and administrative supervision and support.

In my view, this end can be achieved by taking the following steps:

The pertinent national program department should be more directly involved in the work of the J.C.U.A. Al Vorspan should be appointed to the Council's Board, and so should the Chairman of the Commission on Social Action or someone designated by him. Certainly on a staff level, no major programmatic effort should be initiated without the prior involvement of the Social Action Director.

Administratively, there should be like close coordination. As a case in point, the books of the Council should be set up in accordance with national procedures and subject to its audit. The budget of the Council should bear its fair portion of shared service charges -- for rent, and the like -- for which every other regional operation, such as the camp or RJA, is made responsible.

Lastly, there should be a lay president, even as is the case with your camp, or as holds true for the UPACA operation here in New York. Your ability to goad the Council to activity will not suffer because of it; and the work of the Council itself can only be strengthened through the fullest involvement of competent, conscientious lay leadership.

I realize that the J.C.U.A. now is indeed an independent body and that I cannot mandate these matters. They are my recommendations, which the Council's Executive has every right to reject. If it rejects them, we, on our part, will have to re-assess the Federation-Council relationship in all of its aspects. If it effects them -- as soon as is practically possible -- only greater strength and efficiency can accrue to its doing. I know that you will favor these steps, since they are at least in part the consequence of our prior conversations on this subject.

Be that as it may, once effected, no one will be able to question and measure the extent of your personal involvement in the Council's work. It will be your duty to advance it as the Director of our Federation. This does not mean, of course, that it can become your sole or overly dominant concern. Many other duties must be met -- in the realm of Jewish education, and camping, and worship, and service to our congregations. These will be your continuing responsibility as indeed they always were.

In this connection, I must caution you not to work for the J.C.U.A.'s financial well-being at the expense of the financial strength of our Union. We simply cannot go into competition with ourselves. Congregations and members of our congregations must support the Union as a whole, through MUM and RJA, before their support for the Council is accepted. This holds true for every other

Rabbi Robert J. Marx  
February 24, 1970

Page Three

aspect of your regional work whether it be your marriage counselling service or a youth program, whether it be a religious school for retarded children or the Olin-Sang Camp Institute. I know that such local activities have an appeal far more intense than the appeal of a distant national organization. But prospective donors must be made to know the folly of supporting a single program without supporting the source from which it emanates. This will not always be easy to implement, but your every effort in this direction is urged.

Insofar as the problems attendant upon your service to rabbi-less congregations is concerned, I will comment only to the extent of directing you once again to the several memoranda and letters on the subject which you have received.

The South Side issue is beyond the realm of my competence for judgment. I simply do not know what the facts are. I must say this, however: it is both possible and proper to support the program of an organization generally even while denying support for one of its particular activities. To put this more concretely, the Council's endorsement of the Contract Buyers' League does not relieve you of the obligation to dissociate yourself publicly from a particular action whose validity and justice you do not perceive. Please don't misunderstand me to say that you should have refrained from joining the South Side campaign. I cannot do so without knowing the fuller facts. The leadership of your Council must develop these facts and then recommend action which flows from their understanding of them.

Let me conclude with the assurance of my continuing regard and affection. I admire your imagination and industry, your perseverance and your courage. On this score, everyone who attended the Wednesday meeting was in the fullest possible agreement.

Please keep in touch. I am anxious to hear from you.

As ever,

*Maurice N.*

Maurice N. Eisendrath

MNE:vm

#17

Memorandum of Preliminary Draft  
of Meeting Held at the Chicago Federation  
UAHC, at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday,  
April 9, 1970

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The following were present: Rabbi Eisendrath, Rabbi Marx, Messrs.

Harold E. Friedman, Alan J. Altheimer, Bernard Sang  
and Sidney Cole

Mr. Robert L. Adler was out of town and consequently unable to attend the meeting.

A free and open discussion was held concerning the UAHC and the Chicago Federation's relationship with the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs (JCUA) as well as Rabbi Marx's professional administrative relationship to the Council.

In conclusion, the following was agreed on:

1. - All present accepted Rabbi Eisendrath's letter of February 24, 1970, addressed to Rabbi Marx as being both adequate and equitable in spelling out Rabbi Marx's relationship to the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs within the context of his responsibilities as a full time professional director of the Chicago Federation, UAHC.

2. - As to specifics, it was agreed as follows in addition to and clarification of Dr. Eisendrath's letter mentioned above.

a. - Rabbi Marx will formally resign as President of the JCUA prior to May 15, 1970.

b. - Rabbi Marx's administrative involvement in the J.C.U.A. shall be as outlined in Rabbi Eisendrath's letter of February 24, 1970. However, Rabbi Marx is not to serve officially and publicly as an officer or director or in any other official capacity in the JCUA.

Preliminary draft - 2

- c. - He may, if elected, serve on the Board of Directors of the JCUA
- d. - Rabbi Marx is not to engage in ongoing fund raising for the JCUA or any other agency, group or fund which is not an official agency of the UAHC or where such fund raising does not have prior approval of the National Board of the Union.
- e. - The JCUA shall be permitted to rent space in the Chicago Federation offices subject to an agreed monthly rental established by the Union. The JCUA shall reimburse the Union for any and all services rendered to it.
- f. - In view of the fact that there will be some involvement on the part of our Regional Director and his staff, the books of the JCUA shall be subject to audit by the UAHC in much the same manner as with all other entities sharing our facilities.

#15

August 28, 1970

To: Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath

From: Rabbi Robert J. Marx

Subject: Jewish Council on Urban Affairs Fund Raising

I understand that Bernard Sang has once again complained about my work in conjunction with the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs. Since he has written to you and/or Alex, I thought you might like to have the facts related to Bernie Sang's complaint.

The agreement which we worked out when you were here in town specifies that I shall not conduct "on-going" fund raising on behalf of the JCUA. Since that agreement was developed last spring, there has been one fund raising luncheon at which I have spoken - this is the one that Bernie writes about.

Every year a group of Solel Congregation members hold alluncheon to acquaint their members with the work of the Council. I have always been asked to be present at these luncheons. This year, conscious of my responsibilities to the Reform Jewish Appeal, I indicated that I did not want to be the speaker at the luncheon, and instead asked Arnold Wolf to talk about the Council's significance and to ask for support. Arnold did this. During the question and answer period, however, I did respond to a question about the work of the Council and indicated that each staff member costs about \$15,000 to sustain.

The meeting which Bernie is upset about was held the first week in July, following the termination of our 1969-70 RJC Campaign. I did not see it as conflicting with our campaign, nor as a violation of our agreement. Besides, as you know, I feel that the work of the Council is an important adjunct of our UAHC task in Chicago.

I hope this analysis will prove useful as you prepare to answer Bernie.



## JEWISH COUNCIL ON URBAN AFFAIRS

100 WEST MONROE STREET  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60603  
TELEPHONE STATE 2-1477

May 27, 1970

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The President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned organizations urge your intervention in a serious conflict which has reached crisis proportions in the eviction and impending eviction of hundreds of black families from their homes on the west side of Chicago.

A detailed statement of the nature of the problem is contained in a complaint filed in the U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, by the Contract Buyers League as plaintiffs against a variety of real estate firms engaged in contract sales, savings and loan and other banking institutions as defendants, in which it is charged that the defendants engaged in a conspiracy made possible through the active assistance of the Federal Housing Administration and local governmental units to deprive the plaintiffs of their civil rights.

These home buyers purchased their homes on contract ten to twelve years ago, and many, despite maintaining their regular monthly payments, find themselves so handicapped by unconscionable contract financing that they have, in fact, acquired very little equity in their homes. Despairing of negotiating an equitable financing of their home contracts with the deed holders of the property, they have sought relief in the federal court and, concurrently, initiated a payment strike. Neither of these remedies appear equal to the task of finding a just solution.

The unconscionable contract financing -- sales prices as high as twice the true value of the property and at the maximum legal interest rate allowable was made possible by a combination of wide spread housing bias against blacks and the flagrantly discriminatory practices of federal housing agencies.

Thus, the Federal Housing Administration refused to insure mortgages to blacks in changing neighborhoods.

Thus, the FHA, dominated by real estate interests, imposed on private lenders an adherence to these same blatantly discriminatory lending policies publicly enunciated by that agency.

Thus, the Federal Savings and Loan Deposit Insurance Corporation permitted savings and loan banks to issue unwise and even illegal

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JEWISH FEDERATION OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

mortgages to real estate speculators while refusing mortgages to black home-seekers, with the result that so many of the savings and loan banks failed and had to be taken over by the FSLDIC, that that agency now holds over 800 mortgages on property initially sold to these black families on contract and is administering these mortgages on the basis of the original grossly over-priced sales contracts.

Thus, black families desperately seeking decent housing for their families had no choice but to remain in deteriorated, rat-infested housing or paying unconscionably inflated prices by reason of the accommodation provided by discriminatory policies of federal agencies to real estate speculators who seized the opportunity offered by these circumstances to make large profits..

We turn to you with the conviction that you will want to avail yourself of the power of your high office to seek a just solution. We urge you to call together such regulatory bodies of the federal government as the Federal Housing Administration, the Federal Savings and Loan Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Community Relations Service, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the U.S. Department of Justice and such other arms of the Executive as can give assistance to a creative resolution of this matter.

We urge you to call upon these and all other parties in this dispute to join in an effort to right a serious wrong visited upon thousands of decent, hard-working people who otherwise must come to the inescapable conclusion that practicing the time honored American virtues may bring rewards to our white citizens but not to black Americans.

Respectfully yours,

American Jewish Congress

Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith

Chicago Board of Rabbis

Jewish Council on Urban Affairs

Jewish Labor Committee

Jewish War Veterans of the United States

National Council of Jewish  
Women

Union of America Hebrew Congregations

cc: Hon. Charles H. Percy

Hon. Ralph T. Smith

The Illinois Congressional Delegation



# Jewish Federation

of Metropolitan Chicago

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May 28, 1970

Mr. Robert S. Engelman  
2511 West 23rd Street  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Bob,

Although I am sure you have seen the enclosed letter from Albert Weiss of May 21st, I am enclosing a copy for your ready reference.

I had occasion yesterday to discuss this letter informally with Al. At that time I explained to him my view that any further involvement in this issue, particularly by the major Jewish organizations, can only help to create further confusion and division in our community. Although the letter does refer to the problem of Contract Buyers on the West side, an intervention by the national administration would almost certainly involve both the South side and West side buyers, in which case the whole issue would be boiling even higher than at the present time.

Al explained to me why ADL feels that the Federal government should take action, as indicated in the letter. Certainly there is some merit to this point of view. Nevertheless my own view is, in the face of all that has happened and continues to happen on this issue, that further involvement by the major Jewish organizations in the Contract Buyers problem is unlikely to help resolve the problem itself, and almost certainly will tend to exacerbate the sharp differences that the situation has created in the Jewish community.

The views expressed above are not necessarily those of the management, but they sure are mine!

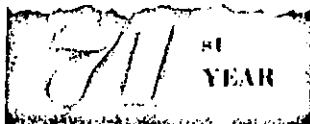
Sincerely,

James P. Rice

JPR/mr

cc: Jerome Comar

Maynard Wishner, Chairman, Special Committee on Urban Problems



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June 2, 1970

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Mr. Robert S. Engelman  
2511 West 23rd Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60608

Dear Bob:

Following our telephone conversation, Jim Rice favored me with a copy of his letter to you of May 28. I enclose copy of the final text of the letter to President Nixon which was mailed prior to Al Weiss' conversation with Jim. You will note it is signed by eight Jewish agencies concerned with community relations. The American Jewish Committee similarly is writing to Washington.

I understand the special pressures on the Federation from certain of its contributors which inhibit<sup>10</sup> but this is no reason for other of the Jewish agencies not to take action, if indicated. The Joint Jewish Conference on Urban Affairs was instituted by the Federation to provide a "Jewish presence" in solving the problems of the inner city. A majority of its participating agencies believes that this situation constitutes an appropriate occasion for such presence.

Jim is concerned that if the federal government were to respond as suggested here, the whole issue would be "boiling even higher than at the present time." We believe exactly the contrary. The issue already has boiled over. Only a neutral force, such as the federal government with its resources, can reduce the level of conflict which is bound to damage the Jewish community.

Our concern from the beginning of this dispute was that it would be conceived in both the black and white communities as a Negro-Jewish dispute with the Jews occupying the villains' role. As if to produce this very result, the contract sellers have just filed a well-publicized motion in federal court to disqualify Judge Will from further hearing the case because "they (the contract sellers) are all Jewish and Judge Will is prejudiced against them and in favor of the black plaintiffs."

As the letter to the President points out, the chief responsibility for producing this situation and now for resolving it lies with the federal government. This letter is a follow-up to previous of our efforts in Washington through the offices of Congressman Mikva, Senator Percy and others to have the federal government assume a

Mr. Robert S. Engelman

-2-

June 2, 1970

responsibility here. The letter puts the contract sellers in a less invidious position than they now find themselves in, in the public prints and elsewhere, and at the same time indicates to the black community that the Jewish community is not monolithic in opposition to its pleas for justice.

I understand that you will be at the ADL office on Friday on another matter. If you wish we can discuss this further at that time.

Sincerely,



A. Abbot Rosen

AAR/lwt

Enc.

cc: James P. Rice —  
Jerome Comar  
Maynard Wishner



# Should Rabbis Avoid Social Conflict?

Guest Editorial By RABBI ROBERT J. MARX, Director,

Chicago Federation, Union of American Hebrew Congregations

A strange change is occurring within our Jewish community, a change that finds parallels in the inter-religious community as well. The roles of our institutions seem to be inverted.

Our congregations, whether they like it or not, are increasingly finding themselves involved with social concerns — with the race problem, with conscientious objectors, with the poverty program. On the other hand, our secular agencies, which have traditionally confronted social injustices and racial issues, find themselves neck deep in inter-faith programs. The Anti-Defamation League conducts seminars for Christian clergymen; the American Jewish Committee is planning an inter-religious theological confrontation. This goes on while the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the United Synagog and the Chicago Board of Rabbis unite to sponsor Jewish participation in the Conference on Religion and Race.

Nor is this "inversion of interests" characteristic of Judaism alone. Catholic and Protestant representatives called in by our secular agencies to discuss inter-faith dialogue repeatedly seek to change the agenda. The urban crisis, rather than salvation, seems to be the entree they prefer at the ecumenical banquet.

Paradoxically, there is no evidence that the majority of Jews (or Catholics or Protestants for that matter) want their religion to be involved in social issues. A study in a recent issue of Trans-Action Magazine would lead us to believe that those who are most active church participants are least interested in social justice.

Now there are those who will rejoice at such statistics. "Keep your mouth shut, rabbi," I can hear them bleat, "The people who are supporting you and your breed really don't want you involved in controversy. If rabbis would be more religious then our problems would be solved and our young people would be retained for Judaism."

I am sickened by this kind of reasoning and feel it important to show why it is not only false, but pernicious as well.

1. In Judaism religion and ethics

personal morality.

2. In Judaism, the individual is constantly asked to subordinate his own individuality to the welfare of the community. In a brilliant essay on Judaism and Asceticism, the great philosopher of Zionism, Ahad Ha-Am dared to ask whether the Jewish community of his day was worthy of this subordination. The question remains a relevant one. Today we suggest the answer is negative. The crisis in Israel gave us a brief moment of greatness. Here was something that we could live for and identify with. Today the only crisis we can conceive is a threat to Israel or a recurrence of anti-Semitism. We suggest that there are crises of the spirit, crises of the community that we have not even begun to identify and confront.

3. The problem with the synagogue today is not that it is here or that it is neglected. Rather it is that it is boring. Future planning committees talk about building parking lots. They are cut off from the real issues of our day.

4. The real issues of our Judaism today are identical with the themes of our contemporary society, except that they must be seen through the bifocal vision of a unique Jewish role and history. It is nonsense to suggest that Judaism is better served by remaining away from these issues. To withdraw from the struggle for freedom for black people would not only be folly; it would be suicidal as well.

I'm not talking about slum landlords and credit merchants whom we must remove from the ghetto. (We must also point out that the black ghetto may be expected to echo calls for the removal of the "Goldsteins and Cohens" while remaining silent about the much more significant sources of ghetto exploitation, the telephone companies, the insurance giants, and the monopolistic utilities.) In truth, much more than a few bad apples are our concern. There are Jewish institutions now operating in black areas. The 24th and 29th wards, which are 98% black, are run by Jewish absentee politicians. There are Jewish social agencies, ostensibly serving the poor, but not always acting in the best interests of either the poor or the Jewish

welfarism?) The Jewish community is present, whether we like it or not, but Judaism is absent. It is silent. It is muted.

5. It is a deadly delusion to believe that Jewish institutions should remain aloof from the moral struggles of contemporary society. The fatal argument which we hear over and over again is that traditionally Jews as individuals, and not as official spokesmen of Jewish institutions, ought to be involved in the conflicts of our civilization. This argument suggests that we are a small and weak people and should not arouse the antagonism of a non-Jewish majority.

Nonsense! We are not that small, and we are certainly not weak! If justice arouses antagonism, then will silence avert it? If a sick majority is to once again turn against its Jews, will obsequious silence prevent it?

In 15th Century Spain, Jews as individuals prevented Jewish institutions from voicing their social concerns. In 20th Century Germany, Jews as individuals prevented Jewish institutions from voicing their social concerns. The efforts of these individuals, including the poetic Spaniard Samuel Ha-Nagid who was a corrupt advisor to a corrupt king, and the "enlightened Jews" of Germany produced a harvest of expulsion and extermination. Are we to listen to their contemporary descendants who would paralyze action by the spiritual institutions of Jewish life while giving a free hand to those who occupy their positions because of their Jewishness, but who are never called to account by the community that has favored them.

6. Judaism believes in the coming of the Messiah, or at least in a Messianic age. It strikes us as significant that the Messianic age is always in the future. The coming of the Messiah is always postponed. The only real heretical movements Judaism ever experienced were those which occurred when men announced that the Messianic age was at hand. What does this suggest? The task is always before us. The faith commands that we pursue justice. It is always elusive, it is always a step ahead of us.

This then is our poetry. It is our vision of a faith that is involved with