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CHOCOLATE TO RAINBOW CITY: THE DIALECTICS OF BLACK AND GAY
COMMUNITY FORMATION IN POSTWAR WASHINGTON, D.C., 1946-1978

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2011

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee

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Abstract

This dissertation historicizes popular assumptions which frame “black” and “gay” as exclusive urban identities and which brand black urban communities as embodiments of economic failure, disorderly heterosexuality and criminality and gay communities as embodiments of economic success, safety, urban renewal and whiteness. In order to denaturalize these assumptions my dissertation explores the material, political and discursive processes through which two adjacent Washington, D.C. geographies, Shaw and DuPont Circle, came to be understood as “black” and “gay” neighborhoods between the end of World War II and the 1978 mayoral election. The racial and sexual complexity of the populations who lived and traveled through DuPont Circle and Shaw in these years belie the ease with which Washingtonians map and inscribe homogenous racial and sexual identities onto them in the present day. I argue that the social movements formed by black and gay activists after World War II to combat both institutional structures of oppression and stigmatizing discourses that justified oppression became stages for redefinitions of the public meaning of “black” and “gay” in the urban context.

As postwar logics of mass consumption and commodification came to dominate the way Americans understood the difference between citizens and non-citizens, black and gay movements used claims to particular neighborhoods to rebrand themselves as deserving participants in American life. However, severe economic stratification between the neighborhoods where “black” and “gay” identities were inscribed made activist coalition between black and gay movements impossible and contributed to popular notions that blackness and gayness operated on the urban landscape in oppositional ways. While there may have been an opportunity for black and gay movements to work together, the politicization of the urban landscape as well as the intensification of racial and economic stratification in the postwar era necessarily limited the kinds of narratives black and gay social movements could tell about who belonged within their political constituency or

who was truly “black” or “gay.” This project then is less concerned with black and gay activism or agency around specific institutional oppressions. Instead, my dissertation interrogates the possibilities and limitations for stigmatized urban groups to rewrite public discourses that blamed them for the decline of the American city.

Acknowledgements

So often, writing a dissertation feels like a solitary endeavor, but without the support of a “village” of mentors, colleagues, friends and family from around the country this dissertation would not have come to fruition. My thanks here can only scratch the surface of the debt of gratitude I owe and hope to pay forward one day.

I must begin by thanking the funding organizations that have supported my research, teaching and writing. Thank you to the Office of Educational Equity, the National Science Foundation’s GK-12 program, the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, the Graduate College at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Department of History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

I am indebted to the many librarians and archivists who assisted me in my research over the past two years. My thanks to the staffs of the Kiplinger Research Library at the Historical Society of Washington, the Gelman Collection at the George Washington University Library and the Washingtoniana Division at the Martin Luther King Public Library in Washington, D.C.

My dissertation would not exist without the work of Mark Meinke. Ten years ago, Mark took it upon himself to found the Rainbow History Project with the explicit goal of “preserving the history” of Washington, D.C.’s LGBTQ community. While Washington, D.C.’s queer history has always been rich, prior to the Rainbow History Project, scholars had scant resources to pursue their interests in uncovering and analyzing D.C.’s queer past. With little help from others, Mark conducted hundreds of interviews, compiled tens of thousands of documents, crafted critical database resources and forged a critical relationship with the Historical Society of Washington. Mark did all of this with little interest in earning acclaim, fortune or even a graduate degree. Rather, he did it for the love of D.C.’s complex and diverse queer community. I, and every scholar invested

in LGBTQ history, owes him a debt of gratitude. Thank you Mark, I feel fortunate to call you a friend.

Thanks also to Rebecca Dolinsky and Phillip Clarke who have taken over the reins at Rainbow History and who are wonderful stewards of D.C. LGBTQ history in their own right.

Throughout my graduate career I have been privileged to be a part of reading groups and interdisciplinary writing seminars that enriched my thinking and afforded me space to air out my ideas. I would like to thank the members of my first research seminar, run by Professor Barrett in the fall of 2004. Many participants in that seminar were regulars at the Working Class History Reading Group, a graduate organized reading seminar that offered me a safe space to present my ideas in their nascent stages. My thanks to the faculty members who were regular participants in the group, Mark Leff and Kathy Oberdeck. As well as the graduate students who hosted our meetings and made up the backbone of its participants. Thank you, Tom Mackaman, Mike Rosenow, Will Cooley, Melissa Rohde, Janine Giordano Drake, Jason Kozlowski, Anthony Sigismondi, Julilly Kohler Hausmann, Stephanie Seawell, Kerry Pimblott, Martin Smith, Emily Pope Obeda, Zachary Sell, Anna Kurhajec and Ian Hartman.

During the 2010-2011 academic year I was fortunate enough to be a part of three life changing reading groups. All of which were critical in shaping the direction my dissertation project would take; The Newberry Urban History Seminar, the Queer Studies Reading Group and the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities fellows' seminar. My thanks to Kathryn Wegner who helped me to co-coordinate the Newberry group this year. Though I joined the Queer Studies Reading Group a little late in the game, I am so happy I did. Not only did I learn so much, but I made wonderful friends. Thank you to, Ryan Jones, Peter Campbell, Michelle Salerno, T.J. Tallie, Sarah Cassinelli, Mel Stanfill, Jean Lee, Durell Callier, Ricky Rodriguez, Martin Manalansan and Chantal Nadeau.

I cannot express the unmitigated thrill it was to be chosen as a Nicholson fellow with the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities. This honor not only offered me the time and space to complete my dissertation, the monthly fellows seminars were laboratories of inspiration. I left each with new ideas and methodological approaches that enriched my work. For that I must thank my 2010-2011 IPRH family, Bruce Levine, Tamara Chaplin, Erik McDuffie, Tim Cain, Ryan Griffis, Audrey Petter, Patricia Goldsworthy-Smith, Nicholas Brown, Urmitapa Dutta, Elizabeth Hoiem, Cory Holding, Nile Blunt, Kristine Nielsen, Jeffrey Droun and Sarah Frohardt-Lane.

The graduate faculty in the department of history has been wonderfully supportive of my dissertation project. David Roediger, Eizabeth Pleck and Erik McDuffie were kind enough to read proposals, chapters and conference papers that were integrated into this dissertation. Thank you all for your feedback. Professor Roediger, in particular, went above and beyond the call of duty in supporting my project over the past few years.

I am extremely grateful to the group of scholars that sat on my committee and who have mentored me over the past 8 years. John D’Emilio and Siobhan Somerville brought a wealth of experience and knowledge on queer studies to the table. Their questions, challenges and insights have enriched this project and opened my eyes to its potential in the future. Throughout my tenure through the program I have been fortunate enough to be guided by two co-advisors Vernon Burton and Jim Barrett. Few scholars are more invested in their student’s success than Professor Burton. He doggedly pursued funding opportunities on my behalf and was always there to hear out my ever shifting ideas about the dissertation project. More than that, Professor Burton opened the doors of his home and family to me from the moment I arrived on campus. Both he and his wife Georganne have stood by me during trying personal times. I will be forever indebted to their grace and kindness. Jim Barrett is not only a model scholar, but represents the kind of academic mentor I aspire to emulate in the future. Equal parts intellectually rigorous and patient Jim gave me the space

to allow my ideas to develop organically and pushed me only to realize the best possible dissertation within the goals I set for myself.

Over the last 8 years I have not only formed relationships with colleagues I have made the closest friends I have in this world. Were I to communicate how special each one of you is to me this acknowledgements page would balloon to the size of a small dissertation chapter. All I will say is that you've each taught me the meaning of friendship in your own way. Thank you for letting me be a part of your lives, Robyn Carter, John Stevenson, Bobby Robinson, William Kinsella, Ian Hartman, Ed Onaci, Sarah Frohardt-Lane, Anna Kurhajec, Brandon Mills, Amy Hasinoff, Julilly Kohler-Hausman, Melissa Prentice, Anthony Sigismondi, Brian Yates and Erica Hill-Yates. Thank you to Richard Mast, who knows why.

I come from a large and loving family, and I am grateful for their unconditional love as I worked my way through this program. Major shout outs to my uncles Chester and Steve, aunts Mereille, Marion and LaRue and cousins Monica, Mona Holmes Jenny, I love you guys. I thank my sister Rashida Holmes for teaching me the meaning of strength, perseverance and determination in the face of insurmountable odds. I love, respect and admire you. I dedicate this dissertation to my parents Gil Holmes and Joy Clarke-Holmes whose support and strength I have stood upon my entire life. You, quite simply, refused to believe that my pursuit of this degree would result in anything but the greatest success. In completing this phase of my life and beginning a new chapter I hope to one day be able to return the favor. I love you both dearly and thank you.

In April of 2007 I met my best friend, boyfriend and partner Kevin Rodgers. Your jokes uplift me, your smile enchants me, your support sustains me and your love inspires me. You put me on your back and dragged me across the finish line. There is little I can say or do to express what you mean to me other than this; I love you.

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Introduction

Logics of Commodification and the Production of Racial and Sexual Identities in Postwar Washington, D.C.

This dissertation historicizes popular assumptions which frame “black” and “gay” as exclusive urban identities and which brand black urban communities as embodiments of economic failure, disorderly heterosexuality and criminality and gay communities as embodiments of economic success, safety, urban renewal and whiteness.¹ In order to denaturalize these assumptions my dissertation explores the material, political and discursive processes through which two adjacent Washington, D.C. geographies, Shaw and DuPont Circle, came to be understood as “black” and “gay” neighborhoods between the end of World War II and the 1978 mayoral election. The racial and sexual complexity of the populations who lived and traveled through DuPont Circle and Shaw in these years belie the ease with which Washingtonians map and inscribe homogenous racial and sexual identities onto them in the present day. I argue that the social movements formed by black and gay activists after World War II to combat both institutional structures of oppression and stigmatizing discourses that justified oppression became stages for redefinitions of the public meaning of “black” and “gay” in the urban context.

As postwar logics of mass consumption and commodification came to dominate the way Americans understood the difference between citizens and non-citizens, black and gay movements used claims to particular neighborhoods to rebrand themselves as deserving participants in

¹ Institutional segregation between Queer studies and African American studies means that though there is a substantial literature confirming my characterization of public assumptions surrounding black and gay neighborhoods individually, there is less work which acknowledges and interrogates the mutual interdependence of the construction of racial and sexual identities in the United States. Some important examples include, Charles Nero, “Why Are the Gay Ghettos White,” in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Siobhan B Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*, Critical American Studies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004)

American life.² However, severe economic stratification between the neighborhoods where “black” and “gay” identities were inscribed made activist coalition between black and gay movements impossible and contributed to popular notions that blackness and gayness operated on the urban landscape in oppositional ways. While there may have been an opportunity for black and gay movements to work together, the politicization of the urban landscape as well as the intensification of racial and economic stratification in the postwar era necessarily limited the kinds of narratives black and gay social movements could tell about who belonged within their political constituency or who was truly “black” or “gay.”

Competing, parallel and intersecting black, white and LGBT community anxieties around the permeable boundaries of racial and sexual urban territory in postwar D.C. framed the importance of exerting control over the meaning of “black” and “gay” in the 1960s and 1970s. Prior to the war, the boundaries between D.C.’s racial and sexual geographies were clear and legible. With few exceptions black residency was limited to, “Anacostia,” which lay across the Potomac from the central city and where Frederick Douglass and other elite free blacks had made their homes.³ In the central city, African Americans lived in small clusters in Foggy Bottom and Georgetown, another free black and middle class enclave throughout the 19th century. The largest concentration of black population in the central city was a large section on the northwest side that included, just north of downtown, the Shaw area.⁴ As was the case in most cities, whites understood these black territories,

² Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003); Charles. McGovern, “The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America (review),” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34, no. 1 (2003): 69-71. Paul A. Passavant, “The Strong Neo-liberal State: Crime, Consumption, Governance,” *Theory & Event* 8, no. 3 (2005); Adam Mack, “Consumption Nation,” *Reviews in American History* 35, no. 2 (2007): 253-259; Shelley Nickles, “More is Better: Mass Consumption, Gender, and Class Identity in Postwar America,” *American Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (2002): 581-622.

³ Jacqueline M Moore, *Leading the Race: The Transformation of the Black Elite in the Nation’s Capital, 1880-1920* (Charlottesville, 1999).

⁴ Constance M. Green, *The Secret City, A History of Race Relations in the Nation’s Capital* (Princeton, 1967).

Shaw in particular, as a source of crime, disease and sexual immorality.⁵ Simultaneously, middle class black Washingtonians were concerned and embarrassed by further subdivided territories within their neighborhoods that were home to poor southern migrants. The demographic upheavals of the Second World War and the immediate postwar years unsettled D.C.'s stable racial and sexual geography, challenging the spatial security of white heteronormativity and black middle class respectability. During the nineteen forties, fifties and sixties federal policy makers, who oversaw D.C.'s government and private institutions devoted to the preservation of white residents' "privilege of place" argued that racial and sexual minorities would transform the nation's capital into an economic wasteland overrun by violent criminals and sexual psychopaths. Neighborhoods east of Rock Creek Park, like DuPont Circle that had once seemed assuredly white and middle class were "threatened" by the potential spread of blight and disorder. Simultaneously though the disruptions and anxieties of demographic change served as a launch pad for black and gay social movements to undermine anti-black and homophobic discourses that had erected exclusionary policies meant to keep black and white, as well as queer and normative separate. In doing so, black and gay social movements also reinstated new, stable social geographies that made sense of racial and sexual identities by mapping them onto specific spaces, this time in the name of justice and liberation.

For example, as the Shaw area gradually transitioned from a relatively stable black middle class enclave into one of the nation's worst "ghettos," white and black observers expressed concern that black inner city neighborhoods like Shaw were sites of both economic decline and sexual immorality that would spread, in the form of blight, into white neighborhoods. In response, black activists in Shaw in the 1960s and 1970s argued that black self determination or "community

⁵ James Borchet, *Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion, and Folklife in the City, 1850-1970*, Blacks in the New World (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Karl John Byrand, "Changing Race, Changing Place: Racial, Occupational, and Residential Patterns in Shaw, Washington D.C., 1880-1920" (University of Maryland, College Park, Geography, 1999). Charles Frederick Weller, *Neglected Neighbors: Stories of Life in the Alleys, Tenements and Shanties of the National Capital* (J. C. Winston, 1909).

control” over their neighborhood was essential to combating poverty and to reinstating the heterosexual reproduction of a black, middle class population. In the 1970s, as white gay activists attempted to organize a visible, recognized movement for sexual liberalism, they worked to attach gay commercial development and residency to one of the city’s few remaining white, middle class neighborhoods, DuPont Circle. This project then is less concerned with black and gay activism or agency around specific institutional oppressions. Instead, my dissertation interrogates the possibilities and limitations for stigmatized urban groups to rewrite public discourses that blamed them for the decline of the American city.

My framing of D.C.’s postwar history is built upon Lizabeth Cohen’s assertion that the major shift in American life, culture and politics after World War II can be explained by the rise of a “Consumer’s Republic.” Cohen argues that, after World War II, Americans became deeply invested in the potential for mass consumption to bring the nation, and the majority of its citizens into the modern era. This emotional investment in the power of mass consumption to revolutionize the American standard of living for the better, Cohen argues, encouraged Americans to commodify every aspect of their lives.

Mass consumption did not only deliver wonderful things for purchase—the televisions, air conditioners, and computers that have transformed American life over the last half century. It also dictated the most central dimensions of postwar society, including the political economy (the way public policy and the mass consumption economy mutually reinforced each other), as well as the political culture (how political practice and American values, attitudes, and behaviors tied to mass consumption became intertwined).⁶

At the heart of Cohen’s argument is the suggestion that the right to consume, in particular the right to display the trappings of middle class life in a suburban home or neighborhood, emerged as a national imperative, one that replaced society wide demands during the New Deal that the state provide a universal baseline of economic stability in the form of the social safety net. Critically, Cohen argues throughout her text that the increased segmentation and fragmentation of Americans

⁶ Cohen, 7-8.

into racially, economically and spatially stratified suburban “markets” made it less likely for Americans to see commonality in their struggles against the exigencies of racial discrimination, globalization, deindustrialization, inflation and other economic factors that compromised the “American way of life.” I take Cohen’s argument a step further and argue that the advent of postwar racial liberalism, suburbanization and the nation’s interest in urban renewal produced a racial and sexual commodification or branding of urban neighborhoods. For those living within racially and economically transitioning cities, broad trends towards the commodification of American life convinced the public that inner city neighborhoods were one black neighbor or one well publicized sex crime away from being branded “blighted,” “slum,” “in decline” or worst of all, a “ghetto.”⁷ These brands were more than descriptive terms, indeed their relationship to the material reality within a given neighborhood was often suspect. Still once branded, urban neighborhoods and their residents suffered severe material consequences ranging from urban renewal policies that threatened to displace residents; declining property values an evacuation of investment capital, shrinking job markets and heightened levels of police harassment and brutality.⁸

Black and gay social movements were inevitably in conversation with the commodification of inner city neighborhoods and the American city as a whole. My argument is not that black and gay movements responded only to the demands of the “free market” or that their organizing strategies were limited to packaging themselves for broad consumption. Rather, I interpret black

⁷ There is a significant literature on racial blockbusting which worked to produce a kind of “one drop” rule of racial proximity. *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago’s West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Stephen Grant Meyer, *As Long as They Don’t Move Next Door: Segregation and Racial Conflict in American Neighborhoods* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); W. Edward Orser, *Blockbusting in Baltimore: The Edmondson Village Story* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994); Robert A. Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of US Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993). While Arnold Hirsch has argued that fears of interracial sex contributed to the rapidity of racial turnovers in neighborhoods, the majority of this literature makes no reference to the importance of sexuality to postwar white flight. Arnold R. Hirsch, “Massive Resistance in the Urban North: Trumbull Park, Chicago, 1953-1966,” *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (1995)

⁸ Cohen, pp

and gay urban social movements as subject to logics of commodification. It is not a coincidence that both black and gay social movements interacted with the concept of “blight” and the constitutive unit “the ghetto” in postwar Washington. In postwar America, the “ghetto” emerged as a descriptive term for increasingly poor African American neighborhoods in the racially transitioning cities. Black sociologists Horace Cayton and St. Clare Drake were the first urban theorists to describe black neighborhoods on Chicago’s south side as akin to the Jewish ghettos of Western Europe.⁹ But also, the “ghetto” and its predecessor, “blight” became enmeshed within American political discourse as predictors of economic decline and of ever expanding zones of danger, tragedy and failure. To varying degrees African Americans and sexual minorities were directly implicated in the reproduction and spread of blight and the transformation of D.C. commercial districts into economic wastelands or residential “ghettos.” Indeed, black and gay activists in Washington, D.C. expressed frustration that in addition to being victims of racism and heterosexism that relegated them to neighborhoods and commercial districts that offered no future for their families or a threat to personal safety respectively, they were simultaneously blamed for the “declining” state of the nation’s capital.

However, while black and gay social movements posed revolutionary challenges to white supremacy and heterosexism, they were unable to escape the logics of commodification in their approach to organizing against oppression. For African Americans this meant the most prominent movement leaders and strategies for social advancement in Washington bought into the idea that public perceptions of urban landscapes had the power to determine an entire community’s economic future. For gay activists this emerged as a growing realization that only a gay movement attached to white, middle class neighborhoods, with white middle class men as its public face, could

⁹ Joe. W. Trotter “Introduction” *The New African American Urban History* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 1996); St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945).

alter public perceptions about homosexuality. Consciously and subconsciously, black and gay activists seemed aware of the vulnerability of “black” and “gay” brands and worked diligently to protect the stability of those brands in the public eye. Urban neighborhoods, particular intersections, traffic circles, public parks and commercial corridors served as billboards for the potentially positive or negative impact, African Americans or sexual minorities could exert on the city. For example, in nearly every news story on the “decline” of Shaw during the nineteen sixties and seventies focused on or made passing reference to the 14th street corridor or the 14th and U intersection. Prior to the war, the black owned businesses, black churches and black civic institutions that lined 14th street and U street symbolized the strength and achievements of D.C.’s black middle class. In the postwar years, however, few images communicated the deleterious impact of black criminality and sexual deviance as efficiently as making reference to “14th and U.” Similarly, when Washington media outlets or policymakers hoped to ramp up anxiety around homosexuality or “sexual perversion” in the postwar decades, they needed only to point to Lafayette Park or the DuPont traffic circle. Rather than opposing the cultural and ideological systems that transformed the DuPont traffic circle or the 14th and U intersections into sites of knowledge about their communities, black and gay activists worked to alter the public discourse on those and other symbolic spaces with varying degrees of success.

Though I examine black and social gay movements’ interactions with the “marketplace of ideas” African Americans and white sexual minorities did not enter that market on equal footing. Due to white people’s disproportionate access to the state, planning boards, the insurance industry, credit bureaus, media outlets and the amalgam of cultural and intellectual products that inscribe knowledge onto spaces and bodies more easily worked in the favor of D.C.’s white gay rights movement once white gay men and political organizations chose to enter the public and political sphere on their own volition. Though the LGBT population within the nation’s capital has always

been and remains economically and racially diverse, a small cadre of white gay male businessmen and activists were able to exert hegemonic control over the public meaning of “gay” until the 1978 mayoral election when the National Coalition of Black Gays and Lesbians—one of the first black LGBT groups in the country—openly split with the political will of the “official” gay rights movement. By then, though, DuPont Circle had emerged as D.C.’s unquestioned “gay ghetto” and public scripts around the inherent relationship between whiteness and gay identity had been set in stone.

Black urban activists, by contrast, interacted with multiple competing public imaginaries, those of the broad white populace and the African American community. Indeed the intra-racial conflicts historians characterize as the “radical break” between the civil rights and Black Power movements were, in urban areas, defined by African Americans inner city residents’ sense of their racial identity, their political orientation and their feelings surrounding what it meant to live in a ghetto in “modern” America. Just as the Black Power movement encouraged African Americans to make the “personal political” by rejecting white standards of beauty and by investigating their African ethnic heritage, black activists in Washington, D.C. attempted to rebrand “the ghetto.”¹⁰ Black urban activists first reframed the ghetto as the result of white institutional racism, rather than the failure of African Americans and eventually as the potential site for the reproduction of a stable, middle class black community.¹¹ In Washington, D.C. the rebranding of the Shaw ghetto took the

¹⁰ Algernon Austin, *Achieving Blackness: Race, Black Nationalism and Afrocentrism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Scot Brown, *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York City: New York University Press, 2003); Jeffery O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*, Reconfiguring American Political History (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2004); William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); Peniel E. Joseph, “Introduction: Toward a Historiography of the Black Power Movement,” in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹¹ Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967); James Boggs, “Notes on Black Political Power, A Conference on Poverty, Community and Power - Sponsored by the Association of Ecumenical Ministries and Center for Research on

form of a movement for black self determination or “community control” over urban renewal within the community. Rather than a site of inevitable tragedy and generational poverty, Shaw activists sought to transform their ghetto into an attractive place for black middle class families, into a site where black ambitions for upward mobility and economic success could be realized. However, like all rebranding efforts, black activists in Washington were reliant on significant financial investments from outsiders, specifically the Johnson and Nixon Administrations. Though the 1968 urban rebellion produced a powerful incentive for federal agencies to support the rebuilding and rebranding of Shaw, the sheer size of the project, the need to develop stable housing and profitable commercial areas combined with justified anxiety around outside exploitation doomed Shaw activist’s efforts to rebrand their community before they began.

My investigation into the racial and sexual branding of Shaw and DuPont Circle provides critical insight into the role the central city has played in establishing racial and sexual regimes in American society over the past five decades. I contend it is possible to understand the major shifts in American understandings of the boundaries between racial and sexual categories after World War II through the public imagination of the American city. After the war white ethnic suburbanization and increased black urbanization produced significantly greater levels of racial stratification between urban and non-urban areas. While African American urban residents were consistently stigmatized as a source of crime and immorality throughout the modern industrial era, the presence of Italian, Polish, Jewish and working class southern white communities in major cities through World War II meant that a host of white and quasi-white subgroups were marked as contributors to—or victims of—the dangers of city life.¹² As white ethnics left the city, the trappings of suburban life—the

Conflict Resolution” (September 27-28, 1965, n.d.), Julius Hobson Papers; James Boggs, “More Notes on Black Power”, October 12, 1965.

¹² Thomas Lee Philpott, *The Slum and the Ghetto: Immigrants, Blacks, and Reformers in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1978); Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*; Stanley Lieberson, *A Piece of the Pie: Blacks and White Immigrants since 1880*

single family home, membership in a homeowners association, the extension of credit for a car and modern household appliances—contributed to the flattening out of ethnic differences in favor of a homogenized “white identity.”¹³ The intensification of racial segregation, what Arnold Hirsh called “the second ghetto,” meant that the visible evidence of urban poverty and municipal neglect in the form of dilapidated housing, streets turned dark by malfunctioning street lights, broken windows, abandoned buildings, uncollected trash, sex work, businesses of ill-repute, including gay bars and drug dealing all became irretrievably linked to blackness in these years. Indeed, markers of whiteness and privilege were so firmly associated with the suburbs that America’s poorest cities, from Detroit to Cleveland to Newark to Washington, D.C. were also dubbed “chocolate cities” in the decades following the war.

Politically, the racialization of the American city contributed as much to the ideological realignment of the Democratic and Republican parties as did the struggle to end Jim Crow in the south.¹⁴ While a substantial literature on postwar African American urban history has debunked once popular myths that the urban theater of the civil rights movement began and ended with the destructive rebellions or “riots” of the late 1960s and early 1970s, federal, state and local governments approached rebellions as an “unexpected” crisis that threatened to tear the nation apart.¹⁵ In the wake of the rebellions the effectiveness of Richard Nixon’s “southern strategy” relied upon his ability to demonize or brand the urban north and in particular black ghettos, as the source

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹³ David R. Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005) Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream, A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American Society, 1760-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹⁴ Jon C. Teaford, *City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan America, 1850-1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979);

¹⁵ *The Kerner Report: The 1968 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

of a broad societal “chaos” resulting from high concentrations of African American residents and the failures of Keynesian liberalism to alleviate urban poverty.¹⁶ As the War on Crime and the subsequent War on Drugs worked to militarize police forces within cities, black neighborhoods were constructed as ultimate anti-citizen spaces, akin to foreign “jungles” where extralegal police tactics were sanctioned by voters who re-elected, locally and nationally, anti-crime politicians over and over again, even as they lived far away from urban centers.¹⁷

Similar developments marked a wide gulf between the sexual identity of the city and the suburbs in these years. As the rise of Cold War anxiety demanded the investigation of any and all sources of subversion to the “American” way of life and emphasized that the nuclear family would form an essential line of “civil defense” against communism, homosexuality emerged as one of the greatest domestic threats to national security. Anti-homosexual anxiety was particularly potent in America’s major cities and suburbs as urban male homosexuals took on the guise of the “sexual psychopath” during a wave of postwar urban sex crime panics. In the early postwar years, city parks, bridge underpasses and playgrounds were transformed from wholesome sites of juvenile recreation to haunts for roaming “perverts” engaged in public “indecent” or worse hunting ground for psychopaths seeking to pick off unsuspecting children. Broadly, it was believed that the corruptive influence of LGBT people, white gay men in particular, added to the danger of urban life and contributed to the economic decline of central cities. As the “good” sixties became the “bad” sixties within conservative discourse, urban homosexuality was linked with drug addiction and homelessness as part of a galaxy of attractive and dangerous magnets that drew “innocent” white suburban kids from their homes and drew them into the bisexual free love environs of the inner

¹⁶ Joseph A. Aistrup, *The Southern Strategy Revisited: Republican Top-Down Advancement in the South* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996); Reg Murphy, *The Southern Strategy* (New York: Scribner, 1971).

¹⁷ Thomas Byrne Edsall & Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction* (New York, 1991); and Michael Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York, 2005); Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, 2008)

city.¹⁸

While the analytical scale of the preceding narrative was broad, many of the developments outlined above played out on smaller scales. If “chocolate” cities like Philadelphia, Chicago or Washington, D.C. became the focus of conservative critiques of liberalism and sites infamous for high crime and incarceration rates, public imaginings of specific neighborhoods—Philly’s “north side,” Chicago’s “south side” and “west side” or D.C.’s “Shaw”—were central to the public discourse on the racial identities of the cities as a whole. The same is true for the way San Francisco’s “Castro,” New York’s “Greenwich Village,” Los Angeles’ “West Hollywood” or D.C.’s “DuPont Circle” are used to make broad claims about the sexual identities of cities. Across the country, specific neighborhoods illustrate popular assumptions about the city, animate political discourses and ground our desires for and fears of “the city”.

My interest in the racial and sexual branding of two neighborhoods in the nation’s capital forces a reconsideration of the major themes of American urban history, African American urban history and LGBT studies. Washington D.C.’s comparative absence from American history till this point is understandable. Washington, D.C. lacked the racial/ethnic diversity and industrial based economies that defined how most American scholars imagined “the big city” for most of the 20th century. Urban history’s fundamental interest in the relationship between industrial revolutions, the urbanization of agricultural communities and the diversification of American life via immigration and migration, did not play out as neatly in D.C. as it did in places like Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee,

¹⁸ Julie Abraham, *Metropolitan Lovers: The Homosexuality of Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Estelle Freedman, “Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920-1960,” in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History, Critical Perspectives on the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989). George Chauncey, “The Postwar Sex Crime Panic,” in *True Stories from the American Past* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 160-178; Andrea Friedman, “Sadists and Sissies: Anti-pornography Campaigns in Cold War America,” *Gender & History* 15, no. 2 (2003): 201-227; Robert O. Self, “Sex in the City: The Politics of Sexual Liberalism in Los Angeles, 1963-79,” *Gender & History* 20, no. 2 (2008): 288-311; Robert Aldrich, “Homosexuality and the City: An Historical Overview,” *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (Special Issue 2004): 1719-1737; Fred Fejes, “Murder, Perversion, and Moral Panic: The 1954 Media Campaign Against Miami’s Homosexuals and the Discourse of Civic Betterment,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 3 (July 2000): 305.

New York or Oakland. These cities, whose factories offered higher wages than could be earned on the farm and whose vaudeville, tenderloin districts and “strolls” offered sensual temptations for the eyes and ears and who became the “arsenals of democracy” became suffused within academics imagining of the city and urban history.¹⁹

The existing secondary literature on Washington, D.C. reflects the city’s separation from the mainstream within urban history, African American history and LGBTQ studies. The most visible literatures on the nation’s capital tend to focus on the city’s architectural history, the uniqueness of L’Enfant’s plan for the city’s layout, the city’s complicated relationship to slavery in the 19th century the elite free black communities who lived across the river in Anacostia and the tumultuous nature of politics under the Barry Administration.²⁰ Indeed, with the exception of the sensational biographies and exposes on Marion Barry’s Administration nearly every major study of D.C., from books to dissertation investigates the city’s history from the 19th century through the 1930s.

While the number of studies on the interwar and postwar decades in other cities has continued to balloon, scholars have virtually ignored the nation’s capital in those years. Some exceptions do exist. Howard Gillette’s book *Howard Gillette, Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995) is a long

¹⁹ McShane, Clay. “The State of the Art in North American Urban History.” *The Journal of Urban History* 32, no. 4 (2006); Campbell, Marne L. “Composing Metropolis: New Approaches to African American Urbanization in the Late Twentieth Century.” *Journal of Urban History* 35, no. 2 (January 2009): 306-313; Cohen, Elizabeth. “Is There an Urban History of Consumption?” *Journal of Urban History* 29, no. 2 (2003); Barrett, James R. *Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago’s Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

²⁰ Horton, James Oliver. “The Genesis of Washington’s African American Community.” In *Urban Odyssey: A Multicultural History of Washington, D.C.*, edited by Francine Curro Cary. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press,) 1996; Karl John Byrand, “Changing Race, Changing Place: Racial, Occupational, and Residential Patterns in Shaw, Washington D.C., 1880-1920” (University of Maryland, College Park, Geography, 1999) Kathleen M. Lesko, Carroll R. Gibbs, and Valeries Melissa Babb, *Black Georgetown Remembered: A History of its Black Community from the Founding of “The Town of George” in 1751 to the Present Day* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991); M.A. Fitzpatrick, ““A Great Agitation for Business’: Black Economic Development in Shaw.” *Washington History* 2, no. 2 (1991 1990); Harry S. Jaffe and Tom Sherwood, *Dream City: Race, Power, and the Decline of Washington, D.C* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Jonathan Agronsky, *Marion Barry: The Politics of Race* (Lanham, NY: British American Publishing, 1991).

history of federal planning in the nation's capital. Gillette's interest in characterizing the incongruity between D.C.'s role as the nation's capital and the federal government's inability to plan around or conceal black poverty is a common theme within the existing D.C. literature.²¹ Another common theme within the postwar literature is that with few exceptions D.C.'s postwar activist class were outsiders who traveled to the nation's capital to support national civil rights causes and who, almost by accident, stumbled into local organizing. Anne Valk's work on women activists in the 1960s and 1970s, Brett Beemyn's brief analysis of postwar gay socializing after World War II and David Johnson's sustained examination of early gay rights organizing by Mattachine all weave narratives that emphasize the influential roles of outsiders, rather than native Washingtonians to the city's postwar history.²² As trends within both African American, LGBT and urban history seek to draw continuity between pre and postwar activism, D.C. feels like a major outlier.

However, in any ways, D.C.'s uniqueness is, in reality, makes it an ideal predictor for the significant shifts in urban activism, economy and governance that scholars identify as the hallmarks of "neoliberalism." For example, one of the most important narratives of postwar urban history is that from the end of the war through the "urban crisis" of the 1980s, the "inner city": became severely divorced from images of American prosperity, independence and progress. From Kennedy to Reagan, the inner city became understood as increasingly "dependent" on suburban areas and "inner city residents," racialized as black, were understood as the nation's "dependent class." Few cities better exemplify the shifts in the nation's imagining of the urban and the inner city than the

²¹ Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995); Crystal Yvonne Anderson, *The Early Years of Metrorail: A Lost Opportunity for Revitalization in the Shaw community, Washington, D.C.*, 1995; Russello Ammon, Francesca. "Commemoration Amid Criticism: The Mixed Legacy of Urban Renewal in Southwest Washington, D.C." *Journal of Planning History* 8, no. 3 (2009): 175 -220.

²² Valk, Anne M. *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Brett William Beemyn, "A Queer Capital: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Life in Washington, D.C., 1890-1955" (PhD, University of Iowa, 1997); David Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: the Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

nation's capital. The first major city to achieve a majority black population, Washington D.C. had been a dependent subsidiary of the federal government since 1874. Despite brief moments, namely immediately after World War II the rapid arrival of returning veterans allowed the Board of Trade to proclaim Washington the nation's "boomtown," the city's significant black population suffered through cycles of perpetual unemployment, inadequate housing and reliance upon charity from the federal government. Even after achieving quasi home rule in 1967, D.C.'s majority black council and black mayors found themselves dependent upon ever dwindling federal funds. In this way, D.C. predicted the fate of black regime cities like Detroit, Cleveland or Newark, all cities where African Americans achieved political power only as cities were permanently marked as dead zones for economic advancement and growth.

Moreover, D.C. is the ideal city to investigate the central role logics of commodification direct and shape the public imaginary and shifts in economic development in the postwar decades. As the nation's capital no other city is so on display as Washington, D.C. From the initial L'Enfant plan to the development of the Smithsonian complex, Washington, D.C. is one of the nation's most well planned cities. Simultaneously though, as Howard Gillette has argued, D.C.'s lack of a municipal government means that those areas not directly related to displaying symbols of national pride or encouraging tourism have, historically been neglected. However, because D.C. became a majority black so many years earlier than other "crisis" cities, it was also one of the first to experience a racially reverse trend in ghettoization. Specifically, white ghettos, that developed in neighborhoods like DuPont Circle were not only racially isolated from the remainder of the city, housing and rental prices skyrocketed in those areas, much as they had in black urban neighborhoods for most of the 20th century as a result of residential segregation. However, unlike black ghettos where high rents represented another manifestation of institutional racism, high property value in the emerging gay ghetto signaled a major sea change in how Americans understood the city during the 1970s. No

longer symbols of the “anti-citizenship” of African Americans, gay ghettos transformed into a city’s most valuable commodity, used to attract white middle class residents back into the city. The postwar decades are essential for understanding the relationship between public assumptions around blackness and gayness directly influenced the success with which white urban ghettos, neighborhoods that would be jumping off points for gentrification, emerged in Washington and around the country during the 1970s.

Narratives that emphasize the relationship between the development of industrial economies, rural to urban migrations and myths of expanded freedom and independence have also produced a critical lacuna within both LGBT and urban African American studies that this project addresses. As Scott Herring has argued, LGBT studies have imbibed and reproduced the most optimistic myths about the relationship between industrial economies, urbanization and expanded freedom for groups and individuals.²³ John D’Emilio’s groundbreaking essay “Capitalism and Homosexuality” and subsequent monograph *Sexual Politics and Sexual Communities* laid the groundwork for a generation of scholars who depicted the formation of gay communities and political subjectivities using familiar imagery of migration, self reconsideration and eventually political organization. Historical research into the gay liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s identified those movements as the natural outgrowth of urban civil rights and Black Power movements.²⁴ Herring and other queer theorists have criticized this literature for creating a “metronormative” bias within queer studies, one that frames the city as a “refuge” against the violence and backwardness of the “rural.” Herring’s critique of metronormative bias within queer studies is part of an emerging literature that details the way LGBT political strategies have become

²³Scott Herring, *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Scott Herring, “Out of the Closets, Into the Woods: RFD, Country Women, and the Post-Stonewall Emergence of Queer Anti-urbanism,” *American Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2007): 341-372; Maynard, Steve. “‘Without Working?’ Capitalism, Urban Culture and Gay History.” *Journal of Urban History* 30 (2004).

²⁴ Brett Beemyn, “The Silence is Broken: A History of the First Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual College Student Groups,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 2 (2003).

dependent on characterizing the homophobia of stigmatized spaces, be they the American “heartland” or the “terrorist” Middle East, as a means of shoring up white queer populations close relationship with modernity, American nationalism and the imperial project.²⁵ However, in rejecting the city as a site of analysis, Herring and others miss the ways in which these patterns of othering—in service to the development of gay political subjectivity—have their origins in the racially transitioning city. As my work demonstrates, in the name of political expediency, white gay male activists and entrepreneurs in Washington, D.C. made conscious decisions about who could be counted as part of Washington’s gay “constituency” and worked to determine the geographic boundaries of that constituency. Indeed, any suggestion that the development of gay political subjectivity was based purely in characterizing “the city” vs. “the rural” ignores the racialization of the American city detailed above. It is necessary then to examine cities like Washington on a smaller scale, interrogating how urban spaces took on not only gay identities, but the constitutive elements of metronormative/homonormative communities, i.e. high rates of home ownership, “exciting” night life and offered residents easy access to high end grocery and retail outlets, consumptive options that, in the Consumer’s Republic, lay at the heart of American citizenship.

Systematic employment, housing and political discrimination against urban African Americans from the moment of their arrival has encouraged black studies scholars to couch their narratives of migration and community formation in less optimistic terms. Indeed, from the publication of St. Clare Drake and Horace Cayton’s *Black Metropolis* to William Julius Johnson’s work on the urban underclass, the academic study of black urbanization has focused on the various ways African Americans were unable to take advantage of the freedom and independence the city offered.²⁶ However, over the past two decades African American urbanists have dismissed the

²⁵ Jasbir K Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007)

²⁶ Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto, 1890-1930* (New York: Harper, 1971); Allan Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Seth Scheiner,

ghetto synthesis as overly negative choosing to focus on the agency of black migrants and activists who found joy, triumph and victory acknowledging the stifling structures that produced and reproduced black poverty. Black feminist historians and black queer theorists have done the most work to point out the ways in which black studies' scholars' emphasis on institutional racism has justified an elision of black women and LGBT people from inclusion within the narrative of major moments in African American history despite significant evidence of their presence.²⁷ Indeed as my work indicates, for many prominent black activists in Washington, D.C. the ideal realization of black agency would relegate black women to the roles of wives and reproducers of the next generation of children and render invisible the presence of queer black Washingtonians. While my project does little to recover the voices and experience of black LGBT Washingtonians, my focus on the stakes of spatial reputation for D.C.'s black activists demands attention to the role sexuality played in black understandings of their communities decline and potential renewal.

A final note before I begin. Throughout the dissertation I refer to gay and queer people, bodies, constituencies and spaces. When referring to "gay" spaces or "gay" communities prior to the 1970s, I exclusively refer to bars that catered to white gay men after World War II. I imagine those spaces, which in Washington were cluttered densely in downtown, sprinkled in DuPont Circle and dotted in Georgetown and other wealthy neighborhoods west of Rock Creek park as "gay"

Negro Mecca: A History of the Negro in New York City, 1865-1920 (New York: New York University Press, 1965); Kenneth Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976); Thomas Philpott, *The Slum and the Ghetto: Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago, 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); James Borchert, *Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion, and Folklife in the City, 1850-1970* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980); Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²⁷ Phillip Brian Harper, "The Evidence of Felt Intuition: Minority Experience, Everyday Life, And Critical Speculative Knowledge," in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Dwight A. McBride, "Straight Black Studies," in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Charles Nero, "Why Are the Gay Ghettos White," in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); William J. Spurlin, "Culture, Rhetoric and Queer Identity," in *James Baldwin Now* (New York City: New York University Press, 1999); Rinaldo Walcott, "Outside in Black Studies," in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

because they catered to a constituency that became the backbone of the public “gay community” during the 1970s. In referring to “queer” constituencies, bodies and spaces I borrow from the work of Cathy Cohen who has challenged queer theorists to imagine queer not merely as a category of sexuality, but one of hyper marginality. Using Cohen’s analysis, queer belongs to those sexually non-normative spaces and zones without institutional representation within either black or gay communities. For example, within postwar Shaw it becomes possible to imagine queer constituencies as a diverse range of blacks engaged in subversive economies within their community including drug dealing, heterosexual and same-sex prostitution and drag performance. Indeed, the linkages between the narcotics trade and homosexuality as evidence of community decline speak to the intense marginality of non-normative sexuality within black conceptions of “respectable” black identity or “queer.” Simultaneously, I identify commercial spaces in black neighborhoods that catered to black men and women seeking same-sex relations and socialization as “queer” as a response to the racialized spatial proscriptions placed around the boundaries of “gay identity” as it developed in the 1970s.²⁸

²⁸ Cathy J. Cohen, “Punks, Bullsaggers, and Welfare Queens,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies* 3, no. 4 (October 1997): 437.

Chapter 1

Producing ‘Shaw’: Blight, Decline and the Branding of a Black Ghetto

Before the mid 1960s, the 675 square acre area, bounded to the west by 16th street NW, to the northeast by Florida Ave NW, to the east by N. Capitol Street NE and to the South by M street NW, was neither a “black ghetto” nor was it called “Shaw.” To be sure, the area’s population had become almost entirely African American between the 1890s and the 1920s.²⁹ Moreover, the territory east of 9th street NW was severely impoverished and contained “slum conditions” that captured the attention and fear of white and black middle class Washingtonians. But the area’s identity as one of the nation’s capitals “most shameful ghettos” was only, gradually, constructed over the two decades following the Second World War. It was only at the end of that process, in 1966, in the midst of an organized social movement for neighborhood self-determination that its boundaries were drawn and it was named “Shaw.”³⁰ Prior to war, the territory that I will refer to as “the Shaw area” was divided into a number of economically and culturally segregated black neighborhoods. Before the war, the complex lines of intra-racial class distinction marked every section of the nation’s capital that contained large concentrations of African Americans from the Anacostia neighborhoods across the Potomac River to the row houses of Georgetown. Still, few black areas were so clearly spatially divided as the Shaw area, where, arguably, the highest concentration of the nation’s “talented tenth” lived just north and west of 9th street NW. Class distinctions were reflected in Shaw’s built environment as middle class enclaves to the west contained clear separations between

²⁹ Traceries, *The Northern Shaw-Strivers Cultural Resources Survey, Phase II Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: The D.C. Preservation League, 1993), 30-40, The Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center For African American History and Culture, *The Black Washingtonians: The Anacostia Museum Illustrated Chronology* (Washington, D.C.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005), 157-161.

³⁰ Prior to the official labeling of this geography as Shaw in 1966 I refer to it in a number of ways. The first attempt to label the entire area as a cohesive whole was in 1952 when the Washington Post ran a series of stories on the 2nd police precinct and dubbed the Shaw area “the wickedest precinct.” Once the area became part of federal urban renewal plans it was known as the “Northwest Renewal Area” and eventually the “Shaw Urban Renewal Area.” When not using those monikers and discussing the area prior to the 1960s I refer to it as “the Shaw area” to signal that the label “Shaw” is the product of a specific historical process.

residential and major commercial areas, and impoverished neighborhoods to the east were defined by high rates of mixed-use development and impoverished, non-respectable southern migrants. These economic distinctions were socially enforced by the existence of exclusive black civic institutions and by strict mores that marked particular geographies and bodies as either “respectable” or “lower class” [Figure 1.1].

By the end of the 1960s, however, economic segregation in the Shaw area was, almost entirely, a thing of the past. On the eve of the 1968 D.C. rebellion, Shaw was universally understood within white and black public imaginations as a singular black community or “ghetto” known as “Shaw.” This chapter traces the gradual dissolution of the material and imagined boundaries between Shaw neighborhoods from the end of World War II to the 1960s and outlines the production and branding of “Shaw” as a black “ghetto” in the midst of the Civil Rights-Black Power era.

This chapter, like so many works on postwar black urban communities is interested in historicizing the steep descent in living standards and quality of life potential for African Americans in inner city neighborhoods between the end of World War II and the wave of urban rebellions from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s. In that sense, this chapter builds upon a vast historiographical debate over what matters in postwar urban history that began with what Joe W. Trotter calls—and critiques as—the “ghetto synthesis.”³¹ Urban historians and sociologists interested in understanding the origins of the “urban crisis” in the 1960s and 1970s produced a score of work that focused on the social and structural impediments that severely limited prospects for African Americans upward

³¹ Joe W. Trotter’s seminal work *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985) was the first place he laid out his critique of the ghetto synthesis arguing that southern migrants had not moved out of the rural south to move into ghettos. Another helpful review of the ghetto synthesis literature is Kenneth L. Kusmer, “The Black Urban Experience in American History” in Darlene Clark Hine, ed., *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 91-122.

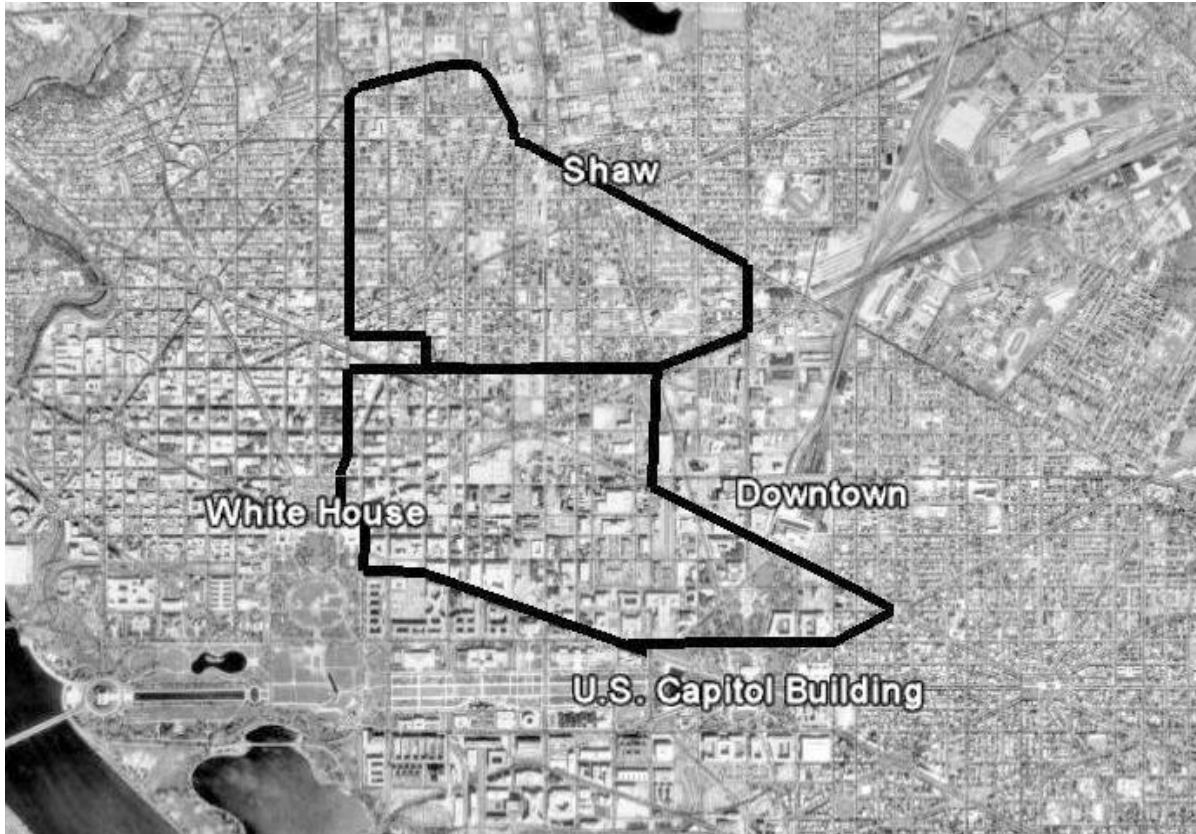


Figure 1.1, “Shaw in relation to Downtown.” This map was created using open source Google Earth software and the following sources. The boundaries of “downtown” are derived from the records of Downtown Progress and were taken from National Capital Area Realtor, “Downtown Progress”, June 1963, Albert J. Headley Papers Box 35, Folder “Downtown Progress, 1963.” Washington Public Library, MLK Library, Washingtoniana Division. The boundaries of Shaw are adapted from “The Shaw School Urban Renewal Area, 1969” Walter Fauntroy Papers Box 26 Folder 26, Gelman Collection, George Washington University Library.

mobility from generation to generation.³² African American urbanists, most notably Joe W. Trotter and Raymond Mohl were the first to respond to the ghetto synthesis in the 1980s and 1990s, arguing that historians should emphasize black “agency” in the decision to migrate to large cities and to organize against the institutional racisms that produced the devastating living conditions in black urban communities.³³ Inspired by Mohl and Trotter’s work, a wave of postwar urban scholarship in recent years has expanded upon the “agency” model to bring African American activism into conversation with the global economic patterns that remade urban life and the organizing traditions that constituted the “long” civil rights movement.³⁴

The intellectual descendents of Mohl and Trotter have, almost universally, rejected the use of the term “ghetto” to describe the shifting historical trajectories of African Americans in the inner city after World War II. As Trotter argued in 1985, ghetto synthesis scholars had used the term to

³² Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto, 1890-1930* (New York: Harper, 1971); Allan Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Seth Scheiner, *Negro Mecca: A History of the Negro in New York City, 1865-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1965); Kenneth Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976); Thomas Philpott, *The Slum and the Ghetto: Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago, 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); James Borchert, *Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion, and Folklife in the City, 1850-1970* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980); Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983). In Arnold R. Hirsch, “Second Thoughts on the Second Ghetto,” *Journal of Urban History* 29, no. 3 (March 2003): 298-309, Hirsch has argued that the 1968 Kerner Commission should be counted as a critical part of the “ghetto synthesis” literature. *The Kerner Report: The 1968 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

³³ What could be called the “agency thesis” dominated African American urban history during the 1990s. Raymond A. Mohl and Kenneth W. Goings ed., *The New African American Urban History* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 1996); Earl Lewis, “Connecting Memory, Self, and the Power of Place in African American Urban History,” *Journal of Urban History* 21, no. 3 (March 1995): 347-371.

³⁴ Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland, Politics and Society in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women’s Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar’s Palace: Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon, 2005); Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia, Politics and Culture in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006); Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009). On the long movement see, Jaqueline Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and The Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91 (2005), Jeanne Theoharis, “Black Freedom Studies: Re-imagining and Redefining the Fundamentals,” *History Compass* 4, no. 2 (2006).

paint a “tragic” image of “black institutional life.”³⁵ This chapter, returns to that concept in order to understand how “the ghetto”, as a political commodity or brand, was used by whites to produce knowledge about blackness, by African Americans to make sense of the decline of their communities and by black activists to frame their attempts to undo institutional racism. Interrogating the branding of “Shaw” as black ghetto, reveals the false distinction between the federal policies and discriminatory economic systems that limited opportunity for inner city African Americans and the emotional—oftentimes gendered and sexual anxieties—that drove black discontent and compelled African Americans to organize against discrimination.

The dissolution of Shaw’s economically divided social geography occurred within the crucible of postwar federal urban renewal policy, black middle class emigration, the neighborhood’s economic decline and the proliferation of vice economies and queer sexuality on Shaw’s public landscape. As the nation transitioned out of the Second World War, domestic economic issues once again topped the federal agenda. During the war, a coalition of big-city mayors and urban-based congressmen had raised warning bells about the challenges of maintaining economic growth in American metropolises as wartime industries decommissioned or relocated to suburban areas in time with the reduction of fighting overseas.³⁶ Urban experts warned that housing shortages, urban congestion and industrial flight threatened to make the city permanently unattractive to the “middle class.”³⁷ Though congressional debate on the ills of the nation’s largest cities rarely referenced race, local media outlets were eager to locate the origins of urban problems within expanding inner city black neighborhoods. Warning bells against the growing urban crisis rang loudest in Washington, D.C., where black poverty became a national embarrassment. After touring wartime housing for

³⁵ Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*, Appendix 1.

³⁶ Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Robert M. Fogelson, *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

³⁷ Eric Avila and Mark H. Rose, “Race, Culture, Politics, and Urban Renewal,” *Journal of Urban History* 35, no. 3 (March 1, 2009): 335 -347.

industrial laborers in the nation's largest cities, *Washington Post* reporter Agnes Meyer skewered Congress for allowing the growth of black "slums" to compromise the physical and moral health of white war workers in the capital city.

In my journey through the war centers I have visited the worst possible housing. But not in the negro slums of Detroit, not even in the Southern cities, have I seen human beings subjected to such unalleviated wretchedness as in the alleys of our own city of Washington. These alley dwellings and street slums must go! That is an old cry. At this moment another congressional hearing on housing and slum clearance is in progress. Statistics are again being piled up on the crime, delinquency, tuberculosis and venereal diseases that rise like a pestilential fume from these overcrowded regions for war workers and lack of Negro housing have congested these areas more than ever, have made slums areas of adjacent properties and increased all the social and economic problems that even in normal times determine the living of the Negro in a large city.³⁸

While most historians of postwar urban renewal cite the 1949 Housing Act as the beginning of a decade of unsuccessful federal investment in raising urban living standards, Congress had already passed the D.C. Redevelopment Act three years earlier, making D.C. a guinea pig for federal solutions to urban problems.³⁹ Both acts authorized states and municipalities to identify, purchase, bulldoze and redevelop "blighted" areas of the city. When federal "slum clearance" went national it devastated black communities around the country, displacing hundreds of thousands of black people over the next three decades. During Congressional debate on 1954 amendments to the 1949 Housing Act, corporate backers of federal slum clearance rebranded these policies as "urban renewal."⁴⁰ Black urban civil rights and anti-poverty activists quickly took to mocking the restorative implications of the term, arguing that federal policies should, more accurately be called "Negro removal."⁴¹ Indeed, in many cities, the destruction wrought by urban renewal became a rallying cry

³⁸ Agnes Meyer, "Capital Sets Record For U.S. in Unalleviated Wretchedness of Slums; Negro Housing: Dismal Record," *The Washington Post*, February 6, 1944, B1.

³⁹ Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995).

⁴⁰ Wendell Pritchett, "Politics and the American City, 1940-1990," *Journal of Urban History* 34, no. 2 (January 2008): 209-220.

⁴¹ Steven Cord, "Urban Renewal: Boon or Boondoggle?," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 33, no. 2 (April 1, 1974): 184-186; John H. Lindquist and Charles M. Barresi, "Ghetto Residents and Urban Politics:

for black civil rights activists to divest from liberal interracial anti-poverty boards and commissions that maintained close ties to city governments in favor of radical protest organizations during the 1960s.⁴²

Not only did postwar urban renewal send bulldozers into the most impoverished inner city black neighborhoods and spark new innovations in black protest movements, it spawned a new public discourse that raised the stakes of spatial reputation for all black urban communities. Recent re-evaluations of the 1949 Housing Act have derided the law for generating “more paperwork than buildings.”⁴³ Yet that paperwork—filled out by white planners as they toured through black neighborhoods and sensationalized by white media outlets who sought to fan the racial anxieties of fleeing whites—mapped new social geographies that collapsed intraracial boundaries between black neighborhoods and emphasized group culpability for urban problems that were, in reality, the result of institutional racism. Derogatory assessments of sexual practices in black communities became a crucial way to highlight the depth to which poverty had marred the urban landscape while also suggesting that no amount of federal action could undo what was wrong with black urban areas. Before Daniel Patrick Moynihan laid the blame for the nation’s urban crisis at the feet of the black matriarch within the black home, federal planners and white media outlets merged their assessment of downward trends in black neighborhood development with sensational images of crime, vice and queer sexuality on black streets. Significant black middle class emigration out of inner city areas—in the case of the D.C. metro area, into northern D.C. and Prince George’s Maryland—exacerbated perceptions that black urban residency was inextricably linked with generational poverty.⁴⁴ In the

Attitudes toward Urban Renewal,” *Law & Society Review* 5, no. 2 (November 1, 1970): 239-250; P. J.

Madgwick, “The Politics of Urban Renewal,” *Journal of American Studies* 5, no. 3 (December 1, 1971): 265-280.

⁴² Raymond A. Mohl, “Race and Housing in the Postwar City: An Explosive History,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1998-) 94, no. 1 (April 1, 2001): 8-30.

⁴³ Jon C. Teaford, “Urban Renewal and Its Aftermath,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): 443-65,

⁴⁴ Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

nation's capital many white and black Washingtonians seemed convinced that once respectable, middle class black neighborhoods north of downtown were no longer distinguishable from the rest of the chocolate city. Indeed, during the 1950s white media reports declared that northwest black Washington had become the “wickedest precinct” and white and black Washingtonians alike became critical of the area's declining “moral health.” Even though “slum clearance” never came to the Shaw area, the transformation of northwest black Washington's many neighborhoods into the “Northwest Renewal Area” cleared away decades of work to manufacture a “respectable,” if exclusive, black middle class identity.

Yet, the flattening of barriers between Shaw neighborhoods in the 1960s coincided with national and local moves within the civil rights and Black Power movements towards a more radical black politics and, by proxy, unified black identity. In Washington, D.C. a new generation of black community leaders and activists repositioned the loss of black middle class residency and the community's descent into a “ghetto” as an opportunity for the production of a geographically and politically unified black community called “Shaw.” Taking advantage of the Johnson Administration's interest in community controlled urban renewal and responding to a powerful demand for freedom from the antipoverty experimentation of the federal government, black activists argued that with proper support, “Shaw” could become a black ghetto that defied the inevitability of blight and decline.

Prior to World War II, African Americans living north of downtown lived and traveled through a complicated social geography that subdivided the area into multiple, class segregated neighborhoods. Historical evidence of the borders between these neighborhoods is limited for a number of reasons. First, African American elites did not have access to state governing bodies—like zoning or planning boards—that built racial and economic hierarchies into urban landscapes across the nation. Second, as Jacqueline Moore's research on Washington's black elite at the turn of

the century indicates, black Washingtonians operated within multiple, overlapping systems of intraracial segregation including income, education, fraternal orders and grades of skin pigmentation.⁴⁵ Moreover, Audrey Kerr's work on colorism within black Washington society reveals that systems of intraracial segregation in the nation's capital are inherently elusive to scholars because they were often shrouded in rumor, myth and intrigue.⁴⁶ Nonetheless some evidence does exist of what Elsa Barkley Brown has called African Americans "cognitive maps" that determined the geographic scope of their lives.⁴⁷

Evidence of Shaw residents' cognitive maps can be found in Sandra Fitzpatrick and Maria R. Goodwin's 1990 book, *The Guide to Black Washington: Places and Events of Historical and Cultural Significance in the Nation's Capital*. Fitzpatrick and Goodwin were both lifelong Shaw residents and their tour guide functions simultaneously as a history of elite black Washingtonian's unique achievements prior to desegregation and as an archive of black knowledge about the pre-World War II Shaw landscape. Fitzpatrick and Goodwin's book was published amidst intense interest from the D.C. city council in capitalizing on the historic assets of impoverished neighborhoods like Shaw through the rehabilitation of historic properties, boulevards and neighborhoods.⁴⁸ In 1993, the city council hired private historic preservation firm Traceries to produce an assessment of the Shaw area's "cultural resources" in order to identify which buildings or intersections could be marketed as parts of a "historic" commercial district. Traceries conducted a number of interviews with black Shaw residents who grew up in the area between the 1920s and 1940s that confirm some of Fitzpatrick and Goodwin's rendering of Shaw's pre-World War II neighborhoods and indicate the

⁴⁵ Jacqueline M Moore, *Leading the Race: The Transformation of the Black Elite in the Nation's Capital, 1880-1920* (Charlottesville, 1999).

⁴⁶ Audrey Kerr, *The Paper Bag Principle: Class, Colorism, and Rumor and the Case of Black Washington, D.C.* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006).

⁴⁷ Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond," in *The New African American Urban History* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 1996), 116-142.

⁴⁸ Linda Wheeler, "'The Heartbeat of the Town' Shaw Draws Homebuyers Despite Crimes," *The Washington Post*, 1989, A1.

importance of intraracial class segregation to their daily lives. Moreover, these interviews point to the importance of the urban landscape in “respectable” parts of Shaw to a positive and uplifting racial identity.⁴⁹

Fitzpatrick and Goodwin’s book contains maps of six Shaw neighborhoods. “Georgia Avenue and Howard University”, “Florida Avenue and LeDroit Park” and “Strivers’ Section” to the north, “Shaw West” and “Shaw East” to the south and “North Capital Street” to the east. Reading Fitzpatrick and Goodwin’s maps alongside the Tracerics interviews conducted for the “Northern Shaw-Strivers Cultural Resources Survey” and the existing secondary literature on black life in Washington, reveals that these neighborhoods can be grouped as two large, classed sections; a large middle class enclave including LeDroit Park, Strivers’ Section and Shaw West on the northwest side and a working class, southern migrant area encompassing Shaw East and North Capitol Street to the southeast.

LeDroit Park was the only purely residential neighborhood in the area, isolated from the rest of Shaw by Florida Avenue along its southern border.⁵⁰ Homeownership in LeDroit Park was restricted to the most prestigious of D.C.’s black citizens, many of whom had genealogical ties to elite free black families extending back into the antebellum period.⁵¹ LeDroit Park streets were lined with “stately Victorian” homes originally designed by James McGill. In its earliest incarnation the neighborhood lay outside the bounds of the city limits and was an early commuter town for white federal employees. When African American migrants began settling around Howard University in

⁴⁹ The NSSCRS was a study of the “historic Shaw” area conducted by EHT Tracerics, “a women-owned research and consulting firm specializing in architectural history and historic preservation” in the Washington Metropolitan Region. EHT Tracerics was hired by the D.C. preservation league, a subsidiary of the city council in charge of transforming “historic” Washington districts into tourist-friendly destinations. Transcripts of NSSCRS interviews are held in the Special Collections room of the Washingtoniana Division of the Martin Luther King Jr. branch of the Washington Public Library.

⁵⁰ “Florida Avenue and LeDroit Park” in Maria Goodwin and Sandra Fitzpatrick, *The Guide to Black Washington: Places and Events of Historical and Cultural Significance in the Nation's Capital* (Hippocrene Books, 1990) 98.

⁵¹ Ronald M. Johnson, “From Romantic Suburb to Racial Enclave: LeDroit Park, Washington, D.C., 1880-1920,” *Phylon* (1960) 45, no. 4 (Qtr 4, 1984): 264-270.

the late 19th century, white LeDroit Park residents encircled their subdivision with a cast iron fence.⁵²

White residents quickly evacuated during the first two decades of the 20th century, however, and were replaced by nationally recognized black civic leaders including Emmet J. Scott, Anna Julia Cooper and Mary Church Terrell.⁵³

The U street commercial corridor was the central feature of Shaw's west side and the cultural center for all of black Washington. During the 1920s, U street acquired the label "Washington's black Broadway" and the strip's jazz clubs and restaurants featured luminaries like Shaw resident Duke Ellington and local favorites "Sportin'" Daniel, Lester Dishman and "Hip Joe." Between the 1920s and the 1950s, U Street was the center of black cultural production in Washington and afforded middle class families a glamorous space to shop, recreate, eat and stroll.⁵⁴ Blair Ruble has called the U street corridor Washington's "contact zone" as the many recreational opportunities drew as many curious whites as it did African Americans. Lucille Johnson remembered the importance of the U street corridor for African American's sense of communal belonging, ownership and safety in a segregated city between the 1930s and the end of World War II.

We recall that as an excellent area. I'm thinking now, at the time, around 14th and U right near the office building they've put up, there were a variety of stores. At 14th and S there was a furniture store. People did not have to go downtown to buy furniture. Everything was there in the neighborhood. It was also the place you walked up and down on Sunday. Just recreation, to socialize. That was the place to be...Our parents would sometimes take us to the night clubs on U Street. Back in those days you could go into the night clubs. You wouldn't have anything to drink. We would just go to watch the live entertainment...People walked from 7th to 15th street [on U] and would stop and entertain you in front of the theaters. You lined the streets, lined both sides of the streets. Also one of the things in this particular neighborhood we called Shaw neighborhood was parades. We had the Elks who were located at 15th and P every year they had a huge parade with bands. They were beautifully dressed. They would march all through the neighborhood. Then we had the religious groups. Father Divine and Daddy Grace. These groups used to parade through the

⁵² Johnson, "From Romantic Suburb to Racial Enclave: LeDroit Park, Washington, D.C., 1880-1920," 265

⁵³ Johnson, 268; Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, 99-100, 107, 109.

⁵⁴ Blair Ruble, *Washington's U Street: A Biography* (Washington, D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 1-17.

area. We had great parades in those days. It was a neighborhood affair where you really participated in the activities.⁵⁵

Another Shaw resident, who Fitzpatrick and Goodwin identify as “elderly Mr. Robinson” told the authors that U Street was a site for “respectable” entertainment in the form of parades. “After church the people would parade up and down the street in front of the theaters. They really dressed in those days!”⁵⁶ Yet, the importance of black public presentation in pre-war Shaw was not only limited to contemporary black nostalgia. Coverage of community activities within the Shaw area in the *Washington Afro American*, the local edition of the nationally distributed *Baltimore Afro American*, indicates black Washingtonians awareness that particular city streetscapes could be a stage for challenging stigmatizing assumptions about urban blackness. Until the early 1950s, the *Afro American* referred to U Street as “YOU street,” indicating that the boulevards landscape served as a reflection of the accomplishments of the surrounding community. Pictures of life on “YOU” street consistently featured black women going to and from club meetings or performing the daily labor of the housewife, pushing strollers and purchasing groceries. Black women on “you” street seemed charged with reproducing the community via the civic and charity activities of their club organizations and the black home through labor as wives and mothers. U Street, the *Afro American* seemed to say, was the stage for this community reproduction.

If Strivers was distinguished by its relationship to U Street, Shaw West was defined by its relationship to 14th street NW, home to many of Shaw’s private black civic institutions. The 12th street YMCA, financed and constructed in 1912 entirely with African American wealth emerged as a source of local pride, but also provides a key example of the way intra-racial segregation played itself out prior to World War II. Access to the Y’s programs was restricted to “known” local residents, rather than the entire black population in northwest Washington. NSSCRS interviewee, Norman H

⁵⁵ Transcript of NSSCRS interview with Lucille Johnson, n.d., 6 Shaw-Strivers Cultural Resource Survey papers, Washington Public Library, Martin Luther King Jr. branch, Washingtoniana Division.

⁵⁶ Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, 207

Wood, grew up in Shaw West in the 1930s and remembered that the building was essential to the production of “first class,” respectable black citizens. Exclusionary practices, he argues, were essential in order to protect the integrity of the Y.

The 12th street Y was a refuge. Boy, if it wasn't for the 12th street Y I don't know what a lot of people would have done. And there was sort of a protection of the 12th street Y because the kids that lived in the area here, you had to be accepted before they would let you in here. So it was a place where some of the best people that worked with children would meet and train young people to be first class citizens.⁵⁷

Wood also remembered that spatial segregation was a two- way street in Shaw. He told his NSSCRS interviewer that despite the limited number of black playgrounds in Washington he would not dare cross east of 9th street to play in a black playground on 8th and S. He recalled; “Well I knew the playground was over there. But, you see, at that time, everybody had a district. And you didn't cross imaginary lines. And the kids at 8th and S wouldn't dare go down [here].”⁵⁸

The “kids at 8th and S” Wood refers to would have been residents of “Shaw East,” a mixed income neighborhood anchored around the 7th street NW corridor. Descriptions of pre-World War II 7th Street NW indicate that the corridor resembled Chicago's “State Street” or Harlem's 125th street during the interwar period. Since the earliest days of Washington, 7th street NW connected the products from Tidewater, Virginia and the docks in southwest Washington to farmland in southern Maryland. The corridor's position as a major trading route made it one of the few areas in Washington to experience a temporary migration of southern and eastern European immigrants after Reconstruction.⁵⁹ European and working class white migrants settled in the infamous alley apartments throughout the late 19th century. However, unlike major industrial cities, by 1900 very

⁵⁷ Transcript of NSSCRS interview with Norman H. Wood, n.d., 4 Shaw-Strivers Cultural Resource Survey papers.

⁵⁸ NSSCRS Interview with Norman Wood, 12.

⁵⁹ Constance Green, *Washington: Village to Capital, 1800-1878* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962).

few white families remained in 7th street alleys.⁶⁰ In their place were working class black migrants from Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas. Though the black southern diaspora to Washington was earlier and steadier than the explosive Great Migration to industrial cities during World War I, southern migration to Washington between 1900 and 1920 set off familiar debates about the questionable moral character of incoming black migrants.⁶¹ According to Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, “Ninth street divided the genteel and prosperous to the west and the poorer residents to the east...Noise and music from the poolrooms, storefront churches, barbershops, liquor stores, flophouses and lunch counters mingled together, punctuated by the enormous audiences crowding into the matinees and evening performances at the Howard Theater.”⁶² However, while Fitzpatrick and Goodwin’s narrative of what Davarian Baldwin might call Washington’s “New Negro modernity” emphasizes the excitement of black working class culture in Shaw East, middle class blacks in northwest Shaw were anxious about their proximity to poor, southern migrants.⁶³

In particular, black middle class civic activists were concerned about the relationship between the built environment and the moral culture of 7th street inhabitants. In LeDroit Park, Strivers and Shaw West, commercial development on U and 14th street was spatially distinct from

⁶⁰ Charles Frederick Weller, *Neglected Neighbors: Stories of Life in the Alleys, Tenements and Shanties of the National Capital* (J. C. Winston, 1909).

⁶¹ The literature on the Great Migration to major industrial centers described here is vast. A small sampling includes, Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes: Modernity, The Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Kimberly L. Phillips, *Alabama North: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-45*, *The Working Class in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Robert Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression: Philadelphia’s African Methodists and Southern Migrants, 1890-1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1991); James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks’ Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-30*, *Blacks in the New World*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987). Also see the literature on black reformers and the politics of respectability. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Harvard University Press, 1993); Victoria W. Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁶² Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, 151-152

⁶³ David L. Lewis, *District of Columbia: A Bicentennial History* (New York and Nashville: W.W. Norton and American Association for State and Local History, 1976), 161-162.

the clusters of single-family homes that surrounded them. By contrast, seasonal labor opportunities produced a demand for temporary housing options for black migrants in both Shaw East and the North Capitol Street neighborhoods in the early 20th century. These apartment complexes, and the “morally suspect” commercial spaces which surrounded them, were identified by middle class African Americans as magnets for “the lower class of Negroes.” A 1929 study by Howard University sociologist William Henry Jones, commissioned by the Interracial Committee of the Washington Federation of Churches, points towards black middle class anxiety (and titillation) at the growth of a “bohemian” black presence in north Washington.

For it is almost needless to state that the more highly cultured people do not prefer to live on transportation and trade routes. This fact tends to determine the type of occupants of the apartments which are so situated. For the most part, the occupants of these apartments in the commercial zones are Bohemians--persons who are socially emancipated and who are, therefore, not in the class of the most responsible citizens.⁶⁴

Jones study marked apartment dwellers, particularly the “emancipated” men and women who Jones discovered sharing expenses in homosocial groupings, as emotionally divested from family and respectable social institutions. Instead, Jones argued, they gravitated towards commercial spaces that provided immediate, sensuous pleasures.

There is in Washington a large group of people who have no permanent ties or home connections. This has resulted in a great social strain upon the life of Negro communities. As a substitute for the home satisfactions which these detached persons are unable to enjoy, intense forms of social stimulation are sought. The cabaret, dance hall, poolroom, or house of ill repute often fill the parts of life left empty by the lack of genuine home satisfactions.⁶⁵

Jones’ and other black reformers apprehensive attitude towards apartment dwellers on the east side and NSSCRS interviewees romantic memories of middle class life amongst the “hard working black professional class” in northwest Shaw indicate that despite the geographic proximity between black neighborhoods, black Washingtonians operated within socially and economically

⁶⁴ William Henry Jones, *The Housing of Negroes in Washington, D.C.: A Study in Human Ecology*, An Investigation Made Under the Auspices of the Interracial Committee of the Washington Federation of Churches (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1929) 141-143.

⁶⁵ Jones, *The Housing of Negroes in Washington, D.C.: A Study in Human Ecology*, 145

segregated worlds prior to World War II. NSSCRS interviews indicate that for many northwest Shaw residents, their neighborhoods' built environment and cultural landscapes were sources of pride. Their memories suggest that those landscapes were regulated by codes of respectable public performance on an everyday basis—they really dressed in those days—and through seasonal community celebrations where middle class fraternal orders and church congregations put themselves on display. As Virginia Wolcott has demonstrated, these organizations did more than provide recreational outlets for black residents. Shaw's cultural and civic organizations simultaneously worked to counteract discourses that questioned the civility, responsibility and sexual propriety of black city dwellers.⁶⁶ The proximity of working class, migrant neighborhoods to middle class areas, and the threatening intermixture of residential areas with the sensuous pleasures of music halls, pool rooms and taverns within those migrant communities, raised the stakes for maintaining lines of distinction between northwest Shaw and Shaw's eastside neighborhoods.

Postwar Urban Renewal and the Shaw Area's Material and Imagined Decline

The “problem” of east Shaw remained primarily the concern of black middle class residents prior to World War II. Federal planners, white reformers and white media outlets, concerned about the growing black presence in Washington before and during the war, directed their energies towards the “embarrassing” state of war and black alley housing in southwest Washington.⁶⁷ Agnes Meyer's expose of alley housing, for example, was concerned with the southwest area, not Shaw. Howard Gillette's history of federal planning in Washington, D.C. points out that political pressure placed on the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations by local media to resolve the irony that the

⁶⁶Victoria W. Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁶⁷ Charles Frederick Weller, *Neglected Neighbors: Stories of Life in the Alleys, Tenements and Shanties of the National Capital* (J. C. Winston, 1909), James Borchert, *Alley life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion, and Folklife in the City, 1850-1970*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982) Elaine B Todd, “Urban renewal in the nation's capital: A History of the Redevelopment Land Agency in Washington, D.C., 1946-1973” (Howard University, PhD Thesis, 1986), Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995).

center of the nation's power was home to some of the nation's worst "slums" (some of which were visible from the windows of Senate office buildings) pushed Congress into passing the 1946 D.C. Redevelopment Act.⁶⁸ The D.C. Redevelopment Act authorized the establishment of a new federal bureaucracy, the Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA). The RLA was an independent, presidentially appointed agency responsible for identifying "blighted" territory in Washington, purchasing and demolishing condemned buildings and authorizing new development projects. In an excellent example of the unique efficiency of Congressional lawmaking, the bill allowed the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPCC) to retain authority over producing the "comprehensive planning" agenda for the entire city.⁶⁹ Though the RLA and NCPCC first went to work in southwest, their initial assessment of the city's "blighted" geography included the Shaw area (identified as "Northwest" in the image below). Indeed the RLA's delineation of the Northwest Renewal Area, along with impoverished black neighborhoods in southwest, Foggy Bottom and Georgetown was the first time the federal government officially mapped out the city's segregated racial geography [Figure 1.2].

Though RLA officials hoped to begin work on the Northwest Renewal Area by the mid 1950s, delays in southwest renewal left Shaw ignored by federal planners throughout the decade. The federal government's willingness to mark the Shaw area as blighted in 1946 combined with its failure to quickly intervene provided a space for white media outlets to exploit local anxiety around the "threat" the Shaw area posed to the predominately white neighborhoods directly west of 16th street. The *Washington Post* led the charge by shining an unflinching and sensational light on Shaw as a whole, stigmatizing it as a critical source for crime, infectious disease and sexual disorder throughout the Washington Metropolitan Area. In 1954, the year African Americans became

⁶⁸ Gillette, 145-160.

⁶⁹ Elaine B Todd, "Urban renewal in the nation's capital: A History of the Redevelopment Land Agency in Washington, D.C., 1946-1973" (Howard University, PhD Thesis, 1986).

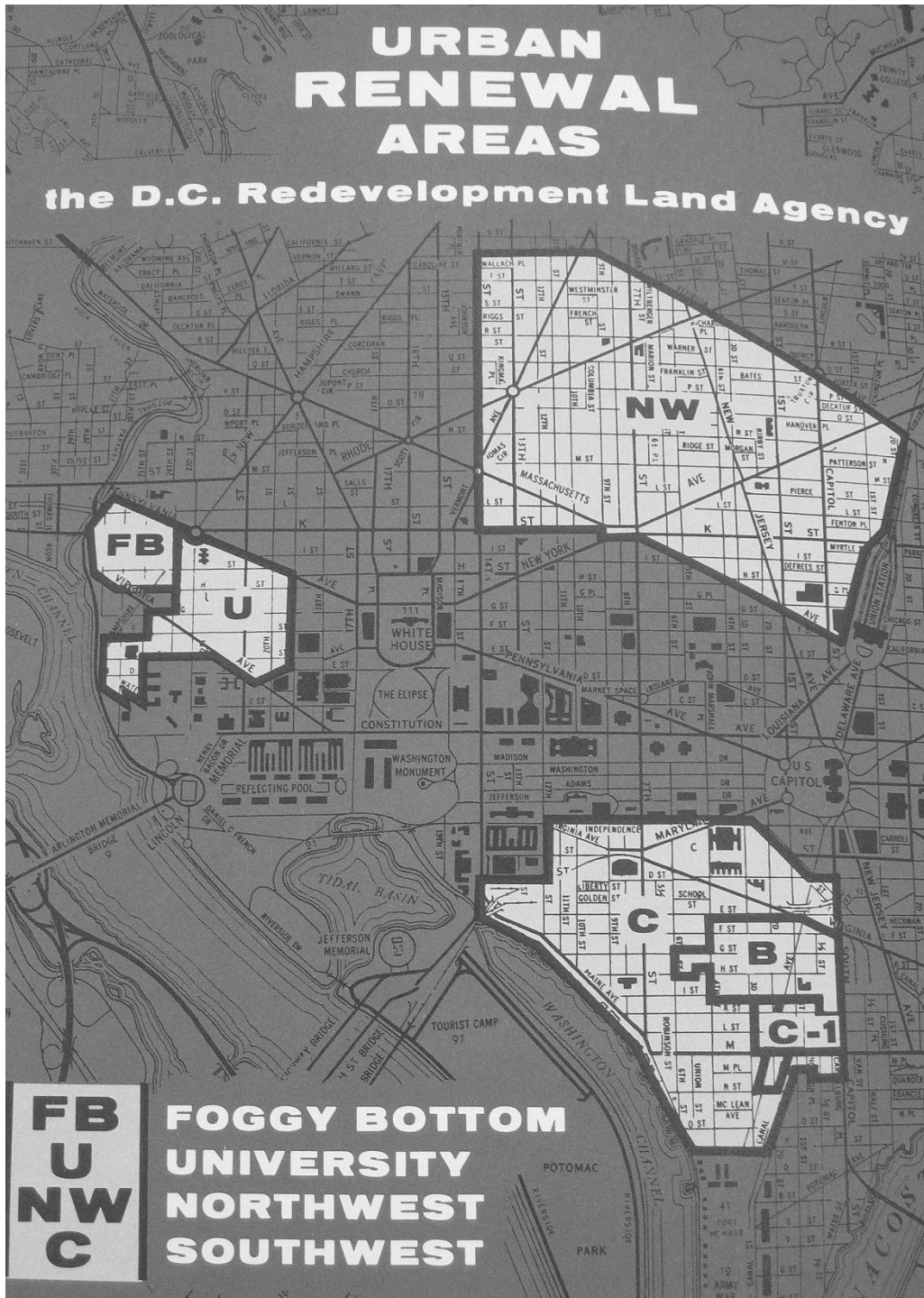


Figure 1.2, D.C. Redevelopment Land Agency “Annual Report: 1958,” 5.

Washington's majority population, *Post* journalists S.L. Fishbein and Albon Haily wrote a damning series of investigative articles on the second police precinct, which encompassed the Shaw area just south of U Street and ignored the 9th street divide that was so important to Shaw residents. The *Post* dubbed the area and their series, “The Wickedest Precinct,” reducing the culturally complex Shaw landscape to an object of police surveillance. In a special editor’s note introducing their piece the *Post* warned readers of the horrors they were about to encounter.

The Second Precinct is the wickedest of all Washington’s police precincts. The Washington Post is putting this poison spot of crime under the microscope to see why it is so filled with evil and to find out what can be done about it. The good people of the Second precinct—and there are thousands—need help in cleaning out the vice, destitution and disease that threaten their well being. The residents of other areas need to be awaked to the conditions that threaten to spread this infection to other neighborhoods. It is a crisis too big for police alone. It will never be solved until all Washington knows and understands the menace of the veritable sink of iniquity that has developed in this precinct.⁷⁰

Using information supplied by the Washington Metropolitan Police, the *Post* prosecuted the Shaw area with a dizzying onslaught of statistical data, giving readers the unquestionable sense that the Shaw area was the “entrenched crime capital of the Nation’s Capital.”

Crime figures for the fiscal year 1953 are interesting. In the Second Precinct, which covers about one sixtieth of the city’s area and contains one fourteenth of the city’s population, there were more murders, robberies, aggravated assaults, housebreakings, concealed weapons, prostitution cases, liquor violations and drug violations than in any of the other 13 precincts.⁷¹

The *Post* did not merely reprint police department statistics. Editors created a number of maps that approximated the location for every homicide, aggravated assault, house break-in and robbery committed in the second precinct in the previous year.⁷²

These maps, like the RLA maps, used the veneer of an objective scientific analysis to collapse boundaries between middle class and poor black neighborhoods and to concretize the

⁷⁰ S.L. Fishbein, “Washington’s Wickedest, The Second Precinct...No. 2 Leads City” *The Washington Post*, March 14, 1954, M10.

⁷¹ Fishbein, “Washington’s Wickedest, The Second Precinct...No. 2 Leads City” M10.

⁷² S.L. Fishbein, “2d Precinct Killings Rooted in Squalor,” *The Washington Post*, March 15, 1954; Fishbein “Washington’s Wickedest, The Second Precinct...No. 2 Leads City” M10.

imagined boundaries between the Shaw area and white neighborhoods to the west. Though the highest concentrations of criminal activity were clustered near alley and apartment housing, the *Post's* maps worked to collectively condemn the entire precinct, including relatively stable middle class areas. On the page, the *Post's* crime maps were combined with powerful images of the environmental catastrophe within Shaw's most impoverished alley neighborhoods. By combining an "aerial view" of the area with images of streets that purported to represent black living conditions, *Post* readers were encouraged readers to conflate their understanding of black inner city residents.

The *Post* also framed the area as a major contributor to the spread of non-normative sexuality throughout the city after World War II. The *Post's* discussion of prostitution in the second precinct indicted Shaw sex workers for corrupting the minds and bodies of "normal" white men.⁷³ Fishbein quoted "hardened" policemen who were "perplexed to see" white men "from real good neighborhoods in bed with the filthiest women you ever saw."⁷⁴ Fishbein's "research" on sex work and disease in Shaw accused all Shaw women of carrying the blight of their neighborhood with them to other parts of the city and contrasted sharply with images of black women as reproducers of stable community in the Washington Afro-American. "The Second is the precinct from which the slum women fan out into the city to become charwomen, day workers and maids; and the precinct which supplies most of the venereal disease patients at the Polk Health Center at 7th and P sts. NW."⁷⁵

While the *Post's* coverage pathologized black sexuality and residency in the Shaw area, their sensational rhetoric was eventually folded into federal discourse about Shaw. In their 1957 reassessment of blighted conditions in the "Northwest Renewal Area" the National Capitol Planning Commission (NCPC) wrote that,

⁷³ Fishbein, "Washington's Wickedest, The Second Precinct...No. 2 Leads City" M10.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, M10

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, M10.

The Northwest urban renewal area is bounded by U street and Florida Avenue to the North, Union Station and its yards on the East, K street and Massachusetts Avenue on the South and Fourteenth street on the West. It encompasses the Second Precinct—*the most wicked precinct in the District of Columbia* [my emphasis].⁷⁶

The 1957 report also increased the size of the renewal area, including significantly poorer sections to the east. Federal planners noted the loss of black middle class residents, pointing out that the area experienced a “6.8% [population] decrease between 1950 and 1957.”⁷⁷ Despite the population loss Federal planners observed that “blight” had crept into west side neighborhoods where tracts of single family homes had been transformed into highly dense apartment buildings. The NCPC report noted that these dense apartments, and by extension working class African American residents, now reached as far west 13th street NW.

The conversion of three story row houses into apartments, the utilization of upper floors over commercial frontages for residential purposes and the intermixing of apartment structures have resulted in much higher density areas in the northwest than existed in the southwest area. The increased density is due to small upper story apartments over commercial establishments and scattered individual apartment houses. The density area is over 120 dwelling units per net residential acre and is located generally in a corridor bounded by 10th and 13th and P streets. Here the conversion of large row houses into small apartments is most prominent. It is evident that the area in its earlier development was predominately residential, but in recent years large single family row houses have been converted to small apartments and spot commercial development has encroached upon practically every square.”⁷⁸

As was the case of Jones sociological work in the 1920s, vice, crime and sexual disorder were linked with a particular kind of neighborhood development defined by the intermixture of commercial and residential territory and the an explosion in apartment dwelling. That the NCPC report identified these trends as west as 13th street in 1957 indicates the extent of demographic and economic change in Shaw after World War II.

⁷⁶ National Capital Planning Commission in Cooperation with the District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency, “General Urban Renewal Plan, Northwest Urban Renewal area, District of Columbia; Preliminary Draft,” (1957) 1.

⁷⁷ National Capital Planning Commission “General Urban Renewal Plan, Northwest Urban Renewal area, District of Columbia; Preliminary Draft,” (1957) 3.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 4-5.

Desegregation and Shaw's Decline in the Black Imagination

Some observations of federal planners reflected the reality of black middle class divestment from the area after World War II. Desegregation in Washington, D.C. was a gradual process that occurred without the mass direct action campaigns that defined the early years of the civil rights struggle in Montgomery, New Orleans and other southern cities. The Washington legal code contained prohibitions against Jim Crow as early as 1872, but the D.C. Board of Commissioners allowed private landlords and business owners to bar African Americans without recourse through the end of World War II.⁷⁹ In 1949, eighty-six-year-old Mary Church Terrell, one of LeDroit Park's most prestigious education reformers formed the Coordinating Committee for the Enforcement of the District of Columbia Anti-Discrimination Laws (CCEDCADL). Knowing they would be refused service Terrell and an interracial group of middle class integrationists walked into Thompsons Restaurant on 14th and New York Avenue, in the center of downtown. When the restaurant's management demanded that Terrell and her companions leave the premises, CCEDCADL filed an anti-discrimination lawsuit that came before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1953. Even before the Supreme Court ruled in their favor, CCEDCAL engineered a series of sit-ins in Washington restaurants and retail outlets throughout the city. By the 1950s, Washington's commercial areas were legally integrated.⁸⁰

Housing desegregation in Washington began with the Supreme Court's 1947 *Shelley v. Kramer* decision, which blocked the enforcement of restrictive covenants against the sale of residential property to African Americans. However, the court's decision did not extend to the rental market and rental properties remained defacto segregated in the district until 1964, when the Board of

⁷⁹ Audrey Thomas McCluskey, "Setting the Standard: Mary Church Terrell's Last Campaign for Social Justice," *Black Scholar* 29, 2 (Summer 1999) 47.

⁸⁰ Marvin Caplan, "Eat Anywhere!" *Washington History* 1, 1 (Spring, 1989) 24-39.

Commissioners passed the city's first open housing laws.⁸¹ In offering greater commercial and residential options to black consumers postwar desegregation encouraged black middle class financial divestment from segregated enclaves like Shaw. Access to new, exciting commercial establishments in downtown, along Connecticut Avenue, in Foggy Bottom and in Georgetown siphoned black consumption away from black owned restaurants and businesses in the Shaw area. New housing opportunities were restricted to black families with the earning power to qualify for private financing.⁸² During the 1960s elite and middle class African American families began to move further north within the city to the Brookland area, north and west to Adams Morgan and Mt. Pleasant neighborhoods, and eventually into Prince George's Maryland.⁸³ Black middle class flight in D.C. was not the systematic, "block by block" diaspora that defined postwar white flight in major metropolitan areas. Open housing in Maryland was restricted to a few counties and the residential desegregation of Montgomery County, Howard County and Northern Virginia would be a slow, gradual process. Nonetheless, from the 1950s to the 1968 riot, black middle class families gradually left Shaw's west side neighborhoods. Stately single-family homes in LeDroit Park were, one by one, sold to Howard University who transformed them into apartment and boarding houses during the 1960s. By 1970, LeDroit Park, once the wealthiest neighborhood in Shaw, was economically indistinguishable from the rest of the community with a median annual income of \$2,000 a year, less than half of the city's overall median income.⁸⁴

⁸¹ George Lardner, "Ban on Housing Discrimination Stirs Divided Opinion of Leaders," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 1, 1964; Paul Schuette, "Fair Housing Law Adopted for Capital," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 1, 1964

⁸² As of 1967 there were a number of black families who could afford to move out of Shaw into affluent areas. In that year the Post reported that 22% of D.C. city workers were black as were 8% of the city's "white collar" workers. Philip A. Smith Washington Post, "Negro Employment Rate Here Is Highest Of 9-Cities Surveyed," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, August 7, 1967, B1.

⁸³ On gradual growth of black population in Brookland, Adams Morgan and Mt Pleasant see, On black migration into Prince George's county see, Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁸⁴ Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, 104-105

Black middle class divestment had significant consequences for Shaw's economic landscape and for Shaw residents' emotional relationship to their community in the 1960s. During the 1960s, the 14th, U and 7th street NW corridors were no longer sources of pride for black Washingtonians, instead they became powerful illustrations of the limitations of integrationist politics for impoverished black urban residents. If access to black owned furniture, clothes and grocery stores gave middle class Shaw residents a feeling of community ownership prior to World War II, an increasingly impoverished Shaw population could not claim to be so mollified. While Shaw commercial corridors never lacked for black business ventures, the scale of black businesses were smaller, and black business owners controlled less commercial storefront territory. Between 1950 and 1960, the number of black owned business in Washington declined by 15%, slower than the national rate of 24%. However, those numbers were skewed by a 16% increase in "self employed" black workers in the "construction industry." The steady growth of black independent construction contractors reflects failed efforts to end racial discrimination against black employees within D.C.'s two largest construction unions. Ominously, the city lost 44% of its black owned "wholesale and retail trade" businesses, compared to 35% nationally.⁸⁵

These trends left Shaw residents in the 1960s with fewer options for the purchase of basic essentials like food, clothes and furniture. White merchants, many of whom lived in suburban areas took advantage of poor black Washingtonians by gouging prices, limiting credit and offering black residents inferior products. Under pressure from welfare rights activists and the D.C. Democratic Central Committee the House Government Operations Committee released a report, which charged grocery chains in Washington, New York and St. Louis with selling spoiled meat and produce to black consumers at exorbitant prices. Similar to findings within the Kerner Commission, the

⁸⁵ "Washington USA: Black Business," *The Washington Afro-American*, April 25, 1964, A17

Government Operations Committee's report found that D.C. merchants coordinated price increases on the same day welfare checks were released.⁸⁶

In directing their anger at Shaw's commercial corridors black residents joined a national effort by Black Power advocates to redeploy stigmatizing images of the ghetto into a platform for revolutionary change. In *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton reproduced discourses that characterized black ghettos as blighted, but rejected all notions that black residents were responsible for environmental conditions in their communities. Instead, Carmichael and Hamilton characterized the ghetto as the product of white outsiders and framed black anger not as "maladjustment," but as the inevitable result of social and economic conditions purposefully produced by outside forces.

The black community perceives the "white power structure" in very concrete terms. The man in the ghetto sees his white landlord come only to collect the exorbitant rents and fail to make necessary repairs, while both know that the white-dominated city building inspection department will wink at violations or impose only slight fines. The man in the ghetto sees the white policeman on the corner brutally manhandle a black drunkard in a doorway, and at the same time accept a pay-off from one of the agents of the white controlled rackets. He sees the streets of the ghetto lined with garbage and he knows that the powers which could send trucks in to collect the garbage are white. When they don't, he knows the reason: the low political esteem in which the black community is held. He is not about to listen to intellectual discourses on the pluralistic and fragmented nature of political power. He is faced with a "white power structure" as monolithic as Europe's colonial offices have been to African and Asian colonies.⁸⁷

Carmichael and Hamilton were by no means the only black intellectuals to characterize the conditions of the ghetto as a combination of neglect and exploitation by white outsiders. As the civil rights movement became increasingly focused on addressing the problems of "nation's ghettos," communities like Shaw offered up illustration after illustration of how deeply entrenched and all encompassing institutional racism was for the average black inner city resident. The

⁸⁶ Peter Milius, "Study Claims Ghetto Gets Poorer Food," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, August 11, 1968, A1.

⁸⁷ Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967), 9-10.

intellectual and cultural products of black nationalists which included the popular speeches and writings of Carmichael, Hamilton, Le Roi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Angela Davis, Eldridge Cleaver, Maulana Karenga and Malcolm X transformed ghetto conditions into advertisements for the importance of revolutionary, approaches to black liberation.

Queer Sub-Culture and the Discourse of Decline in Shaw

Shaw area residents declining emotional relationship to their community coincided with significant shifts in the area's sexual landscape in the 1960s. Unlike what would develop in southeast, D.C. and DuPont Circle during the 1970s, Shaw never became a "gay ghetto." Even if black gays and lesbians in Shaw had articulated or organized around an identity rooted in sexual difference, it is unlikely that black or white Washingtonians would come to view the Shaw area as anything but a black community. Indeed, as Kevin Mumford and Chad Heap have documented in interwar Chicago, for white Washingtonians the existence of commercial spaces that tolerated gender bending or open same-sex desire would have been easily integrated into widespread assumptions that Shaw was a "wicked" area.⁸⁸ For black Washingtonians, feelings around non-normative sexuality and gender performance were complicated, divided along class lines and partially determined by shifts in broad public discourses on Shaw's decline into a "ghetto" by the end of the 1960s. For their part, working class Shaw residents seemed to take non-normative sexuality in stride through the 1960s. In the proper venues, namely nightclubs, theaters and restaurants, gender bending drag performance was extremely popular amongst working class black audiences. Indeed, black drag queens were a regular part of nighttime leisure in Shaw in the postwar period. Pat Hamilton, a black Shaw native who performed drag in area nightclubs during the 1950s recalled,

⁸⁸ Chad C Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), Kevin J. Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

You had to really work. They weren't paying us much in them days. I think we did two shows on the weekend, it was like \$27 we'd get. And you had to be able to do everything. You had to sing, you had to dance, you had to wait on table, you had to go back there in the kitchen. You had to be real. They wanted to see you made up, nice hairdo, and lovely gowns on. That's what brought the men in, the women. They loved it.⁸⁹

As desegregation opened new entertainment venues outside of Shaw to middle class consumers, the marquees and headline acts in Shaw theaters began to reflect the sexually tolerant tastes of the neighborhood's growing impoverished black residents. The relationship between black middle class divestment and an expanded tolerance for queer performance is perhaps best illustrated by the fate of the Howard Theater after World War II. Once commercial establishments in Washington were desegregated in 1953, the nation's most popular black celebrities began to avoid the Howard Theater in favor of more lucrative engagements in predominately white clubs west of Rock Creek Park.⁹⁰ In their place, the Howard resorted to novelty acts whose queer performances would not have been tolerated in white neighborhoods. An example of this trend was the regular appearance at the Howard of the Jewel Box Revue, an interracial drag show featuring both male to female and female to male gender benders. The Revue toured large cities and often stopped in marginalized neighborhoods and African American theaters in the postwar years.⁹¹ Between 1961, the year of the Revues first Washington engagement and 1968, two years before the Howard shut its doors, the Jewel Box Revue performed at the Howard at least 157 times including dozens of weeklong engagements.⁹²

Yet, despite the popularity of the Jewel Box Revue amongst the Howard's remaining audience, when the section of 7th street surrounding the Howard Theater became a popular hangout

⁸⁹ Beemyn, "A Queer Capital: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Life in Washington, D.C., 1890-1955". 157

⁹⁰ Bettye Gardner and Bettye Thomas, "The Cultural Impact of the Howard Theater on the Black Community," *The Journal of Negro History*, no. 4 (1970).

⁹¹ Bud Coleman, "The Jewel Box Revue: America's Longest Running Touring Drag Show," *Theatre History Studies* 17 (June 1997): 79-92.

⁹² Using the Proquest search engine I counted each mention of the Jewel Box Revue in the *Washington Post*. All the ads for the Jewel Box Revue indicated they performed exclusively at the Howard Theater. The first notice for the Jewel Box Revue was September 2, 1961. The final notice was November 27, 1968.

for “homosexuals,” drug addicts and “winos” non-normative sexuality and criminality came to stand in as explanations for the Howard’s tough economic situation.

Shep Allen, who had managed the theater at the height of its prestige, told the *Washington Post* in 1969 that the Howard might close due to its inability to draw respectable white and black customers. For Allen, the Howard had been sabotaged by the perception of a growing criminal and sexual threat nearby.

“They’re all afraid of the same thing,’ Allen said. ‘The thing’ in this case, is the danger of being mugged or held up on a nearby dark side street where most patrons must park to get to the theater at 620 T st nw. The deterioration in the area since 1960 is obvious. Drug addicts, winos, homosexuals and hangers-on crowd the sidewalks. Bars and restaurants that once appealed to the black middle class have shifted gears for a different clientele.”⁹³

That “different clientele” were black gay men who began socializing along the sections of U Street and Florida Ave NW that surrounded the Howard during the mid 1960s. The area was home to three gay or gay-friendly commercial establishments. The Cozy Corner was a popular destination for gay Howard University students and became a gay bar during the evenings on the second floor. The bar had a “largely African American clientele, but whites who were interested in African-Americans would go there too.”⁹⁴ Black gay men often traveled to Cecilia’s Restaurant, located across the street from the Howard, to star watch after a successful show.⁹⁵ The nearby Bus Stop Deli became a popular late-night hangout for black gay men and lesbians. The location and temporal specificity of these spaces—post-show, late-night—inevitably meant that black gay men who congregated near the Howard Theater spent as much time of their time on the street, “crowding” the sidewalk with the “drug addicts,” “winos” and “hangers on.” Indeed, just as Lucille Johnson and her friends enjoyed “the stroll” along U street in the 1930s and 1940s, black gay men took part in a “stroll” of their own in the 1960s, to the chagrin of middle class observers.

⁹³ Hollie I West, “Howard Theater: Often a Silent House,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, 1969, B1.

⁹⁴ Mark Meinke, “PLACES & SPACES -- clubs, bars, community centers, etc. of Washington DC’s LGBT community (1920 to the present)”, 2002, <http://www.rainbowhistory.org/clubs.pdf>, 8.

⁹⁵ Meinke, 5.

Perhaps most troubling for Shaw's outgoing middle class was the allure queer influenced black market economies held for impoverished Shaw residents. Like most large black neighborhoods, Shaw contained its share of crime celebrities, kingpins who ran various forms of numbers rackets, bootleg liquor operations or "jill joints" and houses of ill repute.⁹⁶ One of the most notorious was the self described "Queen of Black Washington" or as the police called her "Queen of D.C.'s Underworld" Odessa Madre, who was, by all accounts but her own, a lesbian.⁹⁷ Madre's reign as D.C.'s only queen pin, spanned from 1942, when she opened her "front" business Club Madre at 14th and W, until she was sentenced to prison for 10 years on a narcotics charge in 1961.⁹⁸ Before her fall, Madre was the only woman amongst Washington's "upper criminal echelon."⁹⁹ It was rumored that at one time her six houses of prostitution, which employed more than twenty women, earned her an annual income of over \$100,000. In addition to her "bawdy houses," Madre ran a series of "jill joints" or bootleg liquor distributors under the cover of "Club Madre."¹⁰⁰

Rumors around Madre's sexuality became an inextricable component of her legend within the community. In public, Madre was known for making dramatic entrances into nightclubs along 14th, U and 7th street. In addition to thousands of dollars in jewelry and fur, an essential part of Madre's accoutrement was an entourage of, in her words "six or seven beautiful yella gals" in tow and for sale.¹⁰¹ In the 1940s Club Madre hosted the nation's biggest black musical stars including Nat King Cole and blues legend Bessie Smith. According to legend, when Smith, who was linked to

⁹⁶ Nathan Thompson, "Kings" *The True Story of Chicago's Policy Kings and Numbers Racketeers, An Informal History* (Chicago: Bronzeville Press, 2003).

⁹⁷ Courtland Milloy, "The Odessa: The Life and Times of the Queen of Washington's Underworld," *The Washington Post*, September 29, 1980, accessed electronically.

⁹⁸ "Queen' Odessa Ordered to Jail," *The Washington Post, Times-Herald*, November 22, 1961.

⁹⁹ Sharon Harley, "Working for Nothing but for a Living?: Black Women in the Underground Economy," in *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 55.

¹⁰⁰ Milloy, "The Odessa: The Life and Times of the Queen of Washington's Underworld," np.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, np.

dozens of women in her life, performed at Club Madre she chose to stay at Madre's home, rather than in a hotel. Other rumors said that walking past Madre's home on any given day would afford one a view of a number of the beautiful women she employed lounging on her porch.¹⁰² Madre did not begin her life in poverty. A gifted student her Aunt, a schoolteacher and wife of a LeDroit Park minister arranged for her to attend Dunbar high school, arguably the most prestigious black secondary school in the nation. However, Madre's dark skin and weight made her the target of "them yella gals" throughout her adolescence.

They called me 'the big, black mutha with the television eyes... There was only three blacks at Dunbar back then -- I mean black like me...I had good diction, I knew the gestures, but they always made fun of me...Like on days when we are having drill competition and we were supposed to wear the school colors -- red and black. The 'yella gals' would say, 'Oh, big, black Dessa -- you don't have to wear the school colors, just stick out your big fat red tongue.' I would try to kick 'em where they said it from, but I could never get my foot no higher than their butts.¹⁰³

Madre successfully graduated from Dunbar high school, but chose not to attend Howard University, instead parlaying the inheritance of her father's 7th street nightclub into a criminal empire. When asked later in life why she chose not to attend college at Howard University Madre explained the choice as resulting from not wanting to deal with judgmental women and men in black middle class society. Simultaneously, she revealed her challenge fitting into normative sexual and gender roles.

I had made up my mind not to go to Howard. I wasn't gonna fool with those gals up there. And I just couldn't keep no whatchamacallit -- a man? I guess I was just born to give orders, not take 'em. What kind of man wants a woman like that? Growing up in Cowtown, you couldn't help but see what was going on...I was always a bit tomboyish and curious, so I hung around the jill joints and the gaming houses and I wanted to get in on some of the fun, too. Shoot. Why should just the boys have all the fun?¹⁰⁴

For Madre gender and sexual conformity was directly connected to embracing the

¹⁰² Ibid., np.

¹⁰³ Ibid., np.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., np.

oppressive rules of the middle class “yella gals” that had tormented her in her youth.

What is clear is that whether or not Madre was a lesbian, the rumors that swirled around her sexual practices indicate she was often read by black Washingtonians as such. Still, despite her non-normative public gender performance and rumored sexual proclivities, Madre was an influential and popular figure among what *Washington Post* reporter Courtland Milloy called “Shaw’s destitute classes.” Madre’s various illegal ventures employed dozens of people, far more than the average black owned Shaw business, and she paid employees handsomely. Madre was purportedly generous with her money, willing to buy the stolen goods off bootleggers, purchase gifts and clothes for area children (to the chagrin of their mothers) and extended lines of credit to those hard on their luck, including other elite gangsters. Madre’s extended patronage network allowed her to escape the clutches of the metropolitan police department for nearly 30 years as few desired (or risked) testifying against her in court.¹⁰⁵ Madre’s popularity and prestige within Shaw’s vast, and ever expanding, poor population also indicates the way black anxiety around non-normative sexuality was situational, determined by class perspective and venue of exhibition.

In the 1960s however, as Shaw residents increasingly expressed anger and frustration at being placed at the mercy of price gouging grocery outlets and landlords, Shaw’s brand as a dependent “ghetto” ushered in a reconsideration of the destructive impact of non-normative sexuality by impoverished Shaw residents. Black queer commercial spaces shared territory with the suburban owned businesses that symbolized the impossibility of social advancement for many Shaw residents. In some ways, black queer space was indistinguishable from the environmental conditions that were a critical part of Shaw’s decline. As middle class residents moved out and large scale retail outlets were gradually replaced by small black and white owned businesses, the Shaw area fell victim to an epidemic of abandoned property. Shaw residents quoted in a National Law Institute study on

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., np.

abandoned buildings along 7th street said the crisis was driving out “decent people,” wary of the vice industries that sprang up in abandoned properties.¹⁰⁶ One *Washington Afro American* editorial complained in 1964 that “widespread violations of the District’s housing code are tolerated by the District Government. The District’s licenses and inspections bureau is understaffed. The housing market is glutted with thousands of defective buildings.”¹⁰⁷ Yet for black queer Washingtonians residents, abandoned and defective buildings were ideal locales for the establishment of queer social space. Opportunities to open queer commercial spaces in Shaw presented themselves precisely because the police and city government were uninterested in protecting the moral health of black neighborhoods. Systemic municipal neglect, which allowed Shaw landlords to collect rent while denying heat for example, also provided space for African American queer men and women to open bars without fear of being shut down for violating municipal ordinances. One regular patron at the Cozy Corner told an interviewer at the Rainbow History Project that “it was one of those places that looked like it could burn down easily.”¹⁰⁸ Throughout the late sixties Shaw resident Aundrea Scott and three friends regularly hosted parties in their homes for African American queer men and women to socialize. However, once interest in their gatherings outpaced the size of their apartments, Scott and her friends became business partners and sought out an abandoned storefront to open a gay lounge called Zodiac. Speaking to an interviewer with D.C.’s Rainbow History Project, Scott recalled;

We needed more space so we found this little, abandoned honky-tonk, country and western club at Riggs Road and South Dakota Ave. We moved into the basement apartment and operated off the [absent] owner’s liquor license.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ William T. Nachbauer “A Study of Abandoned Inner-City Residential Buildings” (Urban Law Institute: National Law Center at George Washington University, 1969), 4.

¹⁰⁷ Sam Hoskins “Slum Living Can Be Abolished” *The Washington Afro-American*, January 11, 1964, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Meinke, 8.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

Urban anthropologist Uli Hannerz who studied “the Washington ghetto” documented this shifting sexual landscape along 7th and 14th streets NW. An excerpt from Uli Hannerz’ book *Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community* observes the development of vice industries that catered to a criminal “clientele” including “gorillas” and “homosexuals.”

The intersections of the main streets are among the landmarks of the ghetto. Where U street crosses Fourteenth Street and where it meets Florida Avenue near the corner of Seventh Street there are always people on the move, as well as people not on the move but just looking. These corners are where beggars, prostitutes and dope pushers do some of their best business....Other bars have become established in the public knowledge as hangouts for more specialized clienteles: gamblers, "gorillas," homosexuals. There grows up an identification between people and the places where they hang out and nobody would want to get an unearned stigma attached to himself.¹¹⁰

Along 14th street NW, the narcotics trade and sexualized vice competed for space with the local headquarters of the nation’s most important black civil rights organizations, the SCLC, the NAACP and SNCC. The *Washington Post’s* narrative of the events leading up to the first acts of violence in the 1968 rebellion points to the ubiquity of queer sex work between S and V street on 14th.

The intersection of 14th and U streets, N.W. was filing up with its customary nighttime crowd...Transients and other newcomers to Washington’s “Harlem” often wound up here looking for action. This was a spot to pick up a woman, purchase narcotics, make a deal. It was also the unofficial nerve center of active black leadership groups—the place to go with a grievance...By 8:00pm prostitutes, pimps and female impersonators were lining the fronts of buildings between T and U streets, and the cafes had their doors open.¹¹¹

According to Earline Budd an advocate for Washington’s transgendered sex workers since the mid seventies, Rosetta’s Golden Nugget, located only 4 blocks north of 14th and U, became a critical congregation point for homeless queer youth who hustled along 14th street and the New York Avenue strip in the North Capitol street area.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Uli Hannerz, *Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 29.

¹¹¹ Ben W. Gilbert ed., *Ten Blocks from the White House; Anatomy of the Washington Riots of 1968*, 13-14.

¹¹² Meinke, 3.

For Shaw residents engaged with black activist discourse around the multifaceted and all encompassing racisms of the ghetto, public exhibitions of non-normative sexuality became entangled within critiques of Shaw's decline into a "ghetto." In a 1969 poem by local Black Power advocate Isaac Ruffin entitled 14th an intermixture of homosexuality, sex work and drug addiction were the consequences of a community with few hopes for the future. Rather than a source of black cultural pride, Ruffin portrayed 14th street as the sexual play land of incoming whites. That Ruffin's poem described 14th street also captures the collapse of the clear boundaries that once separated Shaw west of 9th street from "disorder" and sensuousness of black working class life in East Shaw.

14th St. Wash., D.C., is a dance of
dashikis and African bushes, rhythm
and blues and flare bottom trousers
whores and homosexuals all participating
in the feast of wings and things
pig feet, fat meat swimming in bean soup
nodding occasionally while complimenting
whoever had the best pill of doogee today,
people whose occupation is getting high
everyday all day long.

14th Street Washington, D.C.,
dark, dim underground where the
hustlers meet and the whores prey
on whitey's sexual hangup and walk
away with his wallet and on occasion
his life. Something is happening
on 14th Street, but you don't know
what it is, do you Mr. Citizen.¹¹³

Ruffin's poem indicates homosexuality's place within a matrix of problematic public activities, including drug use and sex work, that many African American urban residents felt were indicative of what had gone wrong with their neighborhoods during the 1960s. Reading the homophobic writings of Black Power icons like Eldridge Cleaver and Amiri Baraka, what Marlon B. Ross calls "black nationalist invective," against the complicated sexual landscapes in neighborhoods

¹¹³ Isaac Ruffin, "14th Street: 'Stories of Poverty and Lost Youth'," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, December 24, 1969.

like Shaw suggest that many of these writers traveled through and witnessed (in Baraka's case, sampled) zones of queer sexuality in black neighborhoods as symptomatic of poverty and white exploitation.¹¹⁴ Young black participants in the 1968 riot, in which a number of black gay bars were burned to the ground, also expressed a sexual component of their anger against white privilege. After the riot, the Howard University's Civil Rights Documentation Project collected three interviews from "anonymous" participants in the April 4-6th 1968 rebellions along 7th street NW, 14th street NW and H street NE. Conducted only weeks after the rebellion, interviewees pointed towards a range of motivations for their participation including perpetual unemployment and the failure of local government to provide adequate municipal service to black communities. However, when an interviewee identified only as "Anonymous B" was asked about why he physically assaulted white men during the riots, he expressed rage at white men's propensity for leisurely traveling through the 14th and U sex work zone.

Mosby: During the riots did you see any white..?

Anonymous B: Yeah quite a few. I tried to off a couple myself.

Mosby: In what way?

Anonymous B: Very simply. I picked up a big rock and tried to knock a cat's head off. You know they piss me off coming in here... If I go up on Wisconsin Avenue, I'm expecting to get an ass-whipping, it's as simple as that. But see, these are the same cats, for the most part during the rioting—the cats who are driving through here during the rioting. These are the same people who drive around 14th and T and 14th and U trying to buy our women. I don't know, they must have a fantastic sexual drive because they come rolling through here every night trying to buy these same old broads. All of them got syphilis and V.D. and everything else, and they come through here every night. It doesn't fail—eight or nine of them jammed into a Volkswagen or something, looking for some chicks to buy, you know. These are the same old hunkies and crackers riding up and down the street here.¹¹⁵

Both Ruffin and Anonymous B's words are critical for understanding the way in which stigmatizing discourses surrounding non-normative sexuality were deployed by everyday African

¹¹⁴ Marlon B. Ross, "Camping The Dirty Dozens: The Queer Resources of Black Nationalist Invective," *Callaloo* 23, no. 1 (2000): 290-312.

¹¹⁵ "Anonymous B" interviewed by James M. Mosby Jr. on April 24, 1968 for the Howard University Civil Rights Documentation Project. Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Oral History Collection.

Americans as evidence of what was “wrong” with the Shaw area. Unlike the *Post’s* “Wickedest precinct” series though, Ruffin, who referenced “whitey’s sexual hang-ups” and “Anonymous B,” who accused white men of having a “fantastic sexual drive” both suggest that non-normative sexuality had been imported by whites, just as economic exploitation and municipal neglect had been engineered by white businessmen and politicians. Black concerns around the gendered and sexual component of community decline were not isolated to circumstantial observations of public queer sexuality; they were integrated into an emerging activist black discourse that emphasized the importance of ending black dependency and exploitation by restoring an “independent,” Shaw community filled with heteronormative, reproducing, middle class male headed families and male leaders.

The D.C. Civil Rights Movement, Community Control and the Production of “Shaw”

If federal planners and white media outlets entered the 1960s with the assumption that the federal government would rescue the Northwest Renewal Area from a disorderly, deteriorating black community, they thought wrong. The direction of federal urban redevelopment in Shaw became enmeshed within a local black movement for civil rights and self-determination that took flight in the second half of the decade. With the exception of Anne Valk’s work on the relationship between second wave feminism and black liberation in D.C., historians have yet to produce a coherent narrative of the Civil Rights-Black Power era in the nation’s capital. Washington, D.C. served as a national staging point for civil rights activism around the country, but according to *Washington Post* reported Richard Prince, “Washington was always a difficult town to mobilize. To organize—that was considered a radical move. It’s basically a government town, and there was always a feeling that you shouldn’t be active in the community.”¹¹⁶ SNCC only began major operations in Washington, D.C. in 1966 after Marion Barry, veteran of the Nashville movement, was sent north to run branch.

¹¹⁶ Jonathan Agronsky, *Marion Barry: The Politics of Race* (Lanham, NY: British American Publishing, 1991), 123.

Though CORE freedom riders began their 1961 trek south from Washington, D.C, the D.C. CORE branch was inactive between the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision and 1962 when Alabama born Julius Hobson revived the branch.¹¹⁷ As architecture historian Cameron Logan has argued, Washington, D.C.'s urban identity has relied upon its distance or "invisibility" from the monuments and buildings that mark the center of the nation's power.¹¹⁸ In the case of the civil rights movement—from the 1963 March on Washington, to the 1968 Poor People's Campaign—the capital city became an ideal place to stage large-scale civil rights demonstrates. Transmitted across the country and around the globe demonstrations in D.C. became the iconic images of the movement; contrasting the supposed egalitarian principles of the founding fathers with the realities of racial, gendered and economic oppression. However, with few exceptions, the local black organizers and activists were not at the center of these events.

Being a "government town" D.C.'s movement had the closest relationship with the federal government. Throughout the 1960s, the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations' commitment to federal interventions against urban poverty made D.C.'s black neighborhoods the national laboratory for the Great Society. Shaw, with its history of black, middle class civic engagement became the ideal neighborhood to test the viability of "maximum feasible participation" as a strategy for improving on the failures of the Truman and Eisenhower's approaches to urban poverty. However, it soon became clear that the sheer number of new, federally subsidized organizations had made the Shaw landscape into a patchwork quilt of anti- poverty agencies, with overlapping jurisdictions and, at

¹¹⁷ On Hobson and CORE see Wallace Terry , "CORE and Community Committee Clash Over Transit Hiring Deal," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, June 20, 1962, B1; "CORE Pickets Real Estate Office," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, December 23, 1962, D9; Kenneth Dole, "'Servanthood' Put Above Civil Rights by Minister," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, June 15, 1963, D9; Paul Schuette , "CORE Ready to Test Fair Housing Order," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 2, 1964, D1.

¹¹⁸ Cameron Logan, "The Constituent Landscape: History, Race and Real Estate in Washington, D.C., 1950--1990" (Ph.D., United States -- District of Columbia: The George Washington University, 2008), 1-5.

times, redundant responsibilities. Moreover, those groups with the closest relationships to the Office for Economic Opportunity were criticized for their “passive” approach to civil rights issues.

In D.C. then, the black freedom movement was, in many ways, a struggle for black self-determination, articulated as “community control” over the operation and control of federal anti-poverty programs. No federal program most exemplified the terms of the struggle than federal attempts to begin the implementation of urban renewal in the “Northwest Renewal Area” during the 1960s. As black activists became increasingly frustrated with the colonial tenor of federal anti-poverty programs, they produced their own organizations and attempted to articulate a black vision for the Shaw area’s future. In doing so, the black organization devoted to ensuring “community control” of urban renewal, Rev. Walter Fauntroy’s Metropolitan Inner City Community Organization (MICCO) planned their vision for a new community named “Shaw.” MICCO’s mapping and planning of the Shaw Urban Renewal Area, not only established the boundaries of urban territory present day Washingtonians understand as “Shaw” it represented a brief triumph of black self determination and unity over old class-based divisions. However, heteronormative logics animated black efforts to ensure black, “unity” and “community control” over the planning of their community. As black activists headquartered in Shaw sought to separate anti-poverty and civil rights organizations from federal supervision they consistently argued for the importance of male headed, heteronormative family structure to the sustainability of black liberation. In the context of the proliferation of queer space in Shaw, often on the same boulevards of radical black organizations, the production of a new “Shaw” community seemed to require the erasure of sources of sexual difference within the black community.

The origins of D.C.’s movement for black self-determination lie within the failures of the RLA’s urban renewal projects in Anacostia. When Agnes Meyer wrote of the “shameful” alleys and the pestilent fumes emanating out of overcrowded alley dwellings, she was referring to black

housing conditions in near southwest. Yet despite a mandate from Congress that the RLA provide new housing for displaced black residents, the RLA did not receive enough funding from Congress to both purchase condemned land parcels and finance the construction on new subsidized housing for low income families.¹¹⁹ Instead, the RLA was forced to ally with private developers, none of whom were willing to guarantee racially open occupancy in new buildings. Downtown Progress, a consortium of private developers, closed ranks on southwest development, pushing out any buyers interested in offering low income or racially integrated housing in southwest. Private developers in southwest were able to buy depreciated land from the RLA at a low price, while making no concessions to displaced black residents. The consequences of the RLA's unfunded mandate and acquiescence to the segregationist tendencies of private developers were devastating for southwest African American residents. In only six years, between 1954 and 1960, with most alley homes in Southwest demolished under the order of the RLA, over 15,000 African Americans were pushed out of their homes.¹²⁰ Many were forced to move in with friends, family or leave the city entirely, exacerbating density problems in the Shaw area. Even when the RLA made meager attempts to relocate residents into affordable accommodations on the northeast side of the city, they failed to investigate living conditions within buildings for displaced southwest residents. The Government Accounting Office's withering audit of the RLA points out the failure of RLA employees to inspect the interior of replacement apartments, often assigning residents to living conditions worse than those they experienced in Southwest alleys.

In evaluating homes for displaced families, the RLA inspector did not examine the interior of many dwellings and used as a criterion the DC housing code which is less restrictive in some respects than the relocation plan approved by the Urban Renewal Agency. Also, the RLA inspector did not inspect some dwelling units prior to referring displaced families to

¹¹⁹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Inadequate Policies and Practices Relating to the Relocation of Families from Urban Renewal Areas, District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency and Housing and Home Finance Agency*.

¹²⁰ District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency, *Community Services and Family Relocation; the Report of a Demonstration Project Carried Out Under the Provisions of the Housing Act of 1954* (Washington, 1964).

them and referred some displaced families to dwelling units which had been inspected and classified as substandard.¹²¹

Those who attended RLA public forums would have heard displaced black southwesters express their anger and fear over the agency's inability to provide replacement housing options after displacement. When one southwest mother of ten was unable to secure public housing to accommodate her children she asked federal planners "do you expect me to take my children out and drown them?"¹²²

The southwest catastrophe inspired Rev. Walter E. Fauntroy, pastor of Shaw's, New Bethel Baptist Church, President of the D.C. Southern Christian Leadership Conference and an active member within a number of interracial anti-poverty initiatives into a new phase of his activist career. When the RLA announced that they planned to begin rehabilitation and renewal activity in the Northwest Renewal Area in 1958, Fauntroy began to use his stature within interracial anti-poverty initiatives to combat dominant media narratives about the efficacy of the RLA's approach to combating black poverty. Fauntroy charged the RLA and the National Capital Planning Commission with using "urban removal" to keep African Americans from reaping the benefits of residency in high value land tracts.

In the Southwest Washington Urban Renewal Project, housing for the area is...not to house low-income groups but [for] upper income groups who in reality have no pressing need for housing. Since it is obvious the housing planned for the area is far beyond the economic grasp of the citizens displaced, the Negro community is led to draw no other conclusion than that urban renewal in Southwest has actually become Urban Removal from so called 'valuable downtown land.'¹²³

¹²¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Inadequate Policies and Practices Relating to the Relocation of Families from Urban Renewal Areas, District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency and Housing and Home Finance Agency*, 11.

¹²² District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency, *Community Services and Family Relocation; the Report of a Demonstration Project Carried Out Under the Provisions of the Housing Act of 1954*, 35.

¹²³ Walter E. Fauntroy, "The Progress of Urban Renewal and Redevelopment in the District of Columbia", Interdenominational Ministers Alliance before the Senate Committees on the District of Columbia, 1960, 1, Walter Fauntroy Papers, Box 2, Folder 1, Gelman Library-Special Collection Research Center, George Washington University Library.

Fauntroy observed that the southwest black community had been out organized and outnumbered by the all white Southwest Citizens Association and Downtown Progress and vowed that the Shaw neighborhood would be prepared to organize community protest against discriminatory urban renewal policy. In 1964 he formed the Metropolitan Inner City Community Organization or MICCO. MICCO became a clearinghouse for community activism surrounding urban renewal issues, bringing 11 other “community improvement” organizations from across the Shaw area under its umbrella united in the idea that Shaw would not become “another southwest.”¹²⁴ MICCO quickly formed a new partnership with par

Since the Kennedy Administration had first proposed the Model Cities Program in 1960 as a means to integrate African American urban residents into the urban renewal and planning process, Washington D.C. had been identified as one of three “test case” cities for the program. While little came of the Model Cities program under Kennedy, President Johnson revived the initiative as the Demonstration Cities Bill in 1966. The Demonstration Cities Bill was the brainchild of Housing and Urban Development director Robert Weaver who called the program “creative federalism” due to its proposal to give local government’s greater authority over the direction of urban renewal programs. The Johnson Administration’s interest in the bill pushed MICCO into action and in April of that year, Fauntroy spoke before the National Capital Planning Commission, identifying Shaw’s problems as evidence of the failure of government to adequately service the community and encouraging the NCPC to accept a new community-based strategy for the renewal of what he called both “the Shaw area” and “the second precinct and U street business district.”

Let us together fashion an attack upon the problems of the Shaw area that would coordinate and concentrate all available federal resources—in housing construction, in job training in health facilities, in recreation, in welfare programs, in education transportation and municipal services—to improve the physical and social conditions for the people who live and work there. Nothing less than such an approach, planned and carried out with the continuing

¹²⁴ On the coalition of African American community improvement organizations within MICCO see, D.C. Redevelopment Land Agency, “Annual Report: 1966,” 10.

participation of residents of the area can revitalize the Second Precinct, U street business district. In short, we want the area renewed both physically and socially by and for the people who presently live and work there.¹²⁵

In his speech, Fauntroy merged his interest in democratizing urban renewal with a desire to transform the new Shaw area into a naturally reproducing middle class black community. He emphasized the importance of home buying families over “transients” who had little emotional investment in their community.

Once the plan for the area has been modified so as to become a residential location for middle income persons, it becomes not only feasible but important that there be permanent families, families who have bought [homes] and not only transients. We think it vital to the continuing success of redevelopment that families live in the area who will give stability. Who will have a stake in it and who will really care about it.¹²⁶

In 1966 MICCO released its first comprehensive renewal plan for the “Shaw School Urban Renewal Area”[Figure 1.3]. The plan reflected MICCO’s vision for Shaw’s sustainable future as an independent, holistically planned community. MICCO’s planners made clear distinctions between the neighborhood’s residential sections and a proposed U street commercial district that would feature black owned “community” businesses. Isolated “neighborhood shopping centers” were not meant to extend beyond particular intersections and were to be limited to essential retail services “groceries, cleaning establishments, barbers and beauty parlors, [and] drug stores.”¹²⁷ In order to address density issues and prevent private developers from reproducing the displacement crisis in southwest, MICCO demanded that the majority of new housing developments be “affordable or low-income” and that projects outside of the proposed Subway corridor between 6th and 9th be restricted to “low rise, low density housing.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ “Statement of The Reverend Walter E. Fauntroy before the National Capital Planning Commission, Thursday April 7, 1966,” 3 Walter E. Fauntroy Papers Box 26, Folder 6.

¹²⁶ “Statement of The Reverend Walter E. Fauntroy before the National Capital Planning Commission, Thursday April 7, 1966,” 6.

¹²⁷ “Plan, the Shaw Urban Renewal Area, c. 1966” Walter Fauntroy Papers Box 27 Papers-MICCO, Folder 4.

¹²⁸ “Plan, the Shaw Urban Renewal Area, c. 1966” Walter Fauntroy Papers.

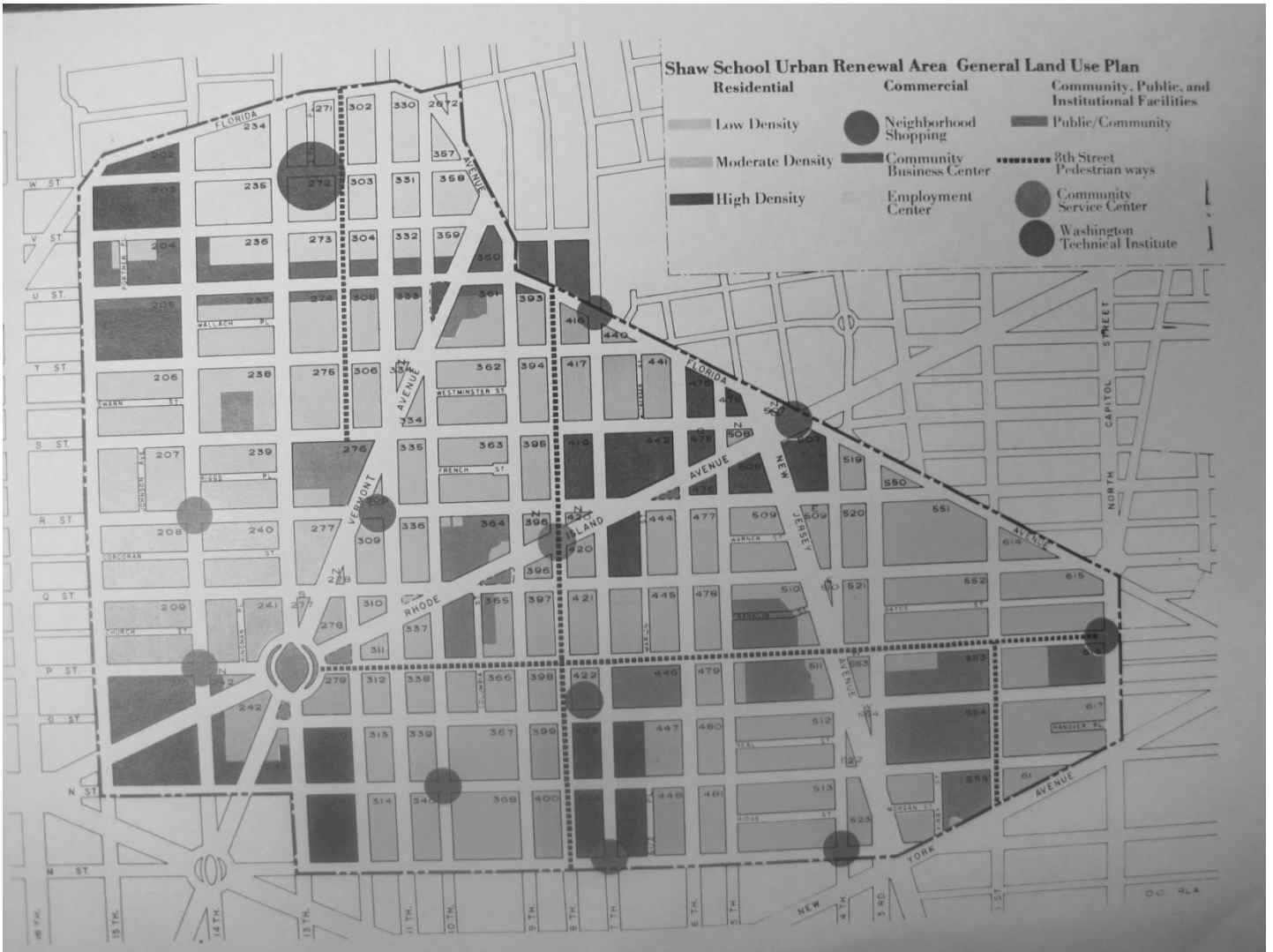


Figure 1.3, “Map, Shaw School Urban Renewal Area,” undated, Walter Fauntroy Papers, Box 27, Folder 1.

Simultaneously, the map reveals the sexual biases of MICCO and their interest in imagining a heteronormative Shaw. The proposed Washington Technical Institute engulfs territory on 14th between S and V infamous for the “whores and homosexuals” within Isaac Ruffin’s poem. The vast green areas designated as “public/community” were meant to interconnect “schools, playgrounds, major parks, cultural institutions and pedestrian traffic.” MICCO’s vision for family-oriented pedestrian traffic through Shaw stood in stark contrast to images of children walking through trash strewn alleys, johns traveling through prostitution zones and drug addicts lining the street that haunted the community throughout the 1960s. The plan also redrew the boundaries of the Shaw neighborhood with little regard to the city’s police precinct system. A comparison of the Shaw School Urban Renewal plan and the Washington Post’s crime maps reveals that MICCO excluded territory just south of New York Avenue which contained the highest concentrations of criminal activity.

The name “Shaw School,” refers to Shaw Junior High School, a poster child for the city’s failure to adequately fund black public education in the city. In his speech before the NCPC Fauntroy referred to the school as a metaphor for the larger community’s problems. “Shameful Shaw’ with its old and dilapidated structures, its overcrowded and inadequately equipped classrooms and its inability to meet the many needs of its pupils is symbolic of conditions in almost every aspect of life for people in the surrounding community.”¹²⁹ By naming the entire community “Shaw,” MICCO spatially shifted the “heart” of the community east, decentering 14th and U streets as critical sites of identity formation. In doing so, MICCO planners seemed to accept that the old “respectable” Shaw community was a thing of the past. In its place they proposed a Shaw community, and by proxy a black community, that was neither economically segregated nor dependent upon white outsiders for basic goods and services. MICCO’s proposal for Shaw was the

¹²⁹ “Statement of The Reverend Walter E. Fauntroy before the National Capital Planning Commission, Thursday April 7, 1966” Walter E. Fauntroy Papers “Speeches and Addresses,” 2

first step in an attempt to rebrand the community and to challenge popular conceptions about what was possible in a ghetto community.

Chapter 2

The Instability of Urban Whiteness in Postwar Washington, D.C., 1946-1969

In July of 1947 the United States Senate's committee on the District of Columbia ordered the F.B.I to complete an immediate and comprehensive investigation of the Washington Metropolitan Police Department's arrest and booking records. Political pressure to investigate police practices in Washington had built rapidly during the previous two weeks after *Washington Post* journalists John Singerhoff and Robert Bruskin exposed a conspiracy by the Washington Metropolitan Police Department to conceal evidence of thousands of crimes ranging from homicides to petty misdemeanors. The goal, Singerhoff and Bruskin discovered, was to depress crime statistics in Washington, D.C. and mask evidence of a growing crime wave from the public. Throughout the war years officers "pocketed" thousands of sworn statements from crime victims, erasing them and their stories from the record books.

If a footpad sneaks out of a dark alley, knocks you to the ground with a rock or his fist and makes off with your pocketbook you're pretty well convinced you've been robbed. But more than 600 people who reported they were robbed between July 1, 1946 and May 31, 1947 were wrong, at least so far as the Police Department is concerned.¹

Yet robberies and muggings only scratched the surface of the reporting scandal. By the time police superintendent Robert J. Barrett testified before the Senate in July, police administrators admitted that "many robber, sex and possibly other crime complaints" had been purposefully left out of official police records for nearly 11 years.² The *Post's* investigation revealed that in a wide range of crime categories nearly 50% of crimes committed were excluded from annual police reports. *Post* editor J.R. Wiggins pointed out that, not only were these crimes unprosecuted, but that the police had lured Washingtonians into a false sense of security about their personal and

¹ John Singerhoff "600 Robbery Cases Never Properly Listed by D.C. Police *The Washington Post* June 30, 1947, A1.

² N.S. Haseltine "Police Conceal Crime Reports, Barrett Admits to Senate Unit; Young is Criticized by Ball" *The Washington Post* July 15, 1947, A1.

proprietary safety. The police, the *Post* charged had, “misled residents as to the security or lack of security in their own neighborhoods, encouraging citizens to take risks that might have been avoided if full information as to the hazards had been known.”³

With evidence of D.C.’s “crime wave” in full view of the public, local officials and Congressional leaders began searching for the source of the city’s crime problems. A year earlier, criminologists at Washington’s St. Elizabeth hospital told the media that the psychological effects of military service, or “war hangover,” might cause some veterans to engage in criminal behavior.⁴ The police reporting scandal, however, shattered white Washingtonians’ illusions that a spike in district crime could be dismissed as the latest in a series of sacrifices for victory overseas. In response, a cadre of local media, law enforcement, anti-crime groups and federal lawmakers quickly absolved white, heterosexual male veterans of any potential wrongdoing. FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover told the *Post* that “those of us in law enforcement” had an important “ally” in returning veterans.⁵ In a study of the postwar crime wave released before the reporting scandal, the Washington Criminal Justice Association argued that even if “some returning veterans will participate in crime” the vast majority of criminals were “maladjusted persons who were civilians during the war, rather than the returning veteran.”⁶

Who then, was to blame? As with all things related to “crisis” in the nation’s capital, the postwar “crime wave” in D.C. drew the attention of national media outlets, members of Congress and the federal government. D.C.’s postwar crime panic opened an opportunity for crime experts, and sensationalist muckrakers masquerading as crime experts, to present the public with a new composite of the maladjusted urban criminal, the “sexual psychopath” and the racialized

³ J.R. Wiggins “Text of the Post’s Report on Its Police Department Inquiry,” *The Washington Post* July 15, 1947, B1.

⁴ Charles E. Davis, “Murders Fill Space Left By Casualties,” *The Washington Post*, March 17, 1946, 1.

⁵ Davis, “Murders Fill Space...,” 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

“hoodlum.” According to George Chauncey, psychiatrists at D.C.’s St. Elizabeth Hospital were at the forefront of constructing new knowledge around sexual deviation that framed homosexuals as unwilling to adhere to societal norms.⁷ In D.C., and across the country, these findings allowed prosecutors to link homosexuality with a pattern of behavior that could lead to psychopathic acts of violent crime, from rape to murder.⁸ However, historians of the postwar sex crime panic in large cities rarely contextualize mounting anxieties sex crime within the racial climate of cities grappling with growing African American populations. In Washington, D.C. images of the sexual psychopath were joined, and at times folded into, constructions of the black criminal or “hoodlum.” Soon after the metropolitan police began to publicize more complete accountings of crime statistics, the *Washington Post* reported that “some 73% of all persons arrested in Washington are Negroes.” In response to the “Negro crime rate” the *Post* sought out expert “penologists” at the Federal Bureau of Prisons to explain the source of black criminality. Henry Coe Lanpher, one of the Bureau’s statisticians framed black crime as another case of thwarted desires, though in this case Negro crime, violent impulses emerged from “the frustration they felt due to their unequal social status.”⁹ As they had with the “maladjusted” homosexual, journalists translated expert testimony around black “frustration” into the urban “hoodlum;” a criminal unable or unwilling to control an insatiable desire for violence. Howard Whitman, author of *Collier Magazine’s* sensational crime series “Terror in Our Cities,” codified these assumptions, arguing that D.C. was quickly becoming the capital city for this new era in urban crime where violence and sexual assault seemed to be the end, rather than the means, of urban criminals.

What Chicago was to the gangster era, Washington bids fair to become in the new era of hoodlum crime: the era of the mugging and yoking, the street assault, the murder, the rape

⁷ George Chauncey, “The Postwar Sex Crime Panic,” in *True Stories from the American Past* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 160-170.

⁸ Estelle Freedman, “Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920-1960,” in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, Critical Perspectives on the Past (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989)

⁹ “Penologists At Odds on Crime Rate Of Negroes,” *The Washington Post*, April 25, 1949, B1.

and the psychopathic sex crime...The old-fashioned professional thug (a menace, indeed, but much less a menace than the modern hoodlum) would corner his quarry so he couldn't run away. He 'cased' a job—went after the man with a payroll in his pockets. He didn't pick on 'the first guy who comes along.' He did his best not to hurt his victim, especially not to kill him.¹⁰

The analysis of white psychiatric experts and media outlets not only offered Americans a new framework for understanding racial differences between whites and black Washingtonians and sexual differences between normative and “deviant” individuals, their emphasis on the mobility of the new urban criminal produced intense fear that white middle class neighborhoods could be overrun with dangerous outsiders. Few white Washingtonians delineated between their concerns over being mugged by the “modern hoodlum” and being victimized by the roaming “sex criminal.” Whitman's *Collier* article quoted Georgia Congressman James C. Davis, notorious segregationist chair of the House Committee on the District of Columbia, saying “We've reached the point where it is risky for women and girls to be on the streets after dusk.”¹¹ Whitman's article also reminded readers of the recent gruesome murder of Carol Bardwell, an 11 year old girl purportedly killed by a “sex maniac” in Rock Creek Park—in close proximity to the wealthiest white neighborhoods in the city.

What kind of a town is this that a little girl can't ride her bike in the park on a bright, sunshiny Sunday without having her throat cut by a maniac?...A woman can't walk (in the parks) by day free of the fear of rape and murder? A man never knows but what he will be held up for his money and lose his life as well.¹²

Whites in segregated neighborhoods began writing letters to conservative leaning newspapers like *The Evening Star* and the *Washington Post* expressing concern that sex predators and violent criminals were willing to enter city parks and residential neighborhoods looking for victims. One woman who identified herself as a “Long-Time Supporter” of stricter anti-crime laws wrote the

¹⁰ Howard Whitman, “‘Terror in Washington;’ Police Lineup of D.C. Hoodlums ‘Enough to Make Any Family Want to Stay Inside.’” *The Washington Post*, June 18, 1950, B1.

¹¹ Whitman, “‘Terror in Washington? ...’” B1.

¹² *Ibid.*, B1.

Star to point out that children could easily be “lured away from the front sidewalk of [their] home. The danger will always be present as long as these men are not given proper confinement and medical attention.”¹³ Another woman who identified herself as “The Mother of a Victim” wrote in to say her child had been emotionally traumatized after witnessing a young man expose himself while on her way to the public pool in Fairlawn Park in southwest D.C. In her letter, the “Mother” demonstrated how her daughter’s brush with sexual exposure had forced her family to consider leaving the city if her child could not travel unsupervised.

I have discontinued my daughters daily swimming lessons, since it is unsafe for her to walk across the strip of open park to the bus stop; however it is impractical to have to arrange for adult accompaniment to and from junior high this winter, and the trips will be far earlier in the morning and later in the afternoon than was this swimming trip.¹⁴

For many white Washingtonians, the city’s expanding black population and the weakening of racial residential and commercial segregation after the war, exacerbated fears that they, or a loved one, might be killed at the hands of a criminal. In a personal memoir published in *Washington History* Paul Wice, a political science professor who was raised in D.C.’s northeast side until his family moved to Wheaton Maryland in 1956, recalled how school integration and a small increase in black residents in his neighborhood made his walk home from McFarland high school a harrowing experience.

As the Petworth area and the junior high began to have an increasingly larger black population, the only threat I personally felt was from organized gangs of tough black kids. Incidents were few, but the potential for violence seemed ever present, and I was careful to avoid risky encounters. In order to catch my bus home, I was forced to walk through parks where my imagination envisioned danger lurking behind every bush and tree. My fears grew during the winter months when I stayed late for basketball practice every afternoon, and it would be dark by the time I left for home.¹⁵

¹³ “More on Sex Offenders” *The Evening Star*, August 26, 1947.

¹⁴ “The Full Story of a Sex Offense” *The Evening Star*, August 22, 1947.

¹⁵ Paul Wice, “Safe Haven: A Memoir of Playground Basketball and Desegregation,” *Washington History* 9, no. 2 (Fall/Winter, /1998 1997), 63.

Though Wice's article argues that area basketball courts offered a brief respite from the mounting racial tension in the area, his memories of fear, anxiety and nervousness surrounding D.C.'s schools, parks and streets reflects the emotions of many white Washingtonians who found their once familiar city a decidedly less friendly place.

The postwar crime panic ushered in a moment of severe anxiety over the stability of spatial whiteness in the nation's capital. Between the end of World War II and the 1968 rebellion, white Washingtonians grappled with a series of challenges to what George Lipsitz has called the white spatial imaginary. "A white spatial imaginary, based on exclusivity and augmented exchange value, functions as a critical mechanism for skewing opportunities and life chances in the United States along racial lines."¹⁶ Lipsitz argues that institutional and cultural racisms have historically mapped out privilege, particularly within urban areas, in geographic terms. Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf and John Swanstrom have described this phenomenon as "the power of place" and demonstrated that, despite civil rights reforms, racialized access to the right neighborhoods, schools and environments increases an individual's chance of economic success and upward mobility.¹⁷

White Washingtonians were both aware of and extremely concerned about the potential that their proximity to racial and sexual others could jeopardize this spatial form of white privilege. Anxiety around African American crime and sex crime coincided with significant increases in D.C.'s black population and visible gay socializing from the end of the war through the end of the 1960s. A series of Supreme Court rulings that, gradually, eliminated legal barriers to residential, commercial and educational segregation in the nation's capital, made the possibility of white proximity to racial and sexual disorder exponentially more likely. As a result, after World War II, white Washingtonians felt that their exclusive access to the privileges of place was under assault from an expanding,

¹⁶ George Lipsitz, "The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race.," *Landscape Journal* 26, no. 1 (March 2007), 13;

¹⁷ Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf, and John Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty-first Century*, Second Edition., Studies in Government and Policy (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

encroaching, criminal black population, an insidious, roaming “brotherhood” of male “sexual deviants” and the growing presence of countercultural hippies.

The dominant themes within postwar urban history would suggest that, in response to these perceived threats white residents would flee the city for expanding suburban areas in Maryland and Virginia.¹⁸ Indeed, D.C.’s white population plummeted in the decade following the end of the war and Washington, D.C. became a majority black city as early as 1954. However, as Heather Thompson has argued about Detroit, not all white residents left the nation’s capital immediately after the war.¹⁹ Those that remained dug in their heels to protect the spatial reputation of their neighborhoods, and by proxy preserve a critical form of white privilege, by blocking the encroachment of racial and sexual others into their neighborhoods. In response, white homeowners used neighborhood based “citizens associations” to organize their efforts to “preserve” their communities in the face of unwanted change. Critically, white citizens associations in D.C. were as concerned with the prospect that racial and sexual others would travel through and recreate in their neighborhoods as they were with the possibility that a middle class black family may buy a home on their block. As the Supreme Court first invalidated racial segregation in home sales in 1947 and then in commercial establishments in D.C. in 1953, white homeowners and businessman scrambled to produce political and business strategies that would, in their minds, preserve their financial investments within a capitalist system where proximity to African Americans and sexual deviance had a direct impact on residential property values and retail profit margins.

It was in the northwest neighborhood of DuPont Circle where white Washingtonians mounted one of their strongest challenges to the infiltration of racial and sexual others. DuPont

¹⁸ As Heather Thompson has argued, most scholars assume that once white flight began in the postwar years all whites left the city in one fell swoop.

¹⁹ Heather Ann Thompson, “Rethinking the Politics of White Flight in the Postwar City: Detroit, 1945-1980,” *Journal of Urban History* 25 (1999): 163-198.

Circle's proximity to Shaw, Rock Creek Park and a rapidly changing downtown placed it on the frontier of racial, sexual and economic disorder [Figure 2.1].

Members of the neighborhoods' all white homeowners association, the DuPont Circle Citizens Association (DCCA) expressed concern that their precarious location vis a vis racial and sexual others and geographies of expanding blight threatened the value of their property and their physical safety. However, as the 1948 *Shelley v. Kramer* decision and the 1953 *D.C. v Johnson* decision unmade legal barriers to racial mixture, the DCCA, along with the entire Federation of Citizens Associations (FCA) reframed their opposition to racial and sexual others by campaigning against "crime," by expressing concerns over economic decline, by warning against declines in "property value" and by opposing commercial development that attracted a "bad element" into white, middle class neighborhoods. The later concern, organized opposition to new commercial development, represents a critical signpost for the eventual changes in the construction of white spatial privilege in the postwar decades. White citizen associations' opposition to all forms of commercial development, from embassy chanceries, to parking lots to restaurants lays at odds with contemporary logics of community development that emphasize the importance of recreation to creating neighborhoods that will attract the middle class or what Richard Florida calls the "creative class." In the immediate postwar decades though, white spatial privilege was predicated upon the ability to exclude racial and sexual others from all neighborhood territory.

Under this schema downtown Washington--once a vital economic center--and other neighborhoods with attractive "nightlife" development served as cautionary tales for DCCA members seeking to preserve their access to spatial privilege in the postwar decades. Critically, the proliferation of gay commercial spaces in downtown in the 1960s functioned as further evidence that proximity to sexual deviants threatened the economic health of an urban community.

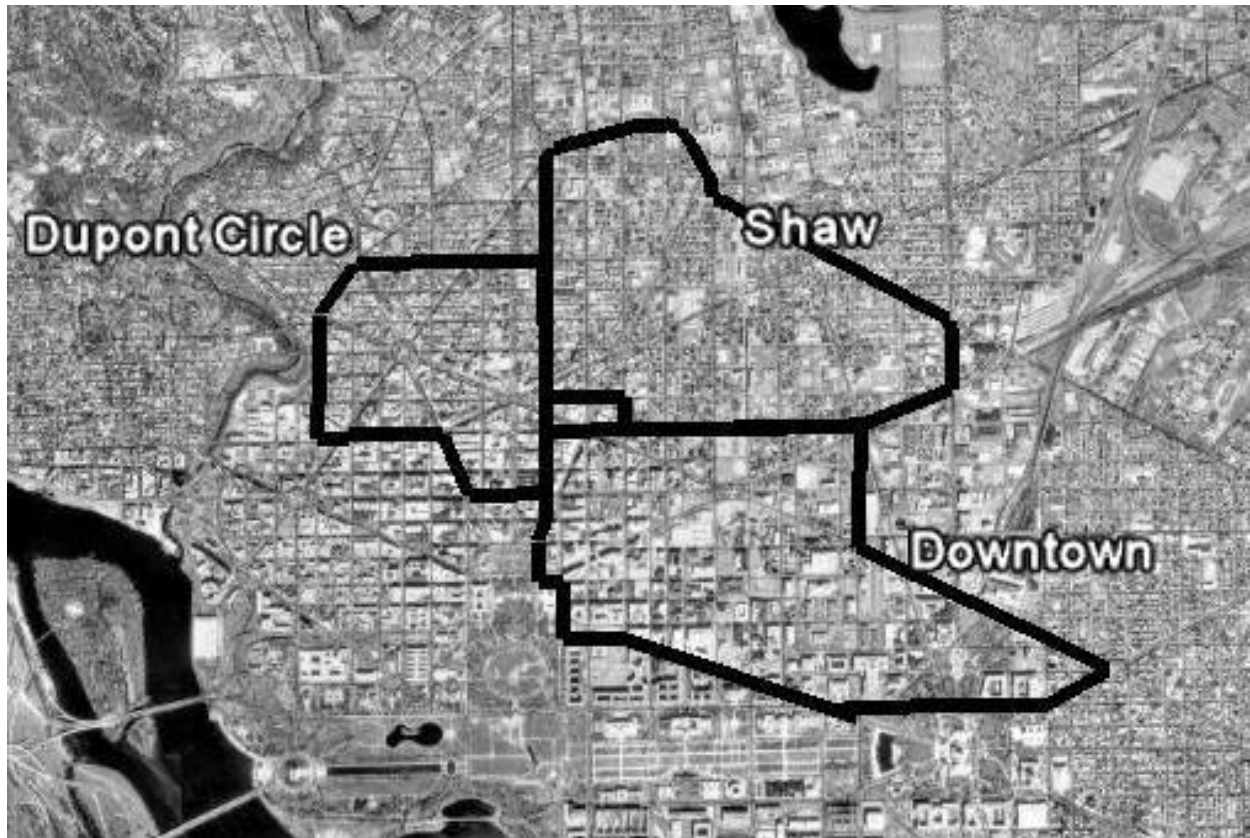


Figure 2.1, “DuPont Circle in Relationship to Shaw and Downtown .” This map was created using open source Google Earth software. While the DCCA materials did not include an official “map” of the area, DCCA committee leaders often made reference to the boundaries of the association in letters to public officials. The boundaries used here were taken from “Letter from Nicholas Addams to Alcohol Beverage Control Board,” Letter, February 25, 1971, DuPont Circle Citizens Association Correspondence, Folder 10, Historical Society of Washington, Kiplinger Research Library.

As downtown Washington lost millions in investment dollars in the forties, fifties and sixties the presence of racial and sexual minorities in downtown became a way of explaining economic divestment that shielded fleeing whites from culpability in D.C.'s "decline." While white homeowners fretted about the city's changing racial and sexual landscape, the gay Washingtonians they blamed for economic decline began to expand their social and economic territory into downtown during the fifties and sixties. The growth of a gay commercial district in "declining" downtown produced interdependent discourses of decline that suggested white homosexuals' willingness to travel through a racially marginalized downtown was a symptom of the "tragic" illness of homosexuality

The economic and demographic transformations ushered in by World War II remade the actual and imagined terrain of D.C.'s racial and sexual geography. As discussed in chapter 1, unlike other major cities, D.C. had many, rather than one, clearly demarcated African American neighborhood prior to World War II. An analysis of the 1940 census tracts by the National Committee on Segregation in the nation's capital indicates that predominately black neighborhoods formed a semi circular belt separating downtown from white neighborhoods to the north and west.²⁰ DuPont Circle, along with Kalorama, Adams Morgan and the Farragut area were the only white neighborhoods within the "black belt" through the end of the war. Still, restrictive covenants on housing deeds along with the extra legal tactics of real estate agents and the police ensured that these "interior" neighborhoods remained exclusively white. District police were quick to use violence and intimidation to discourage black people from lingering too long on commercial boulevards in white neighborhoods on the "interior" of the black ring. Racialized policing of commercial space came to light in 1947 when Albert Clegg—a black Washingtonian war veteran, and employee of the *Washington Post*—was accosted, kidnapped and beaten senseless by Washington Metropolitan Police

²⁰ Landis, *Segregation in Washington: A Report* (Chicago: National Committee on Segregation in the Nation's Capital, 1948), 27.

after being accused of “following” a white woman who had been window shopping in a section of Connecticut Ave NW in.²¹

In addition to the police the two most important forces behind the enforcement of *dejure* and *defacto* segregation in the nation’s capital were the Board of Trade and the FCA. According to the National Committee on Segregation in the Nation’s Capital the FCA had taken up the enforcement of segregation in the 1920s, a decade where black population increased from x to x in the nation’s capital.

Originally the Citizens’ Associations were neighborhood improvement societies, interested in such things as trees and flowers, schools and parks, and improved city services. Not until the 1920’s did they become actively concerned in the containment of Negroes, and turn into a front for the real estate interests.²²

In Washington, a city without an elected city council or mayor until 1974, white citizens associations were the most important pseudo-representative political bodies. Organized under the FCA, individual white neighborhood citizens groups from around the city pooled their most important resources, family name, wealth and personal connections to well placed federal employees, in order to secure patronage for their neighborhoods. FCA members, like the DuPont Circle Civic Association (DCCA) were treated to regular briefings by city and federal officials on a wide range of municipal affairs including sanitation policy, education policy, proposed economic development strategies and police efforts to reduce crime and maintain safety. These visits, never offered to black civic groups, allowed white Washingtonians the opportunity to influence the deployment of federal resources within the district and their neighborhood.

At the top of the FCA agenda in the immediate postwar years were concerted efforts to maintain the racial status quo in the nation’s capital. Even as the Supreme Court outlawed

²¹ “Veteran Files Complaint: Police Are Accused of Beating Negro Held Without Charges” *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, August 8, 1947, 1 “No Action Taken in Clegg Case; Barrett Silent” *The Washington Post*, September 18, 1947, 11.

²² Landis, 34.

restrictive covenants and the Truman Administration issued a series of reports condemning residential and educational segregation in the district throughout the late 1940s, the FCA and its member associations spent the decade organizing against the implementation of integration in the District. In the late 1940s two working class white neighborhoods on the far edges of the city, Brookland and Congress Heights became the first flashpoints for white resistance to residential and school integration. Middle class black families had begun moving out of Shaw into Brookland throughout World War II, sparking a wave of white flight out of the neighborhood. Speaking before the remaining white families at a meeting of the Brookland Citizens Association, FCA president warned white residents they should not sell their houses and move “if a colored person is unwise enough to move to your block.”²³ He went on to declare that neighborhood based segregation was “natural” to Washington which was “originally a typical Southern city, with all the traditions and manners of living in the South.” Newell framed the assault on segregation as resulting not from “old resident” blacks, but “agitating,” “un-American” newcomers who sought to drive the United States towards “social democracy, which is but another name for communism.”²⁴ Earlier that year the FCA had responded to a pro-integration study conducted by the Council of Social Agencies, a respected anti-racist reform organization, by releasing its own study which argued that integration would cripple property values in white neighborhoods. Moreover, the FCA report argued that the “majority” of white residents who desired to separate from blacks were no different than the “the law abiding citizen who separates himself from the criminal.”²⁵ In Congress Heights the situation was more explosive. On the eve of the release of the *Kramer* decision 500 white homeowners and residents in Congress Heights held a rally in the Congress Theater to protest the sale of “their” homes to black families. Speaking before the assembled crowd Congress Heights

²³ “Race Segregation 'Natural' Here, Newell Tells Citizens,” *The Washington Post*, October 15, 1947, 1.

²⁴ “Race Segregation 'Natural' Here, Newell Tells Citizens,” 11.

²⁵ Mary E. Walsh, “Race Report,” *The Washington Post*, January 15, 1947, 8.

Citizen Association President Harry Lebrand declared, “There was a time when this country called upon its Minute-men. Now we want Minutemen and Minute-women in Congress Heights. The old Minute men said: ‘They shall not pass’ Let our slogan be: ‘They Shall not squat here’.”²⁶

However, while the situations in Brookland and Congress Heights suggested that white residents were entrenched, organized, and ready to fight integration alongside the FCA, the battle was nearly over before it began. The FCA lacked the backing of the District Commissioners who, as Presidential appointees, had to rhetorically support the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Kramer*. District Commissioners were under enormous political pressure to demonstrate that a stinging 91 page report on “Segregation in the Nation’s Capital,” sponsored by the National Committee on Segregation in the Nation's Capital, had exaggerated the extent of institutional racism in the District. The report, in particular, identified the Board of Trade, “real estate interests” and the “white citizens” associations for entrenching “slum conditions” in black neighborhoods through segregation.²⁷ While the Board of Trade and other citizens associations denounced the report as an “absolute distortion,” the letter pages of the *Washington Post* were filled with letters condemning FCA leadership for “shaming” the nation’s capital with their “reactionary,” “prejudiced” and “intolerant” attitudes.²⁸ Soon after, the Board of Trade publicly claimed to end their policy of denying home loans to black families in integrated neighborhoods.²⁹ By the mid 1950s, nearly all of the formerly

²⁶ Sam Stavisky, “500 Attend Rally to Prevent Sale of Homes to Negroes,” *The Washington Post*, November 9, 1947.

²⁷ Landis, 21-30

²⁸ On Board of Trade and Citizen Association defenses of segregation in D.C. see, “Segregation Report Items Are Denied By Wender,” *The Washington Post*, December 15, 1948; Murrey Marder, “Segregation Report Assailed as Distorted 'Special Plea',” *The Washington Post*, December 1948; On white and black letters condemning the FCA see, Mary E. Walsh, “Letters to the Editor: Race Report,” *The Washington Post*, January 15, 1947; G. Frazier Miller, “Race Report,” *The Washington Post*, January 8, 1947; E.B. Henderson, “Citizens Association Race Report,” *The Washington Post*, January 10, 1947; Cynthia, B. Anthonsen, “Race Relations Report,” *The Washington Post*, February 6, 1947; “Defense of Prejudice,” *The Washington Post*, December 19, 1947; Grace Smith, “Segregation in Washington,” *The Washington Post*, December 15, 1948; Margaret Wormley, “Segregation in Washington,” *The Washington Post*, December 21, 1948.

²⁹ Dorothea Andrews, “Realty Board Ban on Sale to Negroes Is Removed,” *The Washington Post*, December 12, 1948

white working class neighborhoods on the east side of the city, north and south, were either majority African American or significantly integrated.³⁰

Few white citizens associations in northwest Washington were more focused on regulating the spatial identity of their community in the 1950s and sixties than the DCCA. Prior to World War II, the residential blocks surrounding the DuPont Circle fountain were home to the “wealthy, politically powerful, the diplomatic corps and the cultured.”³¹ By the end of the war however, DCCA historians lamented that the area’s “spacious homes became boarding houses, the enchanting flower gardens became functional vegetable gardens the remaining society matrons again called on weekday afternoons -- but rolled bandages replaced the engraved calling cards of the earlier days.”³² As the Eisenhower Administration ramped up political momentum for bringing urban renewal to northwest Washington in the late 1950s, the area’s proximity to the Shaw urban renewal area concerned many DCCA members. Then DCCA president Frederick Lecomte reached out to Charles H. Conrad at the National Capital Planning Commission for information on the threat federal urban renewal posed to DuPont Circle. Lecomte told Conrad that “several members of the Association have expressed an interest in hearing you talk on the urban renewal plans for the northwest section, especially since much of our own area may be faced with such problems someday and since we almost adjoin the area now.”³³ The boundaries of the 13th police precinct spanned from north Shaw into DCCA territory, placing wealthy white homeowners in the same policing jurisdiction as the 14th and U vice district. By 1960, in fact, portions of the northeast corner of the DCCA boundary more closely resembled the racial demographics of Shaw area than DCCA

³⁰ Karl E Taeuber and Alma Taeuber, *Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change*, Studies in American Negro Life (New York: Anthenum, 1969).

³¹ DuPont Circle Civic Association, *DuPont Circle: In Commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the DuPont Circle Civic Association* (Washington, D.C.: Casillas Press, 1972), 4,

³² DCCA *DuPont Circle: In Commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the DuPont Circle Civic Association* , 4.

³³ “Frederick C. Lecomte to Charles H. Conrad,” March 28, 1958, DuPont Circle Citizens Association Papers, Correspondence, Folder 5, Kiplinger Research Library-Historical Society of Washington.

membership rolls. At the beginning of the 1960s, DuPont was a neighborhood that seemed poised to become the next white neighborhood east of the Park to “fall” to complete racial turnover.

Alongside the Federation of Citizens Association and the police, the Board of Trade was perhaps the most powerful pseudo government body opposed to desegregation in the nation’s capital. If white citizens associations represented pseudo representative bodies, the Board of Trade functioned as a key governing power at times superseding the authority of the District Commissioners. A study released by the National Committee on Segregation in the nation’s capital found that the Board of Trade lay at the center of the hypocrisy which defined life in the nation’s capital, namely that the capital was meant to be the nation’s showcase, an ideal example of American values, yet those in power were content to exclude African Americans from full citizenship. Because the Board of Trade spearheaded major tourist attractions, like the annual cherry blossom festival, the report concluded that their efforts to exclude black Washingtonians from popular commercial areas was part of the marketing strategy, ensuring the continued success of tourist industries from which their businesses profited.

It’s your Capital—says the Board of Trade which promotes the Cherry Blossom Festival and other activities that attract three million visitors who spend 60 million dollars a year in the Nation’s Capital. But Negro Americans Washington has a meaning of its own hotels (no colored) restaurants (no colored) theaters (no colored)³⁴

Preceding recent trends in scholarship on the maintenance of postwar segregation, the 1948 report concluded that it was not acts of terror and violence by the white working class that produced segregation, but the business strategies of elite commercial and residential interests.

It is not in the field of spontaneous human relationships that trouble occurs in Washington, but on a high-policy level where the segregation of the Negro is planned as a matter of good business, and investments are made in the denial of his equal right to own property. It is not the poor whites who set the pattern, but men of acknowledged culture and refinement, the leaders of the community.³⁵

³⁴ Landis, 20.

³⁵ Landis, 38.

Business leaders' concerns that desegregation would hurt their bottom line were borne out almost immediately after the 1953 *D.C. v Johnson* decision. As Shaw activists gradually desegregated commercial outlets directly south of their neighborhood, i.e. sections of downtown east of 15th street, public and private investors quickly pulled out of the area choosing to subsidize commercial development in solidly white areas north of Lafayette Square including McPherson Sq, Farragut North and West and DuPont Circle. By 1961, the press and local urban renewal agencies were already referring to the downtown area as "old downtown" and the *Post* argued that the area needed to be "next in line for surgery" after the completion of the southwest renewal projects³⁶ The nostalgic moniker reflected the sharp decline in private investment in downtown east of 15th street after the *D.C. v Johnson* decision. Between 1954 and 1962 the 150 block section of the "Central Business District" east of 15th received 31.8 million dollars in investment resulting in 1.5 million square feet of new construction. By contrast, the 148 block business district west of 15th street NW received 227.7 million dollars in financing resulting in 11.1 million square feet of new construction projects that were transformed into apartments and businesses that served white consumers and residents.³⁷ In 1960 Board of Trade members whose businesses were located east of 15th street, formed Downtown Progress in the hopes of coordinating resources to revitalize "old downtown."³⁸ In a self congratulatory report released 14 years later, Downtown Progress used race-neutral language to explain the disparity in investment claiming that areas west of 15th street "did not have the ownership and environmental problems of the old downtown."³⁹ Racialized redistribution of

³⁶ Jack Eisen, "Visitors Find New Face on Nation's Capital," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 20, 1961, B3.

³⁷ Downtown Progress, "Action in Downtown, 1960-1974", 1974, 1278, Albert J. Headley Papers Box 35, Folder "Downtown Progress, 1960-1963" MLK Library - Washingtoniana Division

³⁸ Knox Banner "A More Beautiful Downtown in a More Beautiful Washington" *Washington Building Congress Bulletin*, undated, Albert J. Headley Papers Box 35, Folder "Downtown Progress, 1960-1963"

³⁹ "Action in Downtown, 1960-1974," 1278.

investment capital in downtown seemed to confirm the Board of Trade's countenance of racial segregation in downtown stores and streets prior to *D.C. v. Johnson*.

Concurrently, the increasingly ubiquitous presence of white gay men in downtown during the 1950s and 1960s allowed heterosexual whites to draw linkages between sexual deviance and economic decline. In the following section I examine the way discourses which marked downtown as not suitable for financial investment or white recreation framed the white gay men who participated in the downtown scene as tragic figures to be pitied, as much as feared. As downtown continued to lose tourist money with each passing year in the 1950s and 1960s, less scrupulous businessmen began to open establishments that catered to white gay men. In the 1950s, the white gay scene was limited to a small strip of restaurants and dinner clubs in Lafayette Square, just north of the city's most notorious cruising zone, Lafayette Park.⁴⁰

Little scholarly attention has been paid to the growth of gay bars in downtown during the 1960s. Across the street from the huge FBI complex just north of the National Mall, Louis Galenos opened a three story bar complex which included Hideaway, Louie's Lounge and The Barn in 1963. Galenos hoped to establish a diverse atmosphere with a "different personality on each level." The basement bar, Hideaway, was "leather and motorcycle oriented" and was a meeting place for the local chapter of the Druids Motorcycle Club.⁴¹ By day, Louie's lounge was a respectable restaurant that served workers at the nearby FBI building and by night catered to a gay crowd. The Barn's constituency was even more diverse, a country and western themed gay bar on weekends and a place to see drag performance during the week. Other bars in downtown were haunts for D.C.'s white gay sex workers. Bars in downtown hotels like the "Pink Elephant" located

⁴⁰ On the Lafayette Park scene see, David Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: the Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), Brett William Beemyn, "A Queer Capital: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Life in Washington, D.C., 1890-1955" (University of Iowa, American Studies, 1997).

⁴¹ Meinke, Mark. "PLACES & SPACES -- clubs, bars, community centers, etc. of Washington DC's LGBT community (1920 to the present)", 2002. <http://www.rainbowhistory.org/clubs.pdf>, 19.

in the Harrington Hotel and the “Naples Café, which rented rooms by the hour, were known as “hustler bars” that catered to visitors and discreet suburbanites. Nearby James E. Lakes opened “Jimmie Lake’s” in 1954 which, according to the Rainbow History Project “was a hangout for the strippers who worked at the 9th street Bars.”⁴²

The growth of Washington’s gay scene in downtown did not escape the attention of the press or sensationalist authors. Just as Harold Whitman was frightening Washington residents with images of the new urban hoodlum and sex maniac, Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer published *Washington Confidential*, a scandalous urban expose that buttressed concerns that homosexuals had infiltrated every arena of D.C. life.⁴³ Lait and Mortimer’s book also contributed to public discourse on the decline of east downtown by offering a precise geography of the area’s gay cruising spots, street corners popular with white and black sex workers and the supposed location of downtown’s hobo-filled “skid row.”⁴⁴ Lait and Mortimer contributed to interlaced images of sexual “deviance,” urban criminality and racial integration emphasizing the presence of black drag queens performing amidst the “fairies” in Lafayette staple, the Chicken Hut.

Simultaneously, as the composite of the new urban criminal folded anxieties around roaming sexual minorities and encroaching African Americans into one another, the “decline” of downtown produced important narratives around the costs of sexual deviance for white men. In February of 1965, 15 years after the passage of D.C.’s anti-sexual psychopath law, the *Washington Post* attempted to provide a “fair” and “objective” portrait of “the homosexuals” in the nation’s capital. The five part series was entitled “The Others” and, for the most part, reproduced popular assumptions that urban homosexuality was primarily a male phenomenon, that homosexual lives were “furtive and

⁴² Meinke, 16, 21, 23.

⁴³ Both Brett Beemyn and David Johnson have argued that *Washington Confidential* backed up claims from Sen. Joseph McCarthy and metro police Lieutenant Roy Blick that thousands of homosexuals were employed by the federal government and lived within the boundaries of the nation’s capital.

⁴⁴ Lait, Jack, and Lee Mortimer. *Washington Confidential*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1951, 30-34, 90-98.

lonely,” that homosexual men were responsible for the city’s high rates of venereal disease and syphilis and that homosexuals had formed silent fraternities in feminine industries like the arts and fashion.⁴⁵ In a significant move from the intensity of concern over sexual psychopaths in the late 1940s, White suggested that only a minority of homosexuals were rapists and sexual psychopaths. However, in attempting to relay to readers the extent of the tragedy that plagued ostensibly white homosexual’s lives, White suggested that homosexuals were forced to choose between living “lonely” lives or risk travel to dangerous parts of town to release the burden of their sexual desires.

Homosexuality does create some obvious social problems—venereal disease, flagrant solicitation in parks, the noisy boisterous fringe that flowers in ‘pansy patches’ and ‘petticoat lanes.’ But on the whole homosexuals are quiet and unobtrusive, more likely to be victimized than to do violence to others...On 42d[sic] Street off Times Square male hoods prey on homosexuals, lead them on, and then rob and beat them up. Often a man will react to a homosexual advance with violence. At times, it seems the homosexual is his own worst enemy.”⁴⁶

White’s characterization of the homosexual as a victim of his own desires lay at the center of public perceptions of homosexuality and was consistently reinforced by Hollywood movies that demanded homosexual characters die as a result of their sexual abnormality. Yet the inclusion of the urban hoodlum, located within the ultimate representation of downtown decline, 42nd street, suggests the evolution of once widespread assumptions that same-sex attraction was the result of an inversion in sexual identity.⁴⁷ In postwar urban America, the white homosexual forced to travel to 42nd street, or in the case of D.C. into declining and dangerous downtown, represented a form of racial inversion, defying what FCA President George Newell described as a “natural” desire for white “citizens” to separate from criminals. In the early decades of the 20th century theories psychiatric theories of sexual inversion concluded that homosexual men and women’s sex identities

⁴⁵ White, Jean. “Homosexuals Are in All Kinds of Jobs, Find Place in Many Levels of Society.” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, February 2, 1965, A12

⁴⁶ White, A12.

⁴⁷ Kevin J. Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 77.

had been reversed or “inverted” to unnatural ends.⁴⁸ By the postwar period, though the language of sexual inversion had all but disappeared from popular discourse on homosexuality. Still, exposes like *Washington Confidential* and the *Posts* “Those Others” which depicted white homosexuals’ compulsive drive to interact in racially marginal territory, even at the risk of their lives, indicated that homosexuality now turned racial imperatives inside out. Assumptions around the criminal threat and danger of black urban populations dialectically marked investing in the downtown area and the social lives of white gay men as equally parts economically and physical “risky” propositions.

Linkages between racial integration, sexual vice and economic decline did not merely exist on the lips of policy makers and in the pens of sensationalist writers. Some white gay men in the postwar period understood that traveling into postwar downtown for recreation and to meet sexual partners represented a self-inflict sacrifice of the privilege of place. Gay bars in postwar downtown bore little resemblance to the establishments that would come to define “modern” gay living in the 1970s. Instead, gay spaces in postwar downtown were defined by the immediate desires of white gay men who hoped to seek out immediate solutions to their sexual desires, without risking their livelihoods or standing within their communities. Understood spatially, white gay men’s complicated memories of downtown indicate that they also grappled with the racialized rhetoric of downtown’s “decline” For example, one of the longest running gay bars in downtown, Carroll’s Tavern, typifies the perceived mounting danger within the downtown scene in the 1950s and 1960s. Brett Beemyn argues that during the war the military population in the District was stable and that “the local patrons of Carroll’s with the help of the bar’s two supportive waitresses, were able to learn quickly the names, backgrounds, and even reputations of the service personnel who came there. As a result, sailors, marines, and soldiers had to be sure to maintain a good reputations if they expected

⁴⁸ Kevin Mumford has suggested that sociological discourse which stigmatized interracial socializing and sexual inversion provided a language for the development of a diverse range of homosexual subjectivities and positionalities in interwar New York and Chicago.

to find sexual partners; those who mistreated the one who took them home became known to others and were unofficially banned from the bar.”⁴⁹ After the war however, the massive increase in military personnel from around the country “meant that men in uniform were not absorbed into the bar community and that neither the local patrons nor the waitresses knew their reputations, making it much more dangerous for gay and bisexual men to pick up soldiers sailors and marines.” In interviews conducted years later, white gay men who patronized D.C. gay bars before and after the war reproduced narratives of decline informed by a white spatial imaginary. For example, Ladd Forrester recalled “in contrast to the genteel atmosphere of Margaret’s and Showboat was [Carroll’s] a bar on 9th street, a rough trade hangout. Servicemen were very poorly paid at the time and many of them made very aggressive trade.”⁵⁰ “Margaret’s” and “Showboat” were whites-only bars popular in downtown during the 1930s and 1940s in Lafayette Square, which lay west of 15th street.⁵¹ Concerns over Carroll’s “rough trade,” and Forrester’s reference to the “genteel atmospheres” in Margaret’s and Showboat’s demonstrate the way white gay Washingtonians reproduced racialized discourses of decline, even as those discourses worked to further stigmatize homosexuality in the nation’s capital.

Observing these shifts in downtown’s spatial identity from nearby during the 1950s and 1960s, members of the DuPont Circle Citizens Association must have imagined themselves as surrounded by an unstoppable onslaught of sexual and racial disorder. Not only were the north eastern boundaries of the DCCA only blocks from Shaw’s 14th street NW, but DuPont Circle’s southern border rubbed against downtown and was hemmed in to the east by Rock Creek Park, another site of intense media sensationalism around crime and sexual deviance after the war. In addition to Carol Bardwell’s murder, D.C. media coverage seized on the gruesome kidnapping, sexual assault and murder in Rock Creek Park of Harrison Walker in 1949. When Walker’s body was

⁴⁹ Beemyn, 148.

⁵⁰ Ladd Forrester as quoted by Mark Meinke in “Places and Spaces,” 4. It is unclear whether Forrester’s interview was conducted by Beemyn or informally by Meinke.

⁵¹ Meinke, 26.

found by his older brother, the story dominated headlines for days and the metropolitan police vowed to seek out the various haunts of the city's sex criminals, including the popular cruising zone within the DuPont traffic circle. Indeed, according to police arrest records the DuPont traffic circle was the second most popular cruising territory for gay men in the city, next to Lafayette Park and Meridian Hill, which was located just north of Shaw.

DuPont Circle's position on a kind of racial and sexual frontier made the neighborhood into a critical battleground for the maintenance of spatial whiteness and heteronormativity in the 1960s. The importance of DuPont Circle to the mission of Federation of Citizens Associations in these years is evidenced by the fact that for at least five years the DCCA president and the FCA president were the same person, investment banker John Immer, who served as DCCA President from 1960 through 1965 and FCA President from 1960 through the early seventies.⁵² After ceding the presidency of the DCCA to Catherine McCarron in 1965, Immer, in his role as FCA president, continued to work closely with McCarron and active DCCA members to combat encroachment of "undesirables" into DuPont Circle.

Until the late 1960s when African Americans, hippies and LGBT people began to descend onto the DuPont traffic circle en masse, DCCA members rarely expressed specific animosities towards racial and sexual minorities.⁵³ Rather, they virulently opposed commercial development in the neighborhood that would encourage nighttime recreational traffic in the circle and along Connecticut Avenue. Expecting the continuation of the pseudo-patronage the Association had enjoyed in previous years to continue, DCCA members barraged local officials with complaints about new or existing commercial development in the neighborhood with a particular focus on restaurants, nightclubs and liquor stores. Broadly, the DCCA framed any move to alter zoning in

⁵² "John Immer, Ex-Professor, DuPont Circle Activist, Dies," *The Washington Post*, November 11, 1984.

⁵³ The available DCCA correspondence does not extend further back than 1952, only a year before the D.C. v. Johnson decision. As a result, it is impossible to know how residents specifically reacted to the *Shelley v. Kramer* decision.

DuPont Circle as the beginning of the end of the community's reputation as respectable and middle class.

In 1958, for example, then DCCA president Frederick C. Lecomte wrote to Sen. Matthew M. Neely (D-WV) to oppose the sale of an historic DuPont Circle home to Sons of the American Revolution because the structure “would allow the use of the structure, as an office, contrary to the existing zoning laws of the area.” For the DCCA, this kind of “spot zoning” could open up the floodgates to unwanted commercial development and warned that “it inevitably leads to the decline and even destruction of orderly neighborhoods.”⁵⁴ Considering the media attention to sex perverts and black criminals in downtown, DCCA concerns that new commercial developments would disrupt the “historic character” of the neighborhood can be read in a different light. In 1965 DCCA members Abdon and Janet Ackad wrote to the D.C Alcohol Control Board to object to a “notice of intent” to obtain a liquor license for a new restaurant venture sponsored by the “Lost Sheep Corporation.” The Ackad’s were concerned that a “restaurant, complete with liquor is an open invitation in an alley for a hangout, rowdyism and vandalism—a second Georgetown.”⁵⁵ Writing to the Alcohol Control Board in his role of FCA president, John Immer warned that the FCA was “very much concerned” over the “proliferation of beverage licenses adjacent to or abutting residential areas of the city.”⁵⁶ A year later DCCA president Catherine McCarron complained that the increased popularity of nighttime recreation in or near residential neighborhoods was producing a dangerous “faddism” that brought individuals from around the metro Washington area that had no personal investment in community stability.

At one time people going out "on the town" visited night clubs in a central downtown business area. Now, with our greater concentration of population, we want to escape the

⁵⁴ “Letter from Frederick C. LeComte to Sen. Matthew M. Neely”, January 14, 1958. DCCA papers

⁵⁵ “Abdon Ackad and Janet Ackad to Alcohol Beverage Control Board,” September 22, 1965, DuPont Circle Citizens Association Correspondence, Folder (1965).

⁵⁶ “John Immer to Alcohol Beverage Commission,” September 23, 1965, DuPont Circle Citizens Association Correspondence, Folder (1965).

crowds, and we seek small neighborhood clubs near residential areas. Unfortunately these clubs are subject to faddism; it becomes the "in" thing to patronize a selected few. The result is that a club located in a neighborhood shopping area...is descended upon by customers from the entire metropolitan area. These people seem to have little or no responsibility to the residents of that area for good behavior.⁵⁷

McCarron's reference to a previous era where Washingtonians once enjoyed an evening in downtown cannot be coincidental. It demonstrates the way white homeowners in Washington understood their relationship to the fate of the downtown district. With fewer and fewer areas of the city suitable for respectable nighttime recreation, access to zones of secure white consumption became a privilege and fueled "faddism." Yet faddism also worked to undo spatial whiteness as it attracted an element with no personal or emotional investment in the sustenance of the community into middle class areas.

By the mid sixties "faddism" had descended upon DuPont Circle with a vengeance. While DCCA members interpreted increased pedestrian traffic to DuPont Circle as "rowdyism" and "vandalism," in reality DuPont Circle had become a popular destination point for young Washingtonians, across class and racial lines, and suburbanites. From the perspective of DCCA members it must have seemed that the black freedom movement, the "counterculture," the anti-war movement and sexual liberation had descended upon DuPont Circle all at once, especially during the spring and summer months in the late sixties. A number of new Left and radical organizations opened offices in the DuPont area between 1966 and 1971 including the Black Panther Party at 18th and Swann streets NW, the Gay Liberation Front house at, and the leftist think tank the Institute of Policy Studies.⁵⁸

In addition to leftist institutional strength, DuPont's uniquely accessible geography encouraged a wide range of urban constituents to travel there. Buses from Connecticut avenue

⁵⁷ "From Catherine McCarron, President of the DuPont Circle Citizens Association to the Editor of the Washington Star," February 18, 1966, DuPont Circle Citizens Association Correspondence, Folder (1966).

⁵⁸ "3 Panthers Seized in Scuffle." *The Washington Post, Times-Herald*, May 11, 1970, B5.

brought students from American University and young people from wealthy white neighborhoods further northwest in D.C. and in the Maryland suburbs. A short walk down 14th street and west on P street NW brought young black radicals from the 14th and U Street area in Shaw into DuPont Circle, particularly at night where vigorous debates between white hippies and Black Power advocates occasionally turned violent.⁵⁹ Eastbound buses brought students from Georgetown and George Washington University for a series of anti-war protests that drove DCCA members to distraction. In the late 1960s, the DuPont traffic circle was a particularly popular destination for black and white gay newcomers to the city. In the summer of 1968, Jim Harvey, a black gay Chicagoan, moved to D.C. for an organizing position within Marion Barry's Pride Inc. Harvey and Barry originally met in Chicago in 1963 when both were chairmen of SNCC chapters, Barry in Nashville and Harvey in Chicago.⁶⁰ Harvey reached out to Barry in 1968 hoping to escape scrutiny of coming out in an area where he had been a leader within the local movement.

I was looking for someplace to move because I felt as if too many people in Chicago knew me and I was beginning my coming out phase. I was a late-bloomer, I did not come out until age 23 but because I had been so politically active in the civil rights movement in Chicago and points south at that time I didn't think that people would be too receptive to finding that somebody like me was actually a gay man as well.⁶¹

Upon arriving in Washington, Harvey moved into an apartment on 16th and S NW, at the border between Shaw and DuPont and quickly found his way to the now infamous traffic circle.

Didn't know anyone in gay life in DC. Knew no one – that I knew of anyway...Late spring I'm out walking down 16th Street when I see this tall, slender guy walking down the street, hips just swinging, and I said to myself, he's got to be gay. So I followed him. All the way to DuPont Circle... Wasn't interested in him personally. Just wanted information. And when he got to DuPont Circle, you know in those days DuPont Circle was a great place to hang out. The drums were playing. The people were reciting poetry, the whole nine yards. And so I nodded and said hello. He nodded and said hello and we started talking and so I asked him, I just came out and asked him. I'm new in town. I was wondering. You know,

⁵⁹ John Lewis, "Hippies Cool It When Confronted By Black Power Devotees In Washington's DuPont Circle Playground; Debates lead to tensions," *Afro-American*, August 26, 1967

⁶⁰ Interview with Jim Harvey by Mark Meinke, September 14, 2004, 1, Rainbow History Project Oral History Collection.

⁶¹ Harvey transcript, 3-4.

don't be offended but do you know where there are any gay bars in this town? And he took a deep breath and looked at me like, why would you ask me something like that? And I said, I said, this is not a pick-up. I'm just trying to find out what's going on in DC.⁶²

No doubt DCCA members would have been horrified to learn that their traffic circle had become a place where homosexuals congregated, passed information and sought out sexual liaisons. For DCCA members the cross-town buses, and the unruly young, countercultural, black and homosexual bodies they brought into DuPont Circle, became merged into a kind of uber noise and environmental pollution. DCCA member Erin Deforest Mellon wrote to the *Washington Post* to complain about the incessant noise from both the cross-town buses and a set of "African drums" which played, presumably, by young black radicals, in the Circle on spring and summer nights in the late sixties. Though she pleaded with the *Post* not to publish her letter for fear of "anonymous reprisal," she expressed her sense that the buses, the noise and the drums were symbolic of DuPont Circle's decreasing level of "civilization."

The intersection of 18th and P streets is a canyon, with handsome townhouses on the north side and the beautiful America Council building on the south. Buses running east and west and north and south stop and start here. During the winter our well insulated houses are protected against sound, but when we step outdoors - and in the spring when we open our windows for a breath of sweet, fresh air the volume of noise produced by the quick, forced starting of buses at this intersection is overpowering. Another noise...are the African drums which beat down the corridor of houses from DuPont Circle from Saturday and Sunday from noon to 11 and later at night. These drums never stop! They are fine, I am sure, for the jungle, for a civilized residential and educational and hotel area they are intolerable. The DuPont Plaza reports that they have lost conventions, after indignant complaints about the intolerable, insidious vibrations.⁶³

As was the case with their opposition to new commercial development, DCCA members reached out to the state, this time in the form of both the metropolitan police department and the U.S. Park Police.⁶⁴ Alongside concerns over new commercial development, the DCCA became focused on crime reduction as a means of regulating undesirable populations in their community.

⁶² Ibid., 4.

⁶³ "Evelyn Emig Mellon to Managing Editor, The Washington Post," May 18, 1969 DCCA Correspondence, Historical SW Kiplinger

⁶⁴ The U.S. Park police had jurisdiction over the DuPont Circle fountain and traffic circle, as it was designated a historic landmark.

Throughout the 1950s, the DCCA organized regular meetings with the 3rd precinct superintendent for updates on the state of law enforcement in their community, particularly around the DuPont Circle fountain and traffic circle. When the local chapter of the NAACP accused police chief Robert Murray of orchestrating systematic violence, harassment and discrimination against black Washingtonians, the DCCA membership voted for a resolution expressing support for Murray's tactics against the city's "criminal element."⁶⁵

However, during the sixties, the DCCA's relationship with local law enforcement significantly deteriorated. High ranking members of the Metropolitan Police Department appeared before the DCCA less and less over the course of the sixties. DCCA president Catherine McCarron watched in horror as "weirdoes, junior junkies, teeny-boppers, and folkniks and undercover policemen congregate on summer evenings around the splashing fountain at the center of DuPont Circle."⁶⁶ The alliance of leadership within the DCCA and the FCA believed that the police's lax attitude towards DuPont Circle was the direct result of the Kennedy and then Johnson Administration's "compassionate" attitudes towards kooks and criminals in the sixties. For DCCA members, the rhetoric of the Johnson and Kennedy Administration towards crime and youthful rebellion had seeped into every facet of district culture. In 1964, after John Immer's fiery appearance in favor of stronger penalties for criminal behavior on a local radio show hosted by Steve Allison, the DCCA received at least one letter applauding his willingness to

stand up to Steve's favorite illustration of the 99 guilty and 1 innocent...When he says 'What if that one innocent man was YOU' you're supposed to turn pale and be struck speechless...You can carry this tender concern for the criminal to the point where it's absolutely maudlin...Steve is always boasting that he has 'compassion'; but why not spread out a little of that compassion to cover the innocent citizen who gets bludgeoned, robbed, raped and murdered?⁶⁷

⁶⁵ "NAACP Aide Asks Removal of Murray," *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, June 7, 1957, A16.

⁶⁶ Paul Richard, "DuPont Circle Group Balks at Fountain Steps," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, March 4, 1967, B1.

⁶⁷ "Miriam Wagner to Mr. John Immer," November 30, 1964, DuPont Circle Citizens Association Correspondence, Folder (1964).

DCCA members also blamed the *Washington Post* which, they argued, seemed more interested in covering hippies and queers than decriing the increase in crime and “sickness” in Washington, D.C. Writing to *Washington Post* president Katherine Graham DCCA member P. Rinz declared,

Some of the members of [the writing] staff are so obsessed with bare bosoms, bare bottoms, mini-skirts, “mod” hair-do, “psychedelic holidays,” and the perversions of a small sick segment of our society, that it seems almost difficult for any one of them to mention even a stock market report without contemplating an exposed navel...Perhaps what Washington needs, besides a responsible morning paper is a vigorous vigilante action to demonstrate righteous indignation (a sentiment held in high esteem by the late Philip Graham).⁶⁸

The Johnson Administration’s 1966 Commission on crime in the District—which primarily concerned itself with the inadequate organization of the metropolitan police department rather than on strategies to more effectively punish criminals—did little to allay these concerns. In a joint statement, the DCCA and the nearby Kalorama Citizens Association blasted the Administration for turning a blind eye as “once lovely DuPont Circle, graced with one of America’s most artistically sculptured fountains, has become the littered haunt of hoods, kooks, creeps, and perverts gathered, especially at night, from all over the metropolitan Washington area.”⁶⁹ DCCA members were alarmed upon hearing that the Democratic controlled House committee on the District of Columbia planned to lower funds for on-foot beat policemen in the metro police budget. Worse, DuPont residents who attempted to reach out to local police officers and administrators were often ignored or rebuffed. In a letter to metro police chief John Layton in 1967 DCCA member Robert D. Westgate expressed his growing fear over violence in DuPont and his irritation at the irresponsiveness of local police.

⁶⁸ “P. Rinz to Mrs. Katherine Graham, President, The Washington Post,” February 14, 1967, DuPont Circle Citizens Association Correspondence, Folder 7.

⁶⁹ “Board of Directors of The Connecticut Avenue Association and the Executive Committee of the DuPont Circle Association, Join Statement Relating to an “interim report” of July 23rd, made public by the President’s Commission on Crime in the District of Columbia,” n.d., 5, DuPont Circle Citizens Association, Correspondence Folder 7.

We like living in the District, but unless the attitude of its police changes soon, we'll be forced to join the mass exodus to the suburbs. But perhaps that's what the department wants. One of the first comments I heard from a District policeman soon after we moved into an integrated section of the Northwest was "What are you doing living in this section anyway?"⁷⁰

Unable to receive satisfaction from the metropolitan police, the DCCA reached out to the U.S. Park Police, charged with maintaining order within the DuPont Circle park and fountain, for assistance. In October of 1967 Catherine McCarron wrote to the Park Police to request greater assistance regulating visitation to the park by the "weirdo set."

We expect the Park Service to respond to the wishes of the residential community and enforce regulations designed to make the park enjoyable for law-abiding citizens of our neighborhood and city... We feel the Park Service, instead of maintaining the standards heretofore followed, has cooperated with the "weirdo" set to bring about the deterioration (and property value depreciation of our residential neighborhood).⁷¹

During the postwar sex crime panic, the Park Police and the metropolitan police department's morals division had worked together to stall the tide of "sexual perversion" in D.C.; ranging from encouraging plainclothes male officers to entrap gay men to setting up listening devices on park benches to intercept homosexual interaction.⁷² However, in 1960 the Park Police had been humiliated when one of their uniformed officers had questioned and arrested three plainclothes members of the metropolitan police's morals division who were sitting on popular cruising bench in Lafayette Park. When the incident came to light the Washington Post editorial wondered,

In a town where crime is rampant and on the increase, why should three (3) detectives of the Metropolitan Police be stationed in Lafayette Park? And why should they be out of uniform? The answer is obvious. The Morals Division clutters up Lafayette Park, a known gathering place for homosexuals, with detectives whose ugly errand it is to entice some unfortunate into making an advance that can be taken as a basis for arresting him.⁷³

⁷⁰ "From Robert D. Westgate to Chief John Layton, District of Columbia Police Department," October 25, 1967, DCCA papers Folder 7, 2.

⁷¹ "From Catherine McCarron to T. Sutton Jett", October 30, 1967, 1, DuPont Circle Citizens Association Correspondence, Folder 7.

⁷² "Bench in Park Is Tattle-Tale," *The Washington Post*, November 11, 1947, 1.

⁷³ "Lafayette, Here We Come," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, 1960, A16.

While the incident did not persuade either the Park Police or the metropolitan police's morals division to stop harassing cruising gay men, it may explain the reluctance of the Park Police to risk similar embarrassments of jurisdictional overlap merely to stop public nuisances or "immorality." In response to continual complaints from DCCA members, an assistant director of the U.S. Park Police wrote to DCCA president Nicholas Addams in 1969 in an attempt to defuse their concerns. Though the Park Police acknowledged that DuPont Circle "has come to be a popular gathering place for those who apparently desire expression of ideals contrary to normal philosophy" and that "such aberration may be repugnant," it "remains within the legal framework of the laws [sic]."⁷⁴ He went on to point out that there was a marked decrease in "major crimes" committed in DuPont Circle Park despite a sharp uptick in visitation from 1967 to 1968. The Park Police's move to distinguish "major crime" from the acts of "aberrant" speaks to significant shifts in police authorities' attitudes towards "crimes" of sexual difference. This, unfortunately, was little comfort for DCCA members, some of whom began to receive ominous notification from their insurance companies that their homes had become too risky to insure. In 1969, a year out from the 1968 riots, Erin Deforest Mellon wrote to John Immer that she had received notice from her insurance agent that DuPont Circle homes were no longer covered by the Republic Insurance Company due to the area's hippie problem.

I enclose the communication of my insurance agent, informing—as I told you by telephone—that "due to the recent developments in the Washington DC area (my) property location is no longer considered acceptable to the Republic Insurance Company." I was privately apprised that the "recent developments" referred to the hippie problem at DuPont Circle. I must admit that on this point I find it hard to disagree with the Republic Insurance Company.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ "R. Moore[signature unclear] to Nicholas A. Addams" May 16, 1969 DuPont Circle Citizens Association Correspondence, Folder 8.

⁷⁵ "Mrs. Deforest Mellon to Nicholas Addams, President DuPont Circle Citizens Association," May 8, 1969, DuPont Circle Citizens Association Correspondence, Folder 8.

Considering the letter Mrs. Mellon received from the Republic Insurance company it would seem that the worst fears of the DCCA had come to fruition on the eve of the seventies. The neighborhood was ripe for a new spatial identity one completely divorced from traditional conceptions of whiteness. The overwhelming sense that the racial and sexual order had been entirely upended extended beyond members of the DCCA to whites throughout the metropolitan region. By the end of the 1960s a regime of social geography that clearly marked particular areas and neighborhoods as impenetrable to non-white people, non-normative sexualities and alternative lifestyles was under serious attack. Yet, despite the DCCA's fears of neighborhood change, DuPont's racial demographics remained stable during the 1960s. The United States census measured DuPont's white population at 58.8% in 1960 and 58.5% in 1970.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, because DuPont Circle's spatial reputation or "brand" was built upon complete exclusion of racial and sexual others; the imagined racial, sexual and economic identity of the neighborhood was significantly altered.

Still, the racial stability of DuPont Circle's population is instructive for understanding how a stable white spatial imaginary would re-assert itself during the 1970s. Despite the best efforts of the DCCA younger white Washingtonians were excited by the sexually and racially diverse milieu of the area. The development of new forms of commercial development, restaurants, night clubs and small scale retailers attracted many young middle class whites to the community during the 1970s. While the DCCA continued to exist in those years, their influence over the public discourse about DuPont Circle waned significantly. Moreover, despite the warnings of the DCCA as DuPont Circle and other predominately white neighborhoods in D.C. became more racially isolated, property values soared. The growth of property values in DuPont Circle in the 1970s occurred despite the area's

⁷⁶ Paul Valentine, "Segregation Increased in D.C. During 1960s," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, December 13, 1972, B2.

popularity with an increasingly visible white gay community who would be at the forefront of the community's rebranding from on the brink of disaster to on the frontier of urban progress.

Chapter 3

Rebuilding Shaw: The Challenge of Rebranding the Ghetto After the 1968 Rebellion

At 8:19pm on April 4th, 1968, the national news media revealed that Dr. Martin Luther King jr. had been assassinated, the victim of a sniper's bullet on the balcony of a Memphis, Tennessee hotel room. Since 7:00pm that evening, when newswires first reported that King had been shot, thousands of black Washingtonians had been gathering around churches and community centers in Shaw. When news of King's death reached Washington, and collective grief quickly turned to rage, local African American community leaders worked to calm and disperse the mob. The nation's most well known Black Power spokesman Stokely Carmichael, who had been in the district since the beginning of the year working to form a local chapter of the Black United Front, went from business to business along "lower" 14th street demanding white store owners close their doors as a sign of respect for King's stature in the black community. Perhaps as he observed the crowd Carmichael saw early evidence that Washington streets were about to play host to scenes many Americans would recognize from Harlem, Watts, Newark and Detroit. At 9:25pm someone threw the first rock into front window of the Peoples Drug Store at 14th and U. Within hours Molotov cocktails sparked fires that engulfed over a mile of 14th street NW. Over the next twelve hours violence enveloped all three of black Washington's major commercial corridors, spreading west to 7th street NW and northeast to H street NE.¹

D.C.'s urban rebellion began at 14th and U, an intersection that once embodied the achievements of the black middle class and now exemplified the economic and sexual decline of the

¹ The preceding narration of the events of April 4, 1968 is drawn from the collective efforts of the staff of the *Washington Post*. See, Ben W. Gilbert ed., *Ten Blocks from the White House; Anatomy of the Washington Riots of 1968* (New York: The Washington Post Company), 13-30. On damage to 14th street see, Redevelopment Land Agency, *Civil Disturbances in Washington, D.C., April 4-8, 1968; A Preliminary Damage Report. Prepared in Cooperation with the District of Columbia Government and the District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency* (National Capital Planning Commission, 1968), 16-18.

Shaw ghetto. Fires that began at 14th and U spread downtown towards large retail outlets and grocery stores notorious for price gouging and discriminatory credit policies. Fires also spread uptown into the Cardozo area, home to hundreds of small “mom and pop” businesses owned by black residents and white suburbanites. Violence spread east as 7th street NW, Shaw’s other main commercial thoroughfare, and H street NE became targets of black residents’ frustration and rage. The damage wrought over four consecutive evenings brought the entire Metropolitan region to high alert. In less than a week, rioters severely impacted or destroyed 645 buildings at a cost of \$24 million 1968 dollars.² 11 people lost their lives and thousands were arrested.³ In the midst of the crisis, newly appointed Mayor Walter E. Washington had issued a “no-shoot” order to the metropolitan police department, only allowing them to subdue participants by hand.⁴ While the order saved many lives, it allowed the violence and fires to spread nearly without impunity. On April 5, Washington called on the National Guard and instituted a week long, city-wide 5:30pm curfew; the nation’s capital was shut down.⁵

The events of the first week of April 1968 in Washington, D.C. were by no means an isolated incident. Black people in dozens of cities used violence to express their anger at the death of Dr. King and the failure to adequately address the growing crisis of black poverty and political disfranchisement in the nation’s black ghettos.⁶ The King rebellions were part of a long era of black communal violence that began in Harlem, Newark, Watts and Detroit, spread to 164 rebellions

² Redevelopment Land Agency, *Civil Disturbances in Washington, D.C., April 4-8, 1968; A Preliminary Damage Report*, 5-7.

³ Ronald Smothers, “Body of 11th Victim Found in Riot Ruins,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 15, 1968, A12.

⁴ Willard Clopton, “Curfew Imposed As Roving Bands Plunder and Burn,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 6, 1968, A1; The Connecticut Avenue Association, “Order from White House..’Don’t Shoot Looters.’”, n.d 1968, 1, The Washington, D.C. Board of Trade Papers, Box 287, Folder “Riots of 1968-Comments, Aftermath, Reactions,” Gelman Library-Special Collection Research Center, George Washington University Library..

⁵ Willard Clopton Jr. and Robert G. Kaiser, “11,500 Troops Confront Rioters; Three-Day Arrest Total at 2686,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 7, 1968, A1.

⁶ Sheehan, Neil, “Army Has 15,000 for Riot Control,” *The New York Times*, April 6, 1968, 25; Ben A. Franklin, “Race Crisis (Cont’d),” *The New York Times*, April 7, 1968, E2.

during the “hot summers” of 1967 and 1968, and continued across the country until the early 1970s.⁷ After the disastrous summer of 1967, the Johnson Administration empowered a federal commission, led by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, to investigate the broad social origins of black urban rebellions and to propose solutions to the crisis. The 1968 Kerner Commission Report was released only months before King’s assassination and Washington, D.C.’s scarred and burnt landscape became a political battleground between conservative critics of the commission’s findings and black radicals’ demand for black self-determination in urban communities.⁸

A now substantial literature on the rise of the “new right” has argued that, at least in terms of national politics, conservatives won that battle. Beginning with Richard Nixon’s landslide victory in 1968, the destruction wrought during urban rebellions offered conservatives a spectacular set of political optics to bolster their articulation of “law and order” politics.⁹ During the 1968 campaign the Johnson Administration’s longstanding interest in reducing the D.C. crime rate became a rallying point for Richard Nixon to assail the inefficacy of a range of rehabilitative and therapeutic anti-poverty policies. In June of that year, Nixon decried Washington as the “crime capital of the world.”¹⁰ Referring to the April riots, Nixon told the nation, “What is happening to Washington, D.C. is a genuinely sickening tragedy to those who have known the city. D.C. should not stand for

⁷ The Kerner Commission reported that there were 130 rebellions during the summer of 1967. *The Kerner Report: The 1968 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

⁸ One of the most important conservative critics of the Kerner Commission was urban theorist Edward Banfield, who had been at the forefront of developing the racialized public discourse on urban blight in the immediate postwar years. Edward Banfield, “Rioting Mainly for Fun and Profit,” in *The Metropolitan Enigma: Inquiries into the Nature and Dimensions of America’s “Urban Crisis”* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968). Other conservative voices argued that the riots were little more than a shopping spree and ghetto residents’ rejection of the right to protect private property. See, Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 159; Russel R. Dynes and E.L. Quarantelli “Property Norms and Looting: Their Patterns in Community Crises.” *Phylon* 31, 168-82; Joe R. Feagin, and Harlan Hahn. *Ghetto Revolts: The Politics of Violence in American Cities* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).

⁹ Thomas Byrne Edsall & Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction* (New York, 1991) and more recently, Michael Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York, 2005).

¹⁰ Robert Asher, “Nixon Labels D.C. A ‘Crime Capital,’ Blames Johnson,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, June 23, 1968, A14.

Disorder and Crime.”¹¹ Nixon went on to pledge that “a Nixon Administration will sweep the streets of Washington clean of these marauders and criminals and remove from this city the atmosphere of apprehension and fear that hangs over it.”¹² Nixon’s characterization of a rebellion against institutional racism as the work of criminals and “marauders in the street” spoke to the continued racialization of urban crime in the white political imaginary. In 1967, thirteen other U.S. cities had higher crime rates per 100,000 residents than Washington, D.C., but the city’s national reputation as a “chocolate city” allowed Nixon to play on white voters’ fears that unruly black urban dwellers threatened to export crime and violence to the rest of the nation if they were not curtailed by the imposition of the “rule of law” to the nation’s cities.

Once elected though, the Nixon Administration’s divestment from the policies and principles of the War on Poverty in Washington, D.C. proved to be a slower process than much of the “new right” literature suggests. The political pressure placed upon both the Johnson and Nixon Administration to rebuild areas of the city destroyed during the April rebellions ensured that the logics of the War on Poverty remained strongest within the realm of urban renewal policy. After his inauguration, President Nixon toured the burnt out wreckage along 7th and 14th street NW and pledged federal funds to rebuild the area. Away from the campaign trail Nixon struck a decidedly less aggressive rhetorical stance against Shaw residents, shaking hands and encouraging residents to “help the mayor.”¹³ In February of 1969, the President committed 22.9 million dollars towards rebuilding the Shaw Urban Renewal area and an additional 1 million for the northern 7th, 14th street NW and H street NE corridors outside of Shaw’s boundaries.¹⁴ The relative continuity between the Johnson and Nixon Administrations on the issue of urban renewal within the nation’s capital left the

¹¹ Asher, “Nixon Labels D.C. A ‘Crime Capital,’ Blames Johnson,” A14.

¹² *Ibid.*, A14.

¹³ Phineas R. Fiske, “President Visits Riot Site,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, February 1, 1969, A1.

¹⁴ Robert L. Asher and Leonard Downie, “Nixon Details Plan to Make District Safe,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, February 1, 1969, A1.

structure of the Demonstration Cities and Model Cities bills intact. Despite Nixon's electoral victory, MICCO—which had been poised to lead community controlled urban renewal before the riot—retained a powerful say in the course redevelopment would take in Shaw and throughout the riot corridors for a few years. The white house's financial and administrative commitments produced a moment of possibility for the communities swept up into the rebellion to be rebuilt in the image of the "black community." Black Washingtonians were so optimistic about the transformative nature of the riot that an October, 1968 Harris poll that compared "community optimism" of whites living in Burlington Vermont to impoverished black Washingtonians living within the "riot zone," found that the later were more optimistic about their future than their white counterparts in New England.¹⁵ The October poll had been conducted at the request of Sen. Winston L. Prouty (R-VT), member of the Senate's subcommittee on the District of Columbia. To his alarm Prouty's study found that significant numbers of black Washingtonians under the age of 24 believed the April rebellion would produce positive change for the communities with 49% responding that the "riots" had done "some good" and 23% reporting that the "riots" were "necessary for change."¹⁶ While older Shaw residents were more skeptical of urban rebellions as a political tactic, even the most conservative voices within Washington's black political class agreed that returning to "business as usual" within the affected areas was no longer possible.¹⁷

This chapter explores the implications of this brief moment—when the possibility of revolutionary transformation of the ghetto seemed within reach—for the meanings of black racial identity and the spatial identity of the "black ghetto" in Washington, D.C. from the riot to the present. From the immediate post-riot moment in the spring of 1968 to the abandonment of

¹⁵ Elise Carper, "D.C. Slum Dwellers Hopeful for Future," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, October 4, 1968, A1.

¹⁶ Carper, "D.C. Slum Dwellers Hopeful for Future," A9.

¹⁷ *Rehabilitation of District of Columbia Areas Damaged by Civil Disorders* (Subcommittee on Business and Commerce of the Committee on the District of Columbia: U.S. Senate, Ninetieth Congress, Second Session, 1968), 279.

community controlled urban renewal in the mid 1970s, each stage of Shaw's reconstruction emerged as an opportunity to undo the stigma of the ghetto and establish economic and quality of life trends that would revolutionize how all Americans imagined the relationship between black communities and the economic fate of the inner city. Anxieties within Shaw surrounding the devastating legacy of "negro removal" and white suburban exploitation meant that black middle class political leaders, community activists and developers were forced to find ways to frame rebuilding Shaw as part of the broad interests of "the community." MICCO, the most well organized and well funded black planning organization in Shaw before and after the riot, was most successful when linking their urban renewal projects to the stabilization and reproduction of the black family. Working with Shaw's largest, most established black congregations, MICCO successfully engineered the construction of housing projects which, they hoped would attract young, ambitious middle class African Americans to stay within the community and raise families. MICCO's partnerships with black and white commercial developers, namely those represented by MICCO's commercial arm Uptown Progress, were less fruitful. When renewal projects were not explicitly or tangentially related to a project of racial reproduction, familiar accusations of "exploitation" and "removal" resurfaced from Shaw activists outside of MICCO's inner circle.

The first stage of Shaw's renewal was a period of post-riot assessment conducted by the newly formed D.C. city council and Rev. Fauntroy's MICCO. In the press, during post-rebellion city council hearings and on thousands of MICCO questionnaires, Shaw residents articulated which social, economic and cultural institutions they believed naturally belonged within their community by identifying what counted as a loss to the community, which existing institutions should be restored and what new institutions should dot Shaw's landscape for the first time. Critically, absent from those conversations were Shaw's black gay and lesbian population whose community building institutions were lost in the fires of the rebellion. Yet, black gay and lesbians were not the only Shaw

community members impacted by the riot whose voices were not part of the assessment process. Their absence merely illustrates the way in which a diverse range of marginalized, working class and poor residents were excluded from the assessment process in favor of the black middle class, whether in the form of black radicals or black capitalists.

The second stage in post-rebellion redevelopment was defined by a brief series of successful renewal projects orchestrated by MICCO and the federal Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA) between 1968 and 1971. MICCO's structure proved most effective when using federal dollars to secure the construction of new moderate to low-income apartment buildings and the internal rehabilitation of existing apartments and row houses. MICCO promised Shaw residents that all construction and rehabilitation projects would be run through authentic Shaw institutions or "community stakeholders." Inevitably, MICCO and the RLA formed partnerships with Shaw churches whose pastors maintained close relationships with Walter Fauntroy and who were large enough to create their own non-profit housing corporations. In transforming themselves from houses of worship into contractors and landlords, certain churches were able to expand their physical, political and affective territory across Shaw's fire-scarred landscape. Concurrently, MICCO and Shaw churches framed access to their housing projects as an opportunity for equal parts oppressed/stigmatized Shaw residents on the margins of respectability to "better themselves" within a stable living environment.

The final stage in post-rebellion renewal was a period of conflict, corruption and abandonment. While MICCO was initially successful at green-lighting church-sponsored residential projects, sustainable job production and long term commercial development proved an impossible task. Nearly every Shaw community activist who participated in the assessment process agreed that without commercial development—which emphasized black ownership of local manufacturing and service industries—the worst symptoms of ghettoization would remain unaddressed. However,

anxiety surrounding the history of commercial exploitation of black consumers and the desire to produce a family-friendly Shaw landscape placed scrutiny on new commercial developments in Shaw that had not been placed on MICCO's residential development projects. Commercial developers were required to demonstrate that their venture would not only employ African Americans, but Shaw residents. In order to maintain a respectable Shaw, the board opposed restaurants, nighttime recreation and taverns on the idea that these institutions would merely reproduce immorality and licentiousness that had produced "ghetto" conditions in Shaw after World War II. Ultimately, MICCO's inability to link commercial development with "legitimate" community stakeholders, i.e. prominent black congregations meant that Shaw residents did not uncritically accept new commercial development projects. Protests from residents slated to be displaced by commercial ventures demonstrated that, in the area of commercial development, the rhetoric of "community control" was insufficient to defuse or co-opt black resident's historic opposition to urban renewal. By the mid 1970s, many of MICCO's closest allies began to paint the organization as a new form of outsider exploitation and oppression.

At each point of the process, from assessment to redevelopment to failure, black visions of the ideal ghetto future were simultaneously interwoven with and determined by what queer theorist Lee Edelman calls "reproductive futurism." Edelman defines reproductive futurism as a limitation placed upon political discourse which preserves "the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations."¹⁸ In order to gain entry into American political discourse, Edelman argues, political actors must signal that the ends of their political movements are the protection and preservation of children in the present and future. The "Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political

¹⁸ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Series Q (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 3.

intervention.”¹⁹ Michelle Mitchell has identified this trend in black politics since the moment of emancipation, describing it as the “politics of racial destiny.” Describing the era from emancipation through the 1930s, Mitchell argues that if anxieties surrounding normative sexuality are not always at the center of black political subjectivity, African Americans’ tenuous and perpetually contested hold on the benefits of citizenship raised the stakes of securing stable private spaces for reproducing the black community.

The concept of racial destiny, then, politicized the most private aspects of black life and spurred race activists to evaluate intraracial sexual practices rigorously and advocate moral purity. Politics and religion certainly informed African American activists’ ideas about racial fates and fortunes, but these same activists also realized that the continued existence of black Americans literally relied upon biological reproduction. Reformers thus concentrated on more than the deleterious effects of racism—they sought to alter black self perceptions, habits and lives.²⁰

However, if the politicization of black reproduction encouraged black reformers to turn inward prior to World War II, the specter of creeping blight and the expanding ghetto within national political and civil rights debates repackaged and deployed these debates into the public sphere. For residents and activists in the nation’s black ghettos, reproductive futurism lay at the center of defensive postures against institutional racism. The ascendancy of Black Power gave rise to radical black political subjectivities that framed “black genocide” as the natural end result of “negro removal,” police brutality, family planning, incarceration, homosexuality and the high death rate in Vietnam. Movements for “community control” of urban planning, renewal and redevelopment were necessarily filtered through the prisms of reproductive futurism and black politics of destiny.

In Shaw specifically, community controlled renewal seemed capable of rectifying institutional racisms that perpetuated black poverty and renewing Shaw residents’ commitment to stable

¹⁹ Edelman, 3.

²⁰ Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 12.

reproduction. If the MICCO board's goals came to fruition Shaw would be the stage upon which the remaking of the ghetto and the reconstitution of the middle class black family would play out. Amongst the MICCO leadership, Shaw's renewal would only be couched as a success if Shaw children and teens had safe access to quality education, job training and sites of wholesome recreation. Images of playing children suffused the pages of MICCO's promotional material to the exclusion of nearly everything else, with the exception of Shaw's second most vulnerable population, aging seniors. MICCO pursued the establishment of black owned manufacturing firms and vocational training in the hopes of encouraging young, educated black couples to buy homes and raise their families within the Shaw area. It would be a mistake to suggest that a heteronormative landscape was the most important goal during the movement for community controlled renewal in Shaw. Still, the importance of church-centered community reproduction to the success of community controlled renewal continues to shape the way black community activists in Shaw imagine who belongs within black neighborhoods and who can represent the "legitimate" voice of the black community.

Assessing the Damage and Dreams of Shaw's Future

The 1968 rebellion significantly expanded the number of stakeholders in urban renewal in D.C.'s northwest black neighborhoods. While the majority of media attention and federal financing was diverted into the boundaries of the Shaw Urban Renewal Area, both the Johnson and Nixon Administration's public commitments to rebuilding the entire riot zone opened up the possibility that community control would determine the direction of development in black neighborhoods north and east of Shaw. In 1970, the Redevelopment Land Agency released an updated map of Washington's Renewal zones including areas of 14th street NW, 7th street NW and H street NE that had been damaged during the rebellion. Despite the *Washington Post's* insistence on divisions between Black Power activists and moderate leaders like Rev. Fauntroy, the April rebellions unified black

activists across the political spectrum and sharpened their calls for black control of the planning processes and increased black ownership in Shaw businesses. In their report to the Senate on the post-rebellion hearings, the city council acknowledged that, despite the “stridency” of black radicals, nearly every Shaw community member agreed on the centrality of community control of urban renewal.

It was felt by the Council that the “black separatist” voices were the most startling of those we listened to, but we recognize that very possibly the ideas behind these firebrand attitudes are no different from the views of the vast majority of witnesses. In one way or another what came through was the universal demand for the right of self-determination for the neighborhoods that need rebuilding.²¹

Hearings held by the city council after the riot allowed black activists who were invested in community controlled urban renewal before the rebellion to reiterate their arguments, while giving public voice to dozens of new organizations and voices agitating for self determination in Shaw. Covered in local and national media, transcribed and delivered to the Senate, the post-rebellion hearings condensed and magnified calls for black self determination in Shaw, once again transforming D.C. into a case study for federal urban policy.²² Still, access to the podium became a privileged space. The council’s report “would have welcomed the views of more individuals who were directly hurt by the disturbances” and lamented that “most witnesses at the public hearings represented organized groups.” Even the council, though made up of a black majority, expressed concern over appearing to countenance the cooption of will of the “community” for their own. Throughout the planning process black activists and community members remained constantly vigilant on this issue, attempting to materialize the will of “the people” without co-opting and supplanting that will with an oppressive bureaucracy.

Based on the testimony from Shaw community members and activists, community controlled renewal would prove balm to at least three central structures of oppression in the

²¹ *Rehabilitation of District of Columbia Areas Damaged by Civil Disorders*, 267.

²² “Senate Group to Begin Check on Riot-Hit Cities With D.C.,” *The Washington Post*, May 25, 1968, 30.

declining Shaw ghetto, housing access, job access and wage exploitation. Yet before community members spoke, the council heard from representatives from the insurance industry, the D.C. Republican Party, District Grocery Stores Inc. and the Washington D.C. Retail Liquors League. These groups assessment of the damage emphasized the breakdown in the “rule of law” and nearly all demanded restitution for substantial losses suffered in the form of store inventories, insurance policies and commercial property. Hilliarch Schulberg, executive director of the D.C. Liquor Dealers Association told the City Council that his members suffered 10.8 million in losses, over 2 million of which were uninsured.²³ Jerome Litvin President of District Grocery Stores Inc. reported his business association had lost 28 of 262 stores in the Washington Metropolitan Area and that remaining stores were now victims of threats and “coercion.”²⁴ Litvin insisted that District grocers were eager to improve communal relations with black customers. Nonetheless, neither business group expressed any wrongdoing in their treatment of black residents or acknowledged the racial imbalance between the percentage of black members of their business association and the demographics of the neighborhoods they operated within. Though the federal government had demonstrated systematic price gouging by grocers in D.C.’s black neighborhoods, Litvin responded that his association employed 1,100 “colored workers” in the greater Metro area. When Rev. Fauntroy queried Schulberg as to “the essential reason for the fact there are so few Negroes in the Liquor Dealers Association,” Schulberg pleaded ignorance saying there is nothing to bar them from being in the business and never has been.”²⁵ Instead, effected business groups joined Republican calls for greater “police protections” and for a small scale renewal program that only restored “displaced” businesses, rather than destabilize institutional racism.

²³ *Rehabilitation of District of Columbia Areas Damaged by Civil Disorders*, 357.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 374-375.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 360.

White business associations' self serving response to the riots confirmed accusations from Shaw activists, and Black Power advocates around the country, that white planners and business groups could never understand the needs of inner city residents. Komozi Woodard has argued that there is a false distinction between cultural nationalists and black political activists who emphasized the need for African Americans to control economic markets and government institutions that operated in black communities. In post-rebellion cities like Newark or Washington, D.C. cultural nationalists arguments about the incongruity of black and white worldviews were particularly persuasive to a black populace who saw the failures of white governance all around them. "From these semiautonomous urban enclaves, the African American cultural nationalists sought to accelerate the process of black nationality formation through the rapid spread of independent black economic, institutional cultural, social and political development. One important driving force in that process was the collapse of basic government and commercial services in the second ghetto."²⁶ In response, Shaw activists racialized their assessment of what cultural assets had been lost and who should have a right to speak for Shaw's future. Marion Barry told the council that that the failure of urban renewal to alleviate inner city poverty stemmed from the large cultural gulf between white planners and black residents. In the words of Pride Inc. leader Marion Barry,

There is a black culture and there is a white culture. There is a black city and a white city. There are black values and there are white values and let there be no mistake about it, the two are not the same and therefore you can't plan the same way, you can't plan for black people like you do for white people because there is a difference.²⁷

In an address that skewered the complacency of the black middle class and D.C.'s black political establishment Reginald H. Booker, Chairman of the Emergency Committee on the Transportation Crisis, echoed the words of both Barry and Lewis in explaining that economic

²⁶ Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 8.

²⁷ *Rehabilitation of District of Columbia Areas Damaged by Civil Disorders*, 312.

exploitation of inner city residents would only be alleviated if black Washingtonians were placed firmly in charge of redevelopment plans.

Devastated areas where black people are living in hell holes and concentration camps must be rebuilt by black people. I am not talking about the "physical areas," I am talking about the economic areas in the city, where black folks are exploited by absentee landlords, by absentee merchants.²⁸

While Booker, Barry and other activists connected to the Black Power struggle, remained critical of D.C.'s black political establishment, the symmetry between radical and moderate explanations for the origins of inner city poverty points towards a national trend wherein radical black political ideology increasingly informed the rhetoric and politics of an emerging black urban political regime. For example, Vinita Lewis, President of black insurance firm the Woodland Guarantors and one of Washington's most prominent advocates for black capitalism since the mid 1950s had little use for explicitly anti-colonialist rhetoric.²⁹ Nonetheless she laid out the way the discourse of investment and insurance "risk" had allowed white entrepreneurs to rob black communities of the fruit of their wages. Arguing before the City Council that the moratorium placed on new applications for fire insurance in D.C.'s black communities be lifted Lewis remarked,

Now I know you call us risk, you know high risk, but we have made money for you as high risk in business and so even though we are high risk, we are part of that high risk that has to be taken with the democratic way of doing business in this land and the capitalistic way of doing business, and capitalistic society is not without high risk. And if we are as people living in high risk kinds of places for insurance companies, if we are so, we do have other attributes that have been sought out because no matter how high a risk the business always comes back to us. We are the number one consumers in this country. And if any business concern wants to make money, he can make it on the consumer community, the black community."³⁰

Many Washingtonians seemed aware that post-rebellion renewal in Shaw would become a national test case for how effectively radical political subjectivities—"there is a black city, there is a white city"—could be integrated into city politics. For many Shaw residents manifesting Black

²⁸ Ibid., 384

²⁹ "Vinita Lewis, 62, Welfare Aide, Dies," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, November 26, 1969, C4.

³⁰ *Rehabilitation of District of Columbia Areas Damaged by Civil Disorders*, 363.

Power through Shaw's renewal meant supporting development projects that would transform the stigma of the "black ghetto" in the inner city and America at large. Outside of the hearings, MICCO conducted a poll of "8,393 adult residents of Shaw" in order to lend further credence to their claims of representing the voice of the community during the planning process.³¹ The results showed overwhelming community support for the establishment of a "pool" of open capital for Shaw businessmen to open facilities that would "serve the community." 95% of respondents expressed support for the creation of an "Educational-Recreational-Cultural Parkway System" in Shaw that would contain new "schools, recreation facilities, libraries, museums, theaters and other cultural facilities."³² The "parkway" would connect residential and commercial areas and included adding additional street lights to parks and sidewalks where children walked to and from school. Had the plan been realized lights and new sidewalks would have been added to places like Meridian Hill Park, which ranked 3rd in cruising related arrests after World War II next to Lafayette Park and the DuPont traffic circle park.³³ 94% were in favor of the proposed site for the "Washington Technical Institute building facilities," which would replace the sex work zone between T and V on 14th street NW with "college and training courses" for Shaw adults. Respondents also expressed strong support for the establishment of a 25 acre campus for Federal City College on Shaw's southern border with downtown Washington. Charles Horosky, President of the Washington Board of Higher Education told the city council that the City College campus would economically revitalize Shaw in the way what George Washington University had spurred redevelopment of Foggy Bottom during the 1950s.³⁴

³¹ "Results of the MICCO Questionnaire," 1968, 1, Walter Fauntroy Papers, Box 25, Folder 16.

³² "Results of the MICCO Questionnaire," 3.

³³ Brett William Beemyn, "A Queer Capital: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Life in Washington, D.C., 1890-1955" (University of Iowa, American Studies, 1997), 127.

³⁴ *Rehabilitation of District of Columbia Areas Damaged by Civil Disorders*, 320-321.

The racialization of the assessment and planning process also cemented the spatial boundaries of “authentic” black identity. One of dozens of black planning groups that formed in the immediate wake of the riot, the Community Urban Renewal Action Council (CURAC) described the April rebellion as the black community bringing about “urban renewal crash scale” and declared that all white owned businesses in Shaw must close and that no redevelopment occur “until decisions concerning the right to ownership is determined as it relates to black people.”³⁵ CURAC’s calls for local control extended to the federal anti-poverty program run in Shaw from “central downtown” be halted until the “Shaw community determines its relevance.”³⁶ For CURAC it mattered little that black Washingtonians administered federal anti-poverty programs within Shaw. According to their statement, “that the antipoverty agency colonial administrators are wearing black faces makes no difference.”³⁷ Rather, what mattered was whether or not black planners or political leaders had strong historic and emotional ties to the space of Shaw. CURAC argued that “downtown” blacks lacked the “intimate knowledge” of authentic members of the Shaw community necessary to plan a non-exploitative and stable black future.

Our people have the intimate knowledge of this community to operate all programs. It is obvious that those formally in charge are not representatives of our people. They do not understand our problems and therefore cannot deal with the problems of the black community to implement these objectives.”³⁸

In emphasizing the importance of “intimate knowledge” and locating the center of “colonial” power in the downtown government, CURAC’s words demonstrate the way an authentic black political subjectivity was filtered through the prism of spatial location vis a vis “downtown,” Shaw and the “suburbs.” Other black voices, radical and moderate, agreed that only those with legitimate claims to being part of the Shaw community could plan from a black perspective. Black

³⁵ Carol Honsa, “Shaw Unit Asks Renewal Voice; Closing of White Businesses Demanded,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 14, 1968, C2.

³⁶ Honsa, C2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, C2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, C2.

liberals like Rev. E. Franklin Jackson, who headed the D.C. Democratic Central Committee, decried attempts to use the “recent disorders” as an excuse to create “black racist institutional structure, as some would have us do.”³⁹ Yet even Jackson agreed with CURAC ostensibly in saying that only those who were “of the neighborhood” had the right to plan the community.

We much recognize that, however well intentioned they may be, paternalistic, downtown-directed programs of reconstruction, whether public or private, are no answer today. I repeat, it matters not whether the rebuilders of our burned out areas is a public servant or a private contractor; if his organization is not of the neighborhood, it cannot be effective in the neighborhood.⁴⁰

Booker Coleman of MICCO emphasized his organizations legitimacy to control the black future by describing their efforts to reach out across the geographical expanse of the community and finding those “real” black people in the institutions that awarded authenticity.

We have sought ideas, comment and grievances from the organized and the unorganized, from the committed and the seemingly indifferent, from groups and individuals. We have met people in pool halls on street corners, in schoolrooms and in churches. We have found out what the people of the existing Shaw want in the new Shaw...What the people who live in Shaw need and want, the people of Shaw will get. MICCO is Shaw urban renewal. MICCO will fight for its people.”⁴¹

Even David Rusk, deputy director of the Washington Urban League, staunch critic of communal violence as political strategy and powerfully opposed to radical demands for a moratorium on redevelopment envisioned that only “local investors” and “community stockholders” be awarded “experimental franchises” within all white business groups.

While black radicals and liberals agreed on the importance of ghetto residents and stakeholders exercising control over Shaw’s redevelopment, the emphasis on “authentic” or “legitimate” black voices produced gendered and sexual limitations on how damage was assessed in the wake of the riot. Institutions that supported sporting activities for young men were consistently sold as important for offering Shaw youth a path to success that avoided the trap of wage

³⁹ *Rehabilitation of District of Columbia Areas Damaged by Civil Disorders*, 321

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 322.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 326.

exploitation within the ghetto. While a number of new recreation institutions were slated for the proposed recreation “parkway,” the 12th street YMCA, undamaged by the fires, lay at the center of the proposed parkway route. During the hearings Shaw resident Bernard George came before the council to request funds for the Bobby Foster Youth Council, named after the famous boxer who won his first professional bout in D.C. in 1961. The Youth Council was a community gymnasium specializing in boxing training for Shaw’s male youth and teens. Though the gym had not been damaged during the rebellion, its doors were in danger of closing due to unpaid rent. George told the council that the gym, and sports, offered black people an opportunity for advancement that did not reproduce white exploitation of black wages and resources.

I am speaking tonight for the Bobby Foster Youth Council. I am not speaking about homes, freeways but I definitely object to them, I am speaking about the youth and the council of tomorrow. Many individuals come to the gym because of the fact that they see themselves 10 or 15 years from now, and I speak of you, fighting for a \$150,000 purse. They idolize Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson, Bobby Foster, Cassius Clay, and a host of others...I think basically most of us will agree that athletics bridges the gap in our society that no other field has. This is the field where you will find 90 percent of our black individuals are not exploited due to the fact that the white man still wants the dollar bill. I can name individuals from the District—Bates, Elgin Baylor, Morgan Beales, and a host of others.⁴²

Though the gym had not been damaged by the riot, George’s entreaty that the gym had the potential to reproduce a non-exploited black masculinity proved compelling to the council members who quickly released funds to bring the gym’s finances back into the black. The success of the Bobby Foster Youth Council and the YMCA in securing funds demonstrates that the assessment and rebuilding process extended beyond repairing the physical damage done to the community. The prioritization of a boxing gym and an athletic club signals that the maintenance of institutions that reproduced black masculinity and black male economic independence were seen as essential to the reconstruction of the ghetto. The assessment process also reiterated the direct relationship between participation in reproduction, within the normative family unit, and recognition of an individual’s

⁴² Ibid., 389.

right to participate in Shaw's renewal. Lifelong Shaw resident Rev. David Eaton, director of a Black Power inspired job training program called the Opportunities Industrialization Center told the council that regardless of racial identity, anyone who had emotionally invested in Shaw with a home, family and children had a say in Shaw's future.

If any white man lives in the inner city on 14th street, and that is where he has his home, his abode and his children, the black community has been and will always be compassionate enough to let that white man participate in the decisions that are made in that predominately black community.⁴³

Eaton positioned the right to access to redevelopment and community belonging to residency along 14th street in the context of the fact that white families were decidedly uninterested in owning residential property and raising children within black neighborhoods. Critically though, Eaton's words also point towards a kind of universal black authenticity that derives from making 14th street NW one's home. Yet Eaton's words are also a powerful reminder that many other black Washingtonians made 14th street NW their "home," whose subjectivities were not part of the assessment process; namely, homosexual, gender bending or sex working black Washingtonians who continued to make 14th street into an alternative site of work and home in these years and whose social spaces were severely damaged or destroyed during the April rebellions.

In addition to 14th street sex work zone and the collection of gay bars that surrounded the Howard Theater on 7th street NW, there were a number of bars that served black queer populations further north on the 14th street and 7th street/Georgia Ave NW commercial corridors. Prior to the riot, upper 14th and 7th street was home to fewer retail outlets and chain stores and more independent "mom and pop" operations, restaurants and novelty stores.⁴⁴ The disproportionate concentration of discriminatory grocery stores, retail outlets and credit services south of U Street, within the boundaries of the Shaw Urban Renewal Area, produced differing scales of violence from

⁴³ Ibid., 391.

⁴⁴ John Sherwood, "Seventh Street Signs: Colorful and Cryptic," *Daily Star*, 1962; Eagle, "Negro Business Here Total 1534, Mostly Small Service Operations," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, 1965, A7.

south to north. As a result, when rebels attempted to limit their attacks on businesses owned by white suburbanites, the size of the blaze on lower 7th and 14th street NW leapt from block to block, decimating many black owned businesses in the process.⁴⁵ By contrast, violence in upper 7th street/Georgia Ave and 14th street was geographically specific and, by proxy, more clearly intentional. A number of media outlets confirmed that in upper 7th and 14th street rebels were able to avoid black owned establishments that community members counted as community “insiders”. The *Washington Informer* reported that businesses with “Soul Brother” were able to avoid damage from thrown bricks or swinging bats.⁴⁶ Five black male entrepreneurs on upper 7th street NW told the *Post* that their business had been spared because their block was “like one big family.”⁴⁷

The experience of these small businessmen is atypical. The picture that emerged from their discussion is also atypical. Seventh street NW is often considered the domain of white store-owners who leave for the suburbs at night with money gained in the ghetto. Most of the merchants in the 1600 block are Negroes who have been doing business there for years. Some live next to their stores. Some had stayed at the stores through the riot. Some helped hard-pressed police keep order.⁴⁸

By contrast, black gay bars on upper 7th and 14th street NW, both white and black owned, were targeted in acts of communal rebellion against outsider exploitation. With the exception of Nob Hill, which was the oldest running gay restaurant-bar in D.C. until closing its doors in 2004, all were destroyed in the 1968 rebellion or closed soon after.⁴⁹ Violence along upper 14th street was so specific that, in at least one instance, it was exclusively focused on black lesbian bar Amber’s Room also known as “Stevie’s.” The following map [Figure 3.1] is a reproduction of the *Washington Post’s* assessment of the damage along uptown 14th street NW between U and Spring St, with the location

⁴⁵ “Looting Was Often Selective,” *Washington Informer*, April 12, 1968; Orville Green, “Riots Cause, Look at Roles,” *Washington Afro-American*, April, 1968; Robert G. Kaiser *Washington Post*, “Why Blazes Raged: Firemen Outrun,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, May 1, 1968, A1.

⁴⁶ “Looting Was Often Selective,” *Washington Informer*, April 12, 1968.

⁴⁷ Marlin Weil, “7th Street’s ‘Different People,’” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 20, 1968, B1.

⁴⁸ Weil, “7th Street’s ‘Different People,’” B1.

⁴⁹ Mark Meinke, “PLACES & SPACES -- clubs, bars, community centers, etc. of Washington DC’s LGBT community (1920 to the present)”, 2002, <http://www.rainbowhistory.org/clubs.pdf>, 3-5, 17, 24.

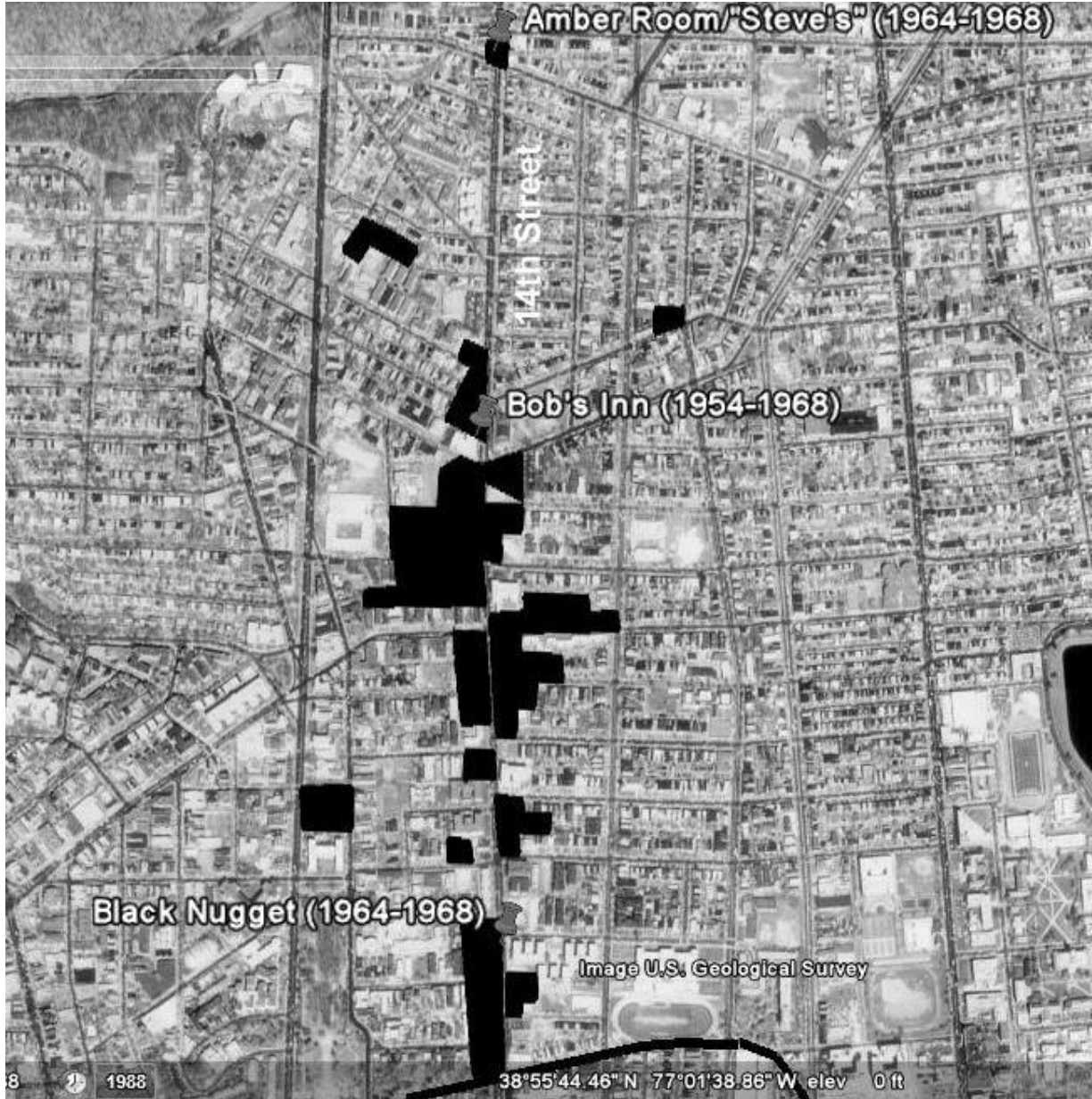


Figure 3.1, Black Queer Commercial Spaces in Relation to Damage on 14th street NW. Map created using open source Google Earth software and adapted from, Jack Eisen, “Cardozo Area Renewal Plan Moves Ahead; Committee Advances 14th Street Renewal,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, September 9, 1969, C1; Mark Meinke, “PLACES & SPACES -- clubs, bars, community centers, etc. of Washington DC’s LGBT community (1920 to the present)”, 2002, <http://www.rainbowhistory.org/clubs.pdf>, 3-5, 17, 24.

of lost black gay and lesbian bars. The map demonstrates the geographic specificity and intentionality of violence against black gay and lesbian bars. The targeting of Amber's Room is particularly telling as few other nearby commercial areas were attacked during the April rebellion. While neither black radicals or moderates made direct allusion to the presence or destruction of black queer space during the rebellion, the connections made between non-normative sexuality, outside exploitation and neighborhood decline in the public discourse before the riot suggests that Amber's and other black queer spaces were attacked as symbols of institutional oppression. The heteronormative boundaries placed around political discourse meant that while the much hated D.C. liquor and grocery retailers were heard during the post-rebellion hearings, those who owned bars or taverns that served gay, lesbian and queer populations did not contribute to the narrative of what "the community" had "lost" in April of 1968.

Ironically, the brief period of post-rebellion assessment represented the most democratic moment within "community controlled" renewal in Shaw. After the city council submitted their report of the hearings findings to the Senate Committee formed to investigate the 1968 "civil disturbances," Congress and the city council left the enactment of renewal in the hands of Rev. Walter Fauntroy, the MICCO board and the Redevelopment Land Agency. As the reality of attempting to implement black controlled urban renewal challenged and curtailed the dreams of Shaw residents at the beginning of the post-riot moment, articulations of the desires of the "community" became increasingly narrow.

Community Control: MICCO, The Black Church and a Heteronormative Black Landscape

MICCO's greatest successes came in the form of residential construction and rehabilitation projects which offered hundreds of new low to moderate income apartment units to Shaw and Cardozo residents. In order to ensure that residential construction projects represented the will of the community, MICCO used their influence with the Redevelopment Land Agency to forge

partnerships between private banks, federal funding and middle class black churches. Pursuant to the rules of the Demonstration and Model Cities Bills, selected black churches were asked to put up a fraction of the initial construction or rehabilitation costs for new apartment complexes. The RLA and Federal Housing Administration supplemented the remainder of upfront expenses. FHA financing ensured that new apartments would remain accessible to low and moderate income residents. Though Shaw churches were unable to independently finance new housing for their constituents, the stamp of racial authenticity and legitimacy they afforded new development ventures would, in principal, reduce black residents' anger at potential displacement, assuage feelings of exploitation and prevent acts of communal violence that were much more costly than the initial federal investment in low income housing.

Few in Shaw disputed the central role middle class churches would play in Shaw's redevelopment. Large scale churches, like Fauntroy's Bethel Baptist Church, were among the few black controlled institutions in Shaw with experience in capital fundraising and large-scale renovation projects. The churches selected for RLA-MICCO projects had either established or were in the process of forming non-profit development corporations that bore the name of their congregations. For example, two of Shaw's United Church of Christ Congregations, Lincoln Temple and Westmoreland Congregational, formed a non-profit housing corporation called "Lincoln Westmoreland" soon after the passage of the Demonstrations Cities Bill. Rev. Fauntroy's Bethel Baptist had also established the Bethel Housing Corporation in the mid 1960s in anticipation of the federal move towards community controlled development.⁵⁰

Black churches central role in the redevelopment of Shaw also signaled a retrenchment of black religious institutions as sites of positive affective identification amongst Shaw's black constituency. Indeed, Rev. Fauntroy had a vested interest in promoting black churches as essential

⁵⁰ Jack Eisen, "2 Housing Projects Approved, Churches Plan Dwelling Units in Shaw Area," *Washington Post Times Herald*, 1969, C1.

to inner city residents' material and emotional liberation. President of the D.C. Southern Christian Leadership Council for many years, Fauntroy's political and economic philosophy was steeped in that organization's belief that black churches were indispensable laboratories for formulating strategies for black people's emotional and material liberation in the United States. Though Fauntroy's father was a pastor, their home was east of 9th street NW, in Shaw's working class and poor neighborhood. Describing his childhood Fauntroy has said, "I grew up in what is now the Shaw area with all the smells, the sights, the sounds and the distress of inner city life there."⁵¹ Like many of his generation, learning that he was loved by God at an early age had allowed Fauntroy to reconcile the poverty and environmental problems that suffused his childhood rather than allowing despair to destroy him. In a 1973 interview with the Civil Rights Documentation Project Rev. Fauntroy recalled that going to church in Shaw in his youth during the 1940s and 1950s had given him a point of reference for self worth amidst the "ghetto" conditions he grew up in.

What I had reference to there, in talking about the religious aspects is that what I learned most from church was that I was of value; that I was somebody; that I was the child of a King. Of course that was quite a revelation to someone who grows up in a neighborhood that tells him in a thousand different ways that he's not equal to—that he is less than; he is from the slums, the ghetto.⁵²

Though Fauntroy never explicitly articulated it, MICCO and community controlled renewal became a means of transferring the church's potential to produce an individual reevaluation of self worth vis a vis the surrounding environment into a broader phenomenon where church sponsored development could materially impact the "sights, smells and sounds" that told Shaw residents that they were "less than" by dint of living in the ghetto.

The centrality of black churches to MICCO-RLA run renewal process in the wake of the riot also held implications for the sexual identity of the Shaw landscape. Davarian Baldwin has argued

⁵¹ Elaine B Todd, "Urban renewal in the nation's capital : A History of the Redevelopment Land Agency in Washington, D.C., 1946-1973" (Howard University, PhD Thesis, 1986), 202.

⁵² Walter Fauntroy, Interview Transcript Civil Rights Documentation Project, February 23, 1973, 3.

that in interwar Bronzeville in Chicago, black religious leaders competed against black working class institutions and cultural production, from speakeasies to jazz music, for the eyes and ears of black inner city residents. Matthew Countryman has made similar claims about black civil rights leaders in postwar Philadelphia, arguing that a coalition of black ministers cut their teeth organizing against “taprooms” that were “pulling into communities that low and cheap element of our population...whose obscene conduct corrupt the morals of our children.”⁵³ In Shaw, the reach of lesbian “queen pin” Odessa Madre, who commanded an enormous patronage network, suggests that black churches were in a struggle for the moral and sexual identity of the Shaw area. Moreover, as discussed in chapter 1, Shaw’s criminal and sexual underworld often operated out of abandoned lots and buildings that MICCO hoped to replace with respectable housing. In MICCO’s view successful residential developments had the potential to fill gaps in the urban landscape and bolster the community’s heteronormative identity by linking access to low income housing with institutions of religious worship that claimed to speak for the entire “black community.”

The first church sponsored development in Shaw was the aptly named “King Towers,” a 10 story low to moderate income apartment complex at 1220 12th street NW. Partnering with the Johnson Administration’s FHA to provide initial investment and with HUD who approved rental supplements to potential low-income residents, King Towers represented an exciting experiment in black community development even before the 1968 rebellion increased political pressure to expedited MICCO’s goals.⁵⁴ Still, it must be noted that King Towers was constructed and opened without the community meetings, polls and surveys MICCO argued were necessary to gauge the desires of the black community in the redevelopment process. This oversight did not prevent MICCO from proclaiming King Towers a success for black controlled planning when the apartment

⁵³ Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*, Politics and Culture in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006), 85.

⁵⁴ Eugene L. Meyer and J.Y. Smith, “MICCO’s Critics. Shaw Agency said to Benefit Fauntroy, Not Little Guy.” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, 1972, A1.

opened its doors in 1971. Coretta Scott King traveled to Washington to dedicate the building to her late husband. King told the audience,

This building is living proof...that the ghetto can be transformed and revitalize with, by and for the people who live there...Remember too, that this is only the beginning. Over the next weeks, months and years many more new homes will be built in Shaw, and many old homes will be made new again. There will be new schools and new business. And you, the people of Shaw, will walk with pride and dignity in your community because it will truly be your community; you will have helped shape it and you will have helped build it.⁵⁵

In publicizing the importance of King Towers to the reformation of the community, *Shaw Power* linked its construction with the eradication of a wide range of institutional, emotional and sexual crises within black communities that reproduced urban ghettos. Characterizing King Tower's as a representative of Shaw's upwardly mobile future *Shaw Power* described a building across the street from the new building in the following way.

Across the street from King Towers, the buildings resemble those of any other street in Shaw. At 1215 12th street, a two story red brick unit reminds one of the familiar Shaw. The downstairs windows are broken and sealed off with boards. The front steps and hand railing sag and the front yard is overgrown with weeds—in contrast to the neat, red and green leaf bushes in front of King Towers. Just down the block, Fred Thompson, 63, of 1229 12th St., looks across the street at the white brick walls of King Towers and says, “I think it's a nice place. I imagine it'd be a nice building to live in.”⁵⁶

According to nearby residents, King Towers replaced a vacant lot with hope for a black middle class future. King Tower neighbor Raymond Hunt told *Shaw Power* “King Towers is a good idea. The vacant lot was just going to waste there. We need more like it. Then people won't have to live in what looks like a ghost house.”⁵⁷

MICCO's coverage of their development projects consistently emphasized that moving into Shaw's new housing complexes represented a critical turning point in the lives of destitute black families and offered a way forward out of the ghetto via new and renewed buildings. *Shaw Power*

⁵⁵ “King Towers Dedicated,” *Shaw Power* January 1971, 1. All issues of MICCO's *Shaw Power* newspaper can be found in Walter Fauntroy Papers Box 25, Folder 5.

⁵⁶ “We Like King Towers, by the Residents and their Neighbors,” *Shaw Power*, January 1971, 3.

⁵⁷ “We Like King Towers, by the Residents and their Neighbors,” 3.

profiled Cora Commodore, one of King Towers' new residents, as an ideal example of a Shaw resident who moved into the building in order to "better herself."⁵⁸ An unmarried "mother of 14 children" who "also raised four grandchildren," Commodore seemed to be a quintessential example of the "black matriarch" that many white and black commenters blamed for the generational perpetuation of poverty in black ghettos. For her part, Commodore told *Shaw Power* that she loved living in King Towers, due to its proximity to shopping and "working elevator."⁵⁹

MICCO's other major success story was the Lincoln Westmoreland apartment complex located on 7th street between R and S in the heart of the riot corridor. Though the Lincoln-Westmoreland Corporation represented the pooled resources of two congregations, the project was led by Lincoln Temple's pastor Rev. Channing Phillips. Phillips was a member of MICCO's executive board and was chairman of Lincoln-Westmoreland incorporated's board from both organizations' inception until he joined the race for non-voting Congressional delegate in 1971. Phillips had been a longtime ally of Rev. Fauntroy within the interracial Coalition of Conscience and many counted his church as a significant force for anti-poverty activism in Washington through the 1950s and the 1960s.⁶⁰ While Phillips did not consider himself part of the Black Power movement, in advocating for community controlled urban renewal he espoused similar criticisms of the black middle class' divestment from the inner city in favor of suburban areas. In a 1967 interview with the Howard University Civil Rights Documentation Project, Phillips describes the fleeing black middle class man as a "pathetic individual" who had failed to throw his lot in with the black poor.

Phillips: If the Negro middle class were ever to lend its backing to the cries of the disinherited, to the poor Negro...so that from the Negro community there came forth a unified, solid proclamation, a manifesto...then I think we could change far more quickly than now. What's happening now is that the community is being inadvertently, or by design, divided.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁰ "1968 Thrust Phillips to Prominence," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 7, 1971, D1.

Shannon: Do you mean by the removal of places for the middle class Negro to live in the city

Phillips: Divided by a number of tactics, and I'm never sure whether they are intentional or not, but the net result is the same. The city is being opened more now, for instance. It allows the Negro middle class to move out of the ghetto, where he tends to try to be identified with the white society, and he usually ends up being identified with the white, liberal society, which is not a majority.⁶¹

Under Phillips ambitious vision, sold to *Shaw Power* readers, Lincoln-Westmoreland would attract respectable black families, bring order to a chaotic commercial landscape and provide housing options for low-income Shaw residents. Emblazoned on the front page of *Shaw Power* were images representing the proposed “before” and “after” of the strip of 7th street that would be transformed into the Lincoln-Westmoreland apartments.⁶² Prior to construction, the 7th and R area had been badly damaged by the fires of the April 1968 rebellions. Yet even before fires scarred the area, the strip of 7th street NW in question was that its landscape reflected anything but stable middle class residency. The mixed use development, small upstairs kitchenettes above commercial outlets below evoked the intermixture of home life and “sensual pleasures” that black reformers in the 1920s first identified as a damaging source of immorality on Shaw’s east side. High rates of mixed use development continued to illustrate the stark difference between the quality of life in white suburbs from the inner city in the early 1970s. In his book “The Subculture of the Washington Ghetto” urban anthropologist Paul Furfey argued that the “checkerboard” nature of urban development in Shaw was one of “the ghettos” most striking features.

When the ecology of the section of Washington we have called the ghetto area, perhaps the most striking thing to meet ones eye is its heterogeneous, almost checkerboard character. In downtown Washington there are large areas that are solidly commercial. In the outer city and in the suburbs there are large areas that are uniformly middle class residential or upper class residential. There is no such uniformity in the Ghetto Area.⁶³

⁶¹ “Shaw Takes Shape” *Shaw Power*, April 1970, 4.

⁶² “Uncle Sam ‘Sweepstakes’ Winner Could Be You if You Live in Shaw” *Shaw Power*, January 1971, 2.

⁶³ Furfey, Paul Hanly. *The Subculture of the Washington Ghetto*. Washington, D.C: Bureau of Social Research and Catholic University of America, 1972, 12.

Encompassing an entire city block, Lincoln Westmoreland would provide that kind of segregation of residential from commercial life on 7th street that had been lacking. Only two blocks from the Howard Theater, Lincoln Westmoreland was to be constructed in close proximity to the 7th street NW black gay socializing zone outlined in the previous chapter, all evidence of which had been burned to the ground in the April fires.

If King Towers had been an early experiment in community controlled renewal, Lincoln-Westmoreland was the brand's first national release. The building had been designed by black architect, Herbert McDonald, who was photographed in *Shaw Power* holding blue prints next to a Caterpillar tractor driven by a black male construction worker.⁶⁴ Lincoln-Westmoreland also represented the "first new housing to be developed in any riot-torn area in the country."⁶⁵ Development moratoriums in other major "riot-cities" had allowed anti-development sentiment within black neighborhoods to become entrenched. As a result as of 1968 no new construction had occurred in Watts, Detroit or Newark since those cities were rocked by black communal violence.⁶⁶ The Nixon Administration signaled the importance of the complex by sending HUD secretary Romney to attend the groundbreaking in the spring of 1970.⁶⁷

Between 1970 and 1974 a number of churches sponsored residential became the only new buildings or construction projects in the riot zone and throughout the Shaw area. These included D.C. Frontiers International 54 new townhouses at 11th and N, 11th and M and 14th and S streets NW, the later in the midst of the 14th street sex work zone. First Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church Housing Corporation, erected a 217 unit high-rise on 7th street between N and O in 1974, Immaculate Conception Community Development Corporation sponsored a 138 unit high rise on

⁶⁴ "First Shaw Project Ahead of Schedule, Architect Predicts Early Completion of L-W Apartments." *Shaw Power*, April, 1970, 6.

⁶⁵ "First Shaw Project Ahead of Schedule, Architect Predicts Early Completion of L-W Apartments." 6.

⁶⁶ Redevelopment Land Agency, *Highlights of Washington's Renewal Program Through 1971* (Washington, D.C: Redevelopment Land Agency, 1972), 1.

⁶⁷ "First Shaw Project Ahead of Schedule, Architect Predicts Early Completion of L-W Apartments," 6.

O street between 7th and 8th street NW, The Prince Hall Masons Inc., sponsored a 93 unit building for 12th and O streets and Deliverance Church of God.⁶⁸

MICCO proved particularly adept at engineering the interior renovation of family homes in Shaw and ensuring that black owned contracting firms performed the work. As of 1970, 661 owner occupied homes in Shaw qualified for “rehab loans” financed by HUD ranging from \$3,500 grants to longer loans up to \$10,000 depending on income.⁶⁹ For at least one family featured in *Shaw Power* a MICCO backed “rehab loan” had transformed a “drab three-story red brick house” into the kind of home “hardworking” middle class families would be eager to live in.⁷⁰ The Williams family, headed by longtime barber Maurice Williams and Bertha Williams were the beneficiary of a “20-year \$10,000 loan from HUD at just three percent interest.”⁷¹ The Williams rehab loan also benefited black contractor James W. Soles who told *Shaw Power* he was unaccustomed to earning money in Shaw. “It’s the first work I’ve had in this neighborhood in two or three years...In terms of building work there just wasn’t any action.”⁷² Most attractive about rehab loans was that, unlike new construction, they did not require Shaw families to be displaced. MICCO-HUD rehab loans were an essential component of MICCO’s effort to transform public meaning around the ghetto. Prior to desegregation, the limited availability of quality housing stock meant that black families earning anything below above average wages were forced into living conditions that were similar to those who were unemployed and on public assistance.⁷³ While residential desegregation had opened more options for middle class residents, it had done little to improve living conditions for those whose economic status did not allow them to leave communities like Shaw. In the case of the Williams

⁶⁸ Walter E. Washington and Washington D.C. City Council, *Ten Years Since April, 4 1968, A Decade of Progress for the District of Columbia: A Report to the People* (Washington, D.C.: The District of Columbia, 1978), 7-9, 18, 35, 54, 151.

⁶⁹ “Miracle on S. Street, Family Transforms Home with Low-cost Rehab Loan,” *Shaw Power*, April, 1970, 7.

⁷⁰ “Miracle on S. Street, Family Transforms Home with Low-cost Rehab Loan,” 7.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷³ “A Decent Home,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, December 28, 1963, A8.

family, their single income, Mrs. Williams chose to be a stay at home mother, was only enough to feed and clothe their four daughters. With the rehab loan however, Mrs. Williams now planned to transform her home into a proper middle class domicile. She told *Shaw Power*,

The house isn't going to look 90 years old anymore. I'm having the second and third floors completely re-sanded. New wood is going into the downstairs. I'm turning that big old kitchen into a den and library for the girls and we'll eat in the middle room downstairs. The house will be completely painted insight and out...I'm even going to give it a touch of Georgetown on the outside, with lights and fixtures.⁷⁴

As important as housing renewal and rehabilitation was for Shaw activists, job training and job creation were at the forefront of efforts to use community controlled renewal to rebrand the Shaw area. In order to prevent middle class young educated people from leaving the community job opportunities were necessary to attract them to stay. As was noted throughout the hearings, black owned businesses did exist in Shaw, but few of them, outside of crime syndicates, had the capacity to employ large numbers of African Americans. Simultaneously, Shaw welfare recipients and those involved in hustling economies, as MICCO called them "the hardcore unemployed," required job training that would give them skills useful to black employers or that would allow them to secure wages that could support those businesses. To address these issues MICCO established FAIRMICCO and Project BUILD.

Founded only a month before the April rebellion, FAIRMICCO hoped to undo the community's problematic relationship to commercial development and cyclical unemployment. FAIRMICCO was a "profit-oriented manufacturing company" sponsored by MICCO and white owned aerospace firm Fairchild Hiller.⁷⁵ By October 1969 FAIRMICCO employed 85 Shaw residents in "jobs ranging from machine operator to key punch operator."⁷⁶ These jobs were meant to allow FAIRMICCO to compete for contracts to produce electric cables, boxes and wooden

⁷⁴ "Miracle on S. Street, Family Transforms Home with Low-cost Rehab Loan, *Shaw Power*, April, 1970, 7.

⁷⁵ Robert G. Kaiser, "Ghetto-Run Firm Set For Hard-Core Jobless; Ghetto-Manned Firm Set Up To Employ Hard-Core Jobless," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, March 1, 1968, A1.

⁷⁶ "FAIRMICCO: Products & Services", n.d.,1, Walter Fauntroy Papers, Box 18, Folder 14.

pallets for the federal government⁷⁷ FAIRMICCO was awarded their first contract with the Department of Defense in March of 1968. Describing FAIRMICCO as “an experiment in black capitalism” *Shaw Power* reported that the company hoped to offer ownership shares in the plant to local residents by the end of 1969.⁷⁸ The plants first two years were extremely promising. In the fall of 1969 the *Post* reported that FAIRMICCO had turned its first official profit. While federal contracts had proven inconsistent, MICCO director Donald Yancey expanded their manufacturing services to the production of prefabricated housing sections for a private home building on the predominately black Northeast side.⁷⁹ According to Fauntroy, the new housing contracts had yielded an astonishing 15% profit.

Paired with FAIRMICCO was MICCO’s short lived job training program Project BUILD. Though FAIRMICCO employed men and women, Project BUILD exclusively prepared young black men in Shaw for jobs in the building trade. Both programs were organized around enticing promising young people to stay in the area and raise families. *Shaw Power* profiled George Blackwell, a recent high school graduate who was one of Project BUILD’s first trainees. Blackwell told *Shaw Power* that the training program and the chance for a job at FAIRMICCO had encouraged him to stay in the neighborhood.

“I guess I’ll be around,” says 18-year old George Blackwell. Listening to him is like listening to the voice of the future of the Shaw community. “There’s not too much for the kids to do in Shaw. There’s no jobs for most of us. The dope’s all around. So I’m glad I’ve got this thing.” Looking at some sheet metal work he’d just completed in Project BUILD, Blackwell said, “This is what the kids of Shaw are asking for—not any handouts, but just something to help ourselves.”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ “FAIRMICCO: Products & Services”, n.d., 1.

⁷⁸ Robert G. Kaiser, “Ghetto-Run Firm Set For Hard-Core Jobless; Ghetto-Manned Firm Set Up To Employ Hard-Core Jobless,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, March 1, 1968, A1.

⁷⁹ Vincent Paka, “FAIRMICCO Turns a Hard Core Profit,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, September 14, 1969, C1.

⁸⁰ “Project Builds Future Careers,” *Shaw Power* April 1970, 8.

Blackwell's story worked in direct opposition to the notion that ghetto areas offered no opportunities for educated, ambitious young black people. Blackwell was described by his basketball coach Charlie Owen as "the best in his class. He wants to learn." Project BUILD director Roland Williams spoke before the D.C. house subcommittee saying that the program was essential for reducing street crime and "hustling" in the community.

We are not experts on crime or crime detection. But we have a ring-side seat in the inner city. And we get a lot of experience in dealing with the cases and the effects of crime. And we have discovered that the young men from the inner city want an opportunity to earn an honest living at a decent wage. ..They would rather make 'honest' money than hustling out in the streets.⁸¹

Williams told Congress that demand for slots within Project BUILD far outstripped levels of federal funding for the program. "Last April we had 70 slots to fill and 320 applicants applied for training."⁸²

Still, if Project BUILD and FAIRMICCO were attractive to middle class teens like George Blackwell, the programs had a significantly more difficult time interesting Shaw residents already caught up in cycles of perpetual poverty and unemployment. Even positive coverage of FAIRMICCO's successes was paired with warnings that the personal habits of "ghetto residents" could easily undermine the plant's success. Prior to the housing contract MICCO had a difficult time retaining steady workers. Company officials blamed their difficulties in retention on impoverished African Americans who were unaccustomed to personal responsibility. The *Post* reported that "8 a.m. starting times proves to be very difficult adjustment for some workers, in spite of the help of three personnel counselors." They quoted one anonymous MICCO official admitting that "the world of work was strange to the people we hired."⁸³ It is equally likely that MICCO's retention problems were due to the firm's extremely low pay scale. Donald Yancey told the *Post* that

⁸¹ Shaw Power "Project Builds Future Careers," 8.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸³ Paka, "FAIRMICCO Turns a Hard Core Profit," C4.

it was difficult to pay FAIRMICCO employees more than two dollars a day and remain competitive.⁸⁴ A year later “nearly half” of FAIRMICCO’s assembly staff walked off the job in protest of Yancey’s establishment of a “piece work” pay scale, linking pay with “productivity.” The protesting employees were summarily fired and management reported that they had been “quickly replaced.” One of the fired workers told the *Post* that in order to meet the minimum wage of 1.60 an hour; employees would have had to increase their output by a factor of ten.⁸⁵ In the wake of the firm’s bad publicity, management quickly rescinded the policy, returning workers to the usual two dollars an hour scale. But the damage had been done. In 1972 FAIRMICCO closed its doors for good, holding over a quarter million dollars in debt.⁸⁶

Equally frustrating for MICCO leaders were their attempts to green-light new commercial development within the riot-corridor. In her analysis of African American participation in economic development projects in the present, Michelle Boyd argues that histories of segregation, exploitation and divestment have produced “defensive development” strategies within economically vulnerable black neighborhoods. Defensive development, Boyd argues, leads to intraracial conflict around the motives of middle class African Americans who want to “renew” the neighborhoods they grew up in, and abandoned in the past.⁸⁷ Trends that Boyd highlights in her work were fore grounded in the challenges organizations like MICCO faced when attempting to develop profitable commercial territory in ghetto neighborhoods. The potential for commercial development projects in Shaw to yield high profits produced a series of protests and public denouncements targeted at MICCO for reproducing the “exploitative” situation that had brought Shaw residents into the streets less than five years earlier.

⁸⁴ Ibid, C4.

⁸⁵ Vincent Paka, “Ghetto Plan Fires 2 After Walkout,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 18, 1970, B3.

⁸⁶ “New Ghetto Enterprises Face Difficulties,” *The Washington Post*, May 25, 1971, D10.

⁸⁷ Michelle Boyd, “Defensive Development: The Role of Racial Conflict in Gentrification,” *Urban Affairs Review* 43, no. 6 (July 2008): 751-776; Michelle R Boyd, *Jim Crow Nostalgia: Reconstructing Race in Bronzeville* (Minneapolis: 2008).

In pursuing commercial redevelopment projects, MICCO had worked closely with Uptown Progress from its inception. Uptown Progress was formed alongside MICCO by a consortium of black entrepreneurs operating in Shaw. Like MICCO they identified themselves as community watchdogs whose primary goal was to ensure “that what happened in southwest doesn’t happen here.” The businesses owned or managed by Uptown Progress board members, black savings and loan associations, funeral parlors and physicians, represented the kinds of black owned businesses that had thrived in Shaw during the Jim Crow era. Uptown Progresses close relationship to MICCO placed them in a position to become close advisors to the National Capital Planning Commission and the RLA as they sought to plan the riot zone for new businesses.⁸⁸ While most of MICCO’s plans for residential development were well received within the Shaw community, Uptown Progress and MICCO’s proposed commercial developments quickly became a target for anti-renewal organizing. In 1969 the National Capital Planning Commission, with MICCO and Uptown Progress’ blessing, proposed an eight story office building be constructed at the corner of 14th and U Street.⁸⁹ The NCPC plan would also purchase the Dunbar Hotel, then co-owned by an Uptown Progress board member, to provide temporary lodging for displaced residents. In response, nearby residents facing displacement formed the New Inner City Community Organization (NICCO) in order to oppose the development project. Headed by Ella Jean Brown owner of small diner “Jean’s Carryout Restaurant” whose business was spared during the rebellion, now faced the prospect of being swallowed up in the development plan.

Throughout the summer of 1969 Brown, NICCO and their allies at the St. Paul Anglican church staged a series of rallies and protest marches around the proposed site of the office building.

⁸⁸ Sue Cronk, “Watchdog Unit to Check NW Renewal,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, December 6, 1965, B1.

⁸⁹ Peter Braestrup, “Plans Unit Backs Dunbar Purchase,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, May 2, 1969, C1; Peter Braestrup, “Dunbar Hotel Purchase Plan Advances,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 29, 1969, C1.

In each protest NICCO activists emphasized that there had been “no effort to obtain citizen or business input for square no. 204.”⁹⁰ Brown told the Washington Post that the plan threatened her livelihood and that planners had been unwilling to consider rehabilitation programs for the commercial district similar to the rehab-loans offered to homeowners by MICCO I don’t know how we’re going to survive Mrs. Brown said as she watched neighborhood women selling Cracker jack and orange crush to neighborhood youngsters. ‘And they won’t even give a notion to rehabilitation.’”⁹¹ During one summer block party, 130 NICCO activists and supporters condemned Uptown Progress, MICCO and the RLA for offering to make the Dunbar hotel into a “dumping ground for the displaced.”⁹² NICCO protestors offered MICCO-Uptown Progress planners more than outright refusals. In a number of public hearings set up by MICCO for “citizen input” NICCO had offered an alternative plan that emphasized new “low-rise,” low income apartments, interior rehabilitation of small businesses and clearing the defunct Dunbar hotel in favor of new middle class housing.⁹³

In response, MICCO, RLA, NCPC and Uptown Progress officials, many of whom held membership within more than one of each group, argued that NICCO had failed to correctly gauge the will of the community and emphasized the polls, surveys and economic impact studies that had been conducted since the 1968 rebellion that signaled Shaw residents were eager for the area to be renewed. MICCO-Uptown officials emphasized that a primary motivation behind conducted to gauge the will of the community. For their part, NICCO lacked the federal funds and technocratic expertise to produce evidence that “the community” opposed MICCO-Uptown’s aggressive renewal program. John Atlas, NICCO’s “volunteer attorney” told the *Post* “We just don’t have the money

⁹⁰ Peter Braestrup, “Dunbar Hotel Purchase Plan Advances,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 29, 1969, C1.

⁹¹ Peter Braestrup, “Political Fight Stalls NW Renewal Plan,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, December 31, 1969, B1.

⁹² Braestrup, B1.

⁹³ “U St. Plan Criticized at Hearing,” *The Washington Post*, June 11, 1969, A9.

(in contrast to Uptown) for technical expertise.”⁹⁴ Ironically, MICCO-Uptown’s technocratic advantage in being able to produce “knowledge” about the needs of the 14th and U community was remarkably similar to the way federal planners used their surveys of blighted conditions in Shaw to construct discourses of community decline in neighborhoods with large concentrations of African Americans. Indeed Brown predicted that despite the efforts of her groups that, “I’m just afraid that Uptown and MICCO will just outwait us and wear us down.”⁹⁵

In January of 1970 the city council approved MICCO-Uptown’s development plan for the 14th and U redevelopment plan over the protest of NICCO organizers. Still, the conflict had left a bad taste in many of MICCO’s former allies, including existing partners in residential development. Increasingly, MICCO’s former allies began to argue that as the organization branched further into the realm of commercial development the selection of “community partners” became more suspect. The Metropolitan Washington Planning and Housing Association, a local advocacy group for low-income housing told the press,

In spite of the numerous community meetings, we get the feeling that there has been no systematic participation by the 'little guys' in Shaw. The decisions by MICCO are made by relatively affluent businessmen and prominent ministers. In plan making, MICCO has not organized affinity groups in schools or among tenants, for example.⁹⁶

Channing Phillips, once a member of the MICCO board told the *Post*, "The control of MICCO is in the hands of a few who are again exploiting the poor and the blacks. The whole system of exploitation is still alive."⁹⁷

Accusations that MICCO was “exploiting” low-income residents were countered by claims from MICCO allies who argued that a development strategy organized entirely around low-income

⁹⁴ Braestrup, B1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, B1.

⁹⁶ Eugene L. Meyer and J.Y. Smith, “MICCO’s Critics. Shaw Agency said to Benefit Fauntroy, Not Little Guy.,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, 1972, A1.

⁹⁷ Meyer, A1.

housing would leave the neighborhood isolated as a “concentration of subsidized housing.”⁹⁸

Though MICCO had been formed in order to prevent the kinds of displacement that had defined urban renewal in southwest, it was impossible to envision a middle class future without removing certain elements of the community, including impoverished black families. The effort to re-brand the ghetto as an attractive site of investment could not be realized in a larger political economy where proximity to working class black urban dwellers was understood as death knell for capital investment.

The challenges MICCO and black activists faced in redeveloping and rebranding Shaw demonstrates the impossibility of crafting a black social movement that, simultaneously, attempted to transform black ghettos into spaces where future generations were better off than their predecessors and which attempted to keep African American communities free from the exploitative influences of capitalism. Black middle class leaders could effectively deploy a rhetoric that emphasized the importance of heteronormative reproduction as a means of legitimizing urban renewal projects that were historically unpopular with black residents and which, in the Black Power era, had become linked to concerns that the white power structure sought to eradicate black populations from the nation. In the name of racial reproduction and the stabilization of the black family, middle class black leaders could justify attempting to make Shaw more like “Georgetown,” advocating for slum clearance and encouraging the in-flow of “outside” investment into the Shaw area. In service of the black family, black technocrats were able to weave an effective public discourse that couched urban renewal as a net positive for the ghetto.

However, when black community and political leaders attempted to deploy the same rhetoric to justify commercial developments that, baldly, would economically benefit a select few

⁹⁸ Eugene L. Meyer and J.Y. Smith, “Shaw: Blight Remains Despite Promises,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, February 20, 1972, A1.

black leaders, consensus built between Shaw's community leaders and residents on the best interests of the community shattered. MICCO and Rev. Fauntroy's strong relationships to black churches, the very institutions that helped to legitimize residential renewal projects, became painted as nepotism, corruption and favoritism.

Indeed, the impossibility of consensus vis a vis profiteering ventures in Shaw drew a critical line in the sand between black and gay community's relationship to discourses of urban progress and economic growth in Washington, D.C. during the 1970s. As will be discussed in chapter 4, the rehabilitation of gay identity in Washington, D.C. was inextricably linked to the popularization of gay commercial ventures within both black and white, middle class neighborhoods. Not only did these commercial spaces provide a space for the development of a new white, gay subjectivity in the 1970s, they suggested that white gay men were at the forefront of an emerging movement to revitalize the central city in the wake of the expansion of blight and the devastation of the 1968 rebellion. While intra-community conflict over who had the right to access gay commercial territory meant that access to a visible gay identity was racially delimited, these conflicts were unrelated to the question of whether commercial development "exploited" impoverished gay Washingtonians. The very kinds of commercial ventures that catapulted white gay men into the spotlight, restaurants, bars and nightclubs were symbols of outsider exploitation in black communities. Free from the burden of racial reproduction, white gay entrepreneurs seeking to claim to blocks, street corners and traffic circles needed only to concern themselves with how virulently local and federal police authorities would seek to curtail their efforts and frighten away customers. The ease with which white gay men pursued and gained access to profitable commercial space provided a critical opportunity to remake the meaning of "gay" in the public sphere in the coming years. An opportunity that was never truly available to African Americans in Shaw.

Chapter 4

Disciplining Gayness, Disciplining Whiteness: Southeast, DuPont Circle and the Production of D.C.'s 'Gay Ghetto,' 1968-1976

Life around the gay ghetto, centered on DuPont Circle, is dulcet. On a spring evening the streets are crowded with strollers and cruisers. Washington is a city of readers, and the bookstores are always busy. One has a restaurant in the back, and you can sit outside under an umbrella, sip wine and snack on pate and watch the joggers huffing past or women in saris ambling by with their children. Gay eyes are quick and knowing around DuPont Circle; three hairdressers lounging in the doorway of their shop take you in as you walk past. At the Lambda Rising gay book store women and men are browsing downstairs, while upstairs a gay poet is giving a reading. The sidewalks are clean, the buildings are low, the shops are fashionable, the overheard bits of conversation are up-to-date (the latest movie, the latest cheese store, the latest play at the Kennedy Center).¹

During the nineteen seventies and eighties, Edmund White wrote a series of travel diaries for New York gay cultural magazine *Christopher Street*. The first in a series of collected travelogues was published in 1980 as *States of Desire: Travels in Gay America*. White's essay collection became both a bestseller and one of the first comparative studies of the sexual, economic and political character of emerging "gay ghettos" across the country. The preceding passage was published as part of an article where White compared the "radical" public politics of gay Boston (defined by White as some activists' willingness to challenge the state's age of consent laws) with the "conventional," quality of gay life in Washington, D.C.² Importantly, while White's sojourn through Washington took him to a party in Georgetown, to Mt Pleasant for a visit with prominent white gay activist Frank Kameny, to "southeast" for an evening of dancing at gay mega bar Lost and Found, to Capitol Hill for an interview with one of the nation's first openly gay lobbyists Steve Endean, and to an unspecified location for an interview with an unnamed black "gay activist living a bisexual lifestyle," he identifies DuPont Circle as the city's only gay ghetto.³

¹ Edmund White, *States of Desire: Travels in Gay America* (New York: Dutton, 1980), 321.

² White, *States of Desire: Travels in Gay America*, 317.

³ *Ibid.*, 317-331.

White's acknowledgment of DuPont Circle as Washington's gay ghetto is particularly striking as his description of the neighborhood does not include one mention of a gay bar. Rather, White paints a picture of a "dulcet" community filled with joggers, women with saris and children, clean sidewalks, bookstores, poets and erudite conversation. But for the presence of "cruisers," White's description of DuPont Circle suggests a much less explicitly sexual milieu than many other contemporary accounts of gay ghettos in New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Boston. Nonetheless, White was not the only observer in the late seventies to claim that DuPont Circle was the center of gay life in the nation's capital. In 1977, both the *Washington Post* and the more conservative *Washington Star* profiled D.C.'s growing (white) gay community and framed DuPont Circle as the "home" of that community.⁴

DuPont Circle's designation as a dulcet gay ghetto by the mid 1970s suggests that, since the 1960s, a significant shift in perception on where homosexual subcultures were located in D.C.'s landscape and what defined the "ghetto" had taken place. A survey of mainstream and gay media in the early 1970s suggests that other D.C. territories, namely downtown and black neighborhoods in southeast were positioned at the center of gay life in Washington. In 1971 the *Washington Blade*, D.C.'s largest gay newspaper, announced the opening of gay restaurant, Capitol Hill Town Restaurant on 8th street SE near the old Naval Yards factory, as the latest to open on "Gay Way."⁵ Unlike the *Post's* coverage of gay life in DuPont Circle in 1977, a three piece series in 1973 found *Post* journalist Robert Mott spending "several weeks among the homosexual community in

⁴ Robert F. Levey, "The Gay Life at DuPont Circle; DuPont Gays 'Comfortable' in their Neighborhood," *The Washington Post*, July 16, 1977, D-C 1., Donia Mills, "Till Death Do Them Part, It Looks like Ron and Jerry" *The Washington Star*, October 30, 1977., Donia Mills "Washington Called the Gay Capital" *The Washington Star*, October 30, 1977., Donia Mills "Homosexuals and Their Professions," *The Washington Star*, November 1, 1977.

⁵ Mark Meinke, "PLACES & SPACES -- clubs, bars, community centers, etc. of Washington DC's LGBT community (1920 to the present)", 2002, <http://www.rainbowhistory.org/clubs.pdf>, 4.

Washington” but only traveling to gay bars, like Hideaway, in the downtown commercial district.⁶ Indeed, no neighborhood in the D.C. metro area was identified as a specific residential territory, or “ghetto” for LGBT Washingtonians. Nationally, urban LGBT residents or heterosexual outsiders rarely characterized urban neighborhoods as “gay ghettos” before the 1970s.⁷ Urban theorists, planners and policymakers who had controlled national and local discourse on American “tenements,” “slums,” and “ghettos” from the Progressive Era to the 1960s did not imagine homosexuals as resident members of the racialized communities that made up the body politic of “the ghetto” in the postwar city. Instead, a reductive imagination of the “ghetto” and ghetto residents allowed white conservatives to draw connections between the supposed hyper heterosexuality of black women and the origins of poverty in American ghettos.

To be clear, exposure to homosexuality was understood as an integral component of the risks of living in the inner-city, but anti-homosexual city commissions or police who organized “clean-up drives” rarely framed the threat of homosexual deviance as emerging from high concentrations of LGBT people living in residential neighborhoods. From the anti-vice campaigns of the 1930s to the sex-crime panics of the postwar decades, political and media sensationalism around the problem of urban sexual perversion focused on the image of the roaming sexual psychopath. As was discussed in chapter 2, at their most benign, constructions of white urban homosexuals suggested that their desires compelled them to risk travel into racially stigmatized parts of town to meet each other or risk crippling loneliness. At their worst, psychiatric experts argued that the uncontrollable urges of sexual deviants propelled them to travel through normative white neighborhoods in order to corrupt or kill children. In Washington, the homosexual menace during

⁶ Robert Mott, “Life Becomes Somewhat Easier for D.C. Homosexuals,” *The Washington Post*, April 23, 1973, C1; Robert Mott, “Life Becomes Somewhat Easier for D.C. Homosexuals,” *The Washington Post*, April 23, 1973, C1; Robert Mott Washington Post, “Morals Laws, Agency Rules Work Against Homosexuals,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 25, 1973, C1.

⁷ Julie Abraham, *Metropolitan Lovers: The Homosexuality of Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

the Lavender Scare seemed particularly diasporic as Republicans expressed concern that gay state department employees who traveled internationally were susceptible to overseas blackmail. In books like *Washington Confidential* and in the press, commercial zones, rather than residential areas, were the primary stages for visible homosexuality in the District. In Shaw, homosexuality only emerged as a legible component of the rhetoric of blight when in close proximity to other forms of street crime like drug dealing or sex work. In DuPont Circle, the DCCA expressed concern over the relationship between commercial development surrounding the DuPont traffic circle as a powerful magnet for visiting “perverts,” but they seemed little concerned about homosexuals moving in next door. Even amongst self identifying gay men and lesbians, securing residential and community concentrations were not an explicit part of their political goals in either the homophile movement or the early years of the more radical Gay Liberation Front. In presenting DuPont Circle as a “dulcet,” “gay ghetto,” White suggests both a significant redefinition of the meaning of homosexuality in the public sphere and a redefinition of the concept of “the ghetto” in the nation’s capital during the 1970s. Indeed, the ease with which mainstream and gay observers suggest that DuPont Circle was a discreet gay neighborhood or ghetto indicates that unpacking the historical origins of that designation is essential for understanding the origins of popular assumptions surrounding the contours and constituency of Washington’s “gay community” in the public imaginary.

This chapter asks three critical questions. First, how did the meaning of “gay” shift so dramatically in the 1970s that it could be inscribed upon a “dulcet” or white and middle class, residential neighborhood? Second, why did DuPont Circle become D.C.’s “gay ghetto” when other areas that housed gay or queer social and commercial spaces did not? Finally, what does the inscription of “gay ghetto” onto DuPont Circle mean about the redefinition of the idea of the urban ghetto in the 1970s? Answers to these questions can be found in the interdependent economic and cultural processes through which barriers surrounding white spatial territory resolidified in

northwest Washington during the 1970s and by which white gay activists, business groups, media outlets and everyday white gay men tethered “gay identity” to the bodies of white middle class men and to institutions and neighborhoods seen as friendly to white middle class men. Prior, during and after the 1970s, a sexually, racially and spatially diverse LGBT population lived and continues to live in the District. Still, between 1970, when local activists formed a chapter of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and 1976, the year of D.C.’s second gay rights parade and festival, white controlled gay activist and business groups, at times together at times independently, linked urban gay life with the privileges of spatial whiteness, i.e. progress, economic growth and urban renewal. In doing so, they unmade linkages between homosexuality and urban decline and locked into place popular scripts that continue to associate white male urban life with urban progress on a local, national and global scale.

Gay identity became coded as white and middle class against the backdrop of a rapidly re-segregating capital city in the 1970s. Even as the black population continued to rapidly outstrip whites, the economic divide between white and black Washingtonians grew during the 1970s. While rustbelt cities like Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit and Milwaukee suffered through a severe economic malaise, Washington D.C. experienced a racialized economic boom in the 1970s.⁸ White employment in D.C. stabilized as multinational banks began locating their headquarters within the city, the federal government invested in transforming downtown back into an attractive destination for white tourists.⁹ The growth in white, middle to high income jobs in the city made access to the limited “pure” white residential territory, most of it west of Rock Creek Park, into a new form of racial and economic privilege in these years. White homeowners in DuPont

⁸ Nancy L. Ross, “Big Business Isn’t Ready Now for Commitment to U.S. Cities,” *The Washington Post*, March 19, 1978.

⁹ Nancy L. Ross, “Area Jobless, Employment Rates Improve,” *The Washington Post*, January 15, 1978; Camp, Patricia, “District Housing Costs Displacing Poorer Families,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, June 21, 1979, sec. B1; Juan Williams, “Gambles in ‘No-Man’s Land’ Have Paid Off for Investors,” *The Washington Post*, September 11, 1979.

Circle, whose racial, spatial and economic identity seemed in severe flux at the beginning of the 1970s benefited greatly from this increase in demand for “modern” housing opportunities. DuPont’s historic housing stock—the preservation of which had been a major sticking point for DCCA opposition to the spread of urban “blight”—and the neighborhood’s proximity to new office buildings significantly increased housing prices in the neighborhood during the 1970s. Housing prices were further buoyed by the presence of important embassies and by the opening of the D.C. Metrorail station near the DuPont Circle traffic circle in 1977.¹⁰ Ironically, the kinds of commercial development that frightened the DCCA in the 1960s proved to be a boon for DuPont Circle as the area’s gay bars, art galleries, open door cafes and restaurants became assets in continuing to attract middle class homeowners, placing even more pressure on property values. Between 1975 and 1979, the same years DuPont emerged as the city’s acknowledge gay ghetto, it became one of only three D.C. neighborhoods where home and condominium prices increased by an astonishing 244%, or an average of \$53,000 to \$193,000 per unit.¹¹ While the racial demographics of the entire DCCA territory remained the same, the increased concentration of wealth in the area occurred west of 17th street, excluding African American blocks that had been part of the old “Strivers” section. Those spatial dynamics were reflected in the disproportionate growth of white wealth in the community during the 1970s. Between 1970 and 1980, for example, the percentage of white homeowners in DuPont Circle’s booming housing market leaped by a staggering 351%.¹² By the end of the 1970s spatial whiteness had reconstituted and resolidified in DuPont Circle based on access to property rather than through explicitly racist politics.

¹⁰ Jack Eisen, “DuPont Circle Metro Station Set to Open,” *The Washington Post*, January 10, 1977.

¹¹ Kenneth Harney, “Housing Prices Rise Sharply in Close-in Areas of District,” *The Washington Post*, August 25, 1979

¹² Frank Harold Wilson, “Gentrification in Central Area Neighborhoods: Population and Housing Change in Washington, D.C., 1970-1980” (PhD, University of Michigan, 1985), 118, 123, 136.

Read against the increasing stability of D.C.'s racial geography, white gay socializing, entrepreneurship and politics in the 1970s can be understood as a spatial strategy for rebranding "gay" in the urban context. White gay activists carefully chose where to deploy their organizational strength, picketing discriminatory public entities in downtown, while ignoring racism perpetrated by gay bars in black neighborhoods. Activists defended gay men's right to cruise for sex in public as an issue of "sexual liberation," but only in predominately white Georgetown and DuPont Circle. Gay businesses located in black neighborhoods were mindful of the financial risk they could incur if their bar or restaurant were to be viewed as friendly to black patrons and actively discriminated against potential black customers. On an everyday basis, white gay men chose to travel particular routes to engage in gay socializing and created mental maps of "gay territory" that excluded impoverished parts of the city. As the number of white gay men and businesses increased in and around DuPont Circle in the mid 1970s, white gay men articulated relief that gay ghettoization afforded them access to "neighborhood bars" and that they no longer had to travel to marginal or "black" areas of the city to meet their fellows. The 1976 Gay Pride Parade and Festival, which afforded white gay activists the opportunity to construct a linear narrative of progress from a "tragic" past to a "modern" present, encapsulated the tight relationship between gay liberation and the renewal of white neighborhoods during the 1970s. It would be a mistake to suggest that white gay residency or commercial areas were ghettoized in the traditional sense in DuPont Circle. With the exception of the development embargo within the riot zone enforced by MICCO, gay entrepreneurs and activists with sufficient capital were relatively free to open businesses and institutions where they chose. In this context it is not surprising that when white gay men moved to Washington, D.C. they often chose to move to DuPont Circle. More important is that the notion of a "gay ghetto" allowed for

the inscription of a cultural identity, what Timothy Stewart-Winter would call an “ethnic identity,” onto an inner city neighborhood that was consistent with the white spatial imaginary.¹³

The Politics of Visibility: From Mattachine and GLF to the Gay Activist Alliance

The D.C. chapter of the Gay Activist Alliance (GAA) was the most important political entity interested in reforming the image of homosexuality in the nation’s capital in the 1970s and their policies significantly influenced how the wider public imagined the location of homosexuality in the district. The GAA’s ability to exert influence over the racial and spatial boundaries of gay identity in D.C. stemmed from their near exclusive claim to the mantle of representatives of the interests of D.C.’s gay community in the 1970s. Before the founding of the GAA in 1971, gay activism in D.C. had run through two particularly oppositional groups, the Mattachine Society of Washington (MSW) and the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). Founded in 1956, Washington Mattachine, like most branches of the California based organization, was organized around providing emotional support to white gay men and lesbians grappling with the stigma of homosexuality in their everyday lives.¹⁴ While Mattachine publications like *Ladder* challenged mores within publishing by discussing homosexuality in a positive light, the MSW did not challenge institutional discrimination against LGBT people in the 1950s. The MSW’s first engagement with anti-discrimination organizing and direct-action protest came under the leadership of Frank Kameny, who became president of the MSW in 1961. In 1957, Kameny had been fired from his position as an aerospace engineer. After a failed attempt to sue the federal government into reinstating him, Kameny, who was also a trained lawyer, pushed the MSW into engaging in a letter writing campaign against the federal civil service administration and organized the first official gay rights pickets against the federal government in 1965.¹⁵ MSW

¹³ Timothy Stewart-Winter, “Raids, Rights and Rainbow Coalitions: Sexuality and Race in Chicago Politics, 1950-200” (PhD, University of Chicago, 2009).

¹⁴ David K. Johnson, “Homosexual Citizens?: Washington’s Gay Community Confronts the Civil Service,” *Washington History* 6, no. 2 (Fall), 55-56.

¹⁵ Johnson, “Homosexual Citizens...” 56-60.

picketing quickly pressured Lawrence Meloy, Civil Service Commission general counsel, and Kimbell Johnson, director, Bureau of Personnel to set up a meeting with MSW representatives that same year.¹⁶ However, the MSW had few connections with either of D.C.'s commissioners or the metropolitan police department in the 1960s. The groups focus on federal employment discrimination meant that the MSW did not engage housing discrimination, employment discrimination in the private sector or police violence, issues that broadly plagued D.C.'s gay and queer populations. As sexual liberation burst onto the scene in Washington and around the country in the late 1960s, Washington Mattachine found itself increasingly marginalized as old fashioned. Though Frank Kameny claimed to have between "40 and 50" members in 1973, an anonymous "gay activist" told the *Post* that Mattachine was a "one man operation" starring Frank Kameny.¹⁷

After the 1969 Stonewall riot in New York, the limitations of the MSW's federal-only approach inspired gay Washingtonians with emotional and organizational ties to Black Power, feminist and anti-war student groups to form a local chapter of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in July of 1970. One of GLF's founding members, Bruce Pennington, told the Rainbow History Project that the D.C. branch of GLF was first organized after he and a group of friends had traveled to New York in June of 1970 to celebrate the one year anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion.

Well [GLF] really started to organize a group of people to go up to the first anniversary of the Stonewall march. And a few people went up and came back really energized. Let's start something here. The war was still going on...During the Vietnam War and other times, they took us. They put us in front of enemy weapons. But if they found out, or they had a reason to do so, they threw us out...So by this time there were veterans, Vietnam veterans, or people who had been thrown out, or people who had gotten Purple Hearts and been released, who knew they were gay. And we now know thanks to Dwight MacDonald, there was plenty of gay sex going on in Vietnam during the war. But there were also prostitutes, there were also hippies, and all kinds of young people with no political agenda who did not, the bottom line was nobody was willing any more to feel isolated as being queer.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁷ Mott, C3.

¹⁸ Bruce Pennington, interview by Mark Meinke, January 27, 2001, Rainbow History Project Oral History Collection, 5

Pennington's characterization of GLF's diverse membership suggests that GLF members hoped to develop a "queer" collective, made up of sexual minorities whose anti-imperial ideology (gay veterans) and hyper marginality (sex workers) placed them far outside the political, economic and sexual mainstream. GLF's queer orientation was partially reflected in the group's board which included Theodore Kirkland, a black gay Ohioan who would eventually be instrumental in the establishment of the annual Black Pride celebration in D.C. during the late 1980s.¹⁹ Unlike the MSW, D.C. GLF was invested in challenging heteronormative logics and assumptions in the public sphere. In 1970 one of GLF's founders, David Aiken organized the purchase of a house at 1620 S street in the heart of DuPont Circle's black neighborhood, providing a communal living space home for homeless queer youth within and outside of the organization.²⁰ Operating out of the 1620 S Street house, GLF members organized a series of "gaynics" or "gayins" in Rock Creek Park during the summer and fall of 1970.²¹ These events were meant to serve as "a happy alternative to the bar scene and the Sunday Brunch Syndrome," a swipe at the perceived superficiality of the bar community.²² Gay-ins also provided GLF members with an opportunity to engage the public in "rap sessions," educating them on the importance of sexual liberation to overall social freedom. After the second gay-in in mid-August, the GLF newsletter boasted that open displays of same-sex affection had led to an "impromptu teach-in" with straight observers.

Highlights of the event were: a spontaneous can, conga line that provided the halftime entertainment for a straight soccer game...affectionate scenes which it has been said may cause Claude Lelouc to do a sequel called "A Man and A Man"...Also an impromptu "teach-in" was held with groups of teenager[sic] and adult straights. Those who were involved in the conversations found the experience very rewarding. It seems that the youngsters started out by

¹⁹ Bruce Pennington, 6.

²⁰ "GLF Newsletter, Volume 1, No. 2", August 11, 1970, 2, Frank Kameny Papers Box 92, Folder 4, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division; Bruce Pennington interview, 7, 9.

²¹ "temporary FACT SHEET for the WASHINGTON GAY LIBERATION FRONT presented for your information until the publication committee can get it together!", n.d., 1, Frank Kameny Papers Box 92, Folder 4.

²² "temporary FACT SHEET for the WASHINGTON GAY LIBERATION FRONT presented for your information until the publication committee can get it together!", 1.

calling names from the sidelines and ended up (after talking with many of our members) having good vibes and expanded heads...WATCH FOR THE NEXT GAY-IN IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD”²³

Unfortunately, internal disorganization and a near immediate split between the predominately male leadership and lesbian members meant few other gay-ins were planned in D.C. parks and neighborhoods. In fact, the organization all but dissolved only a year after its founding. An anonymous gay activist told *Washington Post* reporter Richard Mott that GLF had “too many superstars and ego-trippers. It lasted an active six months, and a kind of death-throes six months. It accomplished next to nothing but its spirit lives on in other organizations.”²⁴ GLF was partially undone by the group’s purposefully decentralized leadership structure. In an attempt to avoid reproducing oppressive hierarchies within the organization, GLF’s founding charter indicated it was necessary that the organization function “as a group of individuals who have varying interests and desires in and for the organization.”²⁵ This decentralized approach ultimately doomed GLF’s ability to enact serious change in public perceptions of homosexuality. David Aiken, who was a founding member of both GLF recalled in 1976 that member’s unwillingness to embrace “By 1971, however, GLF had existed about a year and was well along on the road toward disintegration after many fissures had become evident.....Those who had always chafed at the resolute refusal of GLF’s majority to enter into such traditional practices as electing officers were ready to put something together with a permanent structure.”²⁶

With GLF disbanded and Mattachine Society unwilling to engage broader gay rights causes, D.C.’s nascent political sphere lacked an organized gay presence. The vacuum in gay politicking was filled during the 1971 race for non-voting D.C. congressional delegate. The delegate position was

²³ “GLF: Newsletter, Volume 1, No. 3”, August 18, 1970, 1, Frank Kameny Papers Box 92, Folder 4.

²⁴ Mott, C3.

²⁵ “temporary FACT SHEET for the WASHINGTON GAY LIBERATION FRONT presented for your information until the publication committee can get it together!”, 1.

²⁶ David Aiken, “D.C. Council” 1/27/1976, 3 David Aiken Papers, Folder 5 “Articles, Reports relating to D.C. Laws,” Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington.

part of President Johnson's "home rule" order in 1967, also empowering the mayor and the city council. The delegate position was located in the house and could vote on the House District subcommittee, but not during House floor votes. Frank Kameny seized on the delegate race as an opportunity to gauge the political potential of D.C.'s gay constituency which he believed, using Kinsey's suggestion that homosexuals made up 10% of the population, numbered between fifty and sixty thousand. While Kameny did not win the campaign he recruited volunteers from MSW and from the GLF who were looking for political alternatives. In August of 1971, veterans from Kameny's campaign structure founded the D.C. branch of the Gay Activist Alliance. The founding of the GAA ushered in a new era in gay activism in Washington. Perhaps in response to the loosely radical politics of the GLF, the GAA's founding members laid out a clear agenda for the organization from the get go. In its first constitution the GAA defined its mission as the following

"We, as homosexual activists, seeking total liberation in the eyes of society and equality under law, demand the freedom for expression of our dignity and value as human being through confrontation with and disarmament of all mechanisms which unjustly inhibit us: economic, social and political. Before the public conscience, we demand an immediate end to all oppression of homosexuals and the immediate unconditional recognition of these basic rights: The right to our own feelings...The right to love...The right to our own bodies...The right to be persons."²⁷

The GAA's emphasis on shifting the "public consciousness" and gaining public "recognition" of the legitimacy of homosexual feelings, love and sexual practices demonstrates the importance of a visible gay public to their political strategies. Tellingly, GAA's immediately separated themselves from the GLF's criticisms of capitalism by quickly incorporating the GAA-DC, putting it in a position to purchase a building in downtown that would become Washington's only visible "Gay Community Center."²⁸

²⁷ "Constitution and Bylaws of the Gay Activist Alliance of Washington, D.C. As Adopted in Total, April 20, 1971" Frank Kameny Papers Box 87, Folder 9.

²⁸ On incorporation see, "Articles of Incorporation Of The Gay Activists Alliance of Washington," February, 27, Frank Kameny Box 87, Folder "GAA of Wash, D.C. Correspondence, 1971-1976."

Over the next decade the GAA board began the business of ensuring that GAA was the loudest representative of gay issues in the nation's capital. In the first month of their existence GAA President James McClard wrote to Mayor Washington, Deputy Mayor Fletcher and Police Chief Wilson in order to set up meetings to discuss the state of homosexual rights and the D.C. homosexual community's relationship to the newly formed local government.²⁹ The GAA became the go-to source for media coverage of gay rights issues with GAA members frequently quoted in the *Washington Post* and *Evening Star*. In every local election held in the 1970s, from school board to mayor, the GAA submitted questionnaires on gay rights issues to potential candidates signaling themselves as the pathway to securing the city's gay vote.³⁰ The GAA organized a series of "zaps" or "sit-ins" against institutions in Washington that were discriminatory or that contributed to negative ideas about homosexuality. In particular, GAA activists instituted "zaps" against local media outlets like WMAL TV after they aired a controversial episode of "Marcus Welby M.D." that linked homosexuality with pedophilia.³¹

The GAA's belief in the importance of their own visibility as the voice of gay Washingtonians reflected their belief that public visibility was essential to altering negative assumptions around homosexuality as criminal, disorderly or a sign of community decline. The GAA did not exercise complete control over the production of a new, white, homosexuality, but the overall tenor of the organization found expression in the everyday practices of white gay men and gay business groups all who worked together to produce a sense that gay Washingtonians were white and active participants in the city's renewal.

²⁹ "From James B. McClard, President GAA to Inspector Walter R. Bishop Chief Metro Police Morals Division", August 16, 1971, Frank Kameny Papers Box 87, Folder "GAA of Wash, D.C. Correspondence, 1971-1976"; "To the Honorable Walter Washington from James McClard", January 17, 1972, Frank Kameny Box 87, Folder "GAA of Wash, D.C. Correspondence, 1971-1976."

³⁰ Megan Rosenfield, "Candidates Face 'Gay' Quizzers," *The Washington Post*, August 22, 1974, A22; "DC Elections: GAA Releases Ratings," *The Gay Blade*, September 1974, 1.

³¹ "Report: Meeting with WMAL-TV", March 26, 1975, Frank Kameny Papers Box 87 Folder "GAA General 1973-1975."

Why Not Southeast? The Unmanageability of Gay Identity in a Black Neighborhood.

Washington's diverse gay and lesbian population began to create a new generation of activist, institutional and commercial spaces across the city in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One of the neighborhoods that witnessed an explosion in gay and queer commercial spaces was the predominately black 5th police precinct or "southeast" D.C. Southeast's predominately black population, and low housing costs made it easy for white and black gay and lesbians to open bars, housing collectives and restaurants in the area. Simultaneously, southeast's comparatively open housing and property situation ensured that gay spaces owned by white gay men would become sites of racial and gendered conflict within the LGBT community. As white gay entrepreneurs sought to appeal to curious heterosexual onlookers and to white gay men, who they considered their primary constituency, they fiercely guarded entry and access to commercial institutions that would be instrumental in forming linkages between gay identity and urban renewal, investment and profit.

LGBT spaces in southeast emerged out the remains of Washington's only major manufacturing plant, the Navy Yards. From as early as the Civil War, the Navy Yards functioned as the nation's primary producer of the country's naval armaments. The demands of World War I and World War II significantly expanded employment in the Yards. At the height of the war, the Naval Gun Plant was the largest naval manufacturer in the world, employing over 24,000 workers a year between the 1940s and early 1950s. Labor demand at the Naval Yard produced a massive white, in-migration into the area during the war, transforming the surrounding residential area (under the jurisdiction of the 5th police precinct) into a community of nearly 60,000. In 1944, the FWA warned of "the critical need for additional school facilities in this area, which is experiencing an abnormal population growth due to war activities at the Navy Yard, Bellevue Naval Magazine and Research Laboratory, Bolling Field and the Naval Air Station."³² The opening of the pentagon complex in

³² "Anacostia Area to Get New School," *The Washington Post*, February 13, 1944, M3.

Arlington, VA after the war signaled the beginning of the end of the Navy Yards as a manufacturing employer. In 1962, the Navy permanently shut down the gun factory and a range of nearby smaller facilities.³³

The decommissioning of the naval yard occurred in concert with rapid white outmigration from the city and the neighborhood. While the Bellevue research center continued to employ tens of thousands of workers, the high end technology jobs there afforded its mostly white workforce the ability to purchase homes in nearby suburban areas. Moreover, as federal urban renewal demolition projects in southwest and northwest exacerbated the city's housing shortage, many working class black families moved into near southeast as whites left the area. As was the case around the city, black in-migration produced a new public discourse around southeast Washington, linking it to the "problems" in the Shaw area. In 1959, fifth precinct commander Thomas Edwards complained that

more and more of our plainclothesmen are encountering strange troublemakers who've transferred their activities from the Second [Shaw], Third and Fourth precincts. In all three of those areas substandard housing is being demolished or renovated steadily. It stands to reason that the people who occupied those places have to go someplace, and in late years what little grass we have over here has looked pretty green to them."³⁴

However, while local police raised alarms about black newcomers, white southeast residents remained relatively quiet compared to white communities in northwest Washington. The inherently transitory nature of white communities in southeast, D.C. combined with expanding housing opportunities in Virginia and Maryland perhaps lessened the sting of black immigration. Unlike DCCA member, white southeasters were not linked to a narrative of their neighborhoods "historic character" and unlike working class communities in places like Chicago or Detroit, white southeasters were not unified by ethnicity. Without the Naval Gun Factory, racial transition

³³ "Naval Plant Cuts Smoke From Stacks," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, May 26, 1962, D40.

³⁴ Alfred Lewis, and Harry Gabbett, "More Crime Seeps Into the Fifth Precinct," *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 5, 1959, B1.

occurred with little conflict and by 1970 the fifth precinct was 95% black.³⁵ Equally important is the fact that southeast D.C.'s black newcomers lay outside the symbolic jurisdiction of middle class black political leaders who were focused on renewing and redeveloping Shaw in these years. As a result, when cadres of lesbians and gay entrepreneurs began to open small bars, housing collectives and large-scale discos in the late sixties and early seventies, they were met with no resistance from local residents.

The most publicized gay institutions in southeast were a number of “superbars” or “megabars” that opened in the area between 1969 and 1974.³⁶ The abandoned supply warehouses near the Navy Yards complex presented the perfect opportunity to increase the scale of male same-sex socializing in Washington, D.C. to unprecedented levels. The first mega bar near the Navy Yards to open its doors was Plus One located at 829 8th Street, SE. Plus One was the first gay owned bar to offer same-sex dancing in Washington. Owners Henry Hecht, Donn Culver and Bill Bickford were mega bar moguls in the late sixties and early seventies in near southeast, also opening Lost and Found in 1971.³⁷ Frank Kameny recalled that the opening of the southeast megabars felt like a turning point in local gay history. Prior to Plus One, gay bar owners across the city instituted a ban on same-sex dancing, perhaps part of a successful strategy to keep the police’s “morals division” from raiding gar bars. Kameny remembered, “The Plus One, the first of the superbars saw what was going on, saw what the future held, put in a dance floor, and dancing in gay bars was here to stay!”³⁸ Three years later in 1974 Glen Thompson and George Dotson opened Grand Central at 900 First Street SE.

³⁵ David A. Jewell and Alfred E. Lewis and Washington Post s, “5th District Mainly Residential,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 15, 1970, B5.

³⁶ Also referred to as “megadiscos”

³⁷ Meinke, 18.

³⁸ Frank Kameny quoted in Meinke, “PLACES & SPACES -- clubs, bars, community centers, etc. of Washington DC's LGBT community (1920 to the present),” 23.

The vibrant party scene in southeast megabars attracted the attention of local media outlets, the *Washington Post* and *Washingtonian* magazine in particular. In a 1974 story on the southeast gay scene *Post* reporter Tom Zito informed readers that southeast “discotechques” were proof that the “anything goes gyrations” of the 1960s had not died, as some predicted, but had been remade into an “emerging culture of the 70s: largely places where homosexuals openly mix and flirt; where trendy young people—city and suburban—go for a different less inhibited kind of evening.”³⁹ Zito’s article went further to arguing, that gay clubs like Grand Central, Pier Nine and Lost and Found, with a touch of glitter and a disco beat, had the potential to renovate “desolate,” urban surroundings into a thriving businesses area that catered to “thousands” of customers.

Saturday night, glitter comes to Washington’s warehouse district. Huge ordinarily desolate storage buildings in Southeast and Southwest bask in the bustle of SRO crowds. Cars, most with suburban Maryland and Virginia tags, jam the narrow streets. Lines of people, many in ultra-hip dress, wait patiently for doormen to check IDs. The night’s count of customers is in the thousands at places like Grand Central, Pier Nine and Lost and Found.⁴⁰

Unlike gay bars clustered in downtown or queer space in Shaw during the fifties and sixties, southeast bars were both coded “gay” and incredibly popular with “mainstream” consumers. Mega bar management interviewed for Zito’s story embraced the idea of gay bars as a nighttime recreation for everyone. John Haight owner of mega disco “Sundown” told Zito that “It’s very easy to start a gay club in this town. I guess that as the word got out that men were dancing together in public the gawkers started coming. I’d say its 50-50 right now split between gays and straights. Of the straights, half of them are just having a good time and the other half are gawkers.”⁴¹

The importance of megabars to the wider public’s reimagining of homosexuality cannot be overstated. As Alice Echols has argued in her recent book on the history of disco, the glamour of gay superbars and the muscled, virile white men found within erased images of “nervous,” “tragic,”

³⁹ Tom Zito, “Anything’s Cool At the Discos,” *The Washington Post*, October 17, 1974, E1

⁴⁰ Zito, E1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, E11

and “desperate” homosexuals who were victims of their own sick desires.⁴² In the context of the megabar, young straight Washingtonians increasingly imagined “gay people” as a “good time” and gay megabars as the only place left in the city that allowed freedom of expression. In a 1972 article in *Washingtonian Magazine* anonymous white Georgetown “scenesters” expressed their boredom with Georgetown nightlife and their interest in mingling among the “beautiful people” at gay megabars in southeast.

What Washington needs is a place to go, a casual beautiful place. A place where only the beautiful people can go and display themselves. Not stuffy. That’s what Washington needs now. A place where black people can go, gay people can go, straight people can go and be themselves. If a black or a gay person goes to Ventuno’s they look at him dirty. He’s probably a beautiful person with a lot of money. They’re so stupid! Blacks and gay people are the biggest spenders right now... We go to Pier Nine. It’s a gay bar, but they know we’re straight and we have a good time. At least there you can do whatever you want.⁴³

Yet the image of ultimate freedom and open access within the media presentation’s of southeast bars ignored white gay male entrepreneurs’ desire to ensure that gay bars catered to the desires of white gay men. In a series of depositions taken as part of a class action anti-discrimination lawsuit brought against Lost and Found and Grand Central owners Glen Thompson and George Dotson in 1976, black gay men, black lesbians and white lesbians recalled the experience of being asked for multiple forms of ID, to pay higher cover, to pay for complimentary water and of being generally harassed by white gay staff in southeast bars while white men and straight patrons were allowed to enter and enjoy themselves with impunity. In one deposition Patricia Price, a black lesbian, indicates the casual nature of racial and gender discrimination in southeast megabars.

While patiently waiting in line I observed the following: A. A chain was fastened across the entrance to prevent unauthorized entry. B. the doorman, a white male wearing an employee tee-shirt, would alternately fasten and unfasten the chain regulating the entry of groups of patrons. C. Several times he waved in groups of approximately 10 white males without requesting any information from these individuals. D. As we approached the point of entry, the doorman fastened the chain once more after having just waved through a group of white males in the fashion as described above. E. The doorman turned to me and said “I’d like to

⁴² Alice Echols, *Hot stuff: Disco and the Making of American Culture* (W. W. Norton, 2010).

⁴³ Richard Lee, *Washingtonian Magazine*, “The Gay Life,” November 1972, 48.

see some I.D.” I willingly complied by showing him two pieces of identification consisting of the following: a Virginia driver’s license with my birth date, picture and signature; and a government identification card with my picture and signature. F. The doorman said that such identification was “not sufficient” to allow entry, and further he expressed that he did not believe that I was 21 years of age.⁴⁴

Price’s experience at Grand Central was by no means an isolated incident within gay commercial areas in the 1970s. Denying the validity of unwanted patrons’ I.D. or “carding,” was a ubiquitous practice in white gay clubs around the country during the 1970s and 1980s. The existing literature often characterizes these practices as “subtle” forms of discrimination, yet they did critical work to push the notion that the “future” of gay life in D.C. would not include women or black men.⁴⁵ Price’s testimony also suggested that “carding” policies were geared towards discouraging intimate and social relations between white and black gay men. She observed, “white males entering singly or in all white male groups were not asked for identification and were merely waived through by the doorman. Whites accompanied by blacks and all blacks either singly or in groups were required to present identification and were often charged an admission fee.”⁴⁶ Further testimony suggests that confrontations between white management and unwanted patrons could turn violent. Charles Hall testified that after an evening of pointing out instances of racial and gender discrimination at Grand Central an employee threatened him to “get out or I will throw you out!”⁴⁷ Jeff Blake, a white Grand Central employee from 1974 to 1975 testified against his former employers, illustrating their willingness to engage in violence to protect the bar for white gay male

⁴⁴ Deposition of Patricia Price, July 14, 1976, 1-2, David Aiken Papers, Folder "Racial and Gender Discrimination in Gay Clubs."

⁴⁵ Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (New York: Basic Books, 2006) 236; Enrique N. Roque Ramírez, ““That’s My Place!?: Negotiating Racial, Sexual, and Gender Politics in San Francisco’s Gay Latino Alliance, 1975-1983,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 2 (2003), 233

⁴⁶ Patricia Price Deposition, 3-4

⁴⁷ Deposition of Charles Hall, August 2nd, 1976, 3 David Aiken Papers, Folder "Racial and Gender Discrimination in Gay Clubs."

patrons. One evening, after observing that Blake served a black patron a complimentary glass of water Grand Central's owner, Glen Thompson, confronted him

Glen Thompson, who had observed this transaction, came over to me at the bar and said, "When a customer like that comes to the bar and asks for water charge him \$1.00" I responded, "A customer like what?" He answered pointing to some black patrons, "Any of those niggers!...Later that night, around closing time, a meeting was called by Glen Thompson; all employees, without exception, were required to attend...Glen Thompson informed the gathered group that the bar was having trouble with the "niggers" and that it would be necessary to toughen up the policy at the door. He claimed that the "niggers" made the bar unsafe. He told everyone to come the following night "prepared to fight if necessary." We were all encouraged to bring friends who could assist Mr. Thompson by acting as informal bouncers. Each friend of an employee, who would come to help, Glen Thompson continued, would receive free drinks from the bar.⁴⁸

Thompson's claim that black patrons made bars "unsafe" points to trends identified by Christina Hanhardt's analysis of "safe street" patrols organized by white gay men in New York and San Francisco in the 1970s and 1980s. Hanhardt argues that popular assumptions about the relationship between racial minorities and urban violence allowed white gay actors to frame their investment in racially discriminatory anti-crime policies as a component of the "gay rights" movement.⁴⁹ If Tom Zito's suggestion that southeast gay bars had appeared within "desolate" surroundings reflected a subtle nod to the extremely impoverished black neighborhood that surrounded gay megabars, white entrepreneurs like Thompson were loath to allow the surrounding community to infiltrate his bar. In an ironic twist, Thompsons' concerns about the "safety" of the bar did not match with the crime rate in the southeast area, which had decreased throughout the early 1970s.

In public, megabar owners couched their defense of discriminatory policy as an economic necessity and as essential to serve the true gay public, white men. In 1974, after Patricia Price published an article about racial discrimination at southeast bar Lost and Found in the *Blade* she was

⁴⁸ "Deposition of Jeff Blake," June 15, 1976, 2, David Aiken Papers, Folder "Racial and Gender Discrimination in Gay Clubs"

⁴⁹ Christina B. Hanhardt, "Butterflies, Whistles, and Fists: Gay Safe Streets Patrols and the New Gay Ghetto, 1976-1981," *Radical History Review* 100 (2008).

invited by Glenn Thompson to attend a meeting of BRASS which was a shadowy group of “most of Washington and Baltimore gay bar owners, including the Grand Central.”⁵⁰ BRASS members told Price they had formed their organization “to have more economic bargaining power with major liquor distributors” an issue that had plagued gay bars prior to Stonewall.⁵¹ Price told BRASS members that “Gay Blade and the Gay Activist Alliance were constantly receiving reports that the bars discriminated against blacks and women” and that discrimination “was a source of much bitterness and divisiveness in the gay community.”⁵² One BRASS member from Baltimore responded by saying “in order to please our patrons, we have to discriminate against some groups, even if they’re gay.” Another from D.C. agreed saying “we do the same in Washington too. We feel the same way in Washington.”⁵³ Because gay megabars were packaged as representing the gay community’s investment in liberation and freedom—spaces where one could “do what you want”—BRASS member’s suggestion that white men were “their patrons” points to the way in which the benefits of gay liberation were meant to serve the interests of white male consumers.

GAA members had a complicated public relationship with megabar owners and were reluctant to attack gay institutions that represented economic success and a kind of social legitimacy. In 1971 the GLF organized a picket of Lost and Found, demanding they end discriminatory carding policies.⁵⁴ However the Gay Activist Alliance failed to lend their support to the picket. The GAA board passed a resolution against carding policies, but members became incensed when media reports linked the GAA with the Lost and Found picket. In a letter to the *Gay Forum* GAA president James McClard acknowledged that the GAA did not support “carding” policies in D.C. gay bars.

⁵⁰ Patricia Price deposition, 4

⁵¹ Ibid., 4; Christopher Agee, “Gayola: Police Professionalization and the Politics of San Francisco’s Gay Bars, 1950-1968,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 3 (2006): 462-489.

⁵² Ibid., 5

⁵³ Ibid., 5

⁵⁴ GLF papers, James McClard to Forum Editor, November 17, 1971 Frank Kameny Papers Box 87 Folder, “GAA of Wash, D.C. Correspondence, 1971-1976.”

Nevertheless, active participation by our organization in this particular situation was never pledged. While some members of G.A.A. did participate in the picketing, and continue to do so, they do so as private individuals, and in no way represent, officially or unofficially the GAA/DC. Your error in citing the GAA as an active participant in the picketing was irresponsible and regrettable. Fighting discrimination is a full time job, requiring unity of purpose and direction. Not desiring to weaken the thrust of our activities, GAA from its inception has been a one-issue organization, focusing only on discrimination of a homosexual nature.⁵⁵

GAA's suggestion that carding policies were not examples of "discrimination of a homosexual nature" indicate the GAA's investment in a restricted understanding of what "gay" meant in the political sphere, who gay victims were in society, and where "gay rights" causes were in urban space. While BRASS argued that a limited conception of the gay patron was necessary to protect their bottom line, the GAA suggested that in order to adequately distinguish themselves as a "gay" civil rights organization it was important to isolate instances of discrimination that only could be experienced by white men.

Despite the best efforts of gay megabar owners, not all gay spaces in southeast were racially and sexually homogenous. White lesbians established their own communal and commercial spaces in southeast during the 1970s. Significantly these institutions were not part of the public discourse on homosexuality in the city. If male dominated political institutions like the GAA or the Gay Liberation Front were interested in organizing a political culture rooted in making homosexuals visible to outside audiences, D.C.'s lesbian activists were invested in creating safe private spaces where women could express their emotions, creativity and sexual desires free from judgment. The place-making activities of D.C. lesbians were in line with strategies of second wave feminists "against the gendered exclusions of public geographies," the homophobia of the feminist movement and the sexism embedded within the male dominated gay liberation movement.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ James McClard to Forum Editor, 2.

⁵⁶ Anne Enke, "Smuggling Sex Through the Gates: Race, Sexuality, and the Politics of Space in Second Wave Feminism," *American Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (2003), 635.

Moreover, lesbians, like all women in the 1970s, were significantly less likely to have access to the capital necessary to open bars, clubs and restaurants that were so essential to white gay male identity formation in these years. In 1972 the National Commission on Finance held two hearings documenting lending institutions' unwillingness to approve home or commercial loans for married women without their husband's consent and their propensity to frame single or divorced women a "credit risk."⁵⁷ Considering the institutional limitations placed upon them, D.C. lesbians seeking community shared space within existing progressive institutions. In the 1970s, D.C. lesbians held meetings at the Washington Women's Center, All Souls Unitarian Church and the Quaker House.⁵⁸ In 1972, a small group of white lesbians formed a living and publishing commune called the Furies. The founding members purchased three small homes in the impoverished southeast area. As Anne Valk's work indicates, the Furies' mission was rooted in a desire to separate from feminist and gay social movements as well as a society rife with racial, economic and gender privilege. Rita Mae Brown, a founding member wrote in a 1972 essay that

Once you feel your strength you cannot bear the thought of anyone else being beaten down. All other oppressions constructed by men become horrible to you, if they aren't already. Class and race, those latter day diseases, have sprung from sexism itself. No oppression is tolerable. All must be destroyed. Once you have come out you can no longer fall back on race and class privilege, if you have any.⁵⁹

While it was impossible for Brown and other white lesbians to eschew access to white privilege, their literary gestures towards interlocking forms of oppression stood in stark contrast to the activism of their male counterparts. Anne Valk points out that, for some women, membership in the Furies "provided a way to overcome internalized shame and affirmatively embrace and

⁵⁷ Carole Shifrin, "Credit Institutions' Bias Against Women Outlined," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, June 4, 1972, E1.

⁵⁸ Calendar of Gay Events in Washington, Gay Activist Alliance of Washington, August 1971, December 1971, June 1972, July 1972, Frank Kameny Papers Box 87 Folder "GAA of Wash, D.C. General 1971-1972."

⁵⁹ Anne M. Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 142.

identity demeaned by the dominant society.”⁶⁰ The Furies approach to political radicalism was centered on a revolution of the private sphere, whether by undoing the implicit oppression within the traditional home or by beating back the psychological consequences of sexism and homophobia. These strategies, however, were less amenable to the contestations over public meaning that would define the emerging gay rights movement. This is not to say that lesbians were not a visible part of the new gay public. A few lesbian bars did open in southeast in the 1970s and at least one, Phase One engaged in a consistent marketing campaign in the *Blade*. The original editor of the Washington Blade was a white lesbian named Nancy Tucker. Tellingly though, Tucker left the paper as it transitioned from a small weekly pamphlet to a large newspaper laden with advertisements focused on drawing on gay male consumers. From 1969 until her eventual departure Tucker had attempted to run the newspaper as a volunteer-only organization, courting minimal commercial advertisements. In her final editorial comment Tucker expressed frustration with the unwillingness of *Blade* readers to serve “their” newspaper through volunteering as part of her motivation for leaving the paper.⁶¹

Ultimately, the racial diversity of southeast’s landscape and lesbian challenges to gay male homogeneity made it unlikely the community would come to be understood as a gay ghetto during the 1970s. While the financial success of southeast megabars worked to create new connections between urban homosexuality and economic growth, the neighborhood’s overwhelmingly black population made it impossible for white gay activists to draw connections between gay identity and urban renewal. Glen Thompson’s concerns around crime and the “safety” of his patrons speaks to the way many whites believed that D.C.’s black majority population necessarily made the city unsafe, even when evidence pointed to the contrary. Even though crime rates in Washington, D.C. fell steadily throughout the 1970s, white perceptions that sections of the city east of Rock Creek Park

⁶⁰ Valk 143.

⁶¹ Jennifer King, “The Cutting Edge: A History of the Washington Blade, Metropolitan Washington DC’s GLBT Newspaper of Record”, 2006, 4-5

and south of the National Mall were filled with crime were widespread amongst whites in the metropolitan area. In 1970 and 1975, two independent studies demonstrated that whites in the Washington Metropolitan Area's perceptions of the D.C. crime rate significantly overestimate the number of crimes committed. In 1970 the Voice of Informed Community Expression (VOICE) pointed out that there had been "dramatic drop-offs" in robberies, that there were "more police foot patrols than in recent years" and that "the police force has grown in number."⁶² Still, VOICE noted the local media continued to air "routine 'scare coverage'" on the city's crime rate.⁶³ In 1975, the Justice Department released a study pointing out that "Washington residents suffered fewer crimes of violence than residents of any of other 12 [major] cities except Miami."⁶⁴ Yet in covering the Justice Department report the *Washington Star* seized on the data point that, reportedly, whites in Washington were "much more likely than blacks to be victims of personal violence and of theft" and that "whites were assaulted twice as often as blacks," data that contradicted nearly every other study of racial breakdowns of crime victims in major cities.⁶⁵ For white gay activists seeking to advance sexual liberalism, linking their fate to communities that were portrayed as engaging in a race war via crime may have seemed a risky proposition.

GAA efforts to spatially limit the boundaries of gay territory extended outside the boundaries of gay bars and businesses. Throughout the seventies gay cruisers, the GAA, the U.S. Park police and the metropolitan police department were engaged in a constant battle over the sexual identity of urban territory. As was the case nationally, working against police harassment and brutality was the most important issue for gay men seeking sex in the public sphere and for gay civil

⁶² "D.C. Crime Situation Easing Despite Adverse Publicity, Summary of VOICE Statement on D.C. Crime", March 31, 1970, 1, D.C. Board of Trade Papers, Series XI Box 4 Folder "Correspondence on Crime, 1970s, Safe Street."

⁶³ "D.C. Crime Situation Easing Despite Adverse Publicity, Summary of VOICE Statement on D.C. Crime", March 31, 1970, 1.

⁶⁴ Orr Kelly, "Crime in District Not All That Bad, Study Asserts, *Washington Star*, August 1, 1975, C1.

⁶⁵ Kelly, C1.

rights organizations like the GAA.⁶⁶ However, in the 1970s the GAA's campaigns against police harassment became spatially limited to white neighborhoods in northwest Washington. This strategy allowed the GAA to claim victories against police harassment without risking linking gay rights to African American criminality. Simultaneously, the boundaries of gay space in the city were determined by which areas police forces chose to ignore gay cruising and which areas the GAA chose to protect from police harassment.

One major battleground between police forces and Washington gay men was the Iwo Jima memorial in nearby Arlington VA, the largest cruising territory outside of the city. In 1971 the Park Police staged a well publicized raid of the Iwo Jima Memorial park, arresting 60 cruisers while, in the *Washington Post's* words, "dressed as dandies."⁶⁷ The GAA responded with fury, accusing the park police of infiltrating the "private" space and violating their right to free assembly. The police's entrapment tactics particularly enraged GAA activists. After the park police administration denied that any park police officer had solicited any gay men, the GAA accused them of using violence against cruisers.

A quite different picture of what's happening is reported by a detached third party, a resident of the apartment house opposite the park. Lacey Rich Jr. said that he was standing outside his residence on the night of December 26. Across the street in the woods he saw a tall man in a plaid jacket striking another man in the face- Upon calling the police; he was told an undercover officer fitting this description had just arrested a man in the woods on a morals charge.⁶⁸

The resolution of the Iwo Jima memorial controversy between the GAA and the park police occurred only a year later, however. After a series of meetings with the Park Police Administration the GAA conceded to work with them to encourage cruising men from Washington to seek their

⁶⁶ Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Joey L Mogul, *Queer (in)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT people in the United States* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 2011); Christopher Agee, "Gayola: Police Professionalization and the Politics of San Francisco's Gay Bars, 1950-1968," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 3 (2006): 462-489.

⁶⁷ Jay Malnews, "6 Arrested In Protest at Monument," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 6, 1972, D2.

⁶⁸ "GAA Demands End to Police Entrapment", January 5, 1972, 3, Frank Kameny Papers Box 87 Folder "GAA General 1971-1972."

pleasure elsewhere. In a letter to the park police, the GAA detailed the compromise that had been worked out between the two sides.

It is our understanding that the official Park Police policy is to **not** notify employers of an arrest of one of his employees in sex-related offenses before the trial...It was understood that neither the Gay Activists Alliance of Washington, D. C., nor the United States Park Police condone public sex acts in the national parks, be they heterosexual or homosexual acts...The Gay Activists Alliance of Washington, D. C. will, in turn, make an effort to ask the gay community to stay away from the Iwo Jima Memorial area for purposes of seeking romantic partners, pointing out the illegality of public sexual displays as well as the possible dangers of robbery, blackmail, or worse....In accordance with the agreement, GAA has already asked for the cooperation of The Gay Blade (copy enclosed) to help us keep gays away from the Iwo Jima area. This unpretentious sheet of paper reaches more gay people in the Washington, D. C. area than perhaps any other form of communication...Our regular leafleting of the gay community (reaching approximately 4000 people on a weekend) will carry a message to stay out of the Iwo Jima area.⁶⁹

One area of the city where the police all but left gay men to their own devices was DuPont Circle. In one of his first acts as GAA President in August of 1971, James McClard wrote to morals division chief Walter Bishop on the deteriorating situation between gay people and the metropolitan police. McClard argued that the police had ramped up their harassment in gay spaces popular with white men, the "Black Forest," 9th and D Streets, N.W., the streets of Georgetown (aside from the Dumbarton Block) as well as Pub Nine on 8th street S.E.⁷⁰ Until the metropolitan police's "morals division" was eliminated in 1975 the Black Forest and "The Block" in Georgetown were rife with nightly contests between undercover cops and cruising men. While the *Gay Blade* and the GAA covered instances of police harassment diligently, they never made mention of systematic police harassment in the DuPont Circle area in the seventies. Amazingly, one of the *Gay Blade's* earliest successful campaigns brought the police and gay cruisers together to apprehend a team of young "attractive" men running what amounted to a blackmailing ring against men who cruised in DuPont

⁶⁹ "From Robert Johnson to United States Park Police, Office of the Chief", March 6, 1972, Frank Kameny Papers Box 87, Folder "GAA of Wash, D.C. Correspondence, 1971-1976."

⁷⁰ From James B. McClard, President GAA to Inspector Walter R. Bishop Chief Metro Police Morals Division," August 16, 1971, Box 87, Folder "GAA of Wash, D.C. Correspondence, 1971-1976."

Circle. In 1970 the *Blade* published a pamphlet from the Mattachine Society of Washington warning readers that the blackmailer,

“notes license tag numbers, looks them up and telephones the car registrants. He impersonates a police officer. THIS MAN IS NOT A POLICEMAN....He claims that the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, or the Park Police have a file on you, or are preparing to bring charges against you...He will claim that you have been seen in the DuPont Circle area...Depending upon your responses, a succession of calls will ensue, leading to a meeting and a ‘payoff’ to ‘clear the record.’”⁷¹

In subsequent issues *Blade* editors encouraged cruisers who were confronted by the blackmailer to “call the Mattachine or the Morals div. of the DC police and arrange for a ‘set up’ to arrest him.”⁷² At least one DuPont blackmailer was apprehended by police in 1971 after gay cruisers were willing to come to the police with information that they were being blackmailed. Cruisers’ willingness to work with the dreaded morals division to did not signal a permanent change in police-gay community relations, in the very same issue *Blade* editors warned those seeking to cruise in Georgetown of an aggressive police presence in that neighborhood.⁷³ Still, it is not difficult to imagine that within white gay social circles word got out that DuPont Circle was an area where cruising was marginally tolerated. Considering the large number of white gay men who worked within the federal government, which allowed anti-gay employment discrimination long after the D.C. city council outlawed it, identifying areas of the city that were safe to cruise was a necessity.

The geographic specificity of the GAA activism surrounding police harassment of sexual minorities is best illustrated by their complicity with aggressive police tactics against black drag sex workers operating in nearby Logan Circle. Logan Circle had long been popular with black sex workers, both women and gender benders and in 1970 La Zambra opened, offering a performance

⁷¹ Community Service Committee of the Mattachine Society of Washington “Blackmailer at Work in DuPont Circle Area” *The Gay Blade*, November-December, 1969, 1.

⁷² “RETURN OF THE BLACKMAILER!!” *The Gay Blade*, March, 1970, 2.

⁷³ “RETURN OF THE BLACKMAILER!!,” 2.

space for black drag queens.⁷⁴ In April of 1975, after years of negotiation, the GAA secured a meeting with police chief Maurice Culliane in order to continue negotiations around police harassment of gay cruisers. Culliane assured the GAA that the police were becoming less interested in targeting men who cruised. Culliane told GAA reps that the morals division was more concerned with “the number of citizen complaints concerning the business or commercial activities of female prostitutes and black drags in the 14th street and Logan Circle areas.”⁷⁵ That the police, the GAA and the writers at the *Blade* positioned the “problem” of black drag queens and sex workers as racially and spatially distinct from the concerns of the GAA indicates the effectiveness of white gay activist efforts to shape public knowledge around the boundaries of gay identity.

In interviews published in Edmund White’s essay on gay Washington, local gay activists openly proclaimed that gay liberation in Washington could only succeed if the right kinds of gay people were the visible face of the movement. White spoke to Steve Endean, the first openly gay lobbyist working on gay civil rights issues on Capitol Hill. A veteran organizer from St. Paul, Minnesota, Endean told White that gay liberation in D.C. had succeeded because of the appeal to the gay middle class.

D.C. activists, by pursuing a more moderate line, have been wonderfully successful. They have real clout in this city. Gay liberation needs middleclass gays. It’s important to make gay liberation a chic cause among young gay professionals—they’re the ones with the money and the energy and the influence.⁷⁶

Frank Kameny told White that gay advancement could only emerge from “unified” gay voice and that any division should be dealt in private, rather than in public.

We never show divisiveness in public. We get together and work out our difference privately and in advance. When we speak to the mayor we do so with one voice. If a politician hears two conflicting signals from the gay community, he ignores the gay community.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Meinke, 17.

⁷⁵ “GAA Meets with Top Cop”, *Washington Blade*, April 1975, 1.

⁷⁶ White, 329.

⁷⁷ White, 331.

Endean and Kameny's words help explain white gay activists' disinterest in working against police brutality against "black drags" in Logan Circle or opposing anti-black or lesbian discrimination in southeast gay bars. Such political interventions would challenge the middle class face of the D.C. movement and invite racial and economic divisions within the organized gay voice. Segregated Knowledge: Everyday Mappings of (white) Gay Territory.

The production of a geographically and racially limited gay identity was not only engineered by white gay entrepreneurs and political organizations, it was enforced and reproduced in the realm of everyday living by both white and black gay Washingtonians. In the 1980s, GLF founder Bruce Pennington, became a leader in Black Men and White Men Together (BMWMT). BMWMT's primary goal was the eradication of carding policies in the interest of producing a more racially integrated LGBT community. Nonetheless, Pennington's Rainbow History Project interview reveals that during the 1970s even the most anti-racist white gay men were ignorant of black gay community spaces like Nob Hill. In his interview Pennington recalls that he enjoyed spending time at an Adams Morgan gay bar called "1832," one of the few racially mixed bars west of 16th street NW.

[1832] is also the first place I remember where gay men were very friendly with each other. Lots of groping. Lots of groping of khakis. It was a khaki crowd. But there were a few leather people who came in. Somebody, a leather guy who tended bar there. But most of dressed like we were in the cast of the *The Boys in the Band* movie. It was also the first mostly racially mixed bar, because of where it was *and as we now know wasn't far from Nob Hill* [my emphasis]. It became part of the uptown circuit: with the Nob Hill and ultimately later the Third World. So there were black folks in the clientele and were welcome. There were Latinos in the clientele. They were welcome. There were a few Asians in the clientele, who were welcome. And it was one of those places that gave this illusion that we now know is false about the gay world being such a microcosm of democracy."⁷⁸

1832 was located extremely close to the Cardozo neighborhood and was in close proximity to Nob Hill and other uptown black gay bars. Yet, Pennington's seemingly casual aside—and as we now know wasn't far from Nob Hill—is telling. By contrast, Pennington's suggestion that racial minorities "were welcome" in 1832, suggests the unconscious ways even anti-racist white gay men

⁷⁸ Bruce Pennington interview with Mark Meinke, January 27, 2001, The Rainbow History Project, 3.

claimed ownership over particular gay bars. Critically, the 1832 club was a short-lived endeavor in racially integrated socializing west of 16th street NW; the bar went out of business in 1972.⁷⁹ Despite Pennington's fond memories of the bar, its inability to maintain a steady clientele suggests that not enough gay Washingtonians were willing to patronize a bar where racial demographics were not strictly regulated. Indeed, the failure of 1832 suggests that BRASS members' concerns about losing white patrons if they did not actively card may have had economic merit.

David Harris' RHP interview reveals a similar racially limited spatial knowledge. Harris was the owner of one of D.C.'s only gay bathhouses which opened in 1968 and was forced to close in 1985 due to police harassment. In the following exchange with RHP interviewer Mark Meinke, Harris is questioned about black gay bars destroyed in the 1968 rebellion and points towards his understanding of where it was acceptable to travel in the 1960s.

RHP: Were you here in 68 when the fires happened?

DH: Uh, I was not. I came back.

RHP: There seem to have been a whole set of black clubs up around Georgia and 14th and U Street.

DH: I heard of the Cozy Corner.

RHP: They seem to have gotten burned out.

DH: Insurance.

RHP: The Golden Nugget, which was called the Black Nugget.

DH: That was on 9th St?

RHP: Actually there were two, one on 9th St and one on 14th and Chapin.

DH: I only knew the one on 9th St. I didn't go above U Street because I didn't feel that that was anywhere I wanted to be. Golden Calf and such thing.⁸⁰

The "Golden Calf" was a short lived gay bar in Logan Circle, actually below U Street, but within the boundaries of Shaw. The bar stayed open only between 1963 and 1970 when, like 1832, it was forced to shut down.⁸¹ Still, Harris' assertion that "above U Street" was not "anywhere I wanted to be" illuminates the ease with which commercial institutions were racialized as safe or

⁷⁹ Meinke, 1.

⁸⁰David Harris, interview with Mark Meinke, March 23, 2002, The Rainbow History Project, Oral History Collection, 17.

⁸¹ Meinke, 13.

unsafe for whites based upon their location. Later, Harris more explicitly repeated Pennington's assessment that attempts to establish a racially mixed gay establishment in Washington was, inevitably, a failed venture. For example, Harris told RHP that the predominately black disco Tracks, which opened in southeast in 1984, attempted to foster an interracial crowd, but eventually became entirely black.

Then we had Tracks. That was a disco of discos. I had never been in the place but once. I think I may be mistaken but if I am that's fine. I think they wanted to cater to both white and black, but it eventually became mostly black. And then the white people stayed away.

Though Tracks opened in 1984, Harris' memories of the bar's racial turnover reflect the economic calculus undertaken by BRASS members operating in southeast during the 1970s. Bars within predominately black or integrated neighborhoods were in "danger" of losing the white patrons that marked gay bars as part of the official, legible or known gay scene in the 1970s.

DuPont Circle as "Gay Ghetto"

If the racial and gender identity of gay spaces in southeast were a source of "bitterness and divisiveness," DuPont Circle in the 1970s, was emerging as an ideal neighborhood for white gay male residential settlement and by proxy offered a smoother path towards community formation. Despite the dire the predictions of the Republic Insurance Company and the DCCA, DuPont Circle in the 1970s began to transform into a new kind of urban neighborhood, one whose sidewalks were homes to the kinds of commercial and residential development that frightened the DCCA and, simultaneously, was attractive to single, white, middle class men who were the "true patrons" of gay identity.

In a long *Washington Post* piece reviewing D.C.'s architectural history published in 1969, art critic Wolf Von Eckardt opined on the failure of DuPont's Connecticut Avenue commercial strip to rival the iconic boulevards of Paris' Champs Elysess or New York's Fifth Avenue. Those avenues

and boulevards, Eckardt argued, seemed to condense and synthesize all that made Paris, Rome and New York great urban centers of world.

Paris would not be Paris without the Champs Elysees. Rome has its Via del Corso. To breathe Berliner Luft, you stroll on the Kurfurstendamm. In London, urban elegance is at its liveliest on Bond and Regent Streets. New York's somewhat supercharged version is, obviously, Fifth Avenue. In Washington...I'm afraid one hesitates a moment. We have Connecticut Avenue of course. But it wouldn't do to mention it quite in the same breath with the other great boulevards of civilization. Not even in Chicashack, Okla., is anyone apt to receive a postcard reading: Hi folks! Guess what? We strolled down Connecticut Avenue today."⁸²

Eckardt argued that national, and no doubt international, ambivalence around Connecticut Avenue existed despite the fact that "only a highway engineer, were he to pause for a moment at Farragut Square and look north toward DuPont Circle, could fail to see in that magnificent view of the Avenue the makings of something to write home about."⁸³ The territory along Connecticut Avenue Eckardt referred to lay within the boundary lines of the DCCA. Ironically, Eckardt and the DCCA agreed about the periodization of DuPont's postwar "decline," but they sharply disagreed on the source of that decline. While the DCCA lamented that an increase in federal office buildings along Massachusetts and Connecticut Avenue in the 1960s had compromised the "residential character" of the area, Eckardt was grateful for office buildings that had not "run away to Rosslyn, Crystal City or even farther out in the sticks."⁸⁴ Eckardt was excited by the opportunity presented by the increase of the "clerical rabbits" working in the new federal buildings in the Farragut Square area saying they "could make or break the hoped-for boulevard." Moreover, rather than decrying shifts in moral standards for public behavior, Eckardt argued that while Connecticut avenue had been "much sinned against" its "espirit is wanting. It's not sinful enough."⁸⁵ He went on to say that he was not "advocating vice. The sin I do advocate is only a transgression from the stodgy,

⁸² Eckardt Wolf Von, "The Avenue That Could Be," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, September 14, 1969, 301.

⁸³ Eckardt, 301.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 310.

middlebrow, hicktown, conventional Chamber of Commerce wisdom.”⁸⁶ Eckardt’s less than thinly veiled attacks on the historic preservation strategies of the DCCA soon took on a gendered tone, suggesting that a nervous feminine logic had prevented Connecticut Avenue from advancing forward.

What I mean, in short, is that Connecticut Avenue is a big girl now in what should be a big city. She wouldn’t lose her virtue if she were to stop biting her fingernails, straighten her hairdo, put on a more elegant dress, shorten her skirt a bit and maybe show a little cleavage.⁸⁷

Rather than work to preserve and maintain their historic character, Eckardt suggests that community leaders in central neighborhoods like DuPont Circle should be willing to gamble a little “sin,” to attract economic interest and to enhance D.C.’s reputation as one of the world’s great cities. To achieve that end Eckardt suggested more sidewalk cafes, lively activities, nightclubs, a theater “and several sophisticated cabarets, so the Avenue doesn’t die every evening at the stroke of 5:30pm.”⁸⁸

Eckardt’s deployment of a metaphor around the importance of making urban neighborhoods desirable signals an important shift in how white liberals and urban intellectuals in Washington understood how their city could survive the continuing middle class flight, and by proxy, a dire reduction in tax revenue. In a 1970 *Washingtonian Magazine* piece Arthur Cotton Moore argued that suburbanization and the introduction of technological advancements into the suburban home meant that central cities could no longer organize economic development around the city’s monopolization of technological advancement. Instead, central cities would have to capitalize on their strongest remaining asset, sex appeal.

The center city’s irreducible asset remains to provide the concentration and inherent excitement of crowds, of people seeking the sensation and stimulation of other people. The primary period when human contact is essential is the mating time; consequently the patron of night life in our cities is usually someone on a date or on the make, usually young adults.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 310.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 311.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 310.

Their attitudes and lifestyles recapitulate the historical principle—they want the city to be an exciting avant-garde, swinging neophilistic place, somewhat sexual in character. More than ever, therefore, the city gains vitality in proportion to its discontinuity with the non-permissive, more conservative, less people-mixing surrounding rural and suburban areas. What the new city needs is sex appeal.⁸⁹

Eckardt's vision for Connecticut Avenue's future commercial development recalls Edmund White's description of DuPont Circle's milieu in the mid-1970s, specifically his reference to the idea that "gay eyes are quick around DuPont" and that "hairdressers pull in their customers off the street." This sort of open air commercial development was anathema to the DCCA, but became a critical part of what made DuPont Circle an attractive neighborhood for gay men during the 1970s. Eckardt's desire for greater interaction between pedestrian traffic and café diners had been borne out by White's reference to Kramer Books' back room restaurant where "you can sit outside under an umbrella."⁹⁰ White's description of a neighborhood amenable to both strollers and cruisers suggests that DuPont Circle effectively threaded the needle of "spirit" and "sin."

Importantly, neither Eckardt's vision for DuPont Circle's future at the dawn of the 1970s nor Edmund White's narrative of Washington gay ghetto towards the end of the 70's make any reference to the presence of black radicals or white hippies which were at the center of DCCA anxiety during the sixties. It would be a mistake to characterize Eckardt's silence on black youth or white hippies as the dawning of a new age of urban egalitarianism. Rather, it demonstrates that for a new generation of white urban liberals, these groups' contributions to the urban milieu in attractive locales like DuPont Circle were aggressively forgotten or disappeared, rather than opposed or contested. Indeed, by 1971 the *Washington Post* reported that DuPont Circle's "hippie culture" was beginning to fray apart. The white countercultural "kooks" that had bedeviled the DCCA during the sixties were now marginalized as privileged college kids who had either grown up to become

⁸⁹ Arthur Cotton Moore, "What's Wrong With Downtown?" *The Washingtonian Magazine*, 6, 1, October 1970, 96.

⁹⁰ White, 311.

“settled people with a more or less regular livelihood” or unfortunate drug addicts who had been suckered into an “unrealistic view” and were now feebly “chasing the rainbow.”⁹¹

In their place, came young, well educated, single white professionals, many of whom were gay. Edmund White’s trip to a DuPont circle gay reading group reflected the area’s popularity with middle class, professional white gay men.

One night I attended a meeting of a gay discussion group. Tonight’s meeting was being held in what most Americans would consider a modest house but than in crowded Washington, where real estate is higher than anywhere else in the country , counts as luxury quarters—a two story two bedroom family home. About fifteen men sat on the floor in the living room and discussed the new gay fiction. I met a druggist a policy planner for a government agency, a medical research, a fundraiser for education organizations. Most of the men in the room were in their thirties or forties. All were white and the average income, I suspect was about 35,000.⁹²

While no demographic data on gay households in D.C. during the 1970s exists, the membership rolls of the nearly all white GAA reflected DuPont’s popularity with white gay men.

[Figure 4.1]

In the summers of 1975 and 1976, “Gay Washington” officially arrived in DuPont Circle. In those summer months the editors of the *Blade*, members of the Washington Area Gay Community Council, the GAA and the remaining members of GLF worked together to put on the city’s first and second “Gay Pride Parades and Festivals.” The 1976 celebration was particularly important for the cementing the “brand” of gay spatiality as linked to urban progress, upward mobility, safety and whiteness. Coverage of the 1976 celebration within the *Blade* and promotional materials distributed to visitors seeking out gay bars and emerge as critical texts of community narration at the precise moment gay subjectivity took a major step into the public eye.

Mapping was an essential component of the planning for D.C.’s gay pride. The maps produced by festival organizers told potential gay tourists where to go (and without doing so, where not to go) in order to truly experience “gay Washington.” The maps designation of “gay

⁹¹ “Hippie Culture Starts to Fray,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 14, 1970, A1.

⁹² White, 321.

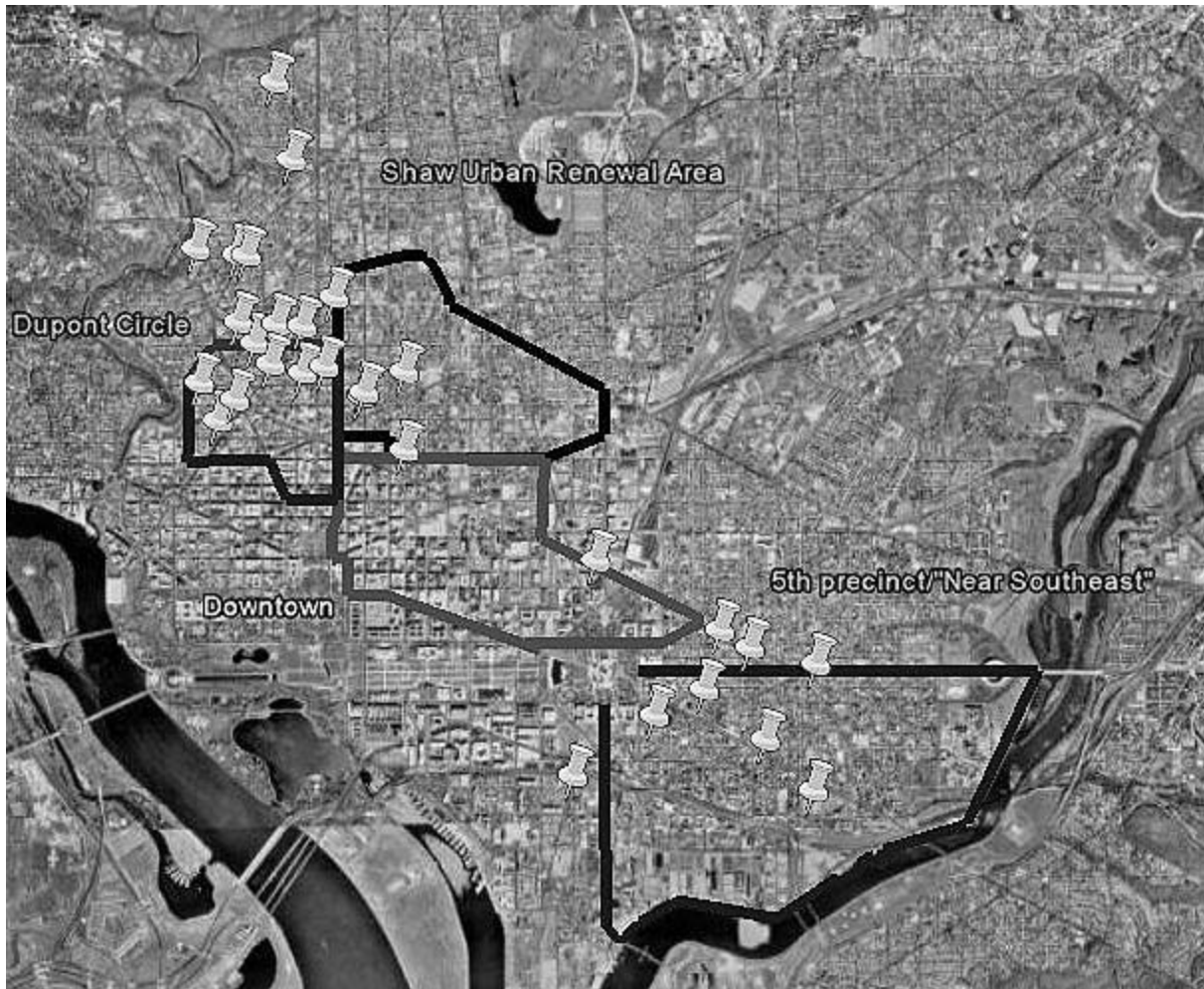


Figure 4.1, Addresses of GAA Members as of 1979. Map created using open source Google Earth software, and adapted from, “GAA Member Directory 1979”, Frank Kameny Papers Box 88, Folder 5, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

Washington” highlights a number of important zones, for gay congregation and socialization. In 1975 DuPont Circle was identified as the “center” of gay Washington and the limited parade route circled around the DuPont traffic circle and headed south to end in Lafayette Park. In 1976 the *Blade* published a “Guide to Gay Washington” for incoming tourists. The map’s rendering of the nation’s capital excluded all black neighborhoods, but for southeast, Washington. The exclusion of black gay and lesbian commercial spaces from view in the *Blade’s* maps worked to cement notions that “gay pride” and gay identity were exclusively for white men.

The confluence of Gay Pride week with the nation’s bicentennial presented an opportunity for gay rights activists to produce a history of gay life in Washington that codified the relationship between gay identity, DuPont Circle and urban progress. *Blade* editors chose to “look back” on D.C.’s gay history with a segment entitled “The Way it Was.” The *Blade’s* history presented a linear narrative of gay life in Washington that began with gay bars popular in downtown D.C. during the postwar crime panic and Lavender Scare. The *Blade’s* pejorative description of the downtown scene in the fifties and sixties recalls rhetoric that had branded downtown as marginal in the wake of commercial desegregation. The *Blade’s* article identified these bars as sad, “dark” and located in risky, dangerous parts of the city.

During the forties, fifties and sixties gay bars were typically dark semi-safe meeting places where the gay person could go to escape the bad vibes that society had towards such ‘deviants.’ In the past few years, however, there has been a trend towards livelier, louder, more beautiful surroundings in the gay-owned bars.”

The author of the piece, Glen Thompson, used Carroll’s, the gay bar that had transitioned into a “rough trade” bar after the end of World War II as an example of D.C.’s tragic gay past and as a comparison point for modern gay socializing in the 1970s.

Today chic urban bars are the rule rather than the oddity, at least in the larger cities. However a few dinosaurs remain with us, stubbornly clinging to decors and atmospheres

which today's gay society overwhelmingly rejects. Carrol's Tavern on Ninth Street, N.W. in Washington is such a bar."⁹³

To illustrate that the gay community had moved on from "dinosaur" bars the *Blade* quoted Carroll's mystified female bar staff who wondered "I just don't know where all the boys have gone off to."⁹⁴ In their story, the *Blade* poked fun at the "maternal" relationship between Carroll's former clientele and the female cocktail waitresses Kay, Annette and Virginia.

The three girls have an abundance of genuine maternal love for "the boys" as they call them. "Most of them can't even talk to their real mothers. They know they can always talk to us about their problems or whatever." With all the beaming pride of a parent, Kay proclaims "They're all my children. They've got three mothers here that they can always talk to."⁹⁵

Identifying Carroll's as the point of origin for Washington's "gay past" does two important things. First, it ridicules previous generation of gay men's reliance upon pseudo mothers or feminine connections as an emotional weakness. A weakness that stands in stark contrast with the independent, all male world of contemporary "men's bars." Second, by locating Carroll's as "almost certainly the oldest surviving gay bar in the District" *Blade* writers ignored evidence of gay bars in Shaw that burned down in the 1968 riots. Even in dismissing Carroll's as a "dinosaur" the *Blade* piece contributed to a racially linear history of gay Washington that cemented the relationship between whiteness and gayness and gayness with "chic," "modern" areas of the city like DuPont Circle.

Edmund White's essay on D.C. quoted at least one white gay Washingtonian who connected the growth of gay population and neighborhoods with overall urban progress at the expense of black residents.

I love Washington...In Philadelphia most guys in a gay bar are high-school graduate if that (except for a tiny elite of gay aristocrats) here they all have college degrees. They're young, they're well paid. Of course it's a company town and everyone has to be minimally discreet, but you must also remember that Washington has the biggest gay population, percentage

⁹³ "Turning Back the Clock: A Quiet Peep into Carroll's Tavern" *The Blade* July , 1976, p. 13

⁹⁴ "Turning Back the Clock...", 13.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

wise in the country. Whites are only 26 percent of the population in D.C. right now, but by the end of the century we'll be 50 percent. The prices of houses are doubling every other year. The blacks are being forced out.⁹⁶

Conclusion

If gay men were once understood by white homeowners as part of the “hippies,” “perverts,” “kooks” and “radicals,” that threatened property values, a white gay community delinked from “dangerous” black populations and political radicalism elements was understood to have, at worst, a neutral effect on a neighborhood and, at most, provided a deterrent to urban crime by the end of the seventies. In a 1977 article that identified DuPont Circle as the “mecca” for D.C. “homosexuals” local residents expressed positive attitudes about their gay neighbors.

Straights say they get along with neighborhood gays because the gays tend to be employed, tend to be stable, tend to spend money in the neighborhood and tend to provide street safety in a curious sort of way. “I never feel afraid any more when I walk around here,” said Evelyn Personick, 64, who lives on Q street NW. “The gays are always walking around, and they’ve scared away all the muggers.”

By the end of the 1970s gay cruising, once a symbol of urban crime and disorder in postwar Washington was understood as a barrier to D.C.’s urban crime problem; a crime problem that had been racialized as black. That Evelyn Personick understood “the gays” as the white, middle class men that Edward White observed cruising in “the gay ghetto” speaks to the successful spatial and racial delimiting of the boundaries of gay identity in Washington D.C.

In interrogating the production of DuPont Circle as Washington’s gay ghetto this section of my dissertation engages a growing literature interested in merging the historicization of homonormativity and critical aspects of urban neoliberalism. In her 2008 article “title” Christina Hanhardt demonstrates that LGBT activists in New York and San Francisco from the late 1970s into the 1980s took advantage of public linkages between racial minorities and violent crime to shore up the physical and imagined boundaries of “gay” urban space, linking that community’s interest

⁹⁶ White, 324-325.

with the interests of city leaders and private developers. “Neighborhoods,” Hanhardt argues, “came to be seen as an expressive demonstration of gay identity, and thus as the collective asset most in need of protection.”⁹⁷ Here I expand upon Hanhardt’s argument by examining the racial instability and eventual stabilization of “gay identity” and DuPont Circle’s spatial identity as parallel, interdependent processes. Ultimately, the ability of the white gay men to reform the way the wider public understood homosexuality in the urban context relied upon their success in producing a public discourse that located homosexuality in white, middle class neighborhoods.

⁹⁷ Hanhardt, 67.

Chapter 5

Black Regime to Rainbow City: Historicizing D.C.'s Neoliberal Political Culture, 1967-1978

In November of 1967 President Johnson swore in Washington, D.C.'s first mayor and city council.¹ Unable to convince Congress to pass legislation that would transform the District of Columbia into an autonomous municipality, Johnson replaced the presidentially appointed Board of Commissioners with a new local government, run by a single executive and a nine member legislative body. Like the Board of Commissioners, the D.C. council was authorized to pass laws and produce a municipal budget, but local budgets still required the approval of the House and Senate District subcommittees. The new mayor, Walter Washington and five black council members, Joseph Yeldell, Margaret A. Haywood, Stanley Anderson, William Thompson and council vice-chairman Rev. Walter E. Fauntroy, D.C. made D.C. the first major American city governed by what Adolph Reed calls a “black regime” in the 20th century.² Nonetheless, the failure to deliver home rule through congressional action severely curtailed the historic import of the reorganization of the District government. The council had the ability to pass a budget, levy taxes and pass a wide range of ordinances. However, like the District Commissioner before them, all budgets and ordinances were, in fact, a series of proposals that needed to be co-signed by the House and Senate District committees.³

That the council remained presidentially appointed only added insult to injury. Rev. Channing Phillip of Shaw's Lincoln Temple summed up black ambivalence about the new

¹ Robert L. Asher, “President Selects Negro Majority to New District Panel,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, September 29, 1967, A1.

² Adolph L. Reed, *Stirrings in the Jug: Black politics in the Post-Segregation Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

³ Robert L. Asher, “President Selects Negro Majority to New District Panel,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, September 29, 1967.

arrangement by calling it “a more efficient form colonialism.”⁴ Underlining Phillips’ criticism was the uncomfortable reality that Johnson’s appointees were subject to the Senate’s advise and consent authority. Johnson’s first pick for council chairman, Max Kampelman was quickly pushed aside when members of Congress accused him of being a “draft dodger” and “conscientious objector” in World War II and Korea.⁵ Johnson selected John Hechinger, president of Hechinger Lumber co. and member of the Redevelopment Land Agency to replace Kampelman. Choosing a liberal, wealthy, white businessman like Hechinger seemed to suggest that the Administration was unwilling to give the city entirely over to the black freedom movement.

Five years later though, things seemed to be looking up for black self determination in the nation’s capital. In 1973 a generational shift in the Democratic Party, and on the House and Senate District committees, led to the approval and passage of the D.C. Home Rule Act.⁶ While local budgets still required Congressional approval, the Home Rule Act authorized local elections for mayor and city council, making city government accountable to the city’s black majority for the first time. In addition, the size of the council was expanded to 13, divided into 8 ward seats, 4 city wide “at large” seats and the council chairmanship.⁷ In that first election local election of 1974, D.C. residents elected a powerful bloc of black progressives, most of them veterans of the D.C. black freedom movement. Four of the five “at large” seat winners, Sterling Tucker, Marion Barry, Douglas E. Moore and Julius Hobson were well known activists based in the Shaw area. On the night of the election Tucker told reporters that that the council’s activist coalition were “people who have been fighting the establishment and now they are the establishment. We know each other’s

⁴ Rev. Channing Phillips, interview with Katherine M. Shannon, Washington, DC, 13 July 1967, Civil Rights Documentation Project, Oral History Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

⁵ Elise Carper, “Kampelman Nomination Draws Fire,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, October 3, 1967, B3.

⁶ Stephen Green, “Hill Votes Home Rule Changes; House Unit Votes Home Rule Change,” *The Washington Post*, February 5, 1974.

⁷ One “at-large” seats was designated the council chairman.

style and each other's behavior.”⁸ Community organizer Willie J. Hardy, one of three women elected, said “it will be one of the greatest councils because you have activists. People believe in what we were doing in the 1960s. You must be activist. People no longer can trust people who were silent.”⁹ D.C. Statehood Party candidate Julius Hobson succinctly stated, “its going to be a radical council.”¹⁰

Yet, the first decade of “home rule” in Washington demonstrated the challenges of enacting a municipal agenda rooted in the radical politics of the 1960s. In the third chapter, I discussed the challenge of rebranding the ghetto via “community controlled” urban planning in Shaw. MICCO represented only one local movement for downward redistribution of political power and economic resources active in D.C. during the late 1960s and early 1970s. An overlapping cadre of black poverty warriors, civil rights activists and black power advocates lobbied their new local government for an end to police brutality, improved flexibility in welfare payments and improved education for black citizens throughout the city. Unfortunately, by the time of the city's second local election cycle in 1978, none of these goals were realized under the appointed or elected city council and mayor.

Instead, the D.C. constituency that won the most legislative and municipal reforms in their favor in D.C. in the 1970s was the gay and lesbian community; specifically the white gay and lesbian constituency represented by the GAA, the *Blade* and other predominately white gay institutions. Between the passage of the 1973 Home Rule Act and the 1978 election for mayor and city council, the GAA was able to engineer the passage of anti-discrimination laws that included language on sexual orientation, secured the council's endorsement of gay pride day and eliminated funding for

⁸ LaBarbara Bowman and Jay Matthews, “New D.C. Council Reunites Warriors of Activist Days,” *The Washington Post*, November 7, 1974, A1.

⁹ Bowman and Matthews, A1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, A1.

the primary source of anti-gay violence and harassment in the district, the metropolitan police department's "morals division."

At the beginning of the 1970s, political observers believed that the direction of D.C. politics in the next decade would exclusively turn on the whim of black religious leaders connected to the civil rights struggle.¹¹ However, the 1978 Democratic primaries for mayor told an entirely different story. A new coalition, led by the GAA, white voters in northwest wards and a minority of black voters around the city awarded the nomination and the mayor's office to former Pride Inc. leader Marion Barry over Sterling Tucker and incumbent mayor Walter Washington.¹² Not only had Barry trailed both men in every pre-election poll, Tucker had the backing of Black Power icon Douglas E. Moore and most of the city's civil rights and religious establishment. By the end of the 1970s, Washington, D.C., a city whose political culture seemed poised to exemplify the victory of the newly franchised black urban majority had become a rainbow city with a powerful, well connected white gay minority. How did this happen?

The political victories for sexual liberalism and the stalling out of radical black politics during the first decade of "black rule" represent the earliest evidence of the ascendancy of neoliberal political cultures within America's major cities during the 1970s. Neoliberalism has become an ubiquitous term; used to describe nearly every facet of the current political moment both within the United States and on the global stage. Here I am interested in historicizing aspects of American neoliberal political culture as defined by Lisa Duggan in *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy*. Duggan defines American neoliberalism as the ascendancy of an aggressively privativist impulse within federal, state and local policymaking that shields industry from regulation and excuses high earners from their tax obligations. Even though these policies have

¹¹ Walterine Swanston, "Washington's Black Leadership," *The Washingtonian Magazine*, January 1972, 46-51.

¹² Thomas Morgan, "Gays Hope to Cast the Deciding Votes for Barry," *The Washington Post*, September 4, 1978, B3; A.E. Acosta, "The D.C. Primary: Gay Clout Comes Through," *The Blade*, October, 1978, 1, 6.

served to unmake the social safety net that stabilized the American middle class, and have had particularly devastating effects on vulnerable racial and sexual minorities, Duggan argues that neoliberal policies are legitimated through public concessions towards diversity initiatives that strive to include racial and sexual minorities within capitalist markets and ostensibly capitalist social and cultural institutions. In this schema historically excluded minority groups traded political strategies that framed racism, patriarchy and heteronormativity as part and parcel of American capitalism and militarism for access to the public and political sphere¹³

This chapter illustrates that struggles over the branding and rebranding of “black” and “gay” in the postwar years contributed to the nascent neoliberal character of political culture in Washington, D.C. Black lawmakers on both the appointed and elected city councils achieved what was believed to be the most important goal of the D.C. black freedom movement, overwhelming representation within city government. During the 1970s, D.C.’s poverty warriors looked to the city council and mayor’s office to maintain and even improve poor black residents’ access to public assistance. Indeed, throughout the decade, the most popular D.C. politicians were those who made promises to do just that. Once in office though, D.C.’s black lawmakers were faced with a national lurch to the right. Over the course of the 1970s, the Nixon Administration gradually abandoned the federal interest in increasing black citizen’s participation in anti-poverty initiatives and incorporating black citizen input into strategies to raise the standard of living within inner city neighborhoods.¹⁴ House and Senate members on the district subcommittees were navigating an organized suburban tax revolt, white resistance to implementation of 1960s civil rights legislation and mounting pressure

¹³ Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003); Jasbir K Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Pritchett Wendell, “Which Urban Crisis?: Regionalism, Race, and Urban Policy, 1960-1974,” *Journal of Urban History* 34, no. 2 (January 2008), 274-282.

to approach urban poverty with punitive, rather than rehabilitative, tactics.¹⁵ Upon ascending to the chairmanship of the Senate committee on the District of Columbia in 1971, Democratic Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii distanced himself from the legacy of Dixiecrat Democrats who had starved the district for funds to shore up segregationist credentials at home, and then proceeded to slash five million dollars of “fat” from the district budget.¹⁶ Inouye couched his approach to austerity for the district within a race neutral language focused on eliminating “waste,” “thrif,” “inefficiency” and “corruption” rather than an appeal to white supremacy.¹⁷ The district also became the national test case for Nixon’s push for “law and order” in the city. After being unable to expand community control of the police, city government was forced to implement the 1971 D.C. Crime Act which authorized police officers with “probable cause” to enter private residences without announcing their presence, known as the “no knock provision.”¹⁸

Adolph Reed’s analysis of post-segregation black politics demonstrates that cities run by black regimes in the 1970s and 1980s grappled with crippling “structural constraints” that doomed black regime’s ability to enact redistributive policies sought at the height of the Civil Rights-Black Power era. “Indeed, for a regime that comes to power at the nodal point of long-term currents of ghettoization and deindustrialization and a collateral alignment of ‘systemic power’ the environment

¹⁵ Thomas J. Sugrue, “Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1964,” *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (1995); Julilly Kohler Hausman, “The Attila the Hun Law: New York’s Rockefeller Drug Laws and the Making of a Punitive State,” *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 71-95; Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary Edsall ed, *Chain Reaction* (New York: Norton, 1991); Michael Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2005). Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer eds., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁶ Irna Moore, “Sen. Inouye To Head D.C. Budget Unit,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, February 3, 1971, C1; Irna Moore, “Inouye Seeks to Cut Fat Out of District’s Budget,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 4, 1971, 33.

¹⁷ Irna Moore, “Inouye Seeks to Cut Fat Out of District’s Budget,” 3; Irna Moore, “Sen. Inouye To Head D.C. Budget Unit,” C1; Irna Moore, “Nixon, Mayor Assailed, Sen. Inouye Ends Hearing on City Budget,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 22, 1971, B1.

¹⁸ Irna Moore, “Nixon, Mayor Assailed, Sen. Inouye Ends Hearing on City Budget, B1.”

for making policy decisions must appear nearly as confining as the geographical environment.”¹⁹ Critically, in a casual aside within his chapter on black regimes, Reed points out that despite their inability to enact redistributive policies, black urban politicians were also unable to replace the scripts of the social movements that brought them to power. Inevitably, black urban politicians must, as Jesse Jackson did in his city-bound 1984 presidential campaign, claim to speak for and represent “the masses of black people,” while gradually lowering the bar on what black representation within political structures can deliver for black constituents. In the first decade of home rule the “structural constraints” Reed refers to took the form of an ominous combination of “law and order” politics with federal austerity inevitably. These constraints made lies out of D.C. black politician’s rhetorical references to the radical dreams of the black freedom movement during their campaigns. Nonetheless, black politicians, particularly the Shaw based politicians who dominated city-wide races, aligned themselves with activist organizations, rhetoric and icons who lent “community” legitimacy and authenticity to their campaigns. Indeed, D.C. politics in the 1970s reveals the extent to which the radical freedom dreams of the 1960s were transformed into political commodities in the 1970s.

While D.C.’s black politicians were forced to govern in the shadow of the idealism of the 1960s, it was D.C.’s white gay activists whose political organizing reflected the tabula rasa nature of D.C. politics in the first decade of home rule. Represented by the GAA, gay politics formed alongside, rather than against, the political constraints of the emerging neoliberal era. The particular form of sexual liberalism pursued by the GAA was borne out of a desire to achieve recognition of gay Washingtonians as a legitimate minority group, rather than a push for the redistribution of resources. Rather, the GAA worked to guarantee the inclusion of “sexual orientation” into pre-existing anti-discrimination statutes and regulations. They aligned themselves with COST; an anti-tax

¹⁹ Adolph L. Reed, *Stirrings in the Jug: Black politics in the Post-Segregation Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 85.

organization devoted to protecting high income unmarried individuals from a discriminatory tax code. GAA lobbying around police reform was couched within the discourse of fiscal responsibility, arguing that the morals division was an unnecessary expense for the cash-strapped city. By the end of the decade few “gay rights” had emerged as a quintessentially neo-liberal cause.

Democratizing Power: The Failed Movement to Reform D.C. Police

During President Johnson’s opening remarks at the swearing in ceremony for the appointed mayor and city council, he acknowledged that the council’s first term would be an experiment in autonomous rule for the district and that the limits placed on council’s lawmaking powers were anything but ideal. The President then proceeded to dangle the carrot of expanded local power before the council on the condition that council members and the new mayor could achieve success in lowering the district’s crime rate.

If we could clean up this crime situation and make Washington the safest city in the Nation, I think it would just be a matter of time, then, when there would be so much encouragement and so much support from all of our people and all of our Congress that we could have the best educational system, we could have the cleanest city, and we could do all these other things that need so much to be done.²⁰

Johnson’s statement reveals the interconnected nature of national discourse on black urban poverty, black criminality and black self-determination in the midst of the Civil Rights-Black Power Era. As political scientist Vesla Weaver points out, Johnson presided over the first Presidential Administration to make combating urban crime a central part of the domestic federal agenda.²¹ Between 1964, when Barry Goldwater framed the nation’s civil rights question as a choice between the rule of law and urban criminal disorder, the 1966 call for Black Power, and the long hot summer of 1967, which seemed to confirm Goldwater’s connection between civil rights and violent black rule, Johnson faced increasing political pressure to balance his racial liberalism with a hard-line

²⁰ “Text of President’s Talk at Swearing in of City Council,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, November 4, 1967, A7.

²¹ Vesla M. Weaver, “Frontlash: Race the Development of Punitive Crime Policy,” *Studies in American Political Development* 21, no. 2 (2007): 230-265.

stance on crime policy. In appointing a majority black council to govern the nation's capital, Johnson demonstrated his continued investment in the efficacy of "meaningful" black participation within political structures as a solution to urban problems. Indeed, while right wing scholars tend to argue that only whites were concerned about urban crime, black Washingtonians were equally attuned to the problem of inner city crime in D.C. in the late 1960s.²² In 1966 a Post-Harris poll of 1500 Washington residents found that a greater share of black residents (57%) than whites (50%) identified "crime and law enforcement" as the city's number 1 problem.²³ However, unlike white residents, black Washingtonians were loathe to empower the metropolitan police to address the crime problem. In 1966 there were only 465 black officers on the metropolitan police force and black Washingtonians experienced harassment and violence on a daily basis at the hands of white metro police officers.²⁴ As was the case around the country, black Washingtonians envisioned the ubiquitous presence of metropolitan police cars in black neighborhoods as the physical arm, or fist, of state backed institutional racism. Because the vast majority of D.C. police officers lived in suburban counties outside the district, the metropolitan police were another example that the colonial domination of the black populace extended beyond D.C.'s dependent relationship on the federal government. A 1968 report by the National Capital ACLU discovered that white police officers also saw themselves as agents of outside domination.

A pervasive attitude among the 77% of the police officers, who are white, is that of an occupying army in alien territory. These police officers do not identify with or feel responsible to the black community in Washington, D.C. They view their jobs as those of lion tamers, and their forum of operations as a jungle.²⁵

²² Jim Sleeper, *The Closest of Strangers: Liberalism and the Politics of Race in New York* (New York, 1990); Frederick Siegel, *Troubled Journey: From Pearl Harbor to Ronald Reagan* (New York, 1984); and Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1985). For a more recent, and exaggerated, articulation of this position, see Frederick Siegel, *The Future Once Happened Here* (New York, 1997).

²³ "Crime Is Top Problem in District, Area's Negroes and Whites Agree," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, October 2, 1966, A1.

²⁴ Joseph D. Whitaker, "Black Officers Charge Bias," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, August 2, 1970, A1.

²⁵ "A Police Department in Trouble: Racial Discrimination and Misconduct in the Police Department of Washington, D.C.; Report and Recommendations of the National Capital ACLU." August 1968, 3.

The ACLU report also indicated that police brutality was a frequent occurrence within black neighborhoods. Citing the 1966 Presidential Commission on Crime in the Nation's Capital, the ACLU reported 20 instances of "clear brutality" during 850 eight hour patrols. While many areas of the city were considered hotbeds of police-community tension, police brutality in Shaw seemed focused on the public humiliation of black men, in particular black men who dated or socialized with white women. An unpublished article within Julius Hobson's personal papers entitled "Police Brutality within the Nation's Capital" by Shaw resident Ronald B. Murray indicates the targeted nature of police violence against black men involved with white women. Murray and a group of friends were hanging out at 14th and T street NW, when they were approached by "4 or 5" police men who quickly instigated a physical fight between Murray and an unnamed officers. Murray wrote that this particular officer had harassed him before and that "the reason I am marked; If you haven't already gathered yourself; Is because of the white females company that I use to keep before I knew what I know now."²⁶

The loudest voice in favor of police reform in the early years of home rule came from the local chapter of the Black United Front (BUF). Started by Stokely Carmichael in January of 1968, the early days of BUF were defined by the *Washington Post's* ongoing adversarial relationship with Carmichael and the national controversy surrounding his embrace of "Black Power."²⁷ By the summer of 1968, with Carmichael long gone from the District, the BUF emerged as a Black Power version of MICCO, a clearinghouse for radical black politics and organizing in the district. Headquartered in Shaw, the BUF's "Board of Conveners" included an ideologically diverse range of Shaw activists and poverty warriors including David Eaton, Rev. Channing Phillips, Marion Barry,

²⁶ Ronald B. Murray "Police Brutality Within The Nation's Capitol," undated, 2-3, Julius Hobson Papers.

²⁷ Much of the press coverage of the BUF through the April, 1968 riot focused on so-called disagreements between Carmichael and entrenched black leadership in Washington, D.C. Kwame Toure disputes the importance of these disagreements in his autobiography.

Rev. Fauntroy, Julius Hobson and Calvin Rolark, editor of the *Washington Tribune*.²⁸ The Front was committed to combating crime in the nation's capital through the decolonization and democratization of the metropolitan police force. Throughout the summer of 1968 the board held a number of meetings to craft a proposal for citizen control of the police, but it was the murder of 22 year old Elijah Bennett on the corner of 14th and U streets NW in October of 1968 that inspired the BUF to go public with their plans. Bennett's murder was so baldly indefensible; the coroner identified it as a "willful homicide," even the normally immovable Policemen's Association called the shooting "a disastrous blow to policemen."²⁹ The BUF's press release argued that the "majority of black citizens in their communities" saw "the D.C. white policeman" as the "perpetrator of violence rather than as the protector of the peace."³⁰ In response the BUF claimed "the black community has decided to turn to itself and create a meaningful change in the operations of the police department—or eliminate the police as they now exist—from our community entirely."³¹

The BUF went on to demand that all precinct board chairmen be subject to local elections, that "a psychologist should determine whether a police recruit is racially prejudiced," demanded an "immediate end to all recruiting of new policemen outside the District" and that men with criminal records should be allowed to become policemen.³² The BUF's proposal represented a significant attempt to use the newly enfranchised Washington government to enact a massive democratization of power and authority in the district in the form of the metropolitan police. Sensing the popularity of these proposals within D.C.'s black population the outgoing Johnson Administration attempted one last ditch effort to integrate radical ideas into federal urban policy. In August of 1968, the

²⁸ Black United Front, "Board of Conveners," Meeting Minutes, 3/19/1968, Julius Hobson Papers, folder "Black United Front."

²⁹ Robert G. Kaiser, "Black Front Presents Police-Control Plan," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, October 18, 1968, B1.

³⁰ Kaiser, "Black Front Presents Police-Control Plan," B1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, B1.

³² *Ibid.*, B1

Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) released \$1.4 million for a “Metropolitan Police Department pilot precinct program.”³³ On paper, the program seemed to satisfy demands for local control of the police. Funds were set aside for the development of “neighborhood centers within a ghetto precinct.” In order to bridge the emotional divides between suburban, white police officers and local residents, neighborhoods centers would be staffed by “police, neighborhood residents, and social-welfare agencies.” To eliminate violent interactions between black youth and the police the model precinct hoped to established a “youth patrol” to combat “vandalism.” Additionally, the plan was meant to protect black crime victims by strengthening “community support for police activities” and improving “police intelligence sources.”³⁴

Despite these efforts, a broad coalition of civil rights and antipoverty organizations opposed the implementation of the model precinct. Scores of 13th precinct black teenagers, aligned with Pride Inc., stormed community meetings called by the Model Precinct Board in an attempt to prevent the program from coming to fruition. Though Mayor Washington had named Marion Barry to the Model Precinct Selection Committee, Barry resigned from the position within days of the appointment. Barry criticized the plan for failing to deliver an essential component of the BUF proposal, power over police hiring and firing in black neighborhoods. “We’ve got no power to remove or bring in the cops we want; if we had that here this project would be good. But we don’t have that control, the staff has already been selected without asking us...So if we can’t control it, let’s kick it out of here.”³⁵ Black liberal groups also opposed the measure. The D.C. Urban League, NAACP and the National Conference of Christians and Jews released a statement calling for “complete [citizen] control over the entire Model Precinct program, including the hiring and firing

³³ Carol Honsa, “OEO Frees Funds For Model Precinct,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, August 10, 1968, A1.

³⁴ Carol Honsa, “OEO Frees Funds For Model Precinct,” A2.

³⁵ Carl Bernstein, “Model Precinct Talks Disrupted,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, February 20, 1969, B1.

of top staff and police training.”³⁶ Their statement argued that Dr. Shellow “does not have the support or confidence of the community.”³⁷ Young black Washingtonians were particularly skeptical of the idea of a “youth patrol” calling it “trick bag” designed “to spy on the black community”.³⁸ During one planning meeting for the pilot precinct over 150 young Pride members “hurled verbal abuse” at older members of the community who had come to ask questions about the project, calling them “Toms” and “old fools.” Community anger over the model precinct program shifted the way the BUF approached the crime problem in 1969. While a “war on crime had been part of the Front’s founding charter, in January of 1969 they abandoned that aspect of their mission state. Front member Gaston Neal told the *Washington Afro American*, “a lot of dudes in the street think we’re turning our fire against them.”³⁹ Neal argued that black on black crime was a symptom of ghettoization saying that “people who are locked up in oppressive conditions will turn on each other...the reason most black people commit crimes is out of hostility against the oppressor that is turned on each other.”⁴⁰

Faced with overwhelming opposition Mayor Washington suspended the launch of the pilot precinct in April and after a tumultuous summer Robert Shellow resigned from his post.⁴¹ By October, Marion Barry and Pride Inc. had taken the lead on local opposition to the Model Precinct and were able to negotiate with Mayor Washington to open up the 31 seats on the pilot precinct member planning board to a community election. The level of enthusiasm for the February pilot precinct election paled in comparison to the rancor that had clouded the initial start up. Only 4% or

³⁶ Carl Bernstein, “Rights Groups Unite in Fight On Chief of Model Precinct,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 12, 1969, B1.

³⁷ Bernstein, “Rights Groups Unite in Fight On Chief of Model Precinct,” B1.

³⁸ Bernstein, ““Model Precinct Talks Disrupted,” B1.

³⁹ “BUF Calls Off Anti-Crime Drive,” *The Washington Afro-American*, January 11, 1969, 1.

⁴⁰ “BUF Calls Off Anti-Crime Drive,” 1.

⁴¹ Ivan Brandon, “UPO Calls on Mayor to Replace Head of Model Precinct Project,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 9, 1969, A9; Carl Bernstein, “Model Precinct Plan Suspended by Mayor,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 19, 1969, A1; William Raspberry, “Police-Community Program Damaged by 2-Year Wrangle,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 23, 1970, A23.

2,321 of the nearly 60,000 eligible voters showed up at the polls.⁴² Barry along with 31 Pride Inc. members was elected to the pilot precinct board that February. Soon after, Model Precincts police-community relations program ceased to exist. Within months of achieving “community control” of the pilot precinct board, Barry abandoned the pilot precinct to organize his upcoming campaign for a seat on the D.C. school board and Pride Inc’s organizational structure became entirely devoted to ensuring his victory. No evidence suggests that, outside of increased “sensitivity training”, any of the demands made by the Black United Front, the NAACP, Urban League or the National Conference of Christians and Jews had been enforced. The pilot precinct board never demanded that a racist or brutal police officer within the precinct lose their job, nor did they institute regulations stipulating that Model Precinct police officers were required to live within the District of Columbia. In 1972, the OEO quietly stopped funding the Model Precinct program bringing it to a silent and ignoble end.⁴³

The bewildering fate of the Model Precinct program is in part due to the quixotic personality of Marion Barry, for whom Model Precincts was only one moment in an activist-political career defined by boisterous beginnings, scandal and unpredictability. Barry along with Mary Treadwell, his girlfriend and business partner, were already under investigation by House member Rep Broyhill who accused the Pride leader of “stealing” most of a 3.4 million dollar grant awarded to Pride Inc. by the Department of Labor in 1968.⁴⁴

More important than Barry’s personal failings are the ways in which the Model Precincts controversy captured, co-opted and ultimately sapped momentum for the democratization of police power in the district as a whole. In his 1971 memoir appointed city councilman John Hechinger

⁴² Carl Bernstein and Washington Post , “Pilot Precinct Vote Won by Barry Forces,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, February 9, 1970, C1.

⁴³ The preceding narrative is derived from a long profile of Barry’s career in D.C. politics written by Nicholas Lemann a year after Barry’s mayoral victory. Nicholas Lemann, “Marion Barry; The question is: Will He Deliver?,” *The Washington Post Magazine*, December 16, 1979, 16-21.

⁴⁴ Lemann, 19.

remembered that prior to the Model Cities program his office received nearly daily complaints about police brutality from black citizens around the city, particularly in the public housing complexes east of the Anacostia River.⁴⁵ However, it was only when Shaw activist organizations and political leaders publicized and organized around police brutality in the immediate wake of the riots did a public conversation about “community control” of the police come to dominate the council’s agenda or headlines within white and black communities. Indeed, the leaders of the activist organizations at the center of the civilian control movement were all budding political superstars in D.C.’s black regime and once Barry had secured control of the Model Precinct, all of them seemed to turn their attention to the 1970 election season. ACT head Julius Hobson and Rev. Walter Fauntroy, who was both a BUF member and council vice-chairman of the city council, switched gears to run for the newly created non-voting D.C. delegate seat in the House of Representatives.

In the absence of a radical black movement for community control of the police, the council, the metropolitan police, the federal government and black neighborhood and civic associations pursued their own strategies to reduce crime and remake the community’s relationship with the police. As the model precinct teetered towards failure in March of 1970, a coalition of black neighborhood civic associations jointed together with the predominately white Federation of Citizens Association, the dreaded Board of Trade and small business groups to begin a crusade against crime “in their own backyards.” The Neighborhood Crusade Against Crime was headed by an interracial, all male, pro-business committee. The NCAC placed emphasis on improving community surveillance of criminal activity in order to contest Washington’s reputation as “the worst city in the world” and to encourage fleeing businesses to remain within the city.⁴⁶ NCAC

⁴⁵ A chapter from Hechinger’s unpublished memoir was published within *Washington History*. John W. Hechinger Sr. and Gavin Taylor, “Black and Blue: The D.C. City Council vs. Police Brutality, 1967-1969,” *Washington History* 11, no. 2 (Fall/Winter, /2000 1999), 5-7.

⁴⁶ “Citizens to Push Anti-Crime Crusade In Own Neighborhoods,” *The Washington Afro-American*, March 14, 1970, 13.

board member Samuel Denkins derided the Model Precincts plan saying “we can solve our own problems without congressional actions if we cooperate.”⁴⁷ The NCAC’s distance from radical black politics and from discussions of internal colonialism or institutional racism set the pattern for liberal interracial cooperation on crime for the rest of the decade. While black politicians continued to decry particularly violent instances of police murder against black teens, neither police brutality or institutional racism were central to sustained critics of the D.C. crime problem. Instead black anti-crime activism focused on private “initiatives,” “crusades” or “drives” oriented towards a self-help approach to crime reduction.

Simultaneously, Mayor Washington attempted to institute racial balance on the police force in ways that did not cede authority over the police to black activists or residents. In 1969, Mayor Washington replaced openly racist police chief Joe Layton with Jerry Wilson who made the cover of *Time* magazine in the summer of 1970 as “insert quote.” Under Wilson the metropolitan police department undid a number of the department’s discriminatory hiring and promotion processes, using the language of “professionalization” rather than “internal colonialism” to describe the inefficacy of a predominately white police force operating within predominately black neighborhoods. By 1972 the number of black police officers in Washington had grown from 465 in 1966 to 1,814 or 36% of the force.⁴⁸ The significant growth in black officers allowed the city government to claim a major victory, while still leaving black residents at the mercy of a predominately white police force.

Concurrently, as the police force diversified the Nixon Administration’s push for “law and order” made black officers the face of an increasingly invasive and militarized police force. In 1970 Nixon fulfilled his 1968 campaign promise to “clean up” the nation’s capital by engineering the

⁴⁷ “Citizens to Push Anti-Crime Crusade..,” 13.

⁴⁸ Joseph D. Whitaker, “Black Officers Charge Bias,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, August 2, 1970, A1; Jim Mann, “D.C. Police Upheld In Charge of Bias,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, August 1, 1972, C1.

passage of the D.C. Crime Act. Passed in the midst of the Model Precinct controversy, the 1970 Crime Act illustrated that, even if community control were achieved locally, the D.C. council and executive branch were subject to the whims of federal policymakers. Just as D.C. became the federal test ground for urban renewal policy in the postwar years, the capital city was asked to implement the first national experiments of anti-crime policies focused on aggressive police interdiction and heightened punishments for criminal behavior via the D.C. Crime Act. The House version of the bill included watershed expansions in the power of the police and criminal justice system in the District. Three of the most controversial provisions within the bill granted the metropolitan police the authority to run wiretaps in criminal investigations, and allowed D.C. circuit judges to “preventatively detain” criminal suspects deemed a “danger to the community.”

Once passed, D.C.’s government was charged with implementing and enforcing the provisions of the Crime Act. The controversial bill produced another test for the council and Mayor Washington. With the potential that he could be replaced by President Nixon at any moment, Washington asked black residents “not to prejudge the effects of this law, but rather work together with us towards its fair and impartial administration.”⁴⁹ Within weeks of the bill’s passage, the Nixon Administration signaled it would not replace Mayor Washington. Black radicals argued that the Crime Act proved the impotence of the appointed council and mayor to protect the interests of African Americans. Rev. David Eaton told his congregation at All Souls Unitarian Church that “any time persons break into our home unannounced, shoot them.”⁵⁰ Eaton was joined by ACT president Julius Hobson and former Pride leader R.H. all of whom argued that black Washingtonians should defend themselves from the police by any means necessary.⁵¹ However, working from pulpits and

⁴⁹ Irna Moore, “Senate Clears Crime Bill, 54-33,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, July 24, 1970, A1.

⁵⁰ David Eaton, “The Rev. David Eaton’s ‘shoot them’ finally shoot them,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, September 27, 1970, 219.

⁵¹David R. Boldt, “Hobson Vows to Shoot ‘No-Knock’ Entrants,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, February 18, 1971.

press conferences, black radicals were unable to organize significant support against the implementation of no-knock while the council and mayor's office were willing participants in anti-crime rhetoric. During the 1971 race for non-voting Congressional delegate all three major candidates, Rev. Fauntroy Rev. Phillips and Joseph Yeldell were middle class African American men who agreed that that crime was issue number one in the nation's capital. While all three opposed the Crime Act, all of their proposed "revisions" to the law avoided the issue of civilian control in favor of anti-poverty rehabilitative programs already ruled ineffectual by the Nixon Administration and Congress.

"Welfare Mothers," and the Commodification of Black Politics during Home Rule.

At the beginning of his administration Washington was faced with a major consequence of Nixon and Ford's dismantling of Great Society programs in favor of community block grants. 4.5 million dollars of community programs linked to the Office of Economic Opportunity and to citizen controlled organizations like UPO and the Health Welfare Council were stripped from the budget, leaving Washington forced to ask the city council to manufacture funds for "day care, healthcare, narcotics treatment and senior citizens centers, youth programs" and other "community outreach programs" run by the UPO. The impact on black people in D.C. was devastating.

According to the 1970 federal census 17% of District residents fell below the federal poverty line; among these, African American women in poverty outnumbered white women by a factor of three.⁵² Since the beginning of the Great Society, the OEO and the Department of Labor funded a number of black community organizations in Shaw, which offered a range of services from vocational education to daycare to food assistance. When the Nixon Administration began to dismantle OEO programs in the early 1970s, Shaw residents wrote into the *Washington Afro-American* to argue that the program cuts threatened the health of the community.

⁵² Anne M. Valk, "'Mother Power': The Movement for Welfare Rights in Washington, D.C., 1966-1972.," *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 4 (Winter2000 2000): 36.

The Shaw area is poverty stricken with over 500 youths and teenagers. We all read the newspapers and when it comes to youth and teens we are all eager to pitch in and help. But we need money for the job. How can the District and the Federal Government sit back and say get programs going for the youth and then do not provide enough money to produce and operate these programs.⁵³

Welfare, on the other hand, lay under the explicit jurisdiction of the D.C. department of Human Resources and welfare rights activists hoped to lobby black lawmakers to change the administration of welfare in the nation's capital. Black poverty in D.C., like most major cities was particularly skewed against young black women. While 31% of D.C.'s black workforce between the ages of 16-21 and earned "subemployment" wages, 40% of black women workers in that age group earned subemployment wages. The slanted rates of female impoverishment in D.C. meant that a significant portion of D.C. families relied upon federal welfare for basic survival and an even greater percentage survived on a combination of low wages, housing assistance and food stamps.⁵⁴ The large numbers of welfare recipients in the nation's capital had made Washington, D.C. a central front for the national welfare rights organizing since the late 1960s. As Rhonda Williams has argued, black women welfare activists in Washington in the 1960s and 1970s joined a long line of white and black poor women who engaged in the "politicization of their traditional roles as mothers, family caretakers and community leaders" over the course of the 20th century.⁵⁵ Referring to themselves as "welfare mothers" D.C., welfare recipients organized themselves into a number of neighborhood based councils and two city wide organizations, the D.C. Family Rights Organizing and the Citywide Welfare Alliance headed by Etta Horn.⁵⁶ Horn was the most outspoken advocate for black women

⁵³ "Fund Cuts Hit By Shaw Teens" *The Washington Afro-American*, April 28, 1970, 4.

⁵⁴ Washington Post Robert J. Samuelson, "U.S. Study Finds 23,% In D.C. 'Subemployed'," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, May 18, 1969, 133.

⁵⁵ Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality*, *Transgressing Boundaries: Studies in Black Politics and Black Communities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 10.

⁵⁶ The Citywide Welfare Alliance was part of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). The NWRO's leadership was drawn from around the country, but counted a particularly large number of leading organizers from Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C.

on welfare in the city. When it was rumored that welfare caseworkers had threatened to withhold checks to women who participated in the 1968 Poor People's Campaign that spring Horn spoke out in defiance saying that "Whether it's with Martin Luther King, Rap Brown or Stokely Carmichael, nobody's going to tell us we can't demonstrate."⁵⁷ Horn argued that motherhood was a "constitutional right" and that in its current form welfare is "the tyranny of our lives." Welfare mothers, she argued, were "branded as illiterate, immoral, poor housekeepers—you name it, they've got a label for it. Our kids are dying for this country, but we're not supposed to demonstrate, and now they tell us we have to work even if we don't want to."⁵⁸

Welfare activists' calls for increased subsidies, more autonomy over their personal lives and dignity within the welfare process were not only redistributionist, they were the kinds of concerns white and black residents believed a black controlled D.C. government could and would deliver. During Congressional hearings on the "home rule" question in 1973 wealthy white Washingtonians fretted that expanded home rule "would be tantamount to handing the town over to welfare recipients." Those words were uttered by Alfred Trask, President of the American University Park Citizens Association, who went on to say that "We [white residents] just don't want to be governed by the majority in the District of Columbia. That's about the size of it."⁵⁹ By contrast, citywide candidates for office, from the 1971 election for non-voting congressional delegate to the 1978 election sought out "the welfare mothers" for endorsements, fundraising and the brand of community authenticity.⁶⁰

Unfortunately, despite rhetorical support from appointed and elected council members, D.C.'s welfare mothers were unable to remain a viable force for downward distribution during the

⁵⁷ Carolyn Lewis, "Welfare Alliance Cries 'Coercion,'" *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, March 2, 1968

⁵⁸ Lewis, B9.

⁵⁹ Herbert Denton, "Home Rule Opposed on Hill by 3 Groups," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 10, 1973, D1.

⁶⁰ David R. Boldt, "Welfare Mothers Endorse Phillips," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, November 27, 1970, A47.

1970s. The organized welfare movement's largest success in the 1970s came after a series of violent protests outside of the downtown district building where welfare activists demanded the right to buy furniture and other household items with their monthly stipends outside of food, rent and utility bills. In 1972, the council approved significant reforms to the Administration of welfare in D.C. and most believed that after the 1974 election, welfare policy would grow progressively liberal.

In practice though the "radical council" oversaw sweeping cuts to welfare funds and the welfare rolls during their first legislative session. The council's budget committee, chaired by former Pride leader Marion Barry, oversaw the biggest budget cuts in the council's short history, an astonishing \$52 million dollars in cuts that extended across the board. Though Barry started the decade as a powerful advocate for increased federal subsidies to fight urban poverty, on the 1974 council he emerged as an expert in financial austerity. Under Barry's leadership the budget committee pushed for the elimination of 6,000 "ineligible" welfare recipients from the rolls at a saving of \$1.4 million dollars. In June of 1975, the council slashed the Office of Human Resources, responsible for administering welfare checks, running city hospitals and providing assistance to the city's poor by 3 million dollars. In 1976, Barry oversaw a \$52 million cut in the D.C. budget, while appeasing business groups by killing a "gross receipts tax" in favor of a 1% increase in the corporate income tax.⁶¹

In the arena of police and welfare reform D.C.'s young black regime recorded some successes. According to the *Washingtonian Magazine*, the administration of city services was more efficient and the council was "more responsive" to black Washingtonians' concerns. Moreover, as discussed earlier, Mayor Washington was successful in increasing African Americans on the police force. Throughout D.C. government the Washington Administration made sure that African Americans were placed in positions with hiring authority, significantly expanding the and maintained

⁶¹ LaBarbara Bowman, "City Council Focuses on Poor, Black," *The Washington Post*, January 4, 1976.

open channels of communication between representatives and constituents. But, in terms of their dependent relationship on federal purse strings, there was little difference between the “moderate” council appointed by Johnson and the “radical” council elected in 1974. Marion Barry whose activism in Shaw inspired *Post* columnist William Raspberry to name him the most important “catalyst for change” in black Washington became a champion of fiscal austerity.⁶² Despite the fiery rhetoric of the post-riot period, redistributionist strategies rooted in the rhetoric of revolution and redistributionism were untenable despite the electoral success of black candidates.

As the council struggled to fulfill its desire to serve impoverished black constituents, white gay Washingtonians, represented by the GAA began to insert their concerns into the public debate. In Washington, D.C. gay activists consistently placed their efforts to secure gay rights in conversation with the tactics and strategies of the black civil rights and Black Power movements. GAA leaders believed that the “radical council” member’s intimate relationship with black civil rights would make them amenable to folding in the concerns of sexual minorities into their larger agenda. In an unpublished 1976 essay GAA leader David Aiken wrote of gay politics in D.C.,

For another thing, the city is overwhelmingly black, and—unlike the Deep South—blacks hold power. The mayor, the congressional delegate and all but a handful of the city council and school board members are black. Further, many of the top black elected officials paid their dues in the civil rights movement, and have not forgotten the idealism from which that struggle sprang. There are some who cave in under pressure from conservative, Bible-thumping Baptists the majority, however seem ready to recognize the parallels between the black rights effort and that of gay people.⁶³

The 1973 revisions to the D.C. Human Rights Ordinance was the first test of the GAA’s theory that black legislators would be receptive to sexual liberalism. Since the beginning of home rule the Human Rights Office had been charged with enforcing anti-discrimination protections based on “race, color or religion.” In 1973, the council added two controversial amendments to the existing charter to the mayor’s office; a move to grant the Human Rights Office the authority to

⁶² Agronsky, 126.

⁶³ Aiken, “D.C. Council,” 2, David Aiken Papers, Folder “Articles, Reports relating to D.C. Laws.”

investigate, prosecute and punish instances of police brutality and to include language protecting “homosexuals, women and students” within the anti-discrimination provisions.⁶⁴ The former provision represented a watered down version of the Black United Front’s calls for community control of the police from a few years earlier. While the Human Rights Office could force an officer found guilty of misconduct to pay “compensatory damages” to their victim, the office would not be allowed to discipline police officers or police administration. However, even in its watered down state, Mayor Washington blocked the Council’s actions citing that “consideration of the proposal at this time is particularly untimely as the city’s budget is before Congress, which in the past has staunchly opposed any citizen control of the police.”⁶⁵ In order to secure passage of the expanded human rights ordinance, councilmember Marjorie Parker, one of its original sponsors, agreed to drop the controversial police discipline reforms. The provisions that expanded discrimination protections to women, students and gay Washingtonians passed without controversy.

Mayor Washington’s actions highlight the subtle ways struggles over community branding worked to uphold neoliberal political cultures. The relative ease with which expansions in civil rights protections for gay Washingtonians sailed through the Mayor’s office suggests the weakening relationship between the public imaginary around homosexuality and the specter of criminality in the nation’s capital. To be sure, sodomy and solicitation remained crimes and gay men remained subject to harassment and vulnerable to a range of institutional oppressions from employment to housing discrimination. As GAA representatives noted in a letter to Mayor Washington on police harassment, gay victims of harassment and discrimination were reluctant to “contest charges which entail the great possibility of public embarrassment, loss of employment, alienation of family and friends, considerable legal expenses and the reality that with usually only two witnesses (the

⁶⁴ Kirk Scharfenberg, “Mayor Disavows Rights Plan,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, May 10, 1973, B1.

⁶⁵ Scharfenberg, B1.

defendant and the complaining arresting officers) trial outcomes can depend upon sympathy or prejudice of the hearer of the fact.”⁶⁶

Still, by the mid 1970s neither local nor federal policymakers in D.C. framed homosexuality as symptomatic of psychological maladjustment that could lead to a wide range of criminal activities. Indeed, federal and state policymakers no longer looked to psychiatric experts to explain or offer solutions to the urban crime problem. Such rehabilitative strategies were discredited as a critical components of the failures of postwar liberalism that had “coddled” criminals instead of “punishing” them.⁶⁷ In the postwar era scandalous exposes like *Washington Confidential*, which added a touch of intrigue to depictions of perverts in the federal government and the “shadowy” criminal underworld befitted postwar America’s obsession with espionage.⁶⁸ Fear, amongst the white and black middle class that criminality, poverty and sexual deviance were spatially contagious was borne out within theories of urban decline that warned of creeping “urban blight.” Urban renewal policy, whether pushed by the federal government or by MICCO, argued that by rehabilitating residential and commercial areas, improving standards of living and making inroads in poverty the emotional symptoms of poverty, violent crime and sexual deviance, could be prevented.

Removed from the city, white suburbanites relied upon television and print media outlets that packaged and simplified urban crime as the direct result of participation in the illicit drug trade. The “spread” of crime could be blocked, policymakers argued, if the drug trade were to be contained and rooted out. Increased racial separatism within visible and publicly acknowledged gay

⁶⁶ From Cade Ware, Joseph V. Stewart and Dr. Franklin Kameny to Mayor Walter Washington,” January 14, 1975, David Aiken Papers “Articles, Reports relating to D.C. Laws.”

⁶⁷ Julilly Kohler Hausman, “‘The Attila the Hun Law’: New York’s Rockefeller Drug Laws and the Making of a Punitive State,” *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 71-95.

⁶⁸ Douglas Field, *American Cold War Culture* (Edinburgh University Press, 2005); Alan Nadel, *Containment Culture: American Narrative, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age*, New Americanists (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); K.A. Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949–1960,” *Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (September 2000): 515-545; John D’Emilio, “The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America,” in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 226-40.

spaces and political groups meant that homosexuality was absent from the television stories and newspaper editorials that aided the commodification of public and political discourse on urban criminality. Unlike the gay men in *Washington Confidential* or in the 1965 *Washington Post* series “those others” white gay men in the 1970s were rarely depicted in the company of African Americans or as socializing in “dangerous” parts of town. More importantly, in consistently refusing to link the cause of “gay rights” even to the plight of African American sexual minorities, be they sex workers in Logan Circle or victims of discrimination in gay bars, gay rights advocates could not be lumped with the cadre of marginalized activists who were seen as wanting to “coddle” the black criminal or black drug dealer. While the emerging moral majority, represented in the 1970s most forcibly by Anita Bryant, framed homosexuality as a threat to children and the family order, few continued to link sexual deviance and the urban crisis after the 1970s.

Given this context the political impossibility of the council’s police reform efforts and the success of gay advocates, no longer seems contradictory. While the GAA advocated in favor of citizen review boards that would monitor police activity, representatives remained silent when it became clear that the civilian control board would not survive the political mood in Congress. Instead, the GAA linked their fate to a coalition with the National Organization for Women and “an ad hoc group of college students complaining that landlords wouldn’t rent to them.”⁶⁹ GAA President Cade Ware recalled that the coalition gave council members “cover” to support gay rights. “With all the other groups pounding the drum, all members were covered. They didn’t have to be associated exclusively with gay rights. They had to agree that gay rights were a good thing, but in the context that rights for all [were a good thing].”⁷⁰

However, in practice, the GAA rarely linked their cause as part of a universal struggle for the rights of “all” Washingtonians. Increasingly, over the 1970s, the GAA formed organizational and

⁶⁹ Aiken, “D.C. Council”, 7.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

ideological alliances with groups who had a vested interest in challenging redistributive welfare programs that benefited Washington's vast poor population. In the mid 1970s a number of GAA activists joined forces with the Committee of Single Taxpayers (COST) to oppose the tax code's bias against unmarried adults without children. In 1975, GAA activist David Aiken wrote an editorial published in the nation's largest magazine geared towards gay men, *The Advocate*, emphasizing how important it was that LGBT men and women participate in the single taxpayer's movement.

Aiken's profile of COST leader Patty Cavin, a wealthy widow living in DuPont Circle, emphasized her glamorous lifestyle, even as it cast her as a victim of oppressive tax policy.

COST executive director, Patty Cavin, is a widow who brings to her task all the articulateness, style and zeal of a public relations professional, which she is. Working from a stylish townhouse in Washington's DuPont Circle with the help of a paid secretary, she issues newsletters to the organization's 10,000 members, and periodically sallies forth to buttonhole members of the House Ways and Means Committee and Senate Finance Committee.⁷¹

Aiken's editorial also emphasized COST's "diverse" membership had made the organization into a meeting ground between conservatives and the radical left.

The organization got its start about 4 years ago at the initiative of [Eisenhower official] Robert Keith Gray...Gray, a bachelor was "incensed" about the extra tax bite singles had to pay. He got Cavin to work as the director and, with former Sens. George Murphy of California and Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota as honorary cochairmen, the organization had its start. McCarthy, former darling of the Democratic antiwar left, and Murphy, best known for his tap-dance routines on old movies and his conservative politics, "couldn't be further apart in philosophy and attitude, but they're together on one thing—the inequity for single taxpayers."⁷²

COST's seemingly apolitical stance necessarily pit "single taxpayers" against programs that benefited impoverished African American families. COST founder Patty Cavin hoped that the Republican Party's gains in Congress would end the idealism of liberal's anti-poverty programs in favor of tax relief. "They're more realistic, more in tune with their constituencies; People are terribly

⁷¹ David Aiken, "Draft of 'COST' Article", March 25, 1975, 1, Rainbow History Project: David Aiken Papers, Folder "Articles, Notes related to COST."

⁷² Aiken, "Draft of 'COST' Article", 1-2.

upset about high taxes.”⁷³ GAA member James Zais, member of local think tank the Urban Institute produced a policy paper in support of COST’s aims entitled “Gay Economic Oppression: The Case of Family Unit Policies In Major Income Transfer Programs.”⁷⁴ Zais’ paper elucidated the many ways anti-federal welfare programs like Aid to Families with Dependent Children discriminated against childless individuals. Zais argued that “family unit policies of most federal income transfer programs discriminates blatantly against gay people, specifically against gays who share households and constitute single economic units. It is argued that these policies constitute a form of horizontal inequity whereby such gay households are treated unfairly when compared to households in similar economic need.”⁷⁵ Indicating the ubiquity of local efforts to brand gay Washingtonians as well-off and affluent, Zais’ position paper took issue with the absence of activism surrounding economic discrimination against homosexuals. Critically though, Zais framed economic discrimination against gay men in pseudo libertarian terms, suggesting that some Americans were awarded “non-earned income” at the expense of others through taxation.

At the same time, attention needs to be focused on two other ways in which income is gained or lost in America: “non-earned” income and taxation. Non-earned income includes the myriad of public income transfer programs (some of which will be considered in this paper) and private transfers, such as credit and loans, insurance premiums, private pension payments and rewards from “charities.” We know something of the types of discrimination involved in each of the fields, although much more investigation and considerably more political action needs to be directed toward them. Taxation, on the other hand appears to be a more direct method of affecting disposable income, and least in the way it is perceived by us as taxpayers.⁷⁶

The extent to which white gay activist linked their fight against discrimination to popular arguments against unfair taxation were made clearer a year later when the GAA was able to convince the council and the mayor to strike a major blow against police harassment of gay men by defunding

⁷³ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁴ James P. Zais, “Gay Economic Oppression: The Case of Family Unit Policies in Major Income Transfer Programs,” n.d. 1, David Aiken Papers Folder “Articles, Notes related to COST.”

⁷⁵ Zais, 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 4.

the Prostitution, Perversion and Obscenity (PPO) division of the metropolitan police department. However, rather than couch their anti-PPO campaign as a fight for sexual liberation, GAA activists suggested that prosecuting gay cruising was, quite simply, too expensive for the city to maintain. The drive to defund the PPO began in the fall of 1974 when the squad picked up Joseph Stewart, a recent law school graduate while cruising on “The Block” in Georgetown. According to the *Blade* police activity in The Block had been unexpected as it was one area of the city where, gay activists believed, an informal truce had been struck between the police and gay cruisers.⁷⁷ Stewart was enraged by his arrest and filed a lawsuit against the constitutionality of the District’s sodomy laws. In an audience before the District public safety committee Stewart told the council that the police’s interest in gay male cruising came at the expense of the prosecution of more important criminal acts in the city.

Stewart told the committee about how he was assaulted by a D.C. police officer who remains on the force. “What bothers me is wasting tax dollars and police manpower by having cops go out night after night in T-shirts and tight dungarees to harass homosexuals in our parks,” Stewart stated. “While pervert Squadsmen roam the forests a hell of a lot of crime is going on undetected.”⁷⁸

Stewart’s assertion that it was ridiculous for the city to spend money on anti-gay policing in light of the city’s high violent and property crime became the GAA’s central argument for eliminating the PPO during the council’s subsequent legislative session. Indeed, the GAA had made similar arguments in private from their inception. When the GAA’s initial attempts to meet with Mayor Washington in 1972 their letters were referred to the PPO squad as though they represented a criminal threat to the city. In response, GAA president Robert Johnson wrote to Morals Division chief Walter Bishop demanding that the police department spend their efforts on the “real” urban criminals.

⁷⁷ Pat Kolar “Trouble on the Block” *The Gay Blade* December, 1974, 8.

⁷⁸ “GAA: Top Cop Must Stop Bias,” *The Gay Blade*, November 1974, 3.

⁷⁹During a hearing before Marion Barry's budget committee GAA representative Craig Howell couched the argument against the PPO in the terms of fiscal austerity.

“The Metropolitan Police Department should be expressly forbidden to spend any money to use plainclothes police to enforce the statutes on sodomy and solicitation for so called lewd and immoral purposes and no funds should be allocated to the MPD to maintain the Prostitution, Perversion and Obscenity Branch of the Morals Division.”⁸⁰

During his testimony Howell argued that it was a grave injustice against gay and lesbian Washingtonians—who he claimed contributed 10% of the District's tax base—to have the government “misuse our own tax dollars to oppress our fellow gays.”⁸¹ Howell cited figures D.C. Superior Court justice Charles Halleck who estimated that each PPO arrest cost taxpayers \$18,000 per arrest which included “the costs borne by the court system in processing these cases and the costs of maintaining the PPO and ‘training’ police for PPO's offensive behavior.”⁸² As a whole the GAA estimated that eliminating the PPO would “save the taxpayers at least \$1 million a year in direct budgetary costs.”⁸³

The Washington Star reported that eliminating the PPO would potentially save the department, \$385,300, a number that was compelling to key members of the city council. In particular, public safety committee chairman David Clarke, ward 2 councilman John Wilson and at-large member Marion Barry pushed for the elimination of the PPO squad. In a statement Clarke argued that the elimination of the squad would allow greater budgetary flexibility for the punishment of more important crimes like burglary and assault saying, “If prostitution crime goes down and

⁷⁹ “From Robert Johnson to Chief Jerry V. Wilson”, March 6, 1972, Frank Kameny Papers Box 87, Folder “GAA of Wash, D.C. Correspondence, 1971-1976.”

⁸⁰ Craig Howell, “Testimony of Gay Activists Alliance on D.C. Budget Priorities Presented to the Budget Committee, D.C. City Council,” February 26, 1975, 3, David Aiken Papers, Folder “Government Documents, Correspondence, Newspaper Articles.”

⁸¹ Howell, “Testimony of Gay Activists Alliance...”, February 26, 1975, 3.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 2.

burglary goes up, the personnel can be redeployed to burglary.”⁸⁴ The heads of the morals division tried to argue that a failure to prosecute sex crimes would do more to hurt the city’s bottom line. Assistant chief Theodore R. Zanders, head of the Morals Division argued that 96% of men and 75% of women arrested by the PPO had records for crimes other than “morals offenses.” According to the *Star* the “lewd and immoral” purposes charge was primarily reserved for female impersonators, but “sometimes [is] used with women prostitutes as well.” Zanders warned that unless sex crimes were reined in “our life’s blood, the tourist trade, will decline.”⁸⁵ Zanders' words of warning fell on deaf ears and the council included cuts to the PPO in the budget submitted to Congress in the summer of 1975.⁸⁶

Though Congress eventually restored the funds for the PPO, chastising the council for making cuts in law enforcement in the process, the GAA and gay activists learned an important lesson about effective political strategy in a city with few sources of revenue. Calling for the elimination of police practices that violated constitutional freedoms of Washington residents, like no-knock, were ineffective when couched in the language of human rights. Instead, GAA’s successful anti-police activism found them, rhetorically at least, in line with a broad range of interests, from the business community to conservative activists like Patty Cavin, who used evidence of fraud, inefficacy and corruption to argue that public bodies were no longer able to enact positive social change in society. These discourses were folded into a political arsenal that, over the next decade would argue that the “free-market” offered a stronger set of solutions to societal ills like poverty and racial discrimination than “interventionist” government.

Four years after Washington residents re-elected Walter Washington and sent an “activist council” to Pennsylvania Avenue, D.C. experienced its second full election cycle. As was the case in

⁸⁴ Toni House, “D.C. Police Vice Squad Really Hustling to Stay in Business,” *Washington Star*, May 8, 1975.

⁸⁵ House,

⁸⁶ “P.P.&O Squad Faces Elimination.,” *The Gay Blade*, August, 1975, 1; Paul W. Valentine and LaBarbara Bowman, “Agency Heads Get Word: Bite Bullet on D.C. Budget” *The Washington Post*, July 31, 1975, B1.

1974, the only real games in town were the Democratic Party primaries for the eleven council seats and mayor's office. In the first decade of Washington's young local government two elected offices had emerged as the centers of political power in the nation's capital; the mayor's office and the chairman of the city council. While the mayor had the ability to sign or veto all bills passed by the council, the council chairman controlled which bills would come before the council and had near unilateral control over appointments to regulatory commissions. While Walter Washington sailed to re-election in 1974, it was Rev. Douglas Moore who emerged from the 1974 D.C.'s fastest rising political star. Moore's at-large bid had received the most votes of any candidate in the race, only confirming universal beliefs that the people of Washington wanted a radical council.⁸⁷ Moore was the former chairman of the Black United Front (BUF) a leader in anti-police brutality campaigns and a strict adherent to cultural nationalist ideology. As the 1978 election cycle approached political observers wondered which of D.C.'s most powerful positions Moore would choose to run for, mayor or repeat terms as council chairman.

Yet, D.C.'s political climate in 1978 was drastically different than it had been in 1974. Save for Moore, Julius Hobson and ward 8 representatives Willie J. Hardy, nearly all of the "radical council" had proven themselves political moderates, willing to court big business and appease the federal government's austerity measures. Hobson's untimely death in 1977 after a long illness further weakened support for radical anti-business legislation. With the exception of the council's move to defund the PPO, the council had voiced no concerns over the police's expanded police powers. Still, the all black, almost entirely male slate of candidates continued to wrap themselves within radical rhetorics and slogans of the postwar black freedom movement. As a result, it was extremely difficult for candidates to draw distinctions between themselves candidates. In the

⁸⁷ Milton Coleman, "A Solitary Battle," *The Washington Post*, March 29, 1978, C1.

absence of clear policy differences candidates argued over who was an independent representative of black Washingtonians and who had been bought by powerful special interest groups.

Despite his firm position within city government, the Moore campaign quickly positioned himself as the outsider candidate, who opposed the cooption of the council by two powerful interests the Board of Trade and, in Moore's words, "the fascist faggots." One week after announcing his bid for council chairman, Moore launched the opening salvo of his campaign during council sessions devoted to the reauthorization of the Human Rights ordinance. What many thought would be a routine reauthorization transformed into a massive political fight when Moore attempted to add two controversial amendments to the bill. The first was an aggressive Affirmative Action regulation that would require all Washington businesses to submit annual reports to the Human Rights Office on their success in hiring African American residents. The second threatened to strip all protections for sexual minorities from the Human Rights Ordinance. Moore was particularly vehement that gay Washingtonians should not be allowed to work in jails, schools or health institutions where people "could be vulnerable to homosexual or deviant behavior."⁸⁸

Both of Moore's amendments were defeated, but the move sparked the beginning of a campaign season where black candidates attempted to balance a desire to reach out to gay voters and maintain their credibility as black candidates who were of and for the "black community." For most of the campaign season the Moore campaign and the D.C. media consistently linked Moore's role as the "anti-establishment" candidate, the "anti-Board of Trade" candidate and the "black church" candidate with his strident demonization of homosexuality. The Washington Post even noticed that, at the beginning of his career on the council Moore had been ambivalent towards gay rights. Moore had not expressed opposition to the inclusion of protections for homosexuality in the 1974 Human Rights Ordinance and had approved the 1975 budget which defunded the PPO squad and secured

⁸⁸ Thomas Morgan, "Council Defeats Human Rights Changes," *The Washington Post*, September 14, 1977.

funds for the Gay Men's V.D. Clinic. However, when confronted with those issues during the 1978 campaign Moore told the press that he had been forced to "trade votes" with council members who were "protectors of perverts" in order to secure 350,000 for a nutrition program for deserving "poor" Washingtonians. Moore had been absent from the council the day a unanimous resolution passed that proclaimed Gay Pride in June of 1976 and 1977 the same weekend as father's day. In 1978, however, he vowed that "unless they pass it when I'm dead, cripple or paralyzed there won't be no more Gay Pride Days in Washington, D.C." Indeed, Moore's rapid shift on gay rights during the campaign inspired fear in the hearts of his fellow council members who chose not to pass a resolution proclaiming Gay Pride Week in 1978.

Unopposed, Moore felt few constraints on framing himself as the only authentic black radical in the race. In campaign speeches Moore pointed out that his campaign aides and lawyers were all black. "I have never doubted your [black people's] capacity to interpret and defend." Moore argued that the white business establishment was frightened of his eventual election because of the council chairman's power in selecting regulatory commissions. "White people aren't concerned about who's gonna be mayor. The chairman of the council is the real person who appoints the commissions. They see me as a real threat. It ain't no lie. They're hustling up day and night trying to prop up somebody to run against me. The word is out to get Douglas Moore." But, according to Moore, business groups were not the only special interest gunning for him. Moore told the Washington Star that his long held opposition to gay rights had made him a target of the "fascist faggots" who had "bought" Marion Barry and Ward 2 councilman John Wilson

They told me they were going to get 50,000 votes against me. Actually I suspect their numbers are very small. The real number of gays in D.C. is more like 1,200. I call them fascists because fascists are people who are always trying to force their ways on other people. They have been able to buy men like Marion Barry for a thousand dollars. Well come election time, I want to see Marion Barry out stumping for gays. I want to see how many

black people in this town want their children influenced by homosexuals. No way! My colleagues on the council just don't know what they've done. But they'll find out in '78.⁸⁹

Moore's suspicions were based in truth. Organized, predominately white business groups were concerned about how a council led by Moore would impact the city's ability to attract regional and national businesses. Robert Linowes, president of the Board of Trade told the *Post* that the council chairman needed to reflect the interests of the business community. "We're not suggesting it should be a white running. We're suggesting that it be someone with a good image for the city."⁹⁰ Moreover, the GAA and the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club—the city's first gay group linked to the Democratic Central Committee had made Rev. Moore, along with close ally Willie J. Hardy, as the most important target in the 1978 campaign.⁹¹

In the media, Moore's campaign was characterized as reflecting the will and interests of the city's impoverished, religious, black constituents. A Methodist minister, Moore's most popular campaign slogan told voters he was going to rid the District of "the three G's, Gays, Gambling and Grass." Moore's three G's slogan demonstrates the persistence of rhetoric that linked homosexuality with the broader "moral issues" afflicting the ghetto in the 1950s and 1960s. However, if homosexuality was an indicator of the way white outsiders contributed to blight in the ghetto in the 1960s, by 1978 Moore's campaign transformed white homosexuals into another of the white business interests that black liberal politicians were selling out to.

Moore contrasted the white gay and business forces that supported Barry, Wilson and Arrington Dixon, who declared for council chairman in May of 1978, with his base of support within black church congregations who, Moore argued, were the legitimate power base in D.C.

I know who my constituents are. Black folks are traditionally a religious people. The only final city of refuge we have is the church...In a city with a weak power structure it is the

⁸⁹ Donia Mills, "Gay Political Experience in Washington: The Males," *Washington Star*, October 31, 1977, A-10

⁹⁰ Coleman, C1.

⁹¹ Lou Romano, "Thwarting Doug Moore," *The Blade*, April 1978, 3.

black church that has the control over most people. It is not the Board of Trade. It is not the Democratic or Republican Party. It is not even the labor unions.⁹²

Moore's opposition tended to agree with his assessment of the importance of the church to black voters and the incongruity between representing "the community" and supporting gay rights. In April of 1978 Barry secured the endorsement of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club, which came along with a \$1,000 contribution to his campaign. Barry had earned the undying support of gay activists in 1975, when he sided with Ward 2 councilman John Wilson to defund the PPO division of the metropolitan police district. Barry cemented the endorsement of gay politicians by being the only of the three major candidates to attend the Gertrude Stein Club's candidate forum. But speaking before the audience Barry set himself as a maverick candidate by playing off popular assumptions of homophobia in the black community.

You all know some of the black community is very conservative on that issue. They don't understand. As long as I'm in office there is no way I can let oppression exist in this city or anywhere else. There is a time in one's life to do what is right and not what is politically expedient.⁹³

Arrington Dixon, Moore's direct foe, faced intense pressure from the Moore campaign to shed his previous support for sponsoring D.C.'s no-fault divorce law which, in its original form, had opened the door to same-sex marriage for District residents. In the final public debate between council chairman candidates, Moore accented his depiction of Dixon as "the candidate of big business and the Board of Trade" by making a large case of Dixon's support of the no-fault divorce law.

The only outburst of the evening occurred when Moore began quoting from a piece of paper that Dixon supported homosexual marriage. Dixon, sitting behind Moore, said "It's not true it's not true." A Dixon supporter in the audience shouted, "He's lying. Doug, you're lying." Later Dixon explained that the bill Moore was referring to was a modernized divorce bill, which Dixon said was a "consumer bill" that benefited poor people and has the

⁹² Coleman, C1.

⁹³ Bill Evans, "Stein Club Endorses Barry," *The Blade*, April 1978.

potential for reducing the rate of illegitimacy in the city. In its final form, Dixon said it had nothing to do with marriages involving homosexuals.⁹⁴

Dixon's willingness to recast his earlier support for same-sex marriage as a "consumer" bill meant to help poor residents indicates the effectiveness of Moore's efforts to brand gay rights and supporting the black community as inherently incongruous.

However, late in the 1978 election cycle a new gay rights organization, the D.C. Coalition of Black Gay Men and Women disrupted the emerging political narratives around the racially and economically limited definition of sexual liberalism and the sexually limited notion of "black politics." The Coalition was formed in April of that year under the leadership of A-Billy Jones with the expressed plan of increasing the visibility of black gay men and lesbians in a majority black city. In a long letter to the *Blade* organizers laid out the failures of the gay establishment in including non-white and middle class voices within gay institutions and media throughout the 1970s.

A lack of focused attention by the *Blade* and other publications on being black and gay in our times and city leads us to write this appeal for reversing that trend. Surely in a city with more than a majority of blacks, black gay culture, politics and facts-of-life out to be pronounced, distinctive, and of immediate interest to many *Blade* readers or potential readers. We know that racial discrimination has been outlawed since the 1860s, but we know also that more than 100 years later many of our gay establishments practice open discrimination against black gays or more subtly discourage blacks from patronizing their establishments. We are also aware of the separateness of much of gay life along both sex and race lines, yet little of black gay life finds its way into print.⁹⁵

The Coalition's first major political move came in August when the organization chose to endorse black establishment candidate Sterling Tucker over Marion Barry, white gay activists' choice for mayor. In a statement released after the endorsement Coalition head Billy Jones Tucker had a "sound record on Gay rights, and he is also someone we can work with as a Black person."⁹⁶ The Coalition had endorsed Tucker because the candidate had responded to two

⁹⁴ Leon Dash, "City Candidates Discuss the Issues, Attack Opponents at Civic Unit Forum," *The Washington Post*, 1978.

⁹⁵ "Letters: Black and Gay," *The Blade*, April 1978, 2.

⁹⁶ A.E. Acostia, "Black Gays Endorse Tucker for Mayor," *The Blade*, August 1978.

Coalition letters—one to announce its formation and the other requesting their opinion on Moore’s proposed repeal of the Human Rights Law. Barry, on the other hand, failed to respond to either query and Jones argued that black gay Washingtonians could not trust him to confront racism within the gay community. “We acknowledge that Barry has closely aligned himself with the White Gay establishments. We question (his) willingness to deal with issues of racism in the gay community.”⁹⁷

The Coalition’s actions threw white gay activists and the two leading candidates for mayor into frenzy. As the Gertrude Stein Club, Tucker campaign and Barry campaign released a flurry of statements, each found it impossible to deploy simplistic characterizations of black or gay politics. The Tucker campaign argued that the Coalition’s endorsement was a validation of his commitment to gay rights and demanded that the Gertrude Stein reconsider their endorsement of Barry. Marion Barry accused the Coalition of working in secret and not holding a public forum. Richard Maulsby, head of the Gertrude Stein club found himself in the position of threading the uncomfortable needle between arguing that Barry had been savvy to risk support from the city’s black majority to support gay rights and arguing that the opinion of the Coalition represented “the views of a small group of people who met in private and made their decision.” Maulsby went onto argue that his organization represented the “views of the community” and emphasized that their meeting had been “open to everyone.”⁹⁸ Though Barry had argued earlier in the year that “the black community” was conservative on issues of sexual liberalism he called the notion that his support for gay rights made him weak on racial discrimination, “ridiculous!”⁹⁹

Barry and Maulsby’s dismissal of the Coalition for operating behind closed doors and of not representing the legitimate gay community provides critical insight into the future development of black and gay politics in the nation’s capital. Despite the efforts of the Coalition, Barry sailed to easy

⁹⁷ Acostia, 3.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

victory in his bid for mayor and Douglas Moore was handily defeated by Arrington Dixon. Business groups and the white gay political establishment celebrated the election as a win for commercial development and sexual liberalism respectively. Indeed as the 1970s turned into the 1980s a coalition made up of Mayor Barry, white business groups and white sexual liberals would exercise significant control and influence over the direction of D.C. politics and economics. Under Barry's leadership the council would pass a series of reforms that allowed the city to approach Wall Street to finance the city budget and that expanded the existing "homesteading" plan. Homesteading, it was argued would represent a permanent solution to the impossibility of community development. Simultaneously, the Barry Administration sought to encourage white middle class residents to return to the city by being "tough on crime" and continuing to enact pro-business legislation. Meanwhile, Barry was eager to include white gay sexual minorities who had helped him get elected.

In supporting the homesteading policy, Barry laid the groundwork for economic shifts that would result in massive middle class gentrification and an unprecedented displacement of black residents from the inner city. Critically, it was white gay men and lesbians who were first poised to take advantage of the investment opportunities presented by "homesteading" laws. Indeed, it was believed that only with white gay participation would homesteading even be considered a success. The belief that white gay men were a sign that a neighborhood was becoming "safer" was now exported into impoverished black neighborhoods like Shaw. Going forward, this study will interrogate the way the contestations over the meanings of black and gay explored in this dissertation help to explain the origins of mass gentrification and the displacement of African American inner city residents in the 1980s and 1990s.

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