WHEN HARD WORK DOESN’T PAY:
GENDER AND THE URBAN CRISIS IN BALTIMORE, 1945-1985

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores roots of the current urban crisis in the United States. Most scholarly explanations associate the problem, particularly of high levels of African-American poverty, with deindustrialization, which has stripped cities of the factory jobs that once sustained working-class communities. My account deviates from the standard tale of black male unemployment by focusing on shifting patterns of African-American women’s labor—both paid and unpaid. Using Baltimore as a case study, it argues that public rather than industrial-sector employment served as the foundation of Baltimore’s post-World War II African-American middle and working classes. Women outpaced men in winning government jobs. Concentrated in social welfare agencies, they used their new influence over public policy to improve the city’s delivery of public services. Black women’s efforts to build an infrastructure for sustainable community development put them at odds in municipal policy-making battles with city officials and business leaders intent upon revitalizing Baltimore through investment in a tourism industry. The social services workers scored some important victories, helping to alleviate poverty by shifting to the government some of the responsibility for health, child, and elder care women earlier provided in the private sphere. The conservative ascendancy of the 1970s and 1980s, reversed many of the gains African-American public-sector workers had won. Intent upon resuscitating the United States’ status in the global economy, American
presidents, influenced by conservative economists and their elite backers, made macroeconomic and urban policy decisions that justified extensive public-sector retrenchment and cuts or changes to social programs. Public-sector workers and their unions, most notably the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), fought with limited success to prevent the transformation of American public policy. Neoliberal policies eroded African-American women’s authority within the state. Job losses hit hardest the agencies in which they worked. Meanwhile, program cuts and changes in eligibility requirements left many poor and working-poor women to attempt to provide themselves services for their families recently available from the state. The changes plunged Baltimore into the most acute phase of the urban crisis.
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ACRONYMS

AFL- American Federation of Labor
AFGE- American Federation of Government Employees
AFSCME- American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
APAC- Antipoverty Action Committee
BFL- Baltimore Federation of Labor
BLC- Baltimore Labor Council
BTU- Baltimore Teachers Union
BUL- Baltimore Urban League
BWRO- Baltimore Welfare Rights Organization
CAA- Community Action Agency
CAC- Community Action Commission
CDBG- Community Development Block Grants
CETA- Comprehensive Employment and Training Act
CIO- Congress of Industrial Organizations
CMEA- Classified Municipal Employees Association
CRC- Community Relations Commission
CSC- Civil Service Commission
DPW- Department of Public Welfare
DSS- Department of Social Services
EEOC- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
GBC- Greater Baltimore Committee
GRS- General Revenue Sharing
HWC- Health and Welfare Commission
IMF- International Monetary Fund
ILO- International Labour Organization
MCEA- Maryland Classified Employees Association
MOMR- Mayor’s Office of Manpower Resources
NAACP- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NUL- National Urban League
PATCO- Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization
SSA- Social Security Administration
UDAG- Urban Development Action Grants
U-JOIN- Union for Jobs or Income Now
USAID- United States Agency for International Development
In March 1986, over seventy workers from Baltimore’s Urban Services Agency marched on City Hall to protest the layoff of twenty-one employees of neighborhood centers. Members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the union that represented the workers, joined the demonstration. Although the group denounced a series of cuts that had shrunk the agency’s staff by two-thirds in five years, they insisted that the March layoffs were particularly painful. Most of those who lost their jobs were African-American women who were veterans of the city’s War on Poverty. Low-level, direct-service providers, many had grown up in the communities in which they worked. Elva Edwards, the African-American associate director of the agency and herself a long-time antipoverty warrior, believed the laid-off neighborhood aides among the agency’s most valuable employees because they had considerable contact with the public. During their demonstration at City Hall, the workers expressed concern about their uncertain futures. They also worried about their clients’ prospects. As one woman explained, “We handle families that have multiple problems such as eviction proceedings, lack of food, truancy among young people,
teenage pregnancy a whole host of difficulties…I don’t know what some of our clients are going to do once we close the cases.”¹

The job losses at the Urban Services Agency epitomized a fundamental transformation in U.S. urban policy. They also reflected a broader reorientation of the rules governing both the American and global economies. During the last third of the twentieth century, American presidents largely abandoned demand-side, Keynesian-inspired macroeconomic policies intended to stimulate growth, alleviate poverty, and promote employment and embraced neoliberal approaches to eliminating social problems. Not only did they adopt neoliberal policies at home but they also pressed their international trading partners to follow suit. The changes generated considerable conflict. But by the mid-1980s, a new free-market orthodoxy was largely entrenched. At Baltimore’s Urban Services Agency, and in other municipal, state and federal human services departments, neoliberal policies eliminated jobs and services and had a particularly devastating effect on women, who were predominant among both workers and service recipients. The political decision making that institutionalized neoliberalism plunged Baltimore into the most acute phase of the urban crisis and all but pushed many African-American women off the economic ladder.

Diagnosing the causes of the urban crisis has been of great concern to social scientists in recent decades. The first influential explanation came from a group of scholars—led by William Julius Wilson in sociology—who locate the problem in the structural transformations of the post-World War II national economy. They argue that the massive deindustrialization of the nation’s old industrial core, cities such as Chicago, which Wilson studies, has stripped inner-cities of the dependable, well-paying jobs that
once sustained African-American families and communities. The result, scholars explain, was widespread unemployment in America’s urban centers, particularly among black men. Unemployment, and eventually isolation from black working and middle-class African Americans who abandoned cities for suburbs, produced concentrations of poverty in urban neighborhoods, and social problems quickly emerged.\(^2\)

Wilson’s accounting of the causes of the urban crisis was published in 1987 as conservative scholars were also trying to explain persistent poverty. The conservatives, most notably Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead, did not attribute urban problems to economic transformations. Instead they identified federal social welfare programs as the cause of persistent poverty, a view in keeping with the neoliberal economic theories ascendant during the 1980s. The government’s efforts to redistribute wealth, the conservatives argue, created a culture of dependency that sapped the poor of ambition and drive. Although many conservatives during the 1980s attributed biological or cultural dysfunction to poor people to account for poverty—and Murray would eventually win notoriety as a leading proponent of that view—he initially avoided the claim. Alternatively, liberals who crafted the ill-conceived Keynesian-based welfare programs were at fault. Their misguided efforts to interfere in the natural workings of the marketplace produced programs that compelled welfare consumers to eschew both work and marriage. The solution to persistent poverty, the scholars concluded, was the dismantling of much of the U.S. welfare state.\(^3\)

While Murray and Meade’s polemics attracted little serious consideration from most scholars, the deindustrialization narrative stimulated much debate. In a study of Detroit, historian Thomas Sugrue offered the most compelling critique of Wilson’s
account. Sugrue agrees that deindustrialization created the urban crisis. But he identifies
the start of deindustrialization in the 1950s, far earlier than imagined by Wilson and
others, who associate factory closures with later global economic restructuring. Sugrue
argues that business executives abandoned factories in unionized Detroit and built new
ones in regions where organized labor was weaker in large part to save labor costs and
weaken unions. He also notes the role federal incentive programs played in luring
industry from Detroit. But neither class conflict nor the federal government’s
contribution to deindustrialization is the principle dynamic to which he attributes the
urban crisis. Instead he uncovers the origins of the crisis largely in the efforts of white
working-class residents of Detroit to defend their racial privileges. New Deal liberalism
created a measure of economic security for working-class whites that they were
determined to defend against African-American encroachment. Their racism limited both
the housing and employment opportunities available to mid-century African American
migrants to Detroit. New Deal federal housing policies had institutionalized patterns of
residential segregation, which whites also had long policed. Even after the federal
government discontinued practices that enforced segregation, whites continued to guard
the borders of their neighborhoods. They defended their privileged access to unionized
industrial jobs equally as aggressively. Employment discrimination concentrated black
workers in the lowest of factory jobs, where they disproportionately suffered the job
losses caused by postwar factory automation. Then, when business executives
abandoned the city, on-going housing discrimination prevented many African-American
workers from following them. Instead they were left to make their own way in a bleak,
deindustrialized wasteland.⁴
While Sugrue demonstrates that African-American workers in Detroit bore the brunt of postwar economic restructuring, recently several scholars have suggested that the Motor City’s mid-century black workers enjoyed greater access to factory employment than African Americans did in most other cities. Roger Waldinger, Michael Katz and Mark Stern, for example, do not dispute Wilson and Sugrue’s claim that joblessness lies at the heart of contemporary urban African-American poverty. But they do challenge the assertion that industrial employment once sustained urban black working-class communities. Alternatively, they argue that during the postwar period, race and ethnic-based employment segmentation and hiring practices excluded most African-American men from unionized industrial jobs. Waldinger uses New York City as a case study, while Katz and Stern employ a century of national census data and come to the same conclusion. They argue that in most U.S. cities, the industrial sector did not provide a job niche for black men. On the contrary, they conclude, discrimination precluded any employment sector from playing that role. As a result, while deindustrialization had tragic consequences in rustbelt cities, sapping urban economies of their vitality and accelerating white flight, it did not destroy the economic base of African-American communities.

While the economic origins of the urban crisis are clear, as is the role of mid-century racism, Wilson’s and Sugrue’s accounts left unclear the responses of African Americans to the forces they confronted in postwar industrial cities. Historian Robert Self has done much to remedy the problem. In his study of Oakland, California, which describes the city’s history through the 1970s, Self is attentive to racialized class factors and urban job losses. He is more interested, however, in the region’s urban/suburban
dynamic. He juxtaposes the views of the leaders of the nation’s most famous suburban tax revolt with those of Oakland’s African-American leaders, including prominent Black Panthers, to demonstrate that the city’s postwar history was the product of conflicts over jobs, space, resources and power—battles suburbanites ultimately won. Like Sugrue, Self describes mid-century American liberalism as accruing to whites assets such as suburban housing that they aggressively defended. He identifies in California’s Proposition 13, which capped the state’s property taxes and had garnered much support in Oakland’s suburbs, frustration with the high cost of the state’s postwar growth. He suggests as well an unwillingness on the part of suburbanites to contribute to efforts to combat the poverty in Oakland produced by the regions’ uneven development.6

While scholars of postwar urban history have revealed many important dynamics that contribute to high levels of African-American poverty in rustbelt cities, few have given African-American women significant attention. Black women make only brief appearances in most studies, often as those who filled the low-wage postindustrial service-sector positions that eventually replaced factory jobs but left black men in unemployment. In recent years, a few scholars have begun to compensate for the absence. Black women have won increased attention from those who study the civil rights movement. In addition, a handful of scholars have also explored some of the postwar stories of urban African-American women with low incomes. These accounts focus largely on women’s grassroots political activism during the War on Poverty, describing the women’s efforts to mobilize federal resources to respond to their communities’ pressing needs and gain a greater role over welfare policy-making. The bottom-up accounts have triggered a reassessment among historians of federal
antipoverty efforts during the 1960s and early 1970s. While hardly an antidote to the urban problems that federal industrial-incentives and housing policies helped to create, Great Society initiatives did open opportunities to African-American women to attempt to respond to local problems and shape the future of their cities.\textsuperscript{7}

The new studies of African-American women have yet to be integrated into a broader account of urban history. Nor has a narrative emerged that replaces the deindustrialization saga’s depiction of the transformation of the black working class into the urban poor. What’s more, although the critical role the racism of white working and middle-class Americans played in the urban crisis is evident, the structural transformation of the postwar American and global economies to which Wilson initially attributed the urban crisis has largely fallen out of the story along with substantive consideration of political economy. This dissertation addresses these gaps in the current narrative. Informed by the many compelling critiques of the deindustrialization thesis, I tell a story of Baltimore’s history between 1945 and 1985 that differs considerably from the standard tales of abandoned factories and African-American male unemployment. Instead, I shift the lens to focus on community action agencies, welfare offices, public-health clinics and schools, where many African-American women worked and where they attempted to craft solutions to urban poverty. In addition, I uncover urban history in kitchens, sickrooms and playgrounds, where many black women cooked for their families, cared for the ill and watched over their children’s play. I argue that these less conventional sites are as important as the shop floor in revealing rises and declines in urban fortunes. Changes in patterns of women’s labor, both paid and unpaid, are central to the story of postwar urban history.
I have chosen to use Baltimore as a case study in this dissertation for two reasons. First, the city’s patterns of deindustrialization and urban decay resembled those of other rustbelt cities, making Baltimore fairly representative. The seventh largest city in the United States at mid-century, Baltimore’s industrial sector powered its local economy. The prospect of wartime jobs attracted large numbers of African-American and white migrants to the city. The black migrants joined Baltimore’s sizable native African-American population in the quest for factory jobs. As in Detroit, white residents’ fierce defense of their privileged access to both housing and employment severely constrained African Americans’ opportunities. In fact, Baltimore, located in a border state, was a Jim Crow city, and patterns of segregation extended well beyond neighborhoods and factories. As Katz and Stern argue was the case in most cities in the U.S., in Baltimore, discrimination prevented the industrial sector from becoming a reliable source of African-American economic security during the postwar years. Deindustrialization then sapped Baltimore of its economic vitality during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, undermining a potential source of male employment and producing the same urban problems evident elsewhere.

But Baltimore also makes an important case study because of the way its postwar history deviates from those of other rustbelt cities. During the 1970s and 1980s, Baltimore forged for itself a postindustrial economic niche with relative success. The city’s “renaissance,” which involved creating a tourism industry centered in the downtown inner-harbor area, attracted both national and international acclaim. Not everyone agreed that the best route to revitalization was commercial redevelopment, however. Baltimore’s history demonstrates the critical role federal-level macroeconomic
decision-making played in shaping the options cities could pursue to respond to poverty. It reveals as well the contested nature of urban planning during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, exposing conflicts the emerged nationwide and in Baltimore over the extent to which the state should commit resources to redistributive or trickle-down remedies to urban poverty. Moreover, the success of Baltimore’s commercial downtown renewal, as well as the entrenched poverty that largely encircles it, makes it possible to evaluate both the merits and false promises of the revitalization approach Baltimore adopted.

Although scholars of postwar urban history have largely confined their attention to employment patterns in cities’ industrial sector, demographic changes in public-sector employment reveal a remarkable trajectory. During the first half of the twentieth century, most black women were confined to jobs in domestic service. By 1980s, they had achieved near wage-parity with white women. To be sure, women’s incomes trailed both black and white men’s considerably. But within little more than a generation, African-American women made considerable employment gains. In Baltimore, as throughout the nation, the gains were in large measure within the public sector. In 1950, only twelve percent of employed African-American women in Baltimore had government jobs. By 1970, nearly a third did, and by 1980, close to forty percent worked in the public sector. African-American men in Baltimore made significant inroads into government workforces as well. While in 1950, a mere seven percent held public-sector jobs, by 1970, the figure had risen to almost a quarter, and by 1980 to nearly a third. Discrimination remained rampant in government workforces, and public-sector employment patterns reflected the gendered and racialized hierarchies of the city’s larger
labor force. Nevertheless, the public sector became an important source of stable employment in a city in which most African-American women and men had long been confined to domestic and laboring work.⁹

African Americans did not secure government jobs without a fight. In recent years, the study of the U.S. civil rights movement has undergone a dramatic transformation. Scholars have begun to recover important activism that predates the postwar period, and they have opened their field of study to include struggles for racial justice outside of the South. Having expanded the civil rights movement across time and space, scholars have uncovered considerable activism that linked race and economics. Much of the new work, however, attributes gains on behalf of economic justice for African Americans only to radical organizations. This was not the case in Baltimore. Instead, liberal civil rights organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Baltimore Urban League played a leading role in struggles for improved jobs and social welfare services for black city residents. They fought for government jobs with particular ardor. In a city where African Americans were all but excluded from elected office, government jobs provided a means by which African Americans could gain influence over public-policy making.⁹

The efforts by Baltimore’s civil rights activists to open public-sector jobs to black workers received a boost from the federal government during the early 1960s. The Keynesian-inspired policies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson dramatically increased the amount of money the federal government sent to cities. As urban aid increased, the public sector expanded accordingly. Ironically, the critique most forcefully leveled by scholars against the Johnson administration is that Great Society initiatives
lacked a jobs-creation program; in fact, the administration “created” tens of thousands of jobs in cities across the nation—by growing government workforces. In Baltimore, African Americans demanded a fair share of the new jobs. But because many of the positions were in health, education and welfare-related agencies—jobs that for decades had been gendered as female—black women outpaced black men in entering the public sector.¹⁰

Government jobs by no means guaranteed a living wage, a problem public-sector unions were determined to correct. Although historians have devoted considerable attention to the role industrial unions played in postwar urban history, few have noted the critical contributions of public-sector unions. U.S. labor historians have also largely neglected government unions. During the last third of the twentieth century, however, public-sector unions were among the fastest-growing and most dynamic participants in the American labor movement. In Baltimore, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) organized among low-wage municipal and state workers. They joined white-collar employee organizations and other public unions, including several representing federal workers, in fights to win for government employees labor protections long guaranteed most of the nation’s private-sector workers. They also fought to improve wages and working conditions. They met with considerable success. Their victories increased the value of public-sector employment to the city’s African-American communities. The gains the unions won help to account for the rising prosperity of many black families during the 1960s and early 1970s, despite on-going deindustrialization.¹¹
As mainstream civil rights activists had anticipated, public-sector employment increased African Americans’ influence over public-policy making. The most significant gains occurred in new federally-funded antipoverty agencies and municipal health, education and welfare departments. African-American men surpassed black women in securing leadership positions, but black women quickly filled the ranks of Baltimore’s human services agencies. Historians recently have made tremendous strides in uncovering the critical contributions of African-American women in War-on-Poverty era contestations over the distribution of power and resources in American cities. Baltimore’s human services workers played a central role in those struggles in Baltimore. During the 1960s, sustained by unprecedented federal antipoverty funds, they worked with white liberals in their agencies to make welfare provisions available to black and white residents in equal measure and to make the government more responsive to the needs of women. In addition, they were often enthusiastic proponents of community-participation in policy-making. They pressed fiercely resistant city and state officials to include residents with low incomes on boards and commissions of federally-funded agencies. They also worked to win community representation on municipal and state policy-making bodies. To be sure, there were class tensions between service workers and recipients. But workers and residents also joined forces in demonstrations and protests, becoming the city’s most outspoken champions of wealth redistribution.¹²

The programs implemented by black female public-sector workers contributed to the overall well being of Baltimore’s population. They provided an additional function as well. Public programs helped to alleviate some of the gendered responsibilities women assumed as the caretakers of their families. For decades, feminist economists have urged
scholars to take seriously the unpaid labor women perform in their families and to recognize it for the vital economic activity that it is. Feminists have explained how caretaking has been rendered invisible, naturalized as an outgrowth of women’s innate predilection to domesticity and devalued in capitalist economies because it is not compensated with wages. Yet cleaning, preparing meals, nursing family members in ill health, caring for elderly parents, and supervising children are central to the health and well being of all communities. They are also activities characterized by a measure of elasticity. Women can expend greater or lesser energy on the tasks in accordance with their family’s level of economic security. In hard times, women provide increased unpaid labor in an effort to stretch family incomes. They cook meals from scratch to avoid the expense of ready-made items or nurse the ill at home or help deliver a baby to avoid an expensive hospital visit. The availability of social welfare services also impacts women’s gendered caretaking responsibilities. Publicly provided recreation programs for children or the elderly ease the responsibilities women might otherwise assume for their families. Because income and service availability influence the level of effort women devote to caretaking work, both micro- and macroeconomic policies have gendered consequences. Because they also impact income and service availability, sex and race-based employment discrimination and segregation have simultaneously racialized and gendered ramifications. Evaluations of urban conditions must consider these factors.¹³

Historian Jacqueline Jones convincingly argues that for many black women family caretaking was a labor of love. It was also quite decidedly labor. If the immediate postwar years fail to qualify as a black working-class heyday, the discrimination African-
American men faced in the industrial sector tells only part of the story. Also of major significance was the tremendous burden employment discrimination and segregation put on women as the caretakers of their families. During the 1960s, however, Keynesian-inspired federal welfare programs eased some of the responsibilities women had assumed in their families. Admittedly, miserly federal allocations for social welfare programs failed to meet pressing needs in Baltimore. Nevertheless, the new universe of services was a significant improvement over what had been available in Jim Crow Baltimore. And African-American female public-sector workers and community residents had played a pivotal role in advocating for and implementing the programs.¹⁴

As African-American women joined forces with others in their agencies and pursued a municipal agenda that prioritized sustainable community development, the group became a bloc within the city government advocating for a specific response to deindustrialization and additional causes of urban poverty. Others in the city did not share their priorities. Many business leaders, city planners, financial officers, and elected officials thought Baltimore could best be revitalized if the city government limited its debt, pursued austere budgets and mobilized resources to actively court investors. The business leaders’ agenda also included considerable municipal investment in downtown commercial ventures that during the 1970s became focused on building a tourism industry. The policy prescriptions of human-services workers and business leaders were not mutually exclusive. Government workers appreciated the need for a job base in the city, and many business leaders approved of anti-poverty efforts. Nevertheless, the two groups pressured the municipal government to prioritize two strikingly different sets of goals.¹⁵
During the late 1970s and 1980s, human services workers lost much of their influence within the city government. Local factors certainly contributed to the change. But dramatic transformations in U.S. macroeconomic and urban policies also undermined their authority. As on-going deindustrialization and white flight had drained the city of much needed tax revenue during the postwar period, Baltimore had become increasingly reliant on external sources of aid. Intergovernmental revenue, however, proved an unstable foundation on which to build a municipal economy. Its dependence on federal funds made Baltimore vulnerable not only to the shifting moods of the national electorate but also to assertions of elite power over federal policymaking. Many scholars and activists initially responded to the dramatic turn to the Right of American political discourse and public policy by decrying the mounting influence of corporate America in the nation’s public life. More recently, however, scholars have turned their attention to the role everyday citizens played in the conservative ascendancy. While there is no question that reactionary social movements played a significant role in the shift, it is important not to lose sight of the considerable influence of powerful economic interests, who helped formulate and steer the policy changes.\textsuperscript{16}

Beginning in the late 1960s, the western world entered nothing short of a global economic crisis. The system established after World War II to govern the capitalist economic order—the Bretton Woods system—unraveled. That system, built on a stable U.S. dollar, was intended to encourage relatively unrestrained free trade. It was also created to accommodate the widely held Keynesian belief that national spending on welfare states could both stimulate economic growth and prevent poverty and high levels of unemployment. As the postwar system crumbled in response to the weakening of the
dollar, policy-makers desperately sought remedies. U.S. business elites, panicked by falling profits, also demanded change. Among those vying to provide solutions was a group of conservative economists, many of whom had ties to the University of Chicago. They were part of an international network of intellectuals united by a common contempt for Keynesianism. Their work had received scant attention during mid-century. But elites who shared their hostility to economic planning subsidized their scholarship. The conservative economists advocated a macroeconomic philosophy that would ultimately be called neoliberalism. They believed that government intervention in the economy disrupted the natural power of market forces to produce economic growth. They argued against welfare spending, government regulation, and taxation schemes intended to redistribute wealth. They were decidedly more sympathetic to government activity that facilitated capital accumulation. The economists believed their macroeconomic philosophy should replace the Keynesianism of the Bretton Woods system and thus become the organizing principle governing the global economy. Conservative economists and their elite backers gained influence over policy-making as Keynesian ideas began to fall into disfavor in the 1970s. Economic planning and demand-side policies seemed ineffective at combating the nation’s economic woes, especially the unexpected combination of rising inflation and unemployment. Meanwhile, neoliberal rhetoric gained appeal among many working- and middle-class white voters. The theories celebrated American political traditions such as freedom and private property. They also reinforced white voters’ hostility to welfare programs and taxes. No group did more to advocate for neoliberal policies than extremely powerful and influential economic interests, such as the National Chamber of Commerce and Wall Street bankers.
The proponents of neoliberalism certainly did not win full sway overnight. As social scientist David Harvey explains, “The capitalist world stumbled towards neoliberalization as the answer through a series of gyrations and chaotic experiments.”18 The gyrations began during the 1970s, growing more synchronized during the 1980s. As U.S. presidents made policy decisions informed by neoliberal theory, they plunged struggling cities into the most acute phase of the urban crisis.19

The gradual ascendancy of neoliberalism entrenched poverty in struggling cities in two ways. First, specific macroeconomic policies intended to rewrite the rules of both the domestic and global economies had profoundly detrimental effects on urban economies. Second, neoliberalism reshaped and increasingly constrained the urban policies presidents pursued during the 1970s and 1980s. The changes cost cities resources needed to combat poverty. Moreover, they undercut the influence of public human-services workers while empowering business elites and their allies.

The dramatic transformation of U.S. macroeconomic and urban policies did not happen without a fight. On the national level, liberal civil rights organizations and labor unions, particularly AFSCME, emerged as the most outspoken opponents of the reassertion of elite power over U.S. public policy. They fought policy changes sure to entrench poverty in cities. They were particularly active when Democrat Jimmy Carter, under intense pressure to combat worsening economic problems, turned his party to the Right, abandoning rustbelt cities, urban African Americans and government workers. While civil rights and union leaders won some concessions, the Keynesian remedies they proposed found few champions in Washington, D.C. On the local level, human services workers and public unions took the lead during the first half of the 1970s in combating...
encroachments on welfare spending and fiscally austere local budgets. Changes in both macroeconomic and urban policies undermined their influence. Simultaneously, both groups became the target of backlash voters and suburbanites angered by high taxes. The fact that many human services workers, like many of the clients they served, were African-American contributed to claims that government workers were incompetent and inefficient and that government unions were greedy rabble-rousers. The public hostility, combined with cuts in intergovernmental aid, took a toll on morale, undermining the fragile solidarity between government workers and service recipients. Reaganomics temporarily reunited the two groups. But they were no match for the structural changes that had been well underway for over a decade.

While the ascendancy of neoliberalism took a toll on all Baltimore residents, black women paid a particularly high price. They were concentrated in the very municipal, state and federal agencies hardest hit by cuts. Some staffing reductions were achieved through layoffs and privatization, but most occurred through attrition. As a result, those most effected were not government workers themselves but the city’s population of female job seekers. Those women would have far less access to a sector of the economy that had helped a generation of working and middle-class black women support their families, buy homes and send children to college. Black women in Baltimore paid the price for the ascendancy of neoliberalism in a second way as well. Cuts in means-tested welfare programs and public services compelled women to assume greater responsibilities as family caretakers. Some women in Baltimore could afford to purchase services formerly provided by the government. Neoliberalism, however, left
poor women to provide the services themselves or do without. Women did what they could, but federal-level cuts left gaps that women could not easily fill as the urban crisis worsened.
“BOOM TIMES” IN BALTIMORE?

In early 1951, The New York Times predicted “Boom Times” for the Baltimore region. The business community had already identified 1950 as its best year since World War II, and corporate executives in several industries planned to expand production to meet demand for defense orders, making the new year even better. Unemployment in Maryland was at its lowest level since the war’s end, and industrial employers expected to have to search out of state to fill a projected 10,000 positions for skilled workers. Many residents of Baltimore shared in the prosperity generated in large measure by the city’s significance in the nation’s military-industrial complex. Economic indicators suggested that they were celebrating the flush times with shopping sprees—and splurging on big-ticket items. Retail sales were on the rise, as was demand for electricity to power the many consumer products that had flooded the market after the war. Area residents also were also taking to the roads with increasing frequency. Car registrations were up, and gasoline consumption was rising quickly as well.¹

But not everyone in Baltimore benefited equally from the region’s boom times. Unemployment persisted, and women, older workers and those who lacked skills made up the bulk of Marylanders without jobs. African Americans were also prevalent among
those workers most peripheral to the postwar prosperity. To be sure, black workers had made some important inroads into the industrial sector during the war. But as T. J. S. Waxter, the director of Baltimore’s Department of Public Welfare, had explained in 1944, “Perhaps the greatest handicap under which Negroes live in Baltimore is in the restriction of job opportunities in many areas. Numerous concerns in the city will not employ Negroes for semi-skilled, skilled and professional work.” Despite wartime gains, he noted, “it is still true…that the overwhelming number of Negroes find employment in unskilled work and domestic service.” After the war discrimination persisted. As a result, even as local employers anticipating recruiting factory workers from out of state, the African-American poverty level in the city at the end of the 1940s surpassed fifty percent.

Although African Americans experienced staggering postwar poverty rates in Baltimore and all but the lowest-paid and least-stable factory jobs remained out of reach, the decade and a half following the war has gained a reputation as an African-American working-class heyday. Many scholars of urban history, led by social scientist and Harvard professor William Julius Wilson, describe the industrial sector in the U.S. as a key source of the postwar economic security. Wartime labor shortages and a desire to escape southern apartheid had led many African Americans to move from the South to northern industrial cities in the early 1940s. There, they joined native black populations and Caucasians in the search for defense jobs. Racism on the part of employers and white workers limited black workers’ employment prospects. After the war, those who had managed to secure industrial employment suffered a disproportionate share of
layoffs, and thereafter, their position in industrial workforces remained fragile. Nevertheless, scholars argue, the industrial sector provided enough jobs to sustain stable black working-class communities.⁴

To this story of postwar economic stability, some scholars, joined by nostalgic African-American baby-boomers, add details that celebrate the postwar period. Dismayed by the persistence of high levels of African-American urban poverty through the late twentieth century, they identify dimensions of life during the age of segregation that compare favorably to more recent conditions. They argue, for example, that residential segregation meant that African Americans lived in economically diverse communities. Young children, even those whose parents lacked jobs, watched neighbors set off for work each day and learned early to set their sights on paid employment. Residential segregation also fostered rich cultural institutions as well as segregated schools staffed by top-notch black teachers, who discrimination prevented from securing other jobs. Taught by the cream of the crop, black children learned from professionals of a higher caliber than those found in white schools. Community cohesion, meanwhile, enabled entire neighborhoods to raise children. Homelessness was all but unheard of, and crime and drug abuse were far less common than they would become.⁵

While there is some truth in the recent depictions of postwar African-American urban communities, they risk romanticizing the period. The accounts exaggerate the extent to which industrial employment sustained black working-class communities and underestimate the detrimental consequences of segregation. What’s more, the descriptions render the history of African-American women largely invisible. Baltimore’s story differs considerably from the standard narratives. During the decade
and a half following World War II, civil rights activists in the city fought continuously to open industrial and other employment opportunities to black workers. Although they met with some success, discrimination largely prevented African-American men from winning industrial jobs that paid breadwinner wages. As a result, most black families relied on incomes earned in non-industrial laboring and service positions. The combined wages of men and women sustained many families. The location of black workers on the periphery of Baltimore’s industrial sector meant that African Americans earned significantly lower wages than whites. They were also less likely than Caucasians to be protected by federal labor legislation and to fully benefit from the nation’s social welfare programs. The cumulative effects of the discrimination had gendered, class-specific consequences. Feminists have identified a host of strategies that working-class and poor women adopted within their households to respond to economic hardship. Women, for example, care for sick family members at home to avoid costly doctor’s visits; sew and mend clothing instead of buying ready-made items; and invest considerable time in food preparation to make use of inexpensive ingredients. Boom times in postwar Baltimore enabled many white working-class women to abandon such strategies, while African-American women had less flexibility. Baltimore’s provision of separate and unequal Jim Crow health and welfare services made African-American women’s gendered caretaking responsibilities all the more challenging. Not surprisingly, the desegregation of social-service provision was an important civil-rights goal in postwar Baltimore. As on the jobs front, activists scored important victories. Nevertheless, persistent inequalities meant that
black women shouldered considerable caretaking burdens even as many labored for wages. When women’s many responsibilities are considered, the postwar period hardly seems a golden age.

* * * * *

During the postwar period, Baltimore had a reputation as the nation’s southernmost northern city and the northernmost southern city. Despite its location below the Mason Dixon line, Baltimore’s postwar economy resembled the economies of industrial cities in the northeast and the Midwest rather than cities in the South. Although Baltimore’s economic roots were in commerce rather than industry, by the start of the twentieth century an extensive rail system attracted manufacturers to the city. The Baltimore port, which became one of the largest and most important on the Atlantic, also fueled the city’s industrial development. A wave of mergers early in the twentieth century consumed many locally-owned firms and added nationally-recognizable names to the city’s business directories. Baltimore, the nation’s seventh-largest city in the 1920s, became known as a city of branch plants. Western Electric and Glenn Martin Aircrafts opened facilities in the area during the 1920s, as did Proctor and Gamble, Coca-Cola, Montgomery Wards, McCormick Spice, and American Sugar. By the 1930s, Bethlehem Steel, which in 1916 had purchased mills in Sparrows Point just outside the city, was Baltimore’s largest employer, and it remained so after the war. Bethlehem Steel also ran shipyards at “the Point” and in South Baltimore. General Motors began operations during the 1930s just outside the city, and by the start of World War II, General Electric
and Westinghouse also had Baltimore branches. As in most northeastern cities, Baltimore’s economy was diversified. Commerce remained important: in 1940, forty percent of the city’s workforce labored in trade and service jobs. After the war, the diversity persisted. The industrial sector, however, remained the city’s primary economic engine.6

Postwar Baltimore’s economic health stemmed largely form the city’s privileged position within the global capitalist economy. As The New York Times indicated, military spending helped fuel the city’s economy. As the U.S. amassed weaponry and waged battles against communism abroad, Cold-War budgets kept Baltimore’s factories humming. The influence American industrial firms exercised in the postwar global economy also paid dividends in Baltimore. The U.S. was the only major capitalist country to emerge from World War II with its industrial infrastructure intact. U.S. firms, which had gained considerable influence over American public policy during the war, entered the postwar period determined to both maintain their influence and seize economic opportunities overseas. During the postwar period, they exerted influence not only on domestic but also on foreign policy as they attempted to convince the nation that corporate and national security interests were interlocked. Their success at winning policy outcomes to their liking helped propel Baltimore’s boom times.

The organization of the postwar global economy also enhanced the power of American corporate interests. In 1944, representatives of over forty countries met in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire to devise a way to reconstruct Europe and resuscitate global free trade. Leaders from the United States dominated discussions over the new international economic system, securing many outcomes advantageous to their nation’s
economic interests. The Bretton Woods Agreement linked the currencies of signatory nations through a system of exchange rates tied to the dollar, which was pegged to a fixed value of gold. With the U.S. currency at the heart of the system, American corporations had significant competitive advantages. After the war, many U.S. firms used the system and the weakness of their international competitors to enrich themselves. 7

The extent to which Baltimore’s workers benefited from the boom times enjoyed by industrial interests was not the product of corporate largess, however. Prior to the war, the United States had created the legislative framework that enabled many of Baltimore’s postwar workers to share in the boom times. The framers of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal wrote laws that ensured workers’ right to organize in unions of their own choosing, established fair labor standards and created the nation’s welfare state. During the war, labor shortages in Baltimore increased the strength of unions. As a result of the legislative achievements of the 1930s and the labor victories of the 1940s, postwar industry leaders were compelled to share their profits with their workers. The Bretton Woods system also bolstered the status of postwar workers. The architects of the system had lived through two world wars and a major global depression, and many believed that capitalism unrestrained by government oversight had contributed to the global disasters. They were determined to create a new system that might prevent future calamities. John Maynard Keynes, a British economist who argued government intervention in national economies could preempt recessions and depressions, proposed controls for the postwar international economic system that he believed would facilitate trade and growth while forestalling a repeat of the recent crises. Embedded in many of the proposals Bretton-Woods participants debated was the assumption that the rules of the international
economy should not impede the ability of national leaders to undertake economic planning to combat unemployment and poverty. Although the United States rejected many of Keynes’ proposals, the international system that emerged assumed participating nations would maintain welfare states. The rules of the international economic order, that is, reinforced the economic idea that national governments had a responsibility to redistribute wealth to some extent.8

In postwar Baltimore, however, African Americans were poorly positioned to secure the benefits of the city’s position in the global economy. As in other industrialized cities, discrimination was endemic in Baltimore’s labor market. Located in a border state, Baltimore had led the nation in the size of its free black population at the start of the Civil War. With ninety percent of its African-Americans free, Baltimore had a reputation as the nation’s black capital. Because of the size and history of its black communities, a small but important African-American middle-class emerged in the city. But, Baltimore’s tradition of free black labor had not prevented whites from excluding most African American men from the lucrative trades and skilled jobs after the Civil War. White employers used racism to justify low wages for African Americans, therefore keeping labor costs down. During the Great Depression, in fact, business leaders made the availability of inexpensive African-American labor a selling point in a campaign to attract investors to the city. “The percentage of Negroes is 17.7 affording a ready supply of common labor,” the Baltimore Industrial Bureau bragged in an advertisement.9 White employers confined black men to low-wage positions for another reason as well. A segregated labor force prevented workers from uniting and thus unionizing. Many white employers used black workers to divide and conquer. In some
cases, employers intentionally denied black workers regular jobs so as to hire them as scabs during strikes. Employers’ use of racism to prevent unionization met with considerable success. By World War II, Baltimore’s labor movement was notoriously weak.\textsuperscript{10}

Yet unions themselves had long contributed to disunity among workers. In the 1920s, the National Urban League (NUL) identified a pernicious labor problem that had long confronted African Americans. Those seeking positions in closed shops—firms in which unions made hiring decisions—stood little chance of winning jobs because officials both in American Federation of Labor (AFL) unions and in company and independent organizations only provided jobs or access to apprenticeships to those who were already members. Thus unionized work—generally skilled labor that paid relatively high wages—was largely closed to black workers. As a result of pervasive discrimination, prior to World War II African-American men were confined predominately to work as laborers or to service positions.\textsuperscript{11}

The low wages earned by African-American men led many black women to seek paid employment, and they participated in the labor market to a far greater extent than their white peers. Jim Crow segregation enabled a few middle-class black women to secure positions as teachers, nurses and social workers. For the most part, however, employment discrimination limited women’s vocational options even more severely than men’s. At the start of World War II, eighty-five percent of employed black women held positions in domestic service.\textsuperscript{12}

A sustained campaign by civil rights activists during the war enabled black workers to make headway in industrial employment, but little in skilled jobs. African-
American representation in factories rose from seven to seventeen percent during the war years. The number of African Americans represented by labor unions increased as well. Although many black workers remained suspicious of organized labor, they were key participants in several successful Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) wartime union drives. Black women moved into factory jobs less frequently than did white women and black men. Nevertheless, women as well as men benefited from the labor shortages that compelled reluctant white employers to hire African Americans. Their toehold at the bottom of the industrial ladder, however, positioned them poorly to benefit from the postwar boom times.\(^\text{13}\)

Although Baltimore’s white workers continued to seek advantage for themselves by exploiting their shared racial identity through the war years, many were only a generation or two removed from immigration and were divided by diverse ethnic heritages. Like its northern neighbors, Baltimore attracted a significant number of immigrants at the turn of the century, although fewer than could be found in many full-fledged Yankee cities. Members of ethnic groups who settled in Baltimore built neighborhoods and community institutions. Immigration to the city all but ceased after World War I, and by the 1920s, ethnic community life in Baltimore was in decline. Although anti-Semitism kept Jews a distinct minority, other white working-class neighborhoods became increasingly heterogeneous. Although about thirty percent of Baltimore residents had at least one immigrant parent in 1930, ethnic-based prejudices had weakened, and in the workplace, whiteness largely trumped ethnic identity. White migration to Baltimore accelerated during the war years. This time, however, most of the new migrants hailed from the southern United States. The mountainous regions of West
Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee produced many of the newcomers. During the early war years, they encountered discrimination from white Baltimore natives who stereotyped the migrants as “hillbillies.” The newcomers resented their cold reception. At the same time, many helped to perpetuate the racism that remained endemic in the city. Over the course of the war, the prejudice against white migrants diminished.

Racism, however, did not.\textsuperscript{14}

Baltimore’s immigrants did not simply protect whiteness. They also helped to protect African Americans’ right to vote. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Democrats in the state’s General Assembly passed a series of constitutional amendment intended to disenfranchise African Americans. The Democrats were unable, however, to convince the state’s electorate to pass them. The failure stemmed largely from their inability to convince Baltimore’s sizable immigrant and naturalized populations that understanding and grandfather clauses and similar disenfranchising measures would not be applied to whites. Thereafter, although a few small cities in Maryland barred African Americans from participation in local elections, most black citizens in the state retained the franchise.\textsuperscript{15}

The lack of legal disenfranchisement did not prevent Baltimore officials from trying to minimize the impact of black voters on city politics. At the end of the nineteenth century, Harry S. Cummings became the city’s first African-American City Council member, and between 1907 and 1923 and again between 1927 and 1931, black representation on the Council continued. During redistricting in 1932, however, white politicians gerrymandered black citizens out of representation by creating wards that prevented African Americans from joining forces as a voting bloc. Until the mid-1950s,
African Americans were unable to win even a single representative on the City Council. During World War II, however, as African-American migration swelled the city’s African-American population, civil rights activists became increasingly adept at mobilizing voting power to affect the outcomes of citywide elections. African-American support helped liberal Republican Theodore McKeldin beat the city’s aging Democratic machine and win the mayor’s office in 1943. In exchange for their support, African Americans expected appointments and municipal jobs from McKeldin. The new mayor complied. The job gains were far from substantial, but the achievement was important. Although civil rights activists had undertaken voter registration drives in the past, during the war the city’s population of African Americans was finally able to flex its political muscle.  

Strict residential segregation also contributed to Baltimore’s status as the nation’s southernmost northern city. As was the case in many American cities, during the nineteenth century African Americans and whites lived in close proximity in many Baltimore neighborhoods. At the turn of the century, however, whites responded to increasing African-American migration by attempting to legislate residential patterns. In 1910, City Council member George W. West proposed a bill to legally segregate the city’s neighborhoods. His measure passed in the City Council but was struck down by the courts after an African-American homeowner sued the city. For the next few years, Council members tried repeatedly to achieve West’s goal. African Americans in Baltimore and in other cities used the courts to prevent elected officials from legally enforcing residential segregation. Victory before the bar, however, hardly translated into multicultural neighborhoods. White residents used restrictive covenants, intimidation
and violence to achieve the ends the City Council could not win. During the 1930s, federal housing policies began to reinforce residential segregation. By wartime, most African Americans lived in neighborhoods within one and a half square miles on the west side of the city. During the war, between 60,000 and 90,000 black migrants moved to the city. They crowded into segregated neighborhoods at a rate of 300 to 400 per month well after the vacancy rate in black Baltimore reached zero. As a result, over 200,000 African Americans, a full fifth of the city’s population, resided in only one-fiftieth of Baltimore’s acreage. By the postwar period, Baltimore easily rivaled its northern industrial competitors in the extent of its residential segregation.¹⁷

Baltimore’s many Yankee proclivities could not disguise the city’s unmistakable southern drawl. Although Democrats failed to disenfranchise African Americans in Maryland during the early twentieth century, their effort to import “Jim Crowism” met with complete success. Democrats in the General Assembly passed the states first segregation laws during the first decade of the twentieth century.¹⁸ De facto segregation had existed in Maryland in many arenas since the Civil War. The reality of legal segregation, however, instituted initially in legislation that segregated passengers on trains and other means of public transportation, came as a shock to many African Americans, who considered their state far more enlightened than those to its south. Outraged by the new laws, black leaders protested in Annapolis, but the efforts were in vain. Legal segregation prompted a rise in de facto segregation in Baltimore that eventually consumed the city’s hotels, restaurants, theaters, department stores, parks, toilet facilities, hospitals and other social welfare agencies. Jim Crow made industrialized Baltimore into a place its native son and civil rights champion Thurgood
Marshall described as “Up South.”19 During the late 1940s, researchers from the National Urban League noted, “In actual practice, Baltimore is a southern city and has adopted practices in race relations that far exceed in severity the practices of other large communities in the Deep South, as well as the border areas.”20

The combination of Baltimore’s northern and southern attributes meant that there were few battles the city’s postwar civil rights activists did not have to wage. Within Baltimore’s segregated African-American communities emerged the tools that black residents used to fight discrimination and racism. Black neighborhoods housed a network of institutions, some of which had roots in antebellum America. Black churches had an especially long and important history in the city. Baptists made up the largest denomination among African Americans, while Episcopalians had the oldest congregation. Baltimore had also been home to the first black Catholic parish, and the Oblate Sisters of Providence, a group of African-American nuns first commissioned in 1831, remained important in the small but prominent Catholic community. Methodists also had a significant presence in the city, as did the Sharp Street United Methodist Church, home of the first black congregation in Baltimore. The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination, which had been created in Baltimore in 1802 when a group split off from the Sharp Street Methodists, also had significant numbers of congregants in the city, as did many store-front churches. In Sunday-morning sermons, clergy across the city—some lecturing in the stern tone of a patriarch, others fired by the passion of revelation—blended spiritual guidance and political advocacy. Although
clergy members differed in their assessments of the responses pernicious racism in the city required, from their ranks emerged many of the leaders and foot soldiers of the city’s civil rights movement.21

Baltimore also boasted a critically important black-owned press. The Afro-American, a newspaper purchased by John Murphy in 1890 and edited from 1919 onward by his son Carl, was perhaps the most important black business in the city and a powerful force behind civil rights activism. The paper covered events of interest to its national African-American readership in editions published in cities across the country. Its Baltimore editions also included stories on local politics. The paper’s editorial page provided readers with perspectives on international, national and local events as well as insights into Baltimore’s on-going civil rights struggles, in which Murphy and his paper were often intimately involved. The editor was a member of the board of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and during the 1930s, he helped to revive the city’s branch of the organization, which had become relatively inactive during the 1920s. No resident in Baltimore had the ear of as many of the city’s black citizens as Murphy.22

Murphy’s paper was hardly limited to political content. Articles in The African American also kept readers updated on the goings-on within the city’s many churches and social organizations, including the numerous fraternal groups, sororities, lodges and other private clubs. Readers also looked to the paper for news of the latest events at Morgan and Coppin, two local black colleges that had graduated many of the city’s African-American professionals. What’s more, The Afro American covered cotillion dances, elegant weddings and other exploits of the who’s who of black Baltimore. The
paper also included articles on the city’s vibrant cultural scene, reporting on the hottest acts appearing in clubs on Pennsylvania Avenue in West Baltimore, the epicenter of the city’s African-American arts world. The Afro-American also kept readers current on all forms of sporting events, providing scores and analysis of high school, college, amateur and professional match-ups. Much of the energy that sustained the city’s civil-rights activists was described in the paper’s non-civil rights related articles.  

During the postwar period, most issues of the weekly paper included news of local civil rights activism. Often leading the battles were the Baltimore chapter of the NAACP and the city’s affiliate of the National Urban League (NUL). The NAACP prioritized the legal struggle for political equality and civil rights, directing considerable resources towards issues most pressing in the South. The NUL, meanwhile, often adopted the methodology of social workers and social scientists to combat problems experienced by African Americans in cities mostly, but not entirely, in the North. In Baltimore, affiliates of both of the nation’s most mainstream of civil rights organizations found plenty to keep them busy.  

The Baltimore NAACP received its charter in 1913, only four years after its parent organization was created, becoming the second branch of the organization in the nation. During its early years, members spearheaded the fights against lynching in Maryland and against Baltimore’s housing segregation laws. Concerned about African Americans’ access to jobs and public services, they also protested rampant employment discrimination in the municipal government. During the 1920s, the organization lost momentum but Murphy encouraged new leadership to revive the organization during the Depression. It was then that the Baltimore NAACP began to adopt mass-action in
addition to its more traditional strategies. Although its leadership lacked the radicalism of those who would rise to the helm of some branches, the Baltimore NAACP supported a Don’t-Buy-Where-You-Can’t-Work campaign, which helped win it a reputation for militancy within the national NAACP. Still, some of the battles the organization chose to pursue reflected the middle-class status of its leadership. The organization desegregated the University of Maryland Law School and fought to open other professional programs in higher education to African-American students. During World War II, the Baltimore NAACP was also led in the fight for jobs for black workers, both male and female.25

Lillie May Jackson was the force behind the resurgence of the Baltimore NAACP during the mid-1930s, and she remained at the organization’s helm until 1970. Born in Baltimore in 1889, Jackson graduated from Coppin Teachers College. She worked in the city’s public schools, then married Kieffer A. Jackson, an exhibitor of religious films. Together the couple had four children. Jackson was devoutly religious and not a little righteous. She understood her efforts in the NAACP to be God’s work, and she grew the Baltimore branch of the organization into one of the nation’s biggest chapters largely by working within the city’s African-American religious communities. Jackson also attracted large numbers of school teachers to the NAACP; the combination of church-goers and educators helps account for the organization’s sizable female membership. In keeping with the ideology that motivated many African-American activists of her generation and class, she believed firmly that it was her “job to help [her] people and lift them up.” Yet she also felt strongly that it was her responsibility to “prove that the Constitution meant just what it said.”26 Her reputation as a successful leader extended well beyond Maryland, and during the late 1940s, the membership of the national
NAACP elected her to the organization’s Board of Directors. Jackson was known not only for her activism but also for her sharp tongue and domineering leadership style. Baltimore NAACP board members who disagreed with Jackson’s dictates sometimes opted to skip meetings entirely rather than battle with, in the words of one member, their “sort of autocratic” leader. Murphy stepped in on several occasions to mediate conflicts between the local and national NAACP when Jackson’s anti-Semitic comments created tensions. Jackson’s style even provoked the unflappable Ella Baker. “Yes it is true what they say about Baltimore,” Baker cautioned an NAACP staff members sent to the city to assist Jackson during a membership drive. Yet as her son-in-law later noted, “She made [Maryland] a lot closer to what it ought to be than anybody ever imagined it would be, and I think she did it by the sheer force of her determination with very little resources to work with.”

Also contributing significantly to the leadership of the Baltimore NAACP was Jackson’s daughter, Juanita Jackson Mitchell. Mitchell was born in 1913 and attended Baltimore City schools. She received both a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania. Returning home during the Depression, she co-founded and became president of the Citywide Young People’s Forum, a progressive organization which was supported by the NAACP. Largely because of Mitchell’s influence, the Baltimore NAACP gained a militant reputation for its willingness to use the picket line in addition to the legal strategies typically associated with the national organization, strategies that only could have been pursued with Jackson’s blessings. After beginning her activist career in Baltimore, Mitchell served as a special assistant to Walter White and as the National Youth Director of the NAACP. In 1938, she married Clarence Mitchell.
The union joined two of the city’s most powerful African-American families and strengthened the link between the Baltimore branch and the national NAACP. Following World War II, Clarence Mitchell became the Labor Secretary of the national NAACP, then director of its Washington, D.C. Bureau and chief lobbyist in the nation’s capital. In the latter position, he played a major role in shaping national civil rights legislation during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Juanita Mitchell’s reputation as a civil rights activist and leader was well-established before her marriage and remained distinct from her husband’s thereafter. In 1943, her work won her an offer from Mary McLeod Bethune to become the Executive Secretary of the National Council of Negro Women. She declined Bethune’s request but a few years later embraced a challenge put to her by NAACP legal giant Charles Houston. In 1950, she became the first African-American woman to graduate from the University of Maryland Law School and to practice law in the state. A lone woman in a world dominated by men, Juanita Mitchell used her legal training to combat Jim Crow segregation and discrimination in Baltimore.\(^\text{30}\)

Under the powerful mother/daughter leadership team of Jackson and Mitchell, the Baltimore NAACP became one of the most vibrant branches in the country. Although neither Jackson nor Mitchell asserted a self-described womanist or feminist agenda, their activism evinced an attentiveness to the concerns of women. In one of Jackson’s earliest civil rights campaigns, she worked with Thurgood Marshall on a county-by-county effort in Maryland to equalize the salaries of black and white teachers. Jackson and Mitchell also engaged in civil rights struggles that responded to the needs of women as family caretakers. Some of their postwar activism demonstrated concern for the challenges segregation posed to women who provided both emotional and physical support for their
families. Meanwhile, they championed the same issues that occupied the nation’s male civil rights leaders. Their decades at the helm of the Baltimore NAACP indicate that African Americans in the city found nothing aberrant about having female civil rights leaders. In fact, many were proud of the Jackson/Mitchell duo. “God opened my mouth and no man can shut it,” Jackson once declared.31 For that, many black residents were grateful.32

Joining the NAACP at the forefront of Baltimore’s civil rights movement, but decidedly less attuned to the interests of women, was the Baltimore Urban League (BUL). Members of an interracial coalition founded the organization in 1924, and the BUL became incorporated in 1943. In keeping with the mission of its parent organization, the leadership of the BUL largely confined itself to advocating for employment opportunities and access to public services for the city’s African Americans. Initially committed to the almost exclusive use of moral suasion to achieve its goals, BUL leaders generally eschewed the picket lines and lawsuits that were the hallmarks of the Baltimore NAACP. The BUL favored the research study that documented the effect of discrimination on African Americans. During the 1930s, for example, the BUL conducted a study of New Deal relief recipients and uncovered discrimination in the distribution of services. They used the results to push for improved services for black residents and to win African Americans positions as case workers with the Baltimore Emergency Relief Commission. The BUL also worked to open low-cost housing options to African Americans and to win better health and recreation services for black city
residents. During the war, the BUL was a major force in the fight to convince white employers to hire black workers. As a result, by the conclusion of the war the BUL had already garnered quite a significant civil rights track record.33

By the postwar period, the BUL had a reputation in Baltimore as a moderate organization dominated by a largely Caucasian, sometimes Jewish leadership. The organization’s board was also entirely male, and many members had affiliations with important businesses or labor organizations in the city. The BUL’s leadership also included some prominent African Americans, including those often found on the NAACP’s masthead. Juanita Mitchell served a stint as a member of the BUL’s Ladies Auxiliary, and her husband was an early board member, where he served alongside The Afro American’s Murphy. The BUL had its own African-American leadership as well. Most influential during the war years and again during the 1950s and 1960s was Furman Templeton. An alumnus of Lincoln University, Templeton joined the BUL as the United States was preparing to enter World War II. From his post as Industrial Secretary, Templeton advocated on behalf of prospective black war workers, efforts which won him a place on The Afro American’s Honor Roll for 1941. He left the League for a federal job during the war and then joined the management of Murphy’s paper. In 1950, he returned to the BUL as the organization’s executive secretary, and from that position he played a leading role in the fight to improve access for African Americans to jobs and social services in the city.34

By the postwar years, Baltimore was also home to a small but growing number of white liberals who were committed to civil rights. The most prominent among them served terms on the board of the BUL and also lent the weight of their other
organizational affiliations to civil rights causes. Although relations between African Americans and Jews were sometimes tense, the leadership of the city’s Jewish communities frequently participated in fights against segregation and discrimination. Some white Protestant and Catholic leaders were also active in civil rights battles, as were the leaders of several labor unions, particularly those affiliated with the CIO. A few business executives also cautiously embraced civil rights struggles. The leaders of the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC), which included corporate executives from one hundred local firms, were considerably more liberal than their members. GBC was primarily concerned with the viability of Baltimore’s downtown commercial district. In fact, during the 1950s, the organization hired the urban planners who designed a long-term redevelopment plan that the City Council ultimately adopted. Although the plan subsumed neighborhood concerns to business interests, some among the GBC’s leadership identified civil rights causes as compatible with the group’s goals for the city. Baltimore was also home to a chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which had a predominately white membership. In addition, the Citizen’s Housing and Planning Association attracted an interracial group that worked to improve race relations in the city.  

During the postwar period the fight for employment opportunities for African Americans remained a major focus of the Baltimore civil rights movement. Of immediate concern was maintaining wartime job gains through the reconversion period. An article in a September 1945 edition of The Afro American suggested that the efforts were not having much success. The paper reported that Glenn L. Martin Aircraft
Company, which had employed 3,000 African Americans at war’s end, had reduced its black workforce by over ninety-nine percent, so that only thirteen African-American remained with the firm. At the start of the war, it had taken a sustained effort by members of the National Negro Congress, the BUL and the Baltimore NAACP to convince Martin officials to hire black workers. By early 1944, over 2,000 African Americans, about five percent of the company’s workforce, had jobs with the firm, and close to seventy percent of the black workers were women. But with the war over and demand for aircrafts temporarily in decline, the firm sent Baltimore’s black Rosie the Riveters packing along with the rest of its African-American employees. The layoffs enraged the city’s civil rights activists. Eventually, the United Automobile Workers (UAW), which had won representation of Martin’s workers during the war, forced the company to comply with seniority provisions in the workers’ contracts. As a result, several hundred African Americans returned to their jobs. The firm soon closed its Baltimore plant, however, and transferred employees to a formerly all-white facility outside of the city. There, company officials assigned their remaining black employees to basement workplaces and built new toilet facilities and an additional cafeteria to maintain segregation.36

The job losses were not limited to Martin. In fact, they reflected employment patterns evident nationwide. In 1945, Frieda S. Miller, the director of the U.S. Women’s Bureau, predicted that African-American would be among the first wartime workers to lose their jobs. She was correct. By 1947, the BUL reported, black women were having difficulty finding anything other than menial positions. African-American men were vulnerable as well. In its final report, the federal Fair Employment Practices Commission
(FEPC) noted that the wartime employment gains of minority workers were “being lost through an unchecked revival of discriminatory practices.” In 1948, the Maryland Commission on Problems Affecting the Negro Population confirmed the trend in their state. In Baltimore, Jackson worried that the job losses were taking a toll even on those African-American workers who had job skills. “At the end of the war, the old patterns again appeared and skilled colored men began experiencing great difficulty in getting work,” she reported to the national NAACP.

Civil rights advocates anticipating such an outcome, launched struggles for postwar equal opportunity even before the war came to an end. Some of the activism in Baltimore called for legislative change on the federal level. Championing the fights in D.C. was Clarence Mitchell, who commuted to the capitol from his Baltimore home to lobby on behalf of the national NAACP. His involvement in federal-level battles may have created more interest in the issues in Baltimore than they garnered elsewhere. The first major battle, which began during the late war years, was for a permanent FEPC. On the national level, the effort was spearheaded by A. Phillip Randolph, who established the National Council for a Permanent FEPC. The national NAACP actively participated in the coalition. The national group relied for support on local and state-level activism; beginning in 1944, the Baltimore NAACP helped lead the fight in Maryland. NAACP members sent telegrams and letters to the president and their state’s senators and representatives urging them to support the measure. Members also lobbied Maryland’s elected officials on the state level. Activists continued the battle after the war. In 1946, the Baltimore NAACP helped found the Associated Groups for a Permanent FEPC, which included over one hundred organizations and was one of at least two statewide
groups committed to winning the legislation. In January, the coalition hosted a mass meeting that attracted representatives not only from African-American organizations but also from several predominately white unions and groups. The group also sent 150 lobbyists to Washington, DC, directing a special contingent to visit Maryland’s Senator Millard Tydings, who had publicly opposed the measure.\(^{39}\)

While civil rights activists often prioritized the legislative battles for a permanent FEPC, many believed that the improvement of African Americans’ position in the labor market also required the federal government to guarantee jobs for all Americans in search of work. The NAACP favored “fair and full employment,” Clarence Mitchell explained at the organization’s 1946 convention. The NAACP became an early proponent of the Full Employment Act of 1945, which promised a job to all prospective workers and also committed the federal government to job creation when positions in the private sector were unavailable. Representatives of the organization participated in early planning meetings on behalf of the measure, and Walter White testified in favor of the bill during congressional hearings. The NUL as well as other African-American and labor organizations later joined the coalition supporting full employment. In Baltimore the issue did not garner the level of activism fair employment received, but it had staunch advocates. The editors of *The Afro American*, for example, called on readers to “stand solidly behind the Full Employment Bill by urging our representatives in Congress to back it to the hilt.” Recalling the activism required to win the wartime FEPC, the editors argued, “We clamored for war jobs. Let us clamor with equal vigor for jobs in peacetime.”\(^{40}\)
Ultimately, neither fair nor full employment legislation made it through the conservative Congress of the late 1940s. Southern Democrats aligned with Republicans to prevent the creation of a permanent FEPC and a right to work in the United States. Despite the defeats, efforts for a permanent FEPC continued. On the national level, activists also set their sights on eliminating employment discrimination within the federal government. The issue had substantive support in Baltimore largely because the headquarters of the Social Security Administration was located in the city. During the war years, the Baltimore NAACP and BUL had successfully pressured the Social Security Administration to increase African-American employment. In addition, the U.S. Post Office had historically been an important source of African-American male employment. Activists in Baltimore anticipated that a federal fair employment provision would bolster on-going efforts to improve employment conditions there.\(^41\)

On the national level, Clarence Mitchell championed the issue. The NAACP drafted a sample executive order that it circulated among sympathetic officials in Washington, D.C. The NUL also joined in the effort. After investigating the status of the 300,000 African Americans in the federal workforce, the NUL explained to President Harry Truman that seventy percent of black workers held unclassified positions—jobs with the least status and pay in the federal system. Other national organizations and unions also joined in the struggle to outlaw discrimination in the federal workforce and military. Ultimately the efforts were successful. On July 26, 1948, the president signed executive orders that promised equal opportunity in the federal government and an integrated U.S. military.\(^42\)
Executive Order 9980, which applied to the federal workforce, had immediate ramifications in Baltimore. The same year it was issued Social Security officials created the Ewing Committee to investigate discrimination at the agency. Shortly thereafter, the committee issued a report that urged the agency to fully desegregate its facilities, hire African-American personnel officials, make employment decisions without consideration of race, and make promotion decisions based on merit regardless of the racial composition of the employees a prospective supervisor would oversee. Social Security officials agreed to adopt the recommendations. Completely out of step with fellow employers in Jim Crow Baltimore, they abolished segregated units, hired an African-American personnel counselor and implemented policies intended to prevent discrimination in hiring and promotion. Thereafter, although African Americans continued to experience discrimination at the agency, conditions improved. Other federal agencies in the city, including the post office, made changes as well. As a result, it 1949, the BUL noted with enthusiasm “a marked increase in the colored employment in Federal agencies.”\textsuperscript{43} African Americans made up sixteen percent of local Social-Security employees and over a quarter of Baltimore’s U.S. postal service workers. In the one realm in which civil rights activists had won a fair employment provision, the measure seemed to be helping.\textsuperscript{44}

Unfortunately, the BUL also reported at the end of the 1940s that the changes in federal agencies were among the very few positive developments for black workers in Baltimore. Most worrisome, African Americans remained largely excluded from the heart of the city’s economy: its industrial sector. One of the most significant obstacles to improving the postwar industrial-employment prospects of African Americans in
Baltimore was the Maryland Department of Employment Security (MDES). During an investigation of MDES in the late 1940s, BUL researchers discovered that the agency employed only one African-American employer-contact representative, whose job it was to find new employment opportunities for black workers. He worked alone in “the colored section” of the office rather than in a team, as did his white co-workers. His job required that he meet with employers, but he could only contact those whose workforces were already majority African-American or those to whom his coworkers recommended him. As a result, the BUL reported, “Over 90 percent of the visits previously made by the colored employer-contact representative were minor market firms [with less than 25 employees].” The constraints under which the African-American representative worked enabled MDES to severely circumscribe the employment opportunities of black workers and largely exclude them from jobs in core industries. “Either Negro workers, or someone working in their interest, had to make direct contact with employers if Negro workers were to obtain employment in industrial establishments,” BUL officials argued.45

Meanwhile, those African-American workers who had managed to secure and keep industrial employment remained largely confined to unskilled, low-wage jobs. In fact, social scientist Mark Stern estimates that at the end of the 1940s, -- percent of black industrial workers in Baltimore earned less than poverty-level wages. Labor unions played a role in confining African-American men to unskilled jobs. Union contracts frequently reinforced racialized employment hierarchies in the industrial workplace. Agreements between the United Steelworkers of America and the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, the city’s largest employer, were a case in point. Historically, Bethlehem Steel had been an important source of jobs for black workers; through the 1950s,
approximately a third of the company’s workforce was African-American. But black workers had long been concentrated in the most dangerous and poorly-paid positions in the company. As McCall White, an African American man who started working for the corporation during the 1940s, recalled, “Wages were much lower, much lower than for white workers. Job classes ran from 1 to 32. Black workers usually stayed around job class 1 and no higher than job class 4.” During the war, a successful organizing drive by the United Steelworkers won employees union representation, a campaign in which African Americans played a key role. In return, union officials promised a policy of non-discrimination. Despite the pledge, the contracts the union negotiated failed to effectively challenge the segregation of black workers into the lowest grades. African Americans fought the discrimination themselves, and with some union support, small numbers of black workers started to make inroads into skilled and supervisory positions by the early 1950s. Greater numbers moved into semi-skilled or operative jobs. But the concentration of African Americans in unskilled positions remained a problem throughout the postwar period.

The situation at Bethlehem Steel was far from unique. Despite slow but important employment changes in the city’s industrial sector, discrimination remained rampant. African-American workers lacked an enforceable method for seeking redress. National civil rights activists had been unsuccessful in their attempt to include a non-discrimination clause in the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which would have enabled the federal government to withhold protections from labor unions that practiced discrimination. As a result, as the authors of study on African Americans in Baltimore during the mid-1950s noted, “It is abundantly clear that a very limited segment of the
industrial units of Metropolitan Baltimore (business establishments or local unions) have within the basic law of their plants the legal foundation necessary for the systemic application of a policy of non-discrimination through the normal labor-management machinery for settling disputes.⁴⁸ Worse, in 1960, a committee studying Baltimore’s “progress towards equity” protested, “On the Labor front many trade unions still bar Negroes altogether, or relegate them to inferior or segregated status.”⁴⁹ To be sure, many of the city’s labor leaders actively promoted civil rights causes. They leaders were also beholden to a largely white rank and file, however, which hardly championed equal opportunity.

Because black industrial worker were concentrated in unskilled positions, they were particularly vulnerable to employers’ efforts to mechanize production. During the postwar years, industrialists throughout the United States built on wartime innovations in their quest to automate production and by so doing lower labor costs. The trend towards automation became increasingly evident in Baltimore during the 1950s. Power machines replaced laborers on many of the city’s postwar construction sites as well as in some of Baltimore’s aging factories. The change enabled employers to reduce their need for unskilled laborers while stalling growth citywide in the number of semi-skilled positions. Automation took a particularly hard toll on African-American workers. As The Baltimore Sun reported, “Negro unemployment, locally as nationally, is being magnified by automation and other technological advances which are steadily reducing the need for unskilled and blue-collar workers.”⁵⁰

Early symptoms of deindustrialization also did not bode well for black workers efforts’ to gain a firmer foothold in the city’s factories. As a consulting firm studying
Baltimore’s regional economy explained, continuous wartime use had “worn out” industrial machinery in many older urban factories. Then, after the war, “Lack of space, increasing congestion, unfavorable cost-price movements, and inflation accompanied the increased wage demands and acted as tremendous disruptive forces for older areas of the Northeast and Middle Atlantic states.” In some instances, firms responded by relocating their facilities outside of aging cities. In Baltimore, the military contracts that helped to produce the region’s boom times often went to suburban-based firms. The shift had serious consequences for the city. Its suburbs already had begun to outpace Baltimore in attracting industrial jobs before the war. As early as the 1930s, manufacturing employment in the city had dropped by ten percent while it had mushroomed by over 250 percent in the suburbs. During the 1950s, deindustrialization quickened, and the city lost 338 manufacturing firms. Manufacturing remained the city’s largest employment category through 1960. Nevertheless, deindustrialization threatened to undermine the city’s postwar prosperity before black workers won their share of the boom times.52

Despite these changes, civil rights activists remained committed to opening and improving employment opportunities for black workers—within the industrial sector and also in the rest of the city’s labor market. During the late 1940s and 1950s, the BUL was the organization most consistently dedicated to improving the job opportunities of African Americans. Its Industrial Committee was initially the only branch of the BUL with a paid staff. The Industrial Secretary and Assistant Industrial Secretary worked directly with MDES officials as well as with private employment-agencies in an effort to open new jobs, especially in the industrial sector, to black workers. They also conferred
with members of the Maryland Unemployment Compensation Commission to combat discrimination in the distribution of unemployment insurance. In addition, they held vocational fairs, monitored African-American access to and participation in vocational education, worked with government officials to open public-sector employment, mediated strikes, helped job candidates prepare for trade-specific examinations, and negotiated with business leaders and union officials. Without the muscle of a Permanent FEPC, BUL members typically relied on persuasion to win jobs for black workers. The organization’s officials also attempted to fill the BUL board with local corporate and union leaders, who held the keys to important job opportunities and who BUL leaders hoped to inspire with a sense of urgency about the employment prospects of African Americans.53

Although it was not the primary focus of the organization’s activism, the Baltimore branch of the NAACP also expended considerable effort on the job front. After the war, numerous public and private entities began construction projects in the city. The NAACP monitored the distribution of federal contracts in Baltimore and worked to ensure the enforcement of the equal-opportunity provisions such contracts mandated. They also pressed the City Council to prohibit employment discrimination in construction projects funded by the city. Although that effort failed, the organization did convince the Board of School Commissioners to hire some black workers on a school construction project. The NAACP also worked with trade unions to win increased opportunities for black workers. Negotiating directly with the international office of a bricklayers union, the NAACP secured membership and membership benefits for some black Baltimore workers. Like the BUL, the organization also pressured individual
employers to open skilled jobs to African-American workers. Their efforts achieved important, though piecemeal, victories. By the mid-1950s, the NAACP had helped to win limited numbers of African Americans jobs as plumbers, electricians, telephone workers, and bus, street car and taxi drivers. The NAACP also improved African Americans’ access to professional jobs by winning the integration of some professional and graduate schools.\textsuperscript{54}

Civil rights activists knew that efforts to persuade employers and unions to abandon discriminatory practices were likely to meet with only minimal results. As a result, during the mid-1950s activists began to pressure Baltimore’s City Council for a local fair employment practices ordinance. By then, twelve states and twenty-nine cities had FEPC legislation. Baltimore activists hoped to make their city the first below the Mason-Dixon Line with a similar measure. In 1954, a large coalition of civic, labor, religious, and welfare organizations came together to support the local FEPC. The BUL played a leading role throughout the campaign. The NAACP also sponsored the measure, which The Afro-American strongly endorsed. Supporters faced a daunting task as they tried to convince a majority of the white City Council to support the FEPC. In March 1954, four relatively sympathetic members introduced the bill that would ban discrimination based on both race and religion. Hundreds of African Americans immediately wrote to the Council to urge passage. Then, at a hearing on behalf of the bill, over 200 supporters crowded into the Council chambers as thirty speakers presented their case. Lilly May Jackson spoke in favor of the measure, as did William Passano, the president of the BUL, who forcefully informed the Council that all of the businesses and industries in the city discriminated against African Americans.\textsuperscript{55}

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Public opponents of the baby FEPC included the city’s two major white newspapers as well as several independent labor unions. The newspapers’ editors cautioned that Baltimore had already made many advances in race relations and that passage of the bill would only antagonize whites and hamper further progress. Representatives from the unions argued that the measure would impinge on the freedom of both individuals and businesses. Ultimately, the bill’s opponents won the day. As the measure’s supporters bemoaned their loss, Fred Nichols of the BUL pledged, “We are going to begin work immediately for the reintroduction of the bill before the full council in the fall. We shall let no grass grow under our feet.”

Ultimately, two summers worth of grass did grow before activists won an FEPC. By 1956, Baltimore finally had a black City Council member. The movement of whites out of the city, the continuing growth in the African-American population through immigration, and on-going voter registration drives by civil rights groups had overwhelmed white efforts to exclude black politicians from municipal office. In late 1955, Walter Dixon won a seat in the City Council. The following spring, he reintroduced the FEPC ordinance. This time the bill passed, but only after the City Council had all but robbed it of enforcement power. As a result, although the bill did create an Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC), the commissioners could combat discrimination only by holding open hearings. The Afro American’s editorial board described the new FEPC as “another step forward.” The paper’s editors could not fully contain their skepticism, however. “If discrimination in employment can be cured by persuading employers and unions then it should be done that way. This is an effort to see if this method can be successful,” the editors reflected doubtfully.
It quickly became apparent that quite a number of people in Baltimore had no intention of even putting the persuasion method to the test. At the FEPC signing ceremony, Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro, a product of the city’s Democratic machine, made his tepid commitment to equal opportunity clear. “The [Equal Employment Opportunities] Commission…will require intelligence, diplomacy and a recognition of the conditions which exist in our community. I shall give every thought to the selection of a Commission which will effectuate the purposes of this ordinance without disruption or unnecessary interference in the economic and business life of our community.”

The mayor followed through on his thinly veiled pledge to contain the law when he announced his appointments to the EEOC six months later. Although several of his appointees had been supportive of civil rights efforts, only one of the nine commissioners was African-American. Two months later, D'Alesandro appointed Francis Valle, a political crony who would soon admit to being prejudiced, to the directorship of the EEOC. Although the appointment was eventually overturned, the mayor’s lack of commitment undermined much of the utility of the FEPC. By 1957, The Afro American noted with chagrin, “IT WAS hoped” that the EEOC would do something to improve employment opportunities for black workers.

By the end of the 1950s, the EEOC had failed to achieve the ends its advocates had envisioned. What’s more, efforts to integrate more black men into the city’s industrial sector and improve their position within it had met with only limited success. By the mid-1950s, black men in semi-skilled work had reached wage parity with their white peers. Black men’s representation in industrial employment had increased from its wartime level of seventeen percent to about twenty percent. Thirty percent of male wage
earners citywide held industrial jobs, however, suggesting that black men were actually pulling down a white rate that well exceeded the citywide total. By the end of the decade, black men still remained concentrated in unskilled positions. In 1960, African Americans made up nearly seventy percent of the city’s unskilled workers while whites accounted for an astounding ninety-two percent of skilled workers.  

The employment discrimination that African-American men faced in Baltimore’s labor market led many black women to seek paid employment. In 1950, nearly forty-five percent of African American females over the age of 14—as compared to a third of white females—participated in the labor force. While some women may have chosen to enter the paid labor-market to satisfy personal ambition, many more filled low-wage service jobs to contribute to their family’s income. Like black men, African-American women made some significant employment gains during the postwar period. By 1950, the percentage who worked in domestic service had dropped to forty-four percent from eighty-five percent in 1940. The number continued to decline during the 1950s. The change was significant. Yet the movement of black women out of domestic and into other types of low-wage service work largely accounted for the change. What’s more, by the end of the decade domestic service remained the employment category with the largest number of African-American female workers in Baltimore. The new positions failed to yield black women the wages earned by their white peers. By the mid-1950s, black women’s median yearly income of $844 equaled only about sixty percent of that earned by white women. The concentration of African-American women in menial positions led researchers studying Baltimore’s labor scene to note, “the Negro woman
remains the least utilized pool of potential urban industrial labor power having much less than proportionate representation with her white counterpart both according to main occupational and industry classifications.”

Even the combined earnings of African-American men and women failed to close the income gap that separated black and white families. In a study conducted during the mid-1950s, researchers found that the median African American income in the city was only fifty-six percent of white income and that the gap between black and white earnings had increased since 1949. Employment discrimination was largely to blame. By the end of the decade, the authors of a report on Baltimore’s “progress towards equity” concluded, “…when all the advances are ticked off, the employment picture remains a gloomy one.” The authors of another study reached similar conclusions. “Negroes in Baltimore are not utilized to the full extent of their capabilities. There are a few secretaries, a few foremen, a few engineers and telephone operators, but the great majority of colored Baltimoreans continue to sweep and scrub, push and haul, tote and carry in menial, unskilled occupations.” By the end of the 1950s, poverty remained widespread. Nearly a third of black families earned incomes less than the $3,000 the federal government would identify as the poverty line, and almost two-thirds of families earned less than the $5,180 the Bureau of Labor Statistics calculated was needed to sustain a family at a “moderate but adequate” level. Poverty rates had certainly declined over the postwar period, as both male and female workers continued to make gains in employment categories from which they had been excluded. In fact, Baltimore’s black poverty figures were better than the national average. And some families truly shared in the city’s boom times. As Pete Wallace, an employee of Bethlehem Steel, recalled, “If
the man worked [in the steel mills]…and his wife worked for Social Security, we thought we had it made.”64 But most men did not work in factories, and few women had government posts. In Baltimore, the postwar period had not been a working-class heyday.65

A welfare gap exacerbated the divergence in incomes that separated black and white families. A number of scholars have argued that the American welfare state has contributed more substantially to white than to black economic security. Political scientist Robert Lieberman accounts for the difference by explaining that many federal protective labor legislations and welfare laws were “race-laden.” Although they made no specific reference to race, they disqualified large numbers of African Americans from receiving benefits equivalent to those provided to whites. Laws the established the national minimum wage and created the unemployment insurance and social security systems, for example, did not extend protection or coverage to agricultural and domestic workers, occupations in which African Americans were concentrated. Scholars further criticize many welfare provisions for disadvantaging women. Policy makers understood women as dependent mothers and wives who would receive welfare benefits through their worker-husbands rather than as economic citizens in their own right. As a result, welfare initiatives sometimes increased women’s dependency and economic vulnerability. Scholars also note that the framers of the welfare state created a two-tiered system that rewarded most white, male labor-force participation relatively generously but responded to some of the causes of female poverty, such as single motherhood, with miserly and intrusive programs. The combination of the race and gender biases meant that black families were often poorly protected by the U.S. welfare state.66
Civil rights activists had long voiced concerns about the inadequacy of the American welfare state. During the Great Depression, when the United States created the infrastructure of its welfare state, civil rights leaders from the NAACP and NUL had advocated for a greater role for the federal government in American life and fought unsuccessfully to prevent racism from being institutionalized in New Deal measures. Civil rights leaders were early advocates of a national minimum wage, for example, and they also opposed the exclusion of domestic and agricultural workers from the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938. Similarly, during congressional hearings on the Social Security Act, which created the nation’s unemployment and old-age insurance programs, NAACP lawyer Charles Houston argued against the exclusion of agricultural and domestic workers, explaining to the Senate Finance Committee that the proposed legislation was designed as “a sieve with holes sized so that the majority of our [black] workers would drop through." During the 1940s and 1950s, the exclusion of many African-American workers from federal labor laws and welfare programs remained a source of concern for civil rights leaders. On-going pressure during the 1940s finally won agricultural and domestic workers access to the federal Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) program in 1950. Some activists then turned their attention to minimum wage laws. NAACP and NUL leaders as well as members of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) repeatedly went on record protesting the continued exclusion of domestic, agricultural and other categories of workers from the wage provisions. In 1956, Mrs. William Thomas Mason, national president of the NCNW urged, “We cannot over emphasize the pressing importance of the need to broaden the
provisions of the [FLSA] to include retail and service industries and occupations now denied its protections. Many Negroes are employed in industries not now covered.  

Despite continuing efforts by civil rights activists to make the nation’s welfare programs more inclusive during the postwar period, the combination of racial and gender bias meant that the federal government more effectively reduced poverty among whites than African Americans. In Baltimore, the concentration of black workers on the periphery of the industrial sector helped account for the problem. Black workers sometimes used innovative strategies to compensate for their vulnerabilities. Alice Butler, whose mother worked as a domestic in Baltimore during the 1940s and 1950s, recalled one such technique. During interviews with prospective employers, Butler’s mother sometimes exaggerated the hourly rates available to domestics in the city to win a boost in her wages. Even such interventions, however, could not compensate for exclusion from federal protections. As the NCNW noted during the mid-1950s, exclusion from minimum-wage and other protective provisions, led not only to “lower standards of living” but also “poor health, poor housing, inadequate education, lower morale, loss of ambition, etc.”

At the same time, the nation’s unemployment laws failed to adequately respond to the realities of African-American employment patterns. National Urban League researchers estimated that in 1950 unemployment insurance covered sixty percent of white workers but less than half of black workers. A decade later, unemployment programs included nearly seventy percent of whites but only fifty-four percent of African Americans. In industrialized Baltimore, African-American inclusion in the unemployment insurance program likely exceeded the national levels. As a result, during
the mid-1950s when the city’s African-American jobless rate was double that of whites, unemployment insurance was a significant resource for many black families. Nevertheless, because they were concentrated in low-wage jobs, African Americans earned lower benefits from the unemployment system than did whites. Discrimination in the labor market also meant that black workers generally experienced longer periods of unemployment than did Caucasians and thus were more likely than whites to exhaust unemployment benefits. In addition, state employment agencies had the authority to deny unemployment benefits to workers who refused a job agency officials deemed “suitable.” As the national NAACP noted during the early 1950s, state employment agencies were notorious in perpetuating “a terrible pattern of discrimination” in their assessments of what constituted suitable work for African Americans. As a result, the employment agencies could compel black workers into poorly-paid work and help perpetuate the income gap.  

The legacies of past discrimination in the nation’s welfare state also contributed to the postwar security gap. Because of their exclusion from the first-tier of the Social Security programs, many African Americans did not contribute to the federal old-age insurance program during the 1930s and 1940s. In 1939, while eighty-four percent of Maryland’s white workers were paying into the system, only sixteen percent of non-whites were. The continued migration of African Americans from rural to urban areas during the 1940s and 1950s meant that growing numbers of black workers found jobs covered by old-age insurance. Because of their earlier exclusion, however, the program inadequately protected African Americans who became or were elderly in the 1950s. By the end of the decade, African Americans accounted for ten percent of the population of
the United States. Reflecting improvements in the extension of Social Security programs to black workers, African-American children represented fourteen percent of the offspring of deceased workers who received survivors’ benefits in 1959, and their mothers were almost eleven percent of the women receiving spousal benefits. But older African Americans fared less well. In 1959, African Americans made up less than eight percent of the recipients of old-age insurance benefits. Worse, black women constituted only five percent of the widows drawing monthly benefits. The pattern of unequal coverage persisted into the early 1960s, when only sixty percent of African American received Social Security benefits, while seventy-five percent of whites did. The disadvantages many African Americans faced in the Social Security system contributed to high rates of elderly poverty. What’s more, it meant that as working-age whites could increasingly count on the state to help support aging relatives, many African Americans had to provide the assistance themselves.\(^72\)

The concentration of African-American workers on the periphery of Baltimore’s industrial sector also excluded many from those jobs most likely to offer fringe benefits such as health insurance and pensions. Scholars identify such benefits as provisions of the hidden welfare state because firms that offered health insurance and pensions received federal tax relief; tax payers, in other words, helped subsidize benefits available to only a few. Between 1948 and 1954, the percentage of union members nationwide covered by private benefits of some sort jumped from eleven to seventy-five percent. The relative inaccessibility of employment-based health insurance and pension plans to African Americans further widened the gap in security between black and white families. The problem attracted the attention of civil rights activists. By the early 1960s, the NUL
calculated that blue-collar workers received the equivalent of twenty-eight percent of their salaries in benefits, and white-collar workers added twenty-five percent of their salaries to their earnings in benefits. As a result, the organization protested, “The white collar worker and the year-round blue collar worker, mainly white, receive higher salaries than the common laborer, the janitor, the domestic, mainly nonwhite. They also receive extra valuable benefits in addition to their regular higher pay.”

The gap in economic security between black and white families had many consequences in Baltimore’s black communities. During periods of economic hardship, many African Americans were forced to turn to family and friends rather than the state for support. Multigenerational and extended-family households, in which members could pool limited resources, remained prevalent in African-American communities during the 1950s: at mid-decade, close to forty percent of black households included non-nuclear family members. The living pattern was a particularly important strategy for combating poverty among the elderly. Many African Americans also provided material support to friends and family members with whom they did not live. During World War II, the U.S. Women’s Bureau discovered that large numbers of female African-American war workers sent a portion of their monthly incomes to support family members outside of the city. Men doubtlessly did the same, and nothing eliminated the need for the practice after the war. Migrants who had moved to Baltimore from the South, where African Americans’ exclusion from the welfare state was often more severe than in the city, likely felt particularly obliged to supply financial assistance. As Alice Butler recalls of her postwar childhood in Baltimore, her parents helped one of her uncles during a bout of unemployment, and he lived nearby within the city.
The postwar gap in economic security between African Americans and whites had specifically gendered consequences as well. High levels of poverty in black communities led women to adopt various strategies within their households to stretch limited budgets. During the postwar period in Baltimore, African-American women continued to utilize such practices even as the city’s boom times enabled growing numbers of white women to abandon many of them. Bertha Brown, an African-American woman who spent her childhood in the city, remembers that her mother sewed and mended most of her and her siblings clothing to avoid the expense of ready-made goods. Similarly, she recalls that her mother made the successful repair of broken household items a source of family celebration. She and her siblings learned early that if they fixed a chair leg, for example, they had scored a noteworthy victory for the whole family in the game of getting-by. To be sure, white women in Baltimore also practiced cost-cutting strategies. But significantly higher rates of poverty among black families compelled African-American women to excel at the strategies. Smith’s mother was hardly unique among African-American women in Baltimore whose resourcefulness and willingness to produce goods and services otherwise available in the market enabled families to absorb the shocks of financial hardship.75

Residential segregation and Jim Crow public and private services made African-American women’s efforts to accommodate hardship particularly challenging. Women often assumed the responsibility of trying to compensate for poor housing quality and segregated services. In 1947, the BUL reported that thirty-five percent of nonwhite housing, as compared to eleven percent of white housing, lacked private baths and flush toilets. An additional ten percent of housing occupied by African Americans had a flush toilets.
toilet but no bath, and seven percent of housing occupied by African Americans had no running water at all. Further, the BUL noted, over half of nonwhite housing lacked central heating. Almost a decade later, researchers found that conditions had improved only slightly. Many black city residents had found homes outside of the neighborhoods to which they had been confined during the war years. Yet over forty percent of the housing occupied by black residents was considered substandard, meaning either the units were dilapidated or lacked a private toilet, bath or hot running water. In addition, almost forty percent of dwellings occupied by African Americans lacked central heating. Perhaps most shocking, ten percent were lighted by something other than electricity. Substandard housing hardly made for ideal health conditions. The poor quality of sanitation services provided to African-American neighborhoods, compounded by the city’s lax enforcement of housing codes and zoning regulations, worsened the health-related consequences of imposed residential segregation.76

Women took it upon themselves to improve the conditions. In their own homes, they scrubbed and cleaned and tried to combat the symptoms of housing decay. They also worked collectively. For decades, African-American women had been prominent among those participating in The Afro American’s clean block campaigns, using their muscle and resources to combat neglect by white city officials. Their efforts, however, could not fully compensate for overcrowding and inadequate garbage collection, rat and pest eradication programs and other municipal services. Even the most diligent housekeeping and street-sweeping efforts could not prevent windows from leaking, lead paint from peeling and germs and illness from spreading. Despite their best efforts, African-American women could not prevent the health-related consequences of
substandard housing. Researchers from Johns Hopkins University compared the health of African Americans who moved to new homes in the city with those who lived in substandard housing between 1955 and 1958. They found that the residents of substandard housing experienced more deaths and illness than those who had moved and that the illnesses among those living in poor-quality housing were more severe. Further, children living in new homes had fewer illnesses than their peers in older housing.\textsuperscript{77}

Poorly-funded schools, like poor quality housing, may also have contributed to the spread of illness among African American children, especially before the city’s schools were desegregated in response to the \textit{Brown v The Board of Education} Supreme Court decision. Baltimore’s white officials had long neglected the infrastructure of the city’s African-American schools. “We don’t pretend to have complete equality in the Negro schools,” the president of the school board commented in 1945.\textsuperscript{78} By 1950, the value of school property available to black students was half that available to whites, a figure that had climbed from just 38 percent in 1946. Some black students even attended classes in rickety wooden school buildings heated by potbelly stoves.\textsuperscript{79}

Substandard housing and school facilities contributed to alarming health statistics for the city’s African-American communities. Baltimore’s Department of Health reported that between 1940 and 1950, tuberculosis struck five times as many black residents as whites. In 1950, African Americans also had higher rates of typhoid fever, measles, whooping cough, influenza, and several other major diseases. African Americans also suffered ninety percent of the city’s cases of accidental lead poisoning. What’s more, in 1950, when African Americans made up almost a quarter of Baltimore’s population, black mothers bore over forty percent of the stillbirths in the city, and black
babies made up almost half of the infants who died under the age of one. The same year, over fifteen percent of African-American mothers gave birth outside of a hospital, and black women accounted for over fifty-five percent of maternal deaths in Baltimore.80

Poor health statistics reflected not only the inadequacy of housing and municipal services but also the economic vulnerability of African Americans. Health care was expensive, and few African Americans received employer-provided health insurance. High rates of illness were also attributable to unequal access to health services, and particularly hospital care in Jim Crow Baltimore. Adequate health care facilities for African Americans had long been a goal of black leaders. Despite their efforts, during the late 1940s and 1950s, African American were readily admitted to only three hospitals in the city, and the quality of care available at one of those facilities, Provident Hospital, was so poor that one black resident recalled family members being reluctant to take relatives there—even after they were dead. Over forty percent of doctors polled during the mid-1950 reported they had encountered difficulty in finding hospital beds for African-American patients. Most hospitals that admitted black patients had racial quotas. Once admitted, African-American patients could not expect the standard of care received by whites. Of all the hospitals that admitted black patients in both Baltimore City and Baltimore County, only one-third offered African Americans unlimited access to private rooms. Most black patients were housed in wards, where people with varying diagnoses shared close quarters. Relatives could not help but wonder if their family member might leave the hospital cured of one ailment yet suffering from new ones.81

Black women often assumed the care of sick family members. When families postponed expensive visits to the doctor, hospital or maternity ward, women provided
substitute care. Although no figures are available for Baltimore itself, nationwide during the late 1950s, the hospital admission rate of non-whites was a mere sixty-six percent of that of whites. The statistic suggests that in times of illness, African-American families sought costly professional medical attention only as a last resort and may have encountered difficulty finding beds in segregated hospitals. National figures also reveal that, once admitted, non-whites remained patients in hospitals on average two days longer than whites. This statistic suggests that many black patients secured hospital care only after their illness had become particularly acute. When their family members lacked access to professional health-care providers, women shouldered the awesome responsibility of responding to illness and monitoring maternal health. As the city’s tragically high rates of African-American illness and infant and maternal mortality suggest, black women could not consistently meet the health-care demands they faced.82

Inadequate health and other social services became of particularly grave concern when African-American women assumed the care of elderly relatives. The exclusion of many African Americans from the federal old-age insurance system contributed to high rates of poverty among elderly African Americans during the postwar period. While many working-aged children provided financial support to their older relatives, women often supplemented material aid with physical support. In some cases, elderly relatives required considerable attention. Support services outside of family and community networks were hard to come by in Jim Crow Baltimore. In the late 1940s, only whites were eligible for convalescent care. Almost a decade later, a study of social welfare agencies in the city found that ninety-five percent provided services—including elder care—on a segregated basis. Also during the mid-1950s, Baltimore’s Department of
Public Welfare acknowledged that nursing home facilities for the city’s needy residents were grossly inadequate, though homes designed to meet the needs of whites undoubtedly surpassed those for African Americans. As in the case of health care, black women stepped in to provide themselves services more readily available to whites.83

Segregation also exacerbated the responsibilities of childcare. Baltimore provided limited day care services to white residents and almost none to African Americans. The situation required black families to negotiate childcare themselves. Meanwhile, neglect by city officials of the sanitation needs in many African-American neighborhoods and the concentration of black families in the city’s most dilapidated housing made it a challenge to find places where children could play safely. The segregation of the city’s parks and recreation services made matters worse. For most of the postwar period, African Americans were barred from many of the city’s best maintained and equipped parks and denied recreational services available to whites. The Afro American’s clean block campaigns were one response to the problem. Neighborhood clean-up committees, however, were no match for segregation, and it generally fell to mothers to navigate the segregated landscape as they sought safe recreational spaces for their children.

Single mothers often found it particularly difficult to juggle family responsibilities that were intensified by segregation. In the mid-1950s, close to a quarter of Baltimore’s African-American households were what researchers at the time described as “broken homes.”84 Many single mothers knew that they could expect second-class treatment and limited support from social service agencies. Researchers surveying family and child welfare agencies in and around Baltimore in the mid-1950s found that African Americans
made up only fifteen percent of the caseloads, while they were close to a quarter of the city’s residents and an even higher percent of the city’s poor population.  

Given the many challenges segregation created for African-Americans—including its gendered consequences—it is not surprising that efforts to eradicate Jim Civil in public and social services was a major priority of civil rights activists during the postwar period. To be sure, the fight against service segregation did not stem from an overtly feminist or womanist agenda. Activists viewed segregation as morally bankrupt, dehumanizing and un-American, and many considered desegregation fights to be battles for dignity and justice. At stake was the well-being of Baltimore’s African-American communities; few would have identified the struggles’ implications for women’s gendered caretaking responsibilities. Yet female activists seemed to have an awareness of the burdens they shouldered as women as they tried to compensate for separate and unequal services. “We are the mothers whose children suffer this damage,” Juanita Mitchell argued while protesting segregation in the city’s schools.  

Civil rights activists had been fighting to improve the quality of public and social welfare services for decades. Early battles focused on increasing the number of African-Americans employees in health and welfare agencies and the number of black representatives on the boards and commissions of social-welfare departments. These efforts continued in full force during the postwar years, as did efforts to compel enforcement of housing and zoning codes. Activists also fought vigorously to
desegregate public services. To that end, they employed three strategies, sometimes in combination: they brought lawsuits against the city; engaged in pickets and civil disobedience; and, using the growing political strength of the black population, applied the pressure of persuasion on municipal officials. In a few cases, their efforts worked. Baltimore’s civil rights activists desegregated a public school in the city prior to the Brown decision. The decision in the Brown case opened a line of legal argumentation that NAACP lawyers, including Juanita Mitchell, used in a court battle that made illegal nationwide segregation in public parks and recreational areas.87

While the fights against segregation in the city’s recreation facilities and schools often won headlines, efforts by civil rights activists to desegregate hospitals and equalize the provision of services provided by health and welfare agencies happened quietly. The efforts were also less successful than the victories that were decided in the Supreme Court. The BUL staff, and Templeton in particular, played a leading role in the campaigns, working with allies to marshal considerable social science data to demonstrate the ill effects of segregation. By 1956, the data had helped the BUL win the support of the Baltimore Council of Social Agencies, an organization created during the Depression to coordinate relief efforts in the city. The Council sent a letter to its 122 public and private member agencies declaring, “In the area of health, recreation and welfare work which is the primary concern of the Council, we believe that nonsegregation is the ideal toward which all our member agencies should strive.”88 The Council also advised members that the BUL was available to help agencies through the
desegregation transition. Although hardly a Supreme Court victory, in Jim Crow Baltimore the move drew praise. Never before had the Council taken such action, The Afro American reported approvingly.89

Civil rights activists also attempted to win the desegregation of service agencies through legislation. The year after he proposed the bill that won Baltimore a baby FEPC, Dixon sponsored an ordinance mandating desegregation of the city’s public accommodations. Included in the bill was a measure that would have imposed a fine of $100 on agencies that discriminated in the provision of public welfare. The bill never stood a chance. White Council members were hardly willing to join the vanguard of the postwar civil rights movement and desegregate Jim Crow Baltimore.90

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By the end of the 1950s, civil rights activists had won some important, if incomplete, victories in their battles against employment discrimination and segregation. The postwar period, however, had hardly been a heyday of working-class stability. Industrial employment remained out of reach of most black men, and, as a result, African-American families did not begin to share in Baltimore’s boom times to the extent that whites did. Even those men who did secure industrial employment were concentrated in insecure and low-waged unskilled positions, which hardly paid the breadwinner wages scholars associate with unionized factory jobs. As a consequence, many families relied on the wages earned by men and women outside of the industrial sector. Employment discrimination and the race-laden organization of the American
welfare state meant African Americans were not well served by federal labor-protections and welfare laws during a period when they increasingly effectively relieved white poverty. Black women attempted to compensate for their families’ insecurity with their domestic caretaking work. Jim Crow segregation made caretaking tasks particularly arduous.

But although the postwar period fell short of a heyday, the tools civil rights activists won and the battles they started would serve them well during the 1960s. Following World War II, Baltimore’s activists had drawn attention to the multitude of problems facing African Americans. The protest created the context that would compel politicians during the 1960s to pay increased attention to American poverty. The measures federal policy makers would take to respond to the problem would enable activists in Baltimore to achieve some of their goals.
CHAPTER 3

“A NEW MOOD” IN BALTIMORE:
GREAT SOCIETY PROGRAMS AS JOB-CREATION

In 1960, the editors of *The Afro American* sent an investigative reporter to the offices of the Baltimore City Municipal Building and City Hall. Since 1956, when the city’s fair employment practices ordinance had become law, municipal officials had repeatedly promised that the new law would be used to root out discrimination in city agencies. Most recently, the newly elected president of Baltimore’s City Council had told a group of African Americans, “I am convinced that there is discrimination practiced in the city government… I believe [the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] should start with the city government. Clean house there before going out crusading.”

Having endorsed the same “good starting point” three years earlier, editors at *The Afro American* had become increasingly impatient with the lack of results. This time they decided to take matters into their own hands by conducting an informal head-count of African-American city-government workers. Peering into offices in the Municipal Building and City Hall, the journalist sought black faces in the sea of white. The Municipal-Building investigation yielded only fourteen African Americans as compared to 500 Caucasians, while the search to find black workers in City Hall proved almost
fruitless. Only the presence of a lone “colored messenger boy” prevented the paper from having to report it could find no African Americans at all. The paper’s editors were outraged by the results of their study. “When you have 32 percent of the population and no personnel employed in City Hall, you are in a bad way—and this is the situation facing the colored citizens of Baltimore,” an Afro American editorial argued. “Not even the rosiest of rose-colored glasses can hide the fact that City Hall is shot through with racial discrimination and when it comes to jobs it is as if the colored citizens of Baltimore do not even exist.”

The efforts by activists to win public-sector jobs for African Americans in Baltimore received a boost from the federal government during the early 1960s. Since the 1930s, when Franklin Roosevelt created the nation’s first national urban policies, the flow of federal aid to cities significantly influenced local policy-making options and power arrangements. Intergovernmental aid, like national welfare programs, was a form of wealth redistribution, and political parties distributed it in ways intended to bolster their local constituencies. During the 1950s, the urban-renewal emphasis of Dwight Eisenhower’s urban policies had provided cities with resources that enhanced the ability of urban business leaders to push municipal planning in the direction of commercial redevelopment. In contrast, John F. Kennedy and especially Lyndon Johnson channeled earmarked federal funds for antipoverty efforts. The intergovernmental aid created opportunities for activists committed to racial, social and economic justice to gain influence in local decision-making. What’s more, intergovernmental aid dramatically expanded the public sectors of poor cities. Federal funds created jobs civil rights activists were determined to win for black workers.
In Jim Crow Baltimore, where African Americans had been all but excluded from official roles in policy-making, civil rights advocates seized the openings federal aid created. Activists from mainstream and more radical civil rights organizations worked independently but also in coalition to increase the influence of African Americans and low-income residents in municipal policy-making. Battles over community participation on municipal boards and commissions, access for black workers to the tens of thousands of public-sector jobs federal spending created, and the appointment of African-American professionals to leadership positions in government agencies pitted civil rights activists against white administrators and elected officials. Using political power that on-going white flight from Baltimore strengthened, African Americans won unprecedented influence over human services agencies in the city during the 1960s and, as a result, greater influence over policy-making than ever before.

Federal urban policy of the 1960s also had specifically gendered implications. Black women made particularly dramatic gains in public-sector employment. Because many of the new positions were in health, education and welfare agencies that were gendered as female, African-American outpaced men in moving into government workforces. In human services agencies, they generally filled positions at the bottom of municipal hierarchies. Nevertheless, government employment was preferable to domestic service, the sector to which many female African-American workers in Baltimore had long been confined. Unintentionally, the federal government created a pool of jobs that eventually would enable black women to contribute significantly to financial security in African-American communities.
Even before he started his campaign in the presidential election of 1960, John F. Kennedy identified cities as the “the great unspoken issue” of the race. Many urban residents hoped a Democratic victory in the election would increase the flow of federal resources cities needed to combat alarming problems. History suggested that the Democratic Party would be sympathetic to the needs of cities. Prior to the New Deal years, American mayors had neither asked for nor desired federal involvement in municipal affairs. The Depression, however, stretched cities’ resources beyond the breaking point. Receiving little help from their state governments, in which cities were often politically underrepresented, many mayors began to press for federal aid. In 1932, a group of executives created the U.S. Conference of Mayors, which lobbied in Washington, DC on behalf of urban interests. Franklin Roosevelt responded slowly to cities’ cries for help, but eventually the federal government began directing resources to city officials. As it did, U.S. “urban policy” was born. Resources from Washington, D.C. made the national government an increasingly important player in local urban affairs during the 1930s and 1940s. Labor and social-welfare legislation won the Democratic Party many urban loyalists. And federal aid that enabled cities to build housing and improve infrastructure won the Democratic Party some support from business leaders whose property investments in cities were threatened by early signs of urban decay.

When the Republicans regained control of the White House in 1952 after twenty years of Democratic rule, urban lobbies became less successful at winning federal resources. Early in his presidency, Dwight Eisenhower promised “to make [the federal
government] smaller rather than bigger” and pledged he would busy himself “finding things it can stop doing instead of seeking new things to do.”\(^5\) The president prioritized balanced budgets and low inflation over low unemployment and social needs.

Eisenhower did not abandon all urban voters, however. The Highway Act of 1956, although an effort to divert federal resources to non-urban Republican constituents, also served the transportation needs of firms in cities. Eisenhower also appealed to urban business leaders with redevelopment funds. During his two terms in office, the flow of federal dollars to cities for urban renewal efforts continued uninterrupted. In many cities, that money enabled local business leaders to assume a significant role in municipal planning.\(^6\)

This certainly was the case in Baltimore. During the 1950s, the city’s business leaders took the lead in municipal planning, gaining influence they would maintain for decades. The business community long had played a significant role in city politics. Mayors regularly appointed local executives to the boards and commissions that oversaw city agencies, and businesses had powerful lobbies with considerable sway in City Hall.

Federal urban renewal funds of the 1950s, however, provided business leaders with the opportunity to make their mark on long-term municipal planning. To accomplish the goal, James Rouse, a local developer who would win a national reputation for his downtown commercial showplaces, helped found the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC). GBC was modeled on a Pittsburgh created to lead that city’s efforts at urban renewal. The Baltimore group’s leadership was progressive among the city’s conservatives because it strongly advocated an active civic role for business leaders. Rouse, virulently anticommunist, was determined to demonstrate that cities in capitalist
countries could provide residents with a better quality of life than central planning could create. He advocated that business rather than the federal government play an intimate role in municipal affairs and planning. Rouse and other members of GBC identified downtown commercial redevelopment as the crucial ingredient in revitalizing Baltimore. During the mid-1950s, the group hired urban planners to draft a long-term plan for the city. In 1958, the City Council adopted GBC’s proposal, rejecting its own plan that was geared toward neighborhood rather than center-city revitalization. With the vote, critics later argued, “The ground rules for the city’s public-private partnership were established: private priorities shaped redevelopment plans.”

During the following decades, advocates with alternative visions for the city’s future would have to contend with the entrenched authority of Baltimore’s business community.

While federal funds fueled urban renewal, the Republican administration lacked an equal commitment to federal programs that redistributed wealth to low income urban residents. Eisenhower, for example, rejected funding requests for public housing. The policy emphasis helps to account for some of the relocation battles civil rights activists fought in Baltimore during the decade, when urban renewal rendered many African-American residents homeless. Eisenhower and his supporters claimed that they cut housing programs to “free” states and localities from federal dominion and to advance states’ rights to determine their own policies. Their critics argued that the administration was cutting federal programs that enabled poor cities to provide needed social services to residents. In 1957, the AFL-CIO accused Eisenhower of launching an “attack on federal aid to state and local governments” that targeted “school lunches, vocational education,
water pollution abatement, national disaster relief, and old-age assistance.” Greedy corporate interests were behind the economic-policy decisions, the organization charged.\footnote{9}

Urban voters were key in the Democratic victory in the presidential race in 1960. During the 1950s, deindustrialization had begun robbing cities like Baltimore of unionized factory jobs. Municipal officials and others repeatedly voiced concerns about structural unemployment. White flight also alarmed municipal officials, who watched working and middle-class tax payers abandon cities for the suburbs. The economic and demographic changes intensified cities' need for federal support, and many urban voters hoped that the return of a Democrat to the White House would accelerate the volume of aid to cities. Urban support for the Kennedy gave him the margin he needed to defeat Richard Nixon, his Republican opponent. Kennedy won twenty-seven of the nation’s thirty-nine largest cities.\footnote{10}

African-American voters also proved decisive in Kennedy’s victory. Although in 1960 most southern African Americans remained disenfranchised, Kennedy won the support of about seventy percent of black voters who were able to participate in the election. In Maryland, African-American votes were critical to the Democrat’s victory. During the 1940s, African Americans in Maryland, and especially in Baltimore, had begun flexing their political muscle to win benefits for black communities. Juanita Mitchell had spearheaded the first NAACP voter drive in the city. “In Baltimore we don’t have to die for the right to vote,” she reminded black city residents she hoped to woo to the polls.\footnote{11} African-American organizations continued to devote resources and energy to voter-registration drives throughout the 1940s and 1950s. In 1960, they pulled out the stops. The NAACP joined forces with volunteers from church groups and
members of the Civil Interest Group (CIG), who The Afro American describes as “the sit-downers” because of their involvement in direct action campaigns to integrate Baltimore’s lunch counters. Together drive participants convinced the city’s board of elections to keep their office open late one night a week to allow residents who worked during the day an opportunity to register. They also provided baby-sitting services and bus transportation between public housing complexes and the voter-registration office. Recent migrants were among the targets of the campaign. “I never had the chance to register before…we couldn’t vote down home,” reported George W. Collins, a newcomer to the city.12 Although The Afro American did not tally the total number of new voters activists added to the rolls, by election day over 106,000 African Americans were registered, and black residents made up twenty percent of the city’s voters. “Hip, Hip Hurrah!” cheered the editors of The Afro American.13 The paper endorsed Kennedy, predicting that Baltimore’s voters would decide the election in Maryland. They did; Kennedy’s “landslide in [the] city’s colored areas” was pivotal in helping the Democrat win the state. African Americans gave Kennedy over 58,000 votes in a state election that he won by 55,000. As in several other states, The Afro American reported, “The Colored vote” created “the margin of victory.”14

African Americans wanted the new president to respond immediately to pressing civil rights issues, and most urban Democrats – white and black – anticipated that the administration would increase the volume of federal aid to cities. Although Kennedy ultimately disappointed many of his supporters, some in his administration indicated a willingness to use the power of the federal government to combat poverty. The president’s economic advisors advocated an American version of Keynesianism. They
believed that government spending injected at the bottom of the economic ladder could help to eliminate social problems while simultaneously stimulating national economic growth.¹⁵

Kennedy himself knew little of formal Keynesian theory when he assumed office, but Walter Heller, James Tobin and Kermit Gordon, his Council of Economic Advisors, quickly brought him up to speed. They argued against much conventional wisdom—and against some of the president’s other advisors—that budget deficits need not be a cause of alarm among policy-makers. Instead, deficits could propel economic growth and help keep unemployment figures low. Eventually convinced of the wisdom of Keynesianism, Kennedy agreed to propose tax cuts intended to stimulate growth. More progressive Democrats, however, argued that tax cuts would favor the wealthy and urged the president instead to endorse significant increases in government spending on housing, education, health care and welfare. During his first two years in office, the president used his executive authority to increase government spending in ways intended to alleviate poverty and unemployment. His first executive order, for example, expanded a food distribution program, and in early 1961 he began a pilot food-stamps program. He also helped to raise the U.S. minimum wage and won an increase in funding for subsidized housing and urban renewal. And he backed the Area Redevelopment Act and the Manpower Training and Development Act. But ultimately, the president opted to propose personal and corporate tax cuts rather than increased government spending on social welfare programs as his major Keynesian initiative. In mid-1963, Kennedy returned to the issue of anti-poverty spending, requesting proposals for such an effort from his Cabinet members. In November, shortly before he was to depart on a trip to
Dallas, Texas, Kennedy reiterated his endorsement of government spending on anti-poverty efforts. “First, we’ll have your tax cut; then we’ll have my expenditure programs,” he told Heller.16

Although Kennedy was assassinated before he had a chance to have his expenditure programs, his successor, Lyndon Johnson, decided to pursue the anti-poverty agenda. The day after the new president assumed office, Heller informed him of his predecessor’s interest in fighting poverty. Hoping to follow in the tradition of Franklin Roosevelt, Johnson decided to make a war on poverty the centerpiece of his domestic agenda. In January 1964, he issued his call to arms, and at a speech at the University of Michigan several months later, he explained the rational for what would become his Great Society. The revitalization of cities was a key component. “Our society will never be great until our cities are great. Today the frontier of imagination and innovation is inside those cities and not beyond their borders,” the president said.17 In line with Keynesian principles, the president proposed a program of government spending intended to respond to social needs to stimulate economic growth.18

If the rules of the international economy provided the Johnson administration the flexibility to undertake a war on poverty, domestic activism during the 1950s and early 1960s—most notably the civil rights movement—helped determine its shape. Scholars debate the extent to which African-American activists influenced Johnson’s decision to pursue a war on poverty. Civil rights leaders did not play a major role in policy-making during the planning stages of the Great Society. Nevertheless, civil rights activism during the decade and a half following the war, and more recently the demands of the participants of the March on Washington, had made an indelible impression on many
law-makers. National civil rights leaders also met with the president to offer their recommendations on antipoverty initiatives, and they authored publications and made public speeches that clearly articulated their agenda. Even if black leaders did not formally draft War on Poverty legislation, certainly the concerns they raised were on the minds of many of the president’s advisors.19

Johnson’s Great Society programs dramatically increased the amount of federal resources cities and their residents received. Between 1964 and 1967, the Congress passed more progressive legislation than at any time since the New Deal years. They enacted not only the Economic Opportunity Act that funded the War on Poverty but also created Medicare and Medicaid, made permanent the Food Stamps program, and established the Model Cities program, intended to stimulate urban community development. They also increased spending on rent support, urban mass transit, the arts and humanities, the environment, and education. Poor school districts received more federal funding as well. To coordinate the implementation of urban policies, in 1966, Congress created the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which established a cabinet-level position for a representative of cities.20

The progressive legislation of the mid-1960s was more attuned to racial justice than New Deal legislation had been. As president, Kennedy had disappointed his African-American supporters, who hoped the president would enact significant civil rights legislation soon after taking office. Not until mid-1963 did the president propose a civil rights bill. He died before the measure passed, but soon after entering the White House, Johnson made civil rights legislation his highest priority. In fact, he strengthened the bill Kennedy had proposed in significant ways. As modified, the new law outlawed
employment discrimination as well as segregation in public accommodations. It also prohibited discrimination in the use of federal funds, a stipulation civil rights activists had been advocating for decades. What’s more, the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act mandated the maximum feasible participation of low-income residents in the planning of antipoverty efforts. Together, these provisions increased the likelihood that African Americans could gain a measure of control over local policy-making. And because Great Society programs as a whole increased the flow of federal funds to cities where populations were becoming increasingly African-American, the administration provided resources that local black communities could try to control. Whereas Eisenhower’s urban policies had enhanced the authority of business leaders in municipal planning, Johnson’s domestic agenda created opportunities for African Americans to win a greater role in shaping their cities’ futures.  

In Baltimore, the influx of federal funds raised the stakes considerably in struggles over the public services that had long pit civil rights activists against white city officials. During the 1950s and early 1960s, most battles over public services centered on desegregation. In 1964, anticipating the passage of federal civil rights legislation, Baltimore’s City Council passed an ordinance that outlawed Jim Crow in public accommodations. Civil rights activists had been pushing for the law for over ten years. But the City Council significantly weakened the bill by removing any reference to the open-housing policy that activists considered vital to civil rights progress in the city. Nevertheless, the measure did open health and welfare agencies in the city. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, passed by the U.S. Congress five months later, reinforced the city’s
ban on segregation and discrimination, and, as the Maryland State Department of Public Welfare explained in a pamphlet distributed to service recipients, gave African Americans additional tools to fight for access to public services. *De facto* segregation, particularly in housing and schools but also in health and welfare agencies, remained problems in Baltimore through the 1960s. But the end of legal Jim Crow freed African Americans to turn their energies to new fights over public policy.\(^{22}\)

Topping the list of new battles was control over service planning and delivery. As the federal government began increasing the flow of funds to cities, African Americans demanded greater influence over policy-making and implementation. The new power struggles exposed class tensions within the city’s civil rights movement that fights against Jim Crow had obscured. During the postwar period, the Baltimore branch of the NAACP and, to a lesser extent, the BUL served as the dominate organizations representing the concerns of African Americans to city officials. They remained important players in city politics during the 1960s. But new organizations challenged the authority of the mainstream civil rights groups to speak for African Americans with low incomes. Black women also became more assertive in making gender-based claims for jobs and services. The increasingly visible divisions did not simply create conflict. Cross pollination among radical and mainstream activists stimulated important debates about policy implementation, energizing progressives in the city. What’s more, African Americans generally joined ranks across ideological divides when challenging the city’s white power structure. Although their strategies for achieving African-American influence over municipal policy sometimes differed, activists of all ideological persuasion contributed to democratizing decision making in Baltimore.\(^{23}\)
An important front in the battle over the control of public services emerged during the early 1960s as the city charted the course it would follow to attack urban poverty. In 1962, the Health and Welfare Council of the Baltimore Area, Inc. (HWC), a private organization that had worked with the BUL to desegregate health and welfare agencies, published “A Letter to Ourselves,” arguing that the city’s response to urban poverty was inadequate. The largely white and liberal leadership of the organization proposed that the city formulate “a comprehensive and coordinated approach” to tackling difficult urban problems. After securing local financial support, the HWC created a Steering Committee on Human Renewal to develop a long-term strategy. The committee included representatives from each of the city’s three major charities, an HWC member, and three mayoral appointees. Only one member of the committee, Reverend Robert T. Newbold, Jr., was African-American. He was also a member of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, an African-American organization in the city actively vying to increase its role in the city’s civil rights movement. While the HWC committee was working on its plan, the U.S. Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Anticipating that new federal funds could make their “Plan for Action” a reality, committee members drafted their proposal to correspond to the federal law’s provisions.

Not long after the Steering Committee began its work, African Americans in Baltimore began protesting their exclusion from the antipoverty planning effort. They outcry came initially not from the city’s mainstream civil rights groups but from new leaders, including some from the city’s east-side, where residents felt excluded from Baltimore’s west-side dominated civil rights groups. Few knew of Newbold’s membership on the committee, and fewer still would have considered a lone African
American on such an important committee adequate representation. In February 1964, Reverend Herbert O. Edwards complained to the HWC about the composition of the committee. “The fact that the Negro represents more than 1/3 of the population of Baltimore City seems to have escaped the attention of those planning this far-reaching project,” he wrote. “The ‘traditional approach’…,” Edwards explained, “is to make plans for the City of Baltimore in order to cope with its problems, ignoring the Negro Community until such time as you have decided what should be done.” Then, he predicted, the city would select African-American representatives “and send them back to the Negro Community to tell them what to do. Surely you cannot be unaware of the past ineffectiveness of such a paternalistic approach!”

A month later, Melvin G. Roy, the president of the Eastside Community Committee, Inc. echoed Edward’s concern in a telegram to Baltimore Mayor Theodore McKeldin. “Better results will accrue when we plan together with ethnic groups rather than plan for them,” Roy explained.

In response, McKeldin appointed six African Americans to an advisory committee on the antipoverty effort. Nevertheless, anger continued to mount. Not to be upstaged by other organizations and leaders claiming to represent Baltimore’s African Americans, the NAACP added its voice to those protesting in late 1964. By then the Steering Committee had completed its Plan for Action, and although the City Council had not yet endorsed the effort, the city had applied for federal funds. In December, Juanita Mitchell of the NAACP sent a telegram to Sargent Shriver, the head of the federal antipoverty program, requesting that the funds be withheld from Baltimore because the African Americans who would be affected by new antipoverty programs had insufficient
participation in the planning process. “We are tired of people planning about us and not with us,” she explained to a Baltimore Sun reporter. “We are mature and want to be partners with the city in all of its activities. We are not children.”

The aggressiveness of the NAACP no doubt came as a shock to Baltimore’s mayor and the city’s white liberal establishment. McKeldin, a socially-progressive Republican, had also as the city’s mayor during the mid-1940s and as Maryland’s governor for two terms during the 1950s. He considered himself a champion of civil rights, and African-American activists in the city had commended his many efforts to fight segregation and discrimination even as they derided the slow pace of change.

Mitchell’s telegram thus was a very public rebuke of one of the few politicians in the state receptive to the NAACP and its concerns. White liberals in the city no doubt shared the mayor’s surprise. Such actions were to be expected from more radical African-American organizations that were making their presence felt in the city during the mid-1960s, but even the historically assertive Baltimore NAACP chapter had long demonstrated greater regard for protocol. Mitchell’s uncharacteristic action reveals the vulnerability the NAACP’s leaders felt to newer organizations challenging the mainstream group’s authority to speak for African Americans in the city.

But Mitchell’s telegram failed to win the NAACP support in the city’s diverse black communities. The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, whose member had served as the sole African-American on the HWC Steering Committee, immediately telegrammed Shriver to refute the NAACP’s claim. Perhaps sensing an opportunity to increase its clout in municipal affairs, the group also released a statement arguing, “The facts regarding the drafting and adoption of the plan reveal that not only were
representatives of the Negro citizenry provided the opportunity of criticizing it but some were invited to submit proposals.” The plan that emerged, the ministers conceded, was “not perfect and does not offer solutions for all the problems of the inner city.” But the ministers insisted that it was “a bold and imaginative attempt by city officials, public and private agencies, to make a coordinated and cooperative effort toward taking the slum attitude and outlook out of our culturally deprived citizen,” a conservative interpretation sure to rankle more radical critics.29

African Americans with considerably more progressive outlooks than those of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance also took the NAACP to task. Robert E. Hinton, Jr., a student at Morgan State who was affiliated with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), was one such critic. Hinton represented an increasingly vocal generation of young African Americans disdainful of mainstream civil rights organizations. He wrote to The Baltimore Sun in outrage that the “Black Bourgeoisie” that ran the NAACP had the gall to represent itself as the voice of poor African Americans. “Mitchell contends that her organization should have been consulted because its office is in the slums,” Hinton wrote. “I contend that mere geographical location of an organization’s office in a slum area is nothing if, as in the case of the NAACP, the people of this area don’t identify with this organization and this organization offers no real program to these people…”30

Finding itself chastised by the white liberal establishment and factions of the African-American community, the NAACP backed down. “We don’t want [the antipoverty program] halted,” said Colin Cromwell, the Maryland field secretary for the NAACP, days after the organization sent the telegram. In fact, Cromwell announced, he
was preparing a second telegram for Shriver noting that “progress has been made” on the Baltimore antipoverty issue. But, the NAACP was not willing to concede entirely. Rather the NAACP demanded that poor people “have a voice” in future policy-making.\textsuperscript{31} Although the NAACP remained a powerful force in the city, it lost its authority to stand alone as the most militant voice of the city’s African-American communities. In his letter protesting African-American exclusion from HWC’s Steering Committee, Edwards had demanded to know, “Who dares to speak for, to express the frustrated hopes of, to describe the mutilated and warped souls, of those condemned to ghettos, to economic insecurity, to sub-standard, high-rent dwellings, to inadequate city services (street cleaning, trash collection, etc.)…”\textsuperscript{32} During the mid-1960s it became increasingly apparent that the Baltimore NAACP had lost its monopoly of that role.

A few months after the NAACP controversy, a new organization added its voice to the growing chorus of those daring to speak on behalf of Baltimore’s poor residents. The Union for Jobs or Income Now (U-JOIN) was founded by members of Baltimore’s SDS chapter. Members included students from Johns Hopkins University, Goucher College and Morgan State College. The organization also received support from several labor unions. U-JOIN opened two offices in the city, one in a predominately poor African-American neighborhood and the other in a predominately poor white neighborhood. Community activist Walter Lively headed the organization. An African-American, Lively had grown up in public housing in Philadelphia. Before moving to Baltimore, he had helped create a chapter of the NAACP and a chapter of CORE in his hometown. He had also been an organizer of the 1961 Freedom Rides.\textsuperscript{33}
U-JOIN drafted an antipoverty plan for the city intended to be an alternative to the HWC proposal, which the organization described as “welfare colonialism.” Because U-JOIN, like HWC, tailored its proposal to federal funding opportunities, little distinguished the types of programming the groups advocated. The striking difference between the plans was the level of control city officials would enjoy over antipoverty efforts. The HWC proposal called for officials to create a new antipoverty agency within the city government, overseen by a body likely to be dominated by those officials. In contrast, U-JOIN proposed that the city create a non-profit antipoverty organization. They also suggested that almost all members of the organization’s governing body be poor community residents or trade-union representatives. What’s more, U-JOIN explained, “To guarantee that decision-making will originate with the poor and not with the professionals,” the administrative staff of the agency was to be “subordinate” to the decision-making body. [emphasis in the original.] Unlike the HWC proposal, the U-JOIN plan forcefully asserted that residents with low incomes, both black and white, should serve as their own representatives in policy making.

Not surprisingly, the Baltimore City Council, which had the authority to create the city’s antipoverty agency, did not adopt U-JOIN’s proposal. By the mid-1960s, African Americans made up about forty percent of Baltimore’s population. The city’s nineteen-member Council, however, included only two black members since Baltimore’s voting districts remained gerrymandered. A powerful majority of the white members of the Council were conservative and largely unsympathetic to civil rights issues. As a result, when determining the form the city’s antipoverty agency should take, the City Council took firm steps to maximize its own control. In February 1965, the Council passed an
ordinance that created a Community Action Agency (CAA) as a city department. Because it was a municipal agency, all of the CAA’s programming would require City Council approval. The CAA was to be governed by an eleven-member Community Action Commission (CAC) composed largely of members appointed by the mayor. As mandated by the federal government, the ordinance called for unspecified “maximum feasible participation of the residents.” But because the Council had veto power over mayoral appointments, its members had relinquished only minimal authority.  

Although tensions persisted in black communities over issues of representation, African-American leaders joined ranks across ideological divides when confronted with the City Council’s proposal for the CAC. Few believed African Americans, much less poor people, would win a significant presence on the body without unified pressure from activists. To coordinate the fight for black and poor representation, U-JOIN helped create the Anti-Poverty Action Committee (APAC), which included the chastened NAACP, the BUL, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, CORE, the Negro American Labor Council, and other religions, civic, social, and political African-American organizations. Perhaps reflecting difference among the groups, APAC demanded simply that a majority of the members of the CAC be “committed Negroes.”

To Mayor McKeldin fell the task of nominating the CAC’s members. Although a Republican, McKeldin was considerably more progressive than many of the members of Baltimore’s entirely Democratic City Council. He had actively supported Johnson’s efforts to pass the EOA and had publicly urged members of his party not to reject the legislation. Nevertheless, McKeldin did not relish handing authority over a municipal agency to people likely to be hostile to the city government. Even before Baltimore’s
CAC was created, McKeldin had written a letter to Johnson on behalf of the Board of Advisors of the U.S. Conference of Mayors expressing that organization’s concern about federal community-participation mandates. He described an “almost unanimous feeling” among member of the Conference that federal officials running antipoverty programs did “not understand the problems and operations of local governments.” The mayors urged the president to reign in the enthusiasts of community participation.  

In Baltimore, McKeldin took further steps to circumvent community participation. Although he nominated five African Americans along with six whites to the CAC, none of the nominees were residents of the Action Area where antipoverty efforts would be targeted. In addition, McKeldin appointed a white businessman as chair of the CAC.

Despite the lack of community inclusion on the CAC, some African-American leaders accepted the mayor’s appointments. Five black members on a single commission, after all, was remarkable given rates of black representation on the city’s other decision-making bodies. In 1965, only five percent of the members of municipal boards and commissions were African-American, meaning black Baltimore had almost no official control over policy-making in the city. The appointment of five black members to the CAC, a near majority on the body, was a significant change. It also represented a considerable improvement over the one African-American who had served on the HWC Steering Committee.

The leadership of U-JOIN and many residents of Baltimore with low incomes did not view the composition of the CAC a victory, however. U-JOIN organized poor residents and urged them to attend City Council meetings to fight their exclusion from the commission. Action Area residents also attended CAC meetings once the body convened.
to demand inclusion. Baltimore activists also turned to the federal antipoverty officials who distributed War on Poverty funding. Ultimately, pressure from Washington, D.C. helped force elected officials in Baltimore to expand the CAC’s membership. Four months after the CAC was created, the City Council passed a new ordinance that increased the membership of the body from eleven to fifteen. The four new members were to be Action Area representatives.

The unprecedented number of African Americans and city residents with low-incomes on the commission angered and scared quite a few members of Baltimore’s City Council. During the years that followed, conservative Council members did all they could to minimize the power of the CAC. But, the Council could not easily reverse the momentum towards democratic decision-making in social-welfare policy that the fight over the CAC initiated. African Americans and low-income residents took the promise of maximum feasible participation in policy-making to heart. During the second half of the 1960s, they demanded a role for themselves on commissions and boards throughout the city government.

The most fervent advocates for community participation in municipal decision-making were low-income residents. In 1966, The Afro American reported that there was a “new mood creeping slowly through the black ghetto of Baltimore like sunlight at early dawn—a mood that demands rights and respect and a chance for a decent life as the natural birthright of all.” The same year, poor activists pressured the mayor to again increase resident representation on the CAC. Although recent amendments to antipoverty legislation required that only one-third of CAC members be community residents elected by their peers, Action-Area activists demanded twenty-four out of
twenty-nine seats on the commission and veto power over five mayoral appointees. The city responded by expanding the commission to twenty-one members, ten of whom would be area residents. Although not the outcome activists sought, the new board did include more low-income members than required by federal law."}

African-American women with low incomes, as well as some whites, also became increasingly aggressive in demanding representation on anti-poverty boards. In 1963, the leaders of Baltimore’s mainstream civil rights organizations had faced an uphill battle when they pressed Maryland officials simply to appoint a second African American to the state’s welfare board. Three years later, thirty-five members of Mother Rescuers from Poverty, a welfare rights organization, crashed a meeting of Maryland’s legislative council to demand their own representation on the welfare board. The request was granted. Predominately female and African-American residents of public housing fought the city for inclusion on housing-related commissions, and Baltimore was one of the first cities in the nation to establish a hard-won Resident Advisory Board. Public housing activist Shirley Wise recalled, the victory “gave [residents] their true rights to sit at the table with the decision-makers and effect some changes in their community.” Residents with low incomes also fought elected officials for significant representation on the policy-making body that oversaw the city’s Model Cities program. By the early 1970s, nearly two-thirds of the membership that board had been elected by residents.

Although city residents with low incomes often led fights for community involvement in municipal decision-making, mainstream African-American and liberal white leaders became increasingly assertive proponents of the idea as well. During the mid-1960s—with the specter of urban riots haunting black and white leaders alike—
resident participation in municipal decision-making became an attractive technique for reducing local tensions. Mainstream African-American leaders and liberal whites did not embrace democratic municipal decision-making only under duress, however. In the context of a hotly-contested national conversation about social justice, the cross pollination of ideas among activists created a growing number of sincere advocates for community participation in municipal decision-making.

The announcement by CORE in April 1966 that the organization was making Baltimore a “Target City” for the coming summer propelled the momentum towards democratic decision-making. During the mid-1950s, Baltimore’s chapter of CORE had been one of the organization’s most active in fights to desegregate public accommodations. During the first half of the 1960s, members of CORE chapters nationwide became increasingly compelled by the critiques of black nationalists, and the change was reflected in the membership of the Baltimore chapter. A predominately white organization in 1961, by 1965 CORE’s membership was almost entirely African-American. Through the years of transition, the organization increasingly focused its energies on organizing black city residents with low incomes. From the perspective of the city’s white establishment, the group became dangerously “militant.” The 1966 announcement by CORE that Baltimore had one of the worst civil rights records in the nation and thus warranted a “concentrated attack on all levels” struck fear in the hearts not only of conservatives but also some of the city’s black and white liberals.

McKeldin, who had received more than his share of threats and hate mail over the years from white Marylanders opposed to his stance on civil rights, initially responded to CORE’s announcement with both trepidation and resentment. “I don’t know why we
should be the target, why we should be picked on,” the mayor complained. “We’ve been battling for these things [since] before these people were born...If anyone has fought harder for the interests of Negroes than I—I’ve been vilified because of my interest in them.” But the mayor quickly recovered his composure and took proactive steps to respond to CORE. His assistant, David Glenn, the first African American to be appointed to a mayoral staff, called a meeting of representatives of Baltimore organizations concerned with civil rights. In attendance were members of the Community Relations Commission (the former EEOC), the CAA, the BUL, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, and representatives from several other private organizations. The group urged the mayor to form a task force comprised of subcommittees, each of which would focus on one of the six issues CORE had identified as Baltimore’s most pressing: housing, public accommodations, employment, health and welfare, education, and police/community relations. Each subcommittee would also have both a black and white chair. Given the breadth of the potential task force’s mandate, subcommittee members would have influence, although no official control, over almost every aspect of social welfare planning conducted by the city government. What’s more, the meeting’s members reluctantly recommended that each of the subcommittees include CORE members. The task force would thus include young and relatively radical activists in addition to the city’s more mainstream black and white leaders. McKeldin immediately created the Mayor’s Task Force on Equal Rights. Thus before the Target City project even started, CORE had already increased African-American influence over policy-making in Baltimore. Many of the members of the mayor’s new task force quickly joined the city’s staunchest proponents of community representation.
Although U-JOIN and CORE had taken the lead in demanding a voice for poor city residents in decision-making, during the second half of the decade the idea won increased popularity among progressives more broadly. In 1967, the Mayor’s Task Force on Equal Rights proposed that the mayor appoint a “People’s Representative” to represent citizens at meetings of the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals and the Board of Liquor. The Task Force’s sub-committee on social welfare also endorsed giving welfare recipients “formal representation” on the city’s Welfare Commission.\textsuperscript{52} Department of Health officials agreed to create a Parents’ Advisory Council to participate in policy-making and program evaluation at a community health clinic that served many of the city’s African-American residents. Even more remarkably, in 1967 the white superintendent of the Baltimore City Public Schools and the members of the school board defended their support for community involvement in educational planning by invoking the rhetoric of radical activists. The superintendent and board explained they did not want the school system to become “another form of paternalism.”\textsuperscript{53}

Even as mainstream activists in the city became increasingly committed to community participation, important ideological differences persisted among African Americans and white liberals. “Black power” provided particularly divisive. In a 1966 speech, Dr. Martin D. Jenkins, the president of Morgan State College and a member of the boards of both the NAACP and the National Urban League, rejected the concept as an untenable solution to the problems African Americans faced. “It is stupid to believe, and act as if, a group representing only 10 per cent of the total population, a group which has meager economic resources, a group whose political effectiveness is largely limited to a balance of power, can exercise its will against the 90 per cent majority,” he argued.\textsuperscript{54}
Lillie May Jackson, who, at almost 80 years old remained the president of the Baltimore NAACP, and Furman Templeton, who headed the BUL throughout the 1960s, expressed similar concerns that the aggressive activism of radicals was sure to hurt rather than help civil rights causes. To younger activists impatient for change, the older leaders’ caution was symptomatic of their generation’s and class’ complacency. Parren Mitchell, Juanita Mitchell’s brother-in-law and the director of Baltimore’s CAA during the mid-1960s, evinced the urgency felt by the city’s more radical activists. In a 1967 speech at Morgan, he berated the college’s faculty for remaining “aloof” in the face of the city’s profound social and economic injustices. He challenged them not “to give service programs and make charitable contributions” but to “attack the system itself.” On-going disagreements over strategy and ideology, however, intensified rather than weakened activists’ resolve to win change, and African-American leaders were certainly savvy enough to close ranks when confronting the city’s white power structure on major issues. Even “Ma” Jackson, whose thirty-year commitment to civil rights struggles went largely ignored by younger activists, was not immune to the energy radicals excited in the city. “Things are very alert and alive here!” she wrote with enthusiasm to the national NAACP the year CORE selected Baltimore as a target city.

By the late 1960s, the city’s African-American activists became increasingly assertive in demanding influence not only over antipoverty planning but over municipal public policy-making in general. In January 1968, for example, a coalition of groups that included CORE, U-JOIN, SNCC, Rescuers from Poverty, and also the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance sent a list of recommendations concerning appointments to municipal boards and commission to the mayor. The group wrote, “We
demand that half of the members of all boards and commissions be black to reflect the racial make up of the city; that no white individuals be appointed until the composition of these boards is at least half black and at least half of the chairmen of these boards and/or commissions are black.”

The same year, welfare recipients expressed their conviction that their insights were universally relevant in government planning. They pressed officials for representation not just in poverty-related bodies but on “all policy-making and advisory boards, state and city.”

By the end of the 1960s, it still was not clear what activists on government boards could truly accomplish. But one thing was certain. Elected officials could no longer exclude African Americans from decision-making roles and ignore the input of low-income residents. Although the percentage of African Americans and residents with low incomes on boards remained low, civil rights activists of all stripes had won some remarkable changes. The changes would not have been possible, however, without the federal government’s commitment to fighting poverty and fomenting democratic participation in decision-making.

An important product of the fights for community-participation on the decision-making bodies of federally, state, and locally-funded agencies was an increase in the representation of women on decision-making bodies. By the end of the 1960s, black and white women together occupied only sixteen percent of the seats of Baltimore’ boards and commissions. Over half of the city’s fifty-one policy-making bodies had no female representation whatsoever, and twelve had only a single woman. Community-participation mandates accounted for a considerable proportion of women’s representation on boards, as residents of low-income neighborhoods elected women to policy-making positions at a higher rate than the city’s mayors appointed women.
1968 almost half of the community representatives on the CAC were women. In 1969, eight of the ten women on the Model Cities’ thirty-member Policy Steering Committee, had been elected by community groups and only two had been appointed. Women seized opportunities to vie for and elect others to positions on decision-making bodies and won unprecedented, if limited, authority to shape public policy. Those involved felt the changes keenly. As Margaret McCarty, the head of Baltimore’s welfare rights organization explained, “I’m a citizen who has a job to do, instead of a poor forgotten colored woman, like some of our people feel.”

Urban aid did more than give African Americans, residents with low incomes and women a larger presence on policy-making boards and commissions. It also dramatically expanded the city’s population of government workers, creating new jobs in a sector of the economy in which African-American activists were best able to fight discrimination. The declining influence of the Baltimore chapter of the NAACP cost residents the organization that historically had been the most attentive to women’s employment issues. The male-dominated groups that gained power over the decade focused considerable energy on opening government jobs to men. Nevertheless, their fights won black women increased access to the public sector. And the concentration of federal aid in human-services programming meant that the federal government created jobs women were more likely than men to fill.

The influence of Keynesian economic theory during the postwar period contributed to national growth in public-sector employment even during the Eisenhower years. Government workforces expanded most dramatically, however, during the 1960s.
In Baltimore, while the city government had added about 7,000 positions during the 1950s, it more than doubled that rate of growth during the 1960s. In 1960, the city employed about 22,000 people; by 1970, Baltimore’s workforce had grown to about 35,000. Between 1962 and 1967 alone, the city added close to 8,000 jobs, almost ninety-five percent of which were full-time positions. Much of the job growth occurred in human services agencies and the Department of Education.62

The growth in the municipal workforce sparked anger among conservatives and residents concerned that the property-tax rates would rise to accommodate what they considered to be a bloated bureaucracy. Despite the city’s success at winning federal aid, during the 1960s the city’s tax rates were well above those in surrounding suburbs. Baltimore’s declining population of home-owners had to compensate for the many renters in the city and to help fund costly services to combat urban problems. High tax rates accelerated white flight and frustrated many business and home-owners who remained in Baltimore. In 1966, the Commission on Governmental Efficiency and Economy, a conservative business organization with substantial influence in the city, complained that Baltimore had the largest number of municipal employees among cities of its size in the nation. A year later, Harry How, Jr., an angry white voter, complained to the mayor, “I am against any of my tax money being used for someone who doesn’t want to work. How long do you think the people of Baltimore City are going to put up with your give away programs of Anti-Poverty, welfare and unemployment…Stop pussy-footing around and trying to find the easy way out.”63 The same year, The News American, a major Baltimore newspaper with a largely white, working-class readership, reported sarcastically that the city was losing 3,000 residents but adding 1,000 municipal
workers annually. The paper estimated that one out of eleven city residents worked for
the city. “But once the employee is hired, no checks are made to see if that employee is
writing love letters all day or performing his job efficiently,” the reporter complained.64

Concern about the growth of the public sector reflected a growing white backlash
to civil rights victories and liberal federal policies. The dynamic was evident nowhere
more starkly than in the high level of support segregationist George Wallace received
from Maryland’s voters, including some from Baltimore, during his bids for the
presidency during the 1960s. In 1964, Wallace shocked political observers with a strong
showing in Maryland’s Democratic primary. Four years later, over 7,500 “Marylanders
Stomp[ed and] Shout[ed] for Wallace” at one particularly lively campaign rally that
organizers had moved at the last minute from Baltimore to a venue just outside the city
due to fear of racial violence. “Sock it to ‘em Georgie, baby, sock it to ‘em,” yelled one
woman in the midst of a sea of Confederate flags.65

But even as backlash sentiment mounted, civil rights activists lauded the federal
commitment to fighting poverty and growth in the public sector. New antipoverty
programs and the expansion of existing municipal agencies promised desperately needed
services to low-income residents, many of whom were African-American. In addition,
activists had long identified the public sector as an important source of jobs for black
workers. Government jobs, even those at the lowest pay-scales, provided some
significant advantages over equivalent private-sector positions. City jobs were generally
fulltime and stable, lacking the insecurity of domestic work and the periodic layoffs
associated with factory jobs. Government positions also provided workers with better
workplace protections than were available to African Americans generally. And public-
sector employment sometimes gave workers access to fringe benefits such as pension plans and health insurance. What’s more, the inclusion of black employees in the city-government workforce, and especially in health, education and welfare agencies, provided African-American communities an additional method of monitoring and improving the quality of public services available to black residents. Aware of the benefits government employment afforded African Americans, civil rights activist intensified the pressure on city officials to win black workers city jobs. The effort by The Afro American journalist to point out discrimination in city hiring was just the first of many actions by activists during the decade.

Within the city government, members of the Community Relations Commission (CRC) and the subcommittee on employment of the Mayor’s Task Force on Equal Rights became important advocates for African-American municipal employment. In 1963, civil rights activists compelled the City Council to expand the staff of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. The following year, the agency changed its name and became the CRC. During the rest of the decade, the agency’s staff grew increasingly independent and assertive. They demanded the right to investigate all instances in which African Americans were passed over for promotions and challenged those directors of agencies with poor records of minority hiring. The employment subcommittee of the Mayor’s Task Force on Equal Rights also took an active interest in African-American employment in the city government. Soon after it was created, the subcommittee announced its intention to help make the city government a “model” employer in Baltimore. In the mid-1960s, the subcommittee had forty-seven members, including some of the most outspoken critics of the city’s minority employment practices. The
committee joined the CRC in insisting that municipal administration improve its record of minority hiring. They were particularly attentive to the city’s hiring record of black men in the police department, and the departments of highways and sanitation.66

Civil rights organizations also fought for jobs for black workers in the city government. They worked with the CRC to compel enforcement of equal-opportunity legislation. They also picketed city agencies with poor minority-employment records. In 1967, an city-election year, the issue came to a head. A coalition of groups publicly accused the members of Baltimore’s Civil Service Commission (CSC), and particularly the city’s white personnel director, Thomas Murphy, of racism, arguing that the CSC prevented low-income residents from gaining public-sector jobs. Bascom threatened a mass protest by the members of “two or three hundred groups” if immediate action was not taken. The pressure made African-American municipal employment a campaign issue in the mayoral race. Candidate D'Alesandro promised “a top-to-bottom review and revision of the city’s civil service system and personnel policies” were he to be elected mayor, and McKeldin immediately appointed an advisory committee on civil service that included Bascom.67 As Leon Sachs, a member of the advisory committee and a leader in the campaign to win Baltimore a fair-employment law years earlier explained, the municipal employment issue had become “a festering sore in race relations in our community and calls for immediate therapy.”68

Following the 1967 municipal election, black City Council member Robert L. Douglass introduced a resolution that called for the city to revamp the CSC’s procedures.69 Newly-elected Mayor D'Alesandro followed through on his campaign promise to address civil service issues. Determined to make procedures accessible to
“low-income, low-skilled persons,” the mayor proposed revisions to the City Charter to change civil service procedures. He also attempted to secure administratively those reforms he could not get through the City Council. The CSC scrutinized exams for bias and took steps to better align exams with the skills required for individual jobs, substituting performance for written tests in some cases. Activists were less successful during the 1960s at winning preferential hiring for city residents. In 1969, the City Council did pass a hiring-preference ordinance. The measure was legally challenged and repealed, however, and the issue remained a source of activism in the city during the 1970s.70

Activism during the 1960s produced substantial increases in the number of African Americans employed by the city. In 1964, the first time that the CRC conducted a survey of African-American municipal employment, researchers calculated that black workers made up a little over a quarter of the workforce. Had the researchers included employees of the Department of Education, the figure would have been somewhat higher. By 1970, almost forty percent of city employees were African-American, and including the Department of Education in the calculation raised the percentage to fifty. In a little over five years African Americans had made tremendous gains in one of the few sectors of Baltimore’s economy that was experiencing growth.71

Fights for jobs for African Americans played out in state and federal governments as well. During the 1960s, intergovernmental aid enabled Maryland officials to significantly expand the State’s public workforce. Between 1962 and 1967, the Maryland’s payrolls grew by nearly 11,500, and state officials opened close to 18,000 additional jobs over the next five year period. While only a portion of the state’s new
jobs were in Baltimore, the State of Maryland became an increasingly important local employer. African-American workers did not make as much headway into state employment as they did in the municipal workforce. Nevertheless, although no figures exist for 1960, by 1970, they made up close to twenty percent of state workers in the city.\(^72\) The creation of new federal programs also increased the number of U.S. government employees who worked in Baltimore. Much of the growth in the local federal workforce occurred at the Social Security Administration (SSA), which was headquartered on the outskirts of Baltimore. Civil rights activists closely monitored the federal governments’ employment practices, pressing for anti-discrimination in employment laws, demanding investigations by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission on employment issues, and even picketing Social Security.\(^73\) The pressure worked. In 1969, the Afro American reported that thirty percent of the agency’s local staff was African-American.\(^74\) Overall, by 1970, African Americans made up over fifty percent of Baltimore’s residents employed by the state and federal governments, and black state and federal workers accounted for almost fifteen percent of employed African-Americans in the city. When combined with job gains in the municipal labor force, over a quarter of all employed African Americans in Baltimore worked in the public sector by the decade’s end.\(^75\)

The public sector proved a particularly vital source of jobs for black women. In 1950, about twelve percent of the employed African-American women who lived in Baltimore had government jobs, and black women also made up twelve percent of all of the government workers who lived in the city. No figures on government employment are available for Baltimore for 1960 due to the methodology officials employed to
conduct that year’s U.S. census. But by 1970, the number of black female public-sector workers in the city had increased dramatically. Nearly a third of employed African-American women in Baltimore worked for the city, state or federal government, and black women also made up nearly a third of the all the public-sector employees who resided in the city. Although largely ignored by scholars of urban history, African-American women made stunning gains in public sector employment during the 1960s.\textsuperscript{76}

Despite such impressive gains discrimination persisted. In all government agencies, African Americans remained concentrated in low-wage jobs. In 1965, the earnings gap between black and white municipal employees was $2,000. In the city and state government workforces, African Americans were concentrated in only a handful of agencies. At mid-decade, the CRC discovered that ninety percent of the city’s classified employees -- those in civil-service rather than laboring positions -- worked in only five city departments: Education, City Hospitals, Health, Fire, and Parks and Recreation. In addition, forty-one percent of the employees of the Department of Public Welfare were African-American. Alternatively, sixty-two city departments, most notably those that controlled the city’s finances and planning, had no or minimal numbers of African Americans on their staffs. Although activists had sometimes targeted health, education and welfare positions in an effort to increase black control of public service planning and delivery, they certainly had not neglected other areas of city government. On-going discrimination led the CRC to conclude that “while some progress had been made in some city agencies in the employment of Negroes, there was a dismal lack of progress and concern by other agencies, and/or those who run them.”\textsuperscript{77} Researchers studying the state workforce made similar findings. What’s more, they raised a concern about the
concentration of black professionals in the human services, pointing out that those in leadership positions in such agencies generally earned lower salaries than those paid other government administrators. 78 African Americans’ concentration in the human services had an additional alarming repercussion. Black workers were disproportionately represented in agencies dependent on federal funding and thus vulnerable to changes in the nation’s commitment to maintaining its welfare state.

African-American women as a group were the most poorly compensated of all government workers. The low-wage health, education and welfare jobs many black women won were often more poorly compensated than low-wage positions filled by men in other agencies. What’s more, the organization of many federal programs produced a hierarchy of jobs likely to reinforce gendered and racialized patterns in the larger job market. White men or in some cases black men served in leadership roles, white women filled many professional positions, and black women worked at the lowest-paid jobs. Training programs during the 1960s reproduced gendered and racialized employment expectations. “When you’re offered job training, it’s always something with ‘aide’ behind it,” welfare-rights activist Margaret McCarthy complained in 1969. “I suppose some kind of job beats nothing, but it tells you what people think of you when they only think of your being a nurse’s aide when you could be a nurse or teacher’s aide when you could be a teacher.” 79 Yet, as historian Rhonda Williams notes, even low-wage positions in human services agencies could serve productive roles. “These…jobs further validated poor black women’s concerns and empowered them to speak; after all, they believed they had the federal government behind them.” 80 What’s more, African-American women employed in human services agencies often had hands-on control over the delivery of
public services. As a result, during the 1960s they won positions that gave them the unprecedented opportunity to try to shape welfare-state programming in the city.81

Just as African-American activists joined forces to increase the number of black and low-income residents on city boards in municipal jobs, they also worked together to press for African-American leadership of city agencies. To be sure, activists sought top posts for black professionals because of the salaries the jobs paid. But leadership positions had an additional importance. In a city in which African Americans remained largely excluded from elected office, control of municipal departments represented opportunities to control policy-making and improve municipal services. Fights for leadership roles for black workers certainly had precedents. In 1960, civil rights leaders had responded in outrage when the Department of Parks and Recreation selected a white over an African-American man for assistant superintendent. Harold Jennifer, the African-American candidate, had received a higher test score on a civil service exam than the white competitor, had been with the agency only a month less than the white applicant, and had earned significantly higher efficiency ratings during his tenure. Activists demanded an investigation by the EEOC. The new body, however, had yet to become a consistent advocate of the city’s fair-employment law. It determined that discrimination had not played a role in the hiring decision. If it wasn’t discrimination, “then what is it?” editors of The Afro American demanded.82 Baltimore’s black population could not have asked for a more perfect case of the city’s racist hiring practices.
Throughout the 1960s activists applied unrelenting pressure on city officials to increase the number of African Americans in leadership positions. Activists were particularly determined to win African Americans positions with responsibilities for health, education and welfare services. Although the city’s 1964 public accommodation law desegregated the agencies, many of the city’s human services departments had a long record of neglect that activists were determined to correct. African-American control of the agencies, they believed, would introduce into the city government high-ranking professionals responsive to the concerns of black residents.

The Baltimore City Council, which had veto power over mayoral appointments to top city jobs, remained an obstacle, particularly to candidates with progressive ideologies. In 1968, Thomas D’Alesandro, III, who had succeeded McKeldin as Baltimore’s mayor, nominated Walter Carter for the directorship of the city’s federal antipoverty agency. Carter had been the top choice of the agency’s commission and had widespread community support. He had also been Maryland’s coordinator for the March on Washington and the chair of CORE from 1961 and 1963. Although he had left CORE as it had become increasingly “militant” he had remained an out-spoken advocate of open housing legislation in the city, a proposal the City Council had repeatedly rejected. By 1968, hard-won redistricting had enabled African Americans to add two additional black members to the City Council. Nevertheless, conservative white members retained significant power and were determined to maintain maximum control over the city’s federally-funded agencies. Despite the outpouring of support for the Carter nomination, the Council soundly rejected him. Outraged city residents inundated the mayor and Council members with protest letters. Twelve members of the CAC, most of them
community residents, resigned in protest. The director of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) also lent his voice to the protesters. The Council’s decision was “an affront… to the basic principle of meaningful resident involvement,” he protested. Despite pleas from the D'Alesandro, whose father had also served as mayor and whose family had considerable power in the city’s Democratic Party, the Council refused to reverse its decision.

Despite the on-going ability of white Council members to weed out some progressive candidates to top city posts, activists did help secure leadership positions for African Americans in many of the city’s agencies during the 1960s. Most of the jobs were filled by men and were managerial positions within rather than at the helm of agencies. In 1963, Dr. E. Walter Shervington became the Health Department’s director for venereal diseases, and the following year, Theodore D. Perkins became the assistant director of the Baltimore City Hospitals. By 1966, the city had two black assistant superintendents in the public school system, and in 1968, William Pinderhughes became the first African-American to hold the post of associate superintendent. The city’s federally-funded antipoverty agencies - the CAA and the Model Cities agency - also had consistent black leadership and significant African-American representation in managerial positions. The director of the city’s federally-funded Concentrated Employment Program, Frederick L. Nims, Jr., was also African-American. In addition, during the late 1960s, African Americans made some gains in the city’s Department of Welfare, and David Glenn moved from his job as the McKeldin’s assistant to the top post in the CRC. African American men secured some leadership positions outside of human service agencies as well. Edgar M. Ewing served as the acting head of Bureau of Urban
Renewal and Housing Authority before assuming the directorship of the Model Cities agency. In 1966, the police department promoted an African-American officer to the rank of captain. Two years later, George Russell became the City Solicitor, the highest position an African-American had ever held in Baltimore’s government.  

Russell’s appointment confirmed the conviction of civil rights activists that high-ranking black city officials would be sympathetic to Baltimore’s African Americans. As City Solicitor, Russell was often put in the awkward position of having to defend the city government in discrimination suits filed by African Americans. Russell’s position also gave him the authority to evaluate the qualifications city officials required of applicants to leadership positions in the municipal government. Shortly after he was appointed, he was asked to consider whether F. Pierce Linaweaver could be considered for an appointment to the directorship of the Department of Public Works. Linaweaver was an African-American engineer with a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University, and he had one year of experience as the deputy director of the department. The job requirements for directorship position, however, called for ten years of experience. Russell ruled that Linaweaver could be considered for the post even though he lacked the requisite years. Troy Brailey, who was the president of the Negro American Labor Council, a former NAACP labor committee chair, a member of the CRC, and a representative in the Maryland House of Delegates, applauded the decision. “The city and state in the past constantly use this ‘years of experience’ barrier to keep Negroes out of good-paying jobs,” he explained.  

Russell’s decision, Brailey predicted, would pave the way for a greater number of African Americans to enter top city posts.
While African-American men made slow but unprecedented progress in the upper echelons of the civil service during the 1960s, black women made far fewer gains. By 1969 black and white women together made up less than nine percent of Baltimore’s 202 officials. Thirty-five of the city’s forty-seven agencies had no women in top positions, and of the remaining twelve, ten had only one female administrator. White women were much more likely than African Americans to hold the top spots. Nevertheless, black women won some important victories. In 1963, Ivy Logan Harris became the only woman in Baltimore to run a public-housing project. In 1968, Marguerite Campbell became Mayor D'Alesandro’s Community Relations specialist and the first African-American woman to serve on a mayoral staff. The same year, F. Eulalian Ferguson was appointed the Social Service coordinator in the Public Housing division of the Department of Housing and Community Development. And shortly thereafter, Pearl Cole Brackett became the assistant superintendent for school-community relations. In addition, African-American women held positions as principals and vice principals in a number of Baltimore’s public schools.97

African Americans began moving into leadership positions in Baltimore at a time when federal urban policy extended to municipal agency heads, and particularly those in the human services, greater authority than ever before. Throughout the 1960s, the federal government sent considerable resources to cities in the form of grants-in-aid. Congress distributed resources in that form so as to control the specific uses to which localities put intergovernmental aid and to ensure that the recipients were in compliance with federal guidelines such as nondiscrimination. To qualify for grants, state and local governments had to submit detailed applications. In some cases, agency heads could apply directly for
grants without the knowledge and approval of elected officials, which gave agencies a measure of independence. Not surprisingly, the ability of government employees to win funds for and implement programming without official sanction angered elected leaders nationwide. They viewed categorical grants that they had not approved as they did community-participation mandates: as a usurpation of their authority over local affairs.

During the mid-1960s, McKeldin and Baltimore’s City Council were outraged that Baltimore agency heads could independently apply for and secure federal grants. In February 1965, the mayor sent a memo to all of the city’s department heads announcing his desire to approve all new municipal programs. The Council, meanwhile, commissioned HWC to undertake a study of all city social welfare planning to make sure that the legislative branch remained informed of all programming. In its report a year later, the HWC confirmed the conservative Council’s greatest concern. “It appears,” HWC reported, “that city departments in several instances had negotiated demonstration projects and new programs to be financed by non-municipal funds without any information thereof being shared by the department involved until after all negotiations had been completed and a definite commitment made.” Although the mayor and City Council attempted to constrain the independence of the city’s social welfare agencies, it is unlikely that they eliminated the practice of covert grant-writing. What’s more, the fact that city workers could introduce programs without official sanction enhanced the clout of human-services agency heads within the municipal bureaucracy.

The categorical-grants method of funding distribution bolstered the power of agency heads in a second way as well. Because the federal government determined the uses to which intergovernmental aid could be put, local officials could not divert the
funds for alternative purposes. Given the composition of Baltimore’s City Council, it is unlikely that antipoverty efforts would have received the level of funding they did had Congress simply channeled resources to city coffers with no oversight. What’s more, because liberal Congresses earmarked funds for antipoverty efforts and other social welfare programs, human service agencies received needed resources without having to compete in municipal budget processes with other departments. As a result, the distribution of categorical grants supplied a degree of independence and security to departments in which African Americans made the most significant leadership gains during the 1960s.89

During the 1960s, federal urban policies provided African American in Baltimore with unprecedented opportunities to increase their control over municipal policy-making. Keynesian-inspired remedies for poverty alleviation increased the flow of federal aid to the city and subsidized a wide array of antipoverty initiatives. Civil rights activists of diverse ideological orientations met with considerable success in their efforts to win African Americans spots on municipal boards and commission, government jobs and leadership posts. As a result, although African Americans remained largely excluded from elected office, their power in the city grew. And as they moved into the public sector, black government workers lost no time before using their new positions to influence the quality of public services the city made available to black residents.
CHAPTER 4

“DECENCY AND JUSTICE:”

PUBLIC-SECTOR WORKERS AND PROTEST

In September 1968, sanitation workers affiliated with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) staged a four-day strike against the city. They proudly followed the lead of the sanitation workers of Memphis, Tennessee, whose fight for union representation six months earlier had attracted the support of Martin Luther King. King’s marching with the Memphis workers brought national attention to their cause, until an assassin took his life. To honor both the slain civil rights leader and the workers he championed—and also to compel sympathy for their own circumstances—Baltimore’s strikers carried placards identical to those used in Memphis. The male and mostly African-American workers protested with signs that declared “I Am a Man” and “Decency and Justice” as they demanded “better wages and job conditions with dignity.” They protested not just for themselves but for all of the municipal government’s lowest-paid workers whose labor enabled the city to function.

A year earlier, leaders, staff and clients of the city’s Community Action Agency (CAA) had also staged a protest. Angered by the federal officials whose spending cuts threatened to undermine the War on Poverty, a crowd of over a thousand gathered at the
city’s Federal Office Building plaza for a rally. They condemned the proposed cuts, then offered an enthusiastic send-off to the hardiest among them who would be embarking on stage two of the protest. Days later, a contingent of about 300 braving the mid-November chill, set off by foot on a forty-mile march to Washington, D.C. The group included agency staff members who forfeited two days worth of pay to make the protest. Not surprisingly, none among the “heavily female” and largely African-American crowds who participated in the Baltimore rally or D.C. march carried placards reading “I Am a Woman.” While such a statement might have invoked the critique of racism implied in the sanitation workers’ slogan, it would have lacked the appeal to gender privilege that lent the men’s message some of its force. Many of the protestors defended the War on Poverty because it funded programs that responded specifically to the gendered challenges poor women faced as they struggled to keep their families healthy and secure. As Nellie Brewer, a CAA neighborhood aide who participated in the march, explained, “I feel I should be here. The program has helped me in many ways and I feel some responsibility for its continuation.”

The activism of Baltimore’s public-sector workers during the late 1960s, indicative of a pervasive faith among Baltimore residents that the city could be changed for the better, defies many historians’ characterizations of the period. Scholars of U.S. urban, labor and political history often point to the 1960s as a period of decline. Thomas Sugrue, for example, whose study of Detroit identifies post-World War II deindustrialization as a major cause of that city’s decay, posits 1967 as the nadir of the urban crisis. Attention to structural transformations in the postwar global economy has similarly led labor historians to describe the 1960s despairingly. U.S. corporations’
efforts to keep up with global industrial competitors and maintain profit-levels undermined union gains and shrank membership rosters. Political historians add to the theme of declension by identifying the postwar years as a period of tragic transformation in the history of American liberalism. The reform impulse of the New Deal era, during which activists fought for an American system of wealth redistribution, was replaced by activism premised on identity politics. African Americans and women played a leading role in the shift by demanding a larger slice of the economic pie for themselves rather than for universal social policies. The dismal picture is made drearier still by critics of the War on Poverty. They charge that liberal politicians’ naïve faith in growth economics led to anti-poverty remedies that ignored structural transformations and presumed a cultural deficiency on the part of the unemployed. As a result, War on Poverty spending funded training and educational programs that prepared participants for jobs that no longer existed in many cities.3

While the concerns of historians about the 1960s have considerable merit, their focus on industrial employment and unionization obscures dramatic developments and activism in the public sector. During the 1960s, civil rights activists in Baltimore worked relentlessly to open government jobs to African Americans, and though discrimination persisted, they had considerable success. Public-sector employment, however, hardly guaranteed workers a living wage, so many workers and civil rights leaders were receptive to overtures by organizers of AFSCME, perhaps the most vibrant union in the United State during the decade. The 1968 sanitation workers’ strike was one of many forms of pressure AFSCME—as well as the city’s other public-sector unions and organizations—applied on elected officials during the 1960s to improve the wages,
benefits and working conditions of government workers. At the same time, public-sector workers became some of Baltimore’s most vigorous defenders of the welfare state. African-American women, who made up the majority of employees in both federally-funded antipoverty agencies and many municipal human-services departments, confronted a welfare-state apparatus that had been legally segregated until 1964. They entered agencies that also had been ineffective in meeting the needs of women juggling the responsibilities of work and family or negotiating single parenthood. In response, they worked with fellow employees, including African-American men and liberal whites, to improve the quality of public services and make the government more responsive to city residents. They also promoted community participation in municipal decision-making in an effort to increase the political power of the poor. What’s more, they monitored government spending on social programs and aggressively fought encroachments. In some instances they worked cooperatively with service recipients, who were also frequently women of color.4

Together, government workers and poor residents defended a variety of social service programs, including many that served a function scholars have largely overlooked. Health, nutrition, recreational and other federally-funded programs redistributed national resources to poor families because government agencies provided services that mothers and daughters had performed. As a result, government programs helped to ease women’s unpaid, gendered caretaking responsibilities. The combined consequences of the new services the government made available and victories in the public-sector labor movement were impressive. Both help to account for the rising prosperity of African Americans in Baltimore in an era of on-going deindustrialization.
The Keynesian policies of the 1960s that dramatically enlarged the government workforce in the United States also fueled the public-sector labor movement. The nation’s growing population of government workers had many reasons to seek union representation. Most protective labor legislation in the U.S. did not cover them, and their wages trailed those earned by workers in equivalent positions in the private sector. President John F. Kennedy’s decision to grant recognition to unions representing federal workers set the stage for local struggles. In Baltimore, the public-sector labor movement became inextricably tied to the city’s racial politics. The Baltimore Teachers Union and AFSCME, the city’s most aggressive public unions, combined concerns about working conditions, employment discrimination and the quality of public services available to the city’s largely African-American population of poor residents, even as the city continued to employ large numbers of Caucasians.

The growing strength of public-sector unions in the United States during the 1960s mirrored developments in nations around the world. The U.S. actually trailed many industrialized countries in developing an organized public sector. In many European countries, public and private sector unionism emerged together over the twentieth century. Some nations nationalized entire industries and created armies of workers who blurred the distinction between industrial and public-sector employees. European nations also grew their public work forces by creating welfare states that generated significant labor demands. Public-sector unionism followed, and labor laws did not create the distinction between public and private-sector workers as they did in the U.S. As a result, public-sector growth during the 1960s merely strengthened existing
unions. In some developing countries, increases in the public sector prompted struggles over unionization. During the decades following World War II, many newly independent nations created large government workforces. As the International Labour Organization (ILO) explains, “In developing countries, enlarging the public sector was often seen as the logical way for governments to respond to the people’s aspirations.” Anxious to reverse the legacies of the colonial era, during which the health, education and welfare needs of native populations were often neglected, many leaders committed significant national resources to public services. Many developing countries also nationalized industries, and some grew their public sectors to guarantee jobs for citizens. In many cases, the growth of the public sector led to unionization.

The rapid growth of the public-sector in developing nations alarmed Americans concerned about the spread of communism. The postwar dominance of the United States in the global economy depended on a system of free-market exchange that helped fuel American economic growth. In the Cold War context, however, the U.S. could not always combat industrial nationalization and welfare-state growth. As Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia between 1981 and 2003, recalls, the United States was “constrained by the need to be nice so that people [would] choose the so-called free-market system as against the centrally planned system.” But American officials felt little compunction to play fair. At least by the early 1960s, even AFSCME was pulled into efforts to strengthen the American empire through covert, overseas anti-communist ventures. The union was only a minor player in Central Intelligence Agency backed operations. Nevertheless, as its membership rolls grew at home in response to Keynesian domestic policies, AFSCME was also involved in the aggressively anti-communist
dimension of mid-century American liberalism. Ultimately, although U.S. efforts to contain public-sector growth internationally met with some successes, many developing nations succeeded in enlarging their welfare states and public workforces to make their governments more responsive to local concerns.⁸

Ironically, while AFSCME participated in efforts to quell potential radicalism overseas, fear of radicalism at home contributed significantly to the union’s—and government worker’—second-class status in the American labor movement. The few scholars who discuss government unions typically begin their accounts in 1960s. In fact, many public-sector unions share with their private-sector counterparts early twentieth-century origins. But the comparisons end there. As historian Joseph Slater explains, an important though overlooked dimension of U.S. labor history is the repression of public-sector unions. Just as African Americans were written out of much New Deal welfare-state legislation, government workers were excluded from the era’s protective labor legislation. Neither the National Labor Relations Act nor the Fair Labor Standards Act applied to government workers. As Slater explains, opponents of public-sector unionization included many who fought unions in all sectors of the economy. They enjoyed frequent success, trading on fears that an organized government workforce would win radical labor leaders dangerous influence in public policy making.⁹

Resistance to public-sector unionism had a long history in Baltimore. The city adopted its 1920 charter in the context of the post-World War I Red Scare and in the wake of the 1919 Boston police strike. The document prohibited municipal employees from joining combinations or workers’ organizations without official permission from city administrators. During the late 1930s, inspired by the recently passed Wagner Act,
organizers from both the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) launched campaigns to unionize municipal employees, both male and female. Public unions pressed the city for many of the rights federal labor law guaranteed private-sector unions. They demanded collective bargaining, dues check-offs, the right to strike, increased control over hiring and firing, seniority rights, and closed shops. Conservative business leaders led the opposition to public-sector organizing, proclaiming that “100% communistic” and “foreign elements” were bent on taking over the city and that higher wages for government workers would require higher taxes that would “disadvantage the manufacturers who have built up the city.”

Union leaders responded by invoking the growing strength of the city’s labor vote to pressure elected officials to bargain with public-sector unions. The tactics were well-suited to the ambitions of Mayor Howard Jackson, who hoped to make a bid for the state’s governorship. During the early war years, when the city’s labor market was particularly tight, the mayor agreed to bargain with the AFL-affiliated Teamsters, who represented some city laborers. In response, a local real estate executive sued the mayor and City Council to have the union recognition rescinded. The Maryland Court of Appeals ultimately settled the case, ruling that the city lacked the legal authority to bargain with public unions. Thereafter, public unions’ influence was only informal. The Teamsters continued to represent some workers; many firefighters joined an affiliate of the International Association of Firefighters (AFL); and a minority of city teachers made up the membership of the Baltimore Teachers Union (CIO). Mayor Jackson as well as his successors, Theodore McKeldin and Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr., continued to bargain unofficially with the unions. As a result, despite their lack of legal standing, public-
sector unions made some gains in Baltimore during the 1950s. The Teamsters and other public unions helped to win dues-check off privilege for workers’ organizations and limited grievance procedures. The city also revoked the rule that required employees to seek permission before joining a union. What’s more, a strike by sanitation workers in 1953 served as a reminder to city officials that workers did not require a legal right to strike in order to do so.\textsuperscript{11}

Mid-century public-sector unions also attempted to organize state and federal workers in the Baltimore area. Efforts to win union recognition from Maryland officials made almost no headway. In fact, in 1941, concern about public-sector union activism led the Maryland General Assembly to consider legislation that would punish participants in public-sector strikes as harshly as the state censured those convicted of treason. Resistance to public-sector unionism remained fierce in Annapolis well beyond the postwar years, and state workers did not win collective bargaining rights until the 1990s. Federal unions had greater success in the Baltimore area. Postal unions had long counted the city’s workers in their membership roles, and federal unions had acted on behalf of Social Security employees since at least the early 1940s. The extent to which federal unions could exercise influence over working conditions, however, depended on the largess of individual agency administrators.\textsuperscript{12}

Employee associations and professional organizations emerged alongside public-sector unions but were typically less aggressive in their demands. The Classified Municipal Employees Association (CMEA) courted members from among the city’s non-laboring and non-per diem municipal employees. The Maryland Classified Employees Association (MCEA) sought members in similar positions in the state’s workforce. Both
organizations, derisively labeled “company unions” by some in the city’s labor movement, began as social groups and did not adopt an adversarial stance toward elected officials. Each organization limited membership to whites. In 1954 perhaps as a response to the decision in the Brown v. Board of Education school desegregation case, CMEA officials affirmed their commitment to segregation. “Any White classified employee of the City of Baltimore or other White employees paid in full or in part by the City of Baltimore, and any White employee of this Association subject to the approval of the Board of Governors, shall be eligible for regular membership,” the organization’s by-laws specified. The racist membership requirement of the CMEA was doubtlessly one of the reasons African-American classified workers organized a parallel employee organization for themselves. By 1942, the Association of Classified Municipal Employees (ACME) boasted a membership of almost 1,000. Teachers and nurses also formed professional organizations in the city prior to 1960. Though they lacked the assertiveness of public-sector unions, the employee associations and professional organizations represented workers in salary discussions and helped win fringe benefits.

Just as civil rights leaders pushed elected officials to open public-sector employment to African Americans during the 1950s and 1960s, they also pressured the city to use its fair-employment law to desegregate government unions and employee associations. In 1959, the city’s Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) began investigations of CMEA, which represented about 7,500 workers. The organization’s leaders responded by offering the stunning defense that “at no time in the history of the C.M.E.A. has there ever been so much as a flicker of suspicion about any act that would point to discrimination.” The city disagreed, and as a result, CMEA’s
newfound disdain for discrimination became the foundation of its revised membership policy. \(^{17}\) The Baltimore Firefighters Association (AFL-CIO), which the EEOC charged with discrimination in 1960, trumped the audacity of the CMEA in its fight against the city. Hounded by the Baltimore Urban League (BUL), the Fire Department finally hired its first African Americans in 1953. By 1960, the city employed 200 black firefighters, but none had been admitted to the firefighters’ union. In response to the EEOC’s charge of discrimination, the union agreed to open its membership—but with a caveat intended as a harsh rebuke to the African-American firefighters and civil rights activists. The union demanded payment of $25 in back dues from seasoned black firefighters. Furman Templeton of the BUL endorsed the “compromise,” but most other civil rights leaders were outraged. “Why should firefighters be penalized for not joining a union when they were prevented from doing so by that union?” demanded Troy Brailey, president of the Negro American Labor Council and chair of the labor committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). \(^{18}\) The firefighters took their complaint to A. Philip Randolph, who was an AFL-CIO vice president, and to the civil rights committee of the AFL-CIO. They ultimately won support for their case. \(^{19}\)

The efforts by civil rights activists to open public-sector unions and associations to black workers during the early 1960s foreshadowed their support for public-sector organizing later in the decade. The responses of CMEA and the firefighters’ union to pressures to desegregate, meanwhile, reveal the complicated landscape of racial politics within the city and its labor movement. Many civil rights leaders and black workers had long championed private-sector unionism and the advantages to be won through worker solidarity. Many also maintained a healthy suspicion of Caucasian union leaders and
workers, who had historically been reluctant to sharing with African Americans the
boons of union membership. The legacy of what a city judge described as the
“undeniable history of hostility between the Negro community and organized labor”
spilled into the public sector.20 The CMEA’s and firefighters’ responses to charges of
discrimination gave black workers good reason to assume that white government workers
shared the racist proclivities of their counterparts in the private-sector. Government
union organizers would have to tread carefully during the decade if they hoped to win the
confidence of African-American municipal workers.

The local leadership of AFSCME was mindful of the city’s racial minefields.
The union had made sporadic organizing efforts in the city since at least the 1950s and
had secured dues check-off privileges by 1960. Raymond Clarke, who became the
president of Baltimore’s Local 44 in 1962, was certainly no stranger to the city’s racial
politics. Clarke, had used his deep bass voice to cajole his fellow employees to join
AFSCME, was a chauffeur-foreman in the Bureau of Sanitation when he joined the
union. He was also African-American. He had grown up in Baltimore, and his father
was a union man. He had been a member of the Teamsters when they had organized a
union among sanitation workers, and he spearheaded AFSCME’s organizing drive during
the 1960s. P. J. Ciampa and Ernest Crofoot, who directed many AFSCME organizing
drives during the 1960s, were also familiar with race relations in the city. The two white
AFSCME leaders had been affiliated with the United Automobile Workers during World
War II, when that union and civil rights leaders fought relentlessly to break the color line
at a major aircraft-producing firm in the city. Ciampa eventually became the Director of
Field Services and later an Area Director for AFSMCE’s International. Crofoot became
the president of AFSCME’s Council 62, which included the Baltimore local. During much of the 1960s, Clarke, Ciampa and Crofoot used their familiarity with the city’s racial politics, their knowledge of the municipal workforce, and organizing skills to make AFSCME a player in Baltimore politics. 21

In 1960, the union undertook a major organizing drive in the city. Union leaders targeted both laborers, among whom they had long organized in the city, and some classified workers. They directed most of their energies towards low-wage municipal workers. The union attracted school cafeteria workers in addition to custodians, patient aides in addition to orderlies, and welfare employees in addition to sanitation workers. The organizing drive, thus won the union many female as well as male members. Even as women helped fill the AFSCME ranks, however, the cigar-smoking, booze-drinking and swearing of the union leaders no doubt contributed to keeping the upper echelons of the organization entirely male. 22

AFSCME won the support of growing numbers of workers by making aggressive demands of the city. In 1960, union officials called for raises and full payment of workers’ medical and life insurance policies. Within six years, their list of demands had grown to include measures intended to compensate for government workers’ exclusion from federal labor protections. They demanded a city-financed unemployment-insurance system, a minimum pension benefit and a disability policy. They also pressed the city to consider seniority in promotion decisions, fought to improve fringe benefits and overtime policies, and tried to get the city to extend some benefits to per diem employees. The union made most headway on the bread and butter issues. Seniority remained an issue of considerable contention between Baltimore’s public sector unions and the city. 23
AFSCME leaders sometimes used the threat of strikes to pressure the city to meet union demands. In 1966, Ciampa referenced Baltimore’s culinary tastes to make a veiled strike threat. “Has anyone ever smelled crab shells that have been sitting around two days in the summer heat?” he asked an audience of union members.²⁴ It is difficult to determine the extent to which AFSCME’s demands during the 1960s affected the city’s personnel policies. City officials were certainly loath to credit the union with policy changes. Nevertheless, improvements in workers’ wages and fringe-benefits packages no doubt owed much to the unions’ efforts.²⁵

AFSCME’s activism in Baltimore helped to radicalize the CMEA. Soon after the union began its 1960 drive, Paul Kowzan, CMEA’s president, announced he resented the “outside” intrusion.²⁶ Nevertheless, the organization was shaken enough to consider transforming itself into a union. The issue was put to a vote in 1961, but members who participated in the election voted overwhelmingly to remain a social group.²⁷ Change in CMEA was unavoidable, however, if the organization wanted to remain relevant. The gradual transformation in the language CMEA officials used to describe their activities demonstrates the influence of AFSCME’s aggressiveness. For years, CMEA officials had been making annual salary “requests” of city officials. As a News American reporter sarcastically commented, “[CMEA] requests annually about twice the pay hike it knows it will receive, and nods its collective head in appreciation when half its requests are granted.”²⁸ By the late 1960s, CMEA had become considerably more aggressive. “Requests” became “demands!” that the formerly lily-white employee organization expected the city to honor.²⁹ Just as organizations such as U-JOIN and CORE pushed the
leaders of the city’s mainstream civil rights groups to take more aggressive stands on issues of social and economic justice in the city, public-sector unions helped turn employee organizations into assertive advocates for workers.

The city’s public-sector unions radicalized employee associations both because of the bread-and-butter demands they made of the city and as a result of assertive stands they sometimes took in an effort to improve municipal services. In the private sector, the radicalism of unions is often measured by the extent to which they attempt to win workers control over or influence in corporate decision-making. Radical public-sector unionism is more elusive. Government employees ostensibly work for the people, and their labor does not generate profits. Scholar Chris Miller suggests that radical public-sector labor activism occurs when public unions declare solidarity with the recipients of public services and use their influence to those improve services. Such activism, he explains, facilitates effective wealth redistribution. During the 1960s, Baltimore’s teachers’ union led efforts to connect service and employment-related concerns in a single agenda. By mid-decade, the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) attracted members disproportionately from the city’s high schools. As a result, its interracial rank and file appears to have been more male than might be expected given the gender make-up of the workforce of the city’s schools. The BTU’s leadership was also predominately male.30

Long an advocate of quality public education, during the 1960s BTU worked intently to improve the city’s schools. To compensate for funding formulas detrimental to children from Baltimore and other relatively poor districts, union officials demanded that the Maryland legislature use subsidies to equalize funding. In 1965, the BTU unveiled a master plan for the city schools “to arrest the expectation of failure with which
we have lived so long.” The plan included ideas borrowed from the urban-education platform of the union’s parent organization, the American Federation of Teachers. BTU recommended that the city’s elementary schools become community centers. Union members envisioned creating facilities in which “educational, medical, recreational, and social services radiat[e] from the school center into the community.” The union also worked outside the system to advance the idea of community schooling. Under the leadership of Dennis Crosby, an African-American teacher who became president of the BTU in 1966, the union coordinated with CORE on an education program. During that summer the two organizations ran a Freedom School, which sponsored discussions on racial issues and taught black history.

Not to be outdone by its union counterpart, the Public School Teachers Association (PSTA) added its voice to those fighting to improve the quality of the city’s public schools. The PSTA had a significantly larger and more female membership than the BTU. In 1966, the organization issued sanctions against the Baltimore school system, promising to lift them “only when it can be assured that adequate financial support for the schools will be forthcoming.” Imposed through work-to-contract measures, the sanctions reflected the educators’ concerns about both the quality of the schools and their own working conditions. Shortly after they announced their sanctions, 3,000 teachers rallied at City Hall. Their efforts to improve the schools eventually won the endorsement of the Maryland School Teachers Association and the National Education Association (NEA). The NEA added its own sanctions on the city, declaring, “The public school system of Baltimore is so extremely deficient that many of the children of the city are
being denied the minimum level of educational opportunity to which every child is entitled.” Although city officials disputed these claims, they also increased funding for the city schools.

While the BTU and the PSTA were most effective among Baltimore’s employee unions in combining demands for workers and improved municipal services, other unions also linked bread-and-butter issues with activism for social justice. Both the Laborers International Union (LIU), which had a short-lived tenure in the city, and AFSCME tried to organize the city’s lowest-paid and most exploited employees, working to win for them protections the federal government guaranteed private-sector workers. The unions also monitored closely the city’s equal opportunity practices. The leadership of LIU was particularly critical of the patronage system that too often determined the allocation of laboring jobs. In 1968, James D. Claxton, the president of LIU, accused the city of reserving the best positions for “political fair-haired boys.” He noted, “If you have no political background or patronage, there is little or no chance for promotion.”

As an international union growing in prominence, AFSCME advanced a social justice agenda on both the national and local levels. The international lobbied for progressive urban policies such as the Model Cities program. It also formed coalitions with other organizations, such as the National Welfare Rights Organization, to fight for social policies of mutual concern and to improve relationships between service providers and service recipients. In Baltimore, AFSCME officials joined the city’s civil rights leaders and the staff of the Community Relations Commission to protest discrimination in civil-service testing procedures. AFSCME also challenged as discriminatory the city’s failure to train and then promote low-level workers. The city’s tendency to keep unskilled
workers in dead-end jobs and to hire new workers for vacant skilled positions reinforced racial and gender-based segmentation in the municipal workforce. To compensate for the practice, the AFSCME International secured federal funding for programs to prepare employees for higher-paid jobs. One program in Baltimore trained custodial workers to become operation engineers. The union convinced the Civil Service Commission to honor the license the union awarded those who succeeded in the program. As Crofoot recalled, the graduations days of the union’s training courses were exceptional in AFSCME history. It was only on those days, he explained, that tough and seasoned labor organizers cried as they watched program graduates receive their diplomas.\textsuperscript{38}

While concerns about service quality and social justice ranked high on the agendas of public-sector unions, winning collective bargaining rights became an increasingly important priority during the 1960s. Kennedy’s 1962 decision to sign Executive Order 10988, which granted federal workers union recognition, buoyed hopes among public-sector employees in other levels of government that they too might win the right. Kennedy’s executive order was the product of a decades-long campaign by federal unions, which had pressed Congress for legislation granting them recognition every year between 1949 and 1961. Union-endorsed bills never made it out of committee. Kennedy proved more sympathetic than Congress: his executive order required federal agencies to recognize unions and grant them some role in personnel policy-making.\textsuperscript{39} By 1965, the nation’s postal unions had 180,000 members, while the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), among the largest of the federal unions, included 150,000 members.\textsuperscript{40}
Kennedy’s executive order had immediate ramifications for the federal workers employed in and around Baltimore. Local 1923 of AFGE became the exclusive bargaining agent for workers at Social Security’s headquarters. The local’s leadership included African-American Count Thomas, who served as first vice president and participated in contract negotiations. By 1965, over 8,500 Baltimore-area workers were represented by the local, which Social Security employees believed to be the biggest in the U.S. representing white-collar workers. Kennedy’s executive order also prompted Baltimore’s postal workers to ready themselves for what would become the largest nationwide union election in American history. In 1963, the Baltimore Post Office began negotiating with several postal unions that had prevailed in local contests. As a consequence of unionization, the wages and working conditions of federal employees improved in Baltimore. Race and gender-based discrimination remained a problem in the federal workforce. Yet the federal civil service had long been an important source of employment for African Americans in the city, and the increased wages and fringe benefits unions won helped to account for the growing prosperity of black communities in Baltimore.\textsuperscript{41}

As federal unions fought to improve the working conditions of their members, many municipal employees became determined to win collective bargaining for themselves. The BTU was the first to crack the City Council’s resistance to unionization. By the early 1960s, the national leadership of the AFT had begun advocating for collective bargaining and moving away from the no-strike pledges many of its locals had taken during the McCarthy era. In December 1966, the BTU formally demanded the city schedule an election between itself and the PSTA and negotiate with the winner. Since
1961, forty cities had held similar elections between teachers’ unions and associations, and although associations had won twenty-six of the contests, the unions fared well in large cities. Determined to prevail in a Baltimore election, Crosby demanded a significant raise for teachers. “No longer will the teachers of Baltimore acquiesce to…feudal conditions…No longer will the teachers accept the crude and demeaning mouthings of patronizing patriarchs,” he declared.\(^{42}\)

The aggressiveness of the BTU pushed the PSTA to step up its assertiveness. In early 1967, an *Evening Sun* reporter noted, “Baltimore’s mild-mannered teachers group has removed its gray flannel jacket, rolled up its sleeves and picked a fight with the School Board.”\(^{43}\) To be more accurate considering the demographics of the PSTA’s membership, the teachers had unbuttoning their blouse cuffs before rolling up their sleeves. The BTU gained an edge in the competition in May 1967. The union staged a one-day strike, during which 130 people were arrested, a third of them women. The same day, 1,200 out of 7,200 teachers failed to show up at work. The strike ended after the City Council quickly agreed to consider holding elections. Shortly thereafter, the Council acceded to the union’s demand, and the BTU, which entered the resulting election with significantly fewer members than PSTA, won the day. As with the unionization of the federal workforce, the BTU victory helped make a sector of the city’s labor market that employed significant numbers of African American women an important source of economic stability. Low-wage municipal employees, however, still lacked collective bargaining rights. As Harold Shaw, an AFSCME official later recalled, “It just [didn’t] make sense that the people who needed it most [didn’t] have it.”\(^{44}\)
Following the city’s decision to grant collective bargaining to teachers, Maryland legislators passed a law requiring all jurisdictions in Maryland to recognize and negotiate with teachers’ organizations. AFSCME leaders tried to convince state legislators to extend the right to all public-sector workers. The fight for union recognition was relatively new to AFSCME leaders. Arnold Zander, a founder and long-time president of AFSCME International, had not prioritized collective bargaining. His successor, Jerry Wurf, who unseated Zander in 1964, championed the issue and pressed local union leaders to follow suit. Despite the directive, by March 1968, union leaders in Maryland had failed in their efforts to have public-sector collective-bargaining rights guaranteed by the state’s new constitution. A “Little Wagner Act,” sat stalled in committee, opposed most vociferously by the Baltimore Chamber of Commerce and the Associate Builders and Contractors of Maryland. Similar efforts to convince elected officials in Baltimore to extend collective bargaining rights to municipal workers, especially those “who needed it most,” did not succeed. Mayoral candidate Thomas D’Alesandro, III endorsed collective bargaining during his 1967 campaign, but most on the City Council remained opposed. It took the assassination of Martin Luther King to help win Baltimore workers collective bargaining rights.

The strike in Memphis, which began in February 1968 and lasted two months, attracted the participation of AFSCME leaders nationwide. Clarke, Crofoot and Ciampa were among those who made repeated trips to Memphis to support the strikers. Crofoot also visited the offices of the Baltimore Labor Council (BLC) to get the organization’s endorsement for the strike. With King’s participation in Memphis, the fight that pitted exploited African-American workers against southern city officials came to represent the
fusion of the civil rights and labor movements in the United States. Still, the BLC refused Crofoot’s request. Representatives of the largely white building-trades unions, who wielded considerable influence in the BLC, would not support the Memphis workers. The decision exposed tensions between public and private-sector unions in Baltimore that had worsened as the municipal workforce had become increasingly African-American. The BLC’s refusal also foreshadowed the responses many white trade unionists would have to public-sector strikes in Baltimore during the 1970s. In response, Crofoot turned his visit to the offices into a protest. Having arrived with a placard that proclaimed the BLC’s support for the strikers, Crofoot crossed out the word “supports” and inserted instead “finks out.” He marched through the BLC’s halls with the placard held high, then angrily left the headquarters.⁴⁶

The assassination of King in April 1968 helped secure victory for the Memphis strikers. His participation in the strike also helped win AFSCME a national reputation as a champion of racial and economic justice. King’s death also prompted civil disorder in cities across the nation, Baltimore among them. King had been scheduled to visit the city in early April but had instead traveled to Memphis. Two days after his death, looting and arson began in an East Baltimore neighborhood. The disorder lasted for four days, police made 5,700 arrests, six people died, and damage to the city was estimated at between $8 and $10 million. In response, Maryland’s governor Spiro Agnew sent thousands of National Guard troops and Maryland State police to the city. He also publicly berated Baltimore’s civil rights leaders for failing to prevent the disorder. The move outraged African Americans and white liberals. It also helped win Agnew an invitation from
Richard Nixon to join the presidential candidate’s ticket. Nixon was seeking a running mate who might counter the popularity of segregationist presidential candidate George Wallace.  

The disorders that followed King’s assassination has received considerable attention. Largely overlooked are the stepped-up efforts to organize low-wage public and private-sector workers that drew inspiration and determination from the Memphis strike. In Baltimore, AFSCME, and also the considerably smaller LIU, spearheaded efforts to translate the shock and grief that followed King’s death into collective bargaining rights for low-wage city workers. To spearhead AFSCME’s campaign, the International sent Jesse Epps, a 31-year old African-American labor organizer and veteran of the Memphis strike, to assist Clarke and the Baltimore staff. Epps was an inspirational speaker who fired up his audiences with dramatic gesticulations and the call-and-response oratorical technique prevalent among African-American ministers. Epps faced off against 35-year old Edward J. Gutman, who Mayor D’Alesandro appointed as the city’s labor commissioner as a first step towards fulfilling his campaign promise of collective bargaining for municipal employees. Gutman, who at over six feet tall towered over the diminutive Epps, was white and a former trial attorney for the National Labor Relations Board.  

By July 1968, AFSCME was considering a strike against the city. Although whites were prevalent among municipal laborers, making up forty percent of those in the Department of Sanitation, charges of government racism were inextricably interwoven with accusations of worker exploitation. Epps charged that Baltimore officials lacked concern for poor people—“who happen mostly to be black.” Gutman countered that the
union should postpone strike deliberations until September, when the City Council was slated to consider a collective-bargaining law. Tensions mounted, and many Caucasians, fearing a reprise of the disorder that followed King’s death, blamed the unions for exacerbating racial divisions. In August, Epps led a crowd of workers into a municipal budget meeting to demand higher wages. The mayor postponed a decision until after the City Council’s September meeting, saying that he did not consider it fair to negotiate with one of the many organizations that would vie to represent workers should the Council approve collective bargaining. A brief ceasefire followed while both Epps and D’Alesandro attended the National Democratic convention. As blood flowed on the streets of Chicago the national Democratic Party seemed destined for implosion. Many issues threatened the Party’s strength, and Epps and D’Alesandro stood on opposite sides of one divide. Although the two shared support for collective bargaining for public-sector workers, that issue in conjunction with the explosive accusations of racism, was among the causes of disunity in their Party.  

Shortly after Epps and D’Alesandro returned to Baltimore, Local 44 put a strike vote before the workers of the Department of Sanitation, a union stronghold. Despite the conservative Baltimore Sun’s admonition that a strike “would be an utterly intolerable act of irresponsibility, completely contrary to the public welfare,” AFSCME members voted to walk out. Despite the panic the city-workers’ strike helped to incite among some residents, the four-day protest progressed very smoothly. The action started among sanitation
workers, then quickly attracted the participation of municipal employees in the departments of highways, parks and sewers. On the first day of the strike about 1,750 city employees joined the sanitation workers, with a larger number participating the following day. In response, the City Council met in special session to debate a collective bargaining ordinance.

On the second day of the strike, about thirty-five civil rights leaders met in private to debate the role they should play. Among the groups represented were the NAACP, BUL, CORE, Civic Interest Group, and Union for Jobs Or Income Now (U-JOIN). Many in the meeting, including several agency heads and program administrators, were public-sector workers. Their dual status as government employees and community leaders demonstrates the extent to which black leaders had secured government posts during the decade. The public workers who participated in the meeting, however, risked jeopardizing their standing in the government by endorsing an illegal strike, so some attended in secret. Nevertheless, the group voted unanimously to support the strike with Walter Lively of U-JOIN becoming the head of a newly-formed Concerned Citizens’ Committee. U-JOIN had spearheaded efforts in the city to win low-income city residents influence in municipal decision-making bodies, and Lively clearly identified the public-sector strike as an extension of his organization’s activism for social and economic justice in the city. The striking workers’ concerns, he explained, were “an issue of survival.” Ultimately, the Concerned Citizen Committee was instrumental in bringing the strike to an end. Lively and Marion Bascom of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance visited City Hall and refused to leave until a settlement was reached. The city
eventually agreed to a wage increase that benefited about 1,500 workers. The strike also hastened the City Council’s decision to grant municipal employees collective bargaining privileges.53

The 1968 strike had a number of implications. LIU, which competed with AFSCME for members among low-wage city workers, particularly African Americans, became AFSCME’s harshest critic. The smaller union charged its rival with fomenting racial division and proceeding with the strike despite the imminence of a collective bargaining ordinance only to bolster its reputation before union elections. Although AFSCME officials denied the charge, they did seriously out-maneuver LIU, which ultimately lost all of the union elections in which it participated.54 Although the strike garnered significant public sympathy, especially from African Americans, it also contributed to a growing white backlash. During the strike, The News American proclaimed, “Baltimore today is experiencing the civic chaos which goes hand in hand with one form of the permissiveness which engulfs our modern society.”55 Governor Agnew endorsed that sentiment. Still extremely unpopular among civil rights leaders in the city, Agnew kept his distance from Baltimore during the strike. But he could not avoid seizing the moment to repeat the law-and-order rhetoric his campaign used to foment white resentment against African Americans. AFSCME’s illegal strike was “another indication of the breakdown of duly constituted authority in our society,” the governor declared.56

While the strike certainly had some critics, AFSCME members and leaders considered it a triumph. Although the Council seemed likely to endorse collective bargaining even before the strike began, there were no guarantees that an ordinance or
raises for workers would quickly follow. What’s more, AFSCME leaders rightly anticipated that a successful strike would give the union leverage in future collective bargaining negotiations. As Crofoot explained, “The [city] knew we would strike. They knew we would do it.”\(^5\) The threat bolstered AFSCME’s power at the bargaining table. Equally as important, the strike gave workers who were among the worst-paid and least-respected in the city the opportunity to make an aggressive stand on their own behalf. At stake, as indicated on the placards many workers carried during the strike, was not only “justice” via collective bargaining rights and higher wages, but also “dignity.” Signs reading “I am a Man” reinforced workers’ demands to be treated with respect.

“I Am a Man” signs also call attention to an intriguing absence of women in the strikes. Middle-class female teachers had participated in the BTU’s strike for collective bargaining almost a year earlier. And female low-wage municipal employees certainly shared their male counterparts’ concerns about “justice and dignity.” For years, the mayor, officials in the Civil Service Commission and civil rights leaders had received complaints from female employees dissatisfied with their earnings. Female low-wage government employees also engaged in aggressive forms of protest in defense of the welfare state during the late 1960s. Yet even those who were AFSCME members did not join the union’s strike. To be sure, AFSCME leaders had not invited them. The union had put the strike vote only to members within the Department of Sanitation. That had not, however, prevented other male workers from joining the walk-out. AFSCME’s male leadership culture probably repelled some women from participation. Others may also have considered the strike a male form of activism or worried about the costs city
residents would pay if workers abandoned human-service posts. Further, the combination of the strikers’ clear assertion of masculinity with an awareness of recent national conversations about domineering “black matriarchs” may have inhibited some women from participating in the strike. One hundred years before the sanitation strike, Marylander Frederick Douglass had prevailed upon women seeking the right to vote to postpone their struggle and respect “the Negro hour.” Perhaps some female city workers believed it was time for, or felt pressured to allow, the (male) Negro hour to strike again.  

While women did not participate in the strike, they certainly benefited from its resolution. In the union elections that followed, workers from the departments of public works and education chose to be represented by AFSCME, as did employees in the city’s jail and hospitals. After the votes were counted, AFSCME’s membership total reached 10,000. The CMEA, which abandoned its no-strike clause and officially became a union in 1968, won uncontested elections among classified workers, and teachers’ aides voted to join the BTU, a remarkable outcome considering that few teachers unions in the nation admitted non-professional members. Two firefighters’ unions and a professional nursing organization also became official bargaining agents for some city workers.  

Collective bargaining did not result in immediate dramatic changes in city workers’ wages, benefits and working conditions. The unions had, however, steadily been winning improvements informally throughout the decade, and collective bargaining increased their influence. Slowly, public sector unions began to close the income gap that divided government and non-government workers. Although no figures are available for Baltimore, nationwide, between 1960 and 1975 wages earned by state and local
workers increased from 89 to 98 percent of those paid to private sector employees. In Baltimore, civil rights leaders had fought a decades-long battle for equal opportunity in the public workforce. Although discrimination certainly persisted, African Americans were nonetheless well represented among the beneficiaries of public-sector union gains. In fact, the unionization of the federal and municipal workforces helped create a measure of economic security in many African-American communities in Baltimore despite ongoing deindustrialization.\(^6^0\)

While black women were not always on the frontlines in public unions’ showdowns with the city, they often took the lead in the city’s war on poverty. As the public sector expanded during the 1960s, African-American women secured increasing numbers of jobs in the city’s human services agencies. Black women entered the public sector during a moment of intense activism for racial and economic justice in both the city and the nation. Many were motivated by what Clarence Blount of the Community Action Commission described as “the passion of the time.”\(^6^1\) Their passion also energized many black men and Caucasians who worked in human service agencies. City employees could not control the level of funding the federal, state and city governments allotted to fighting poverty. They could, however, work to alter power relations within the city by mobilizing residents with low incomes and by working to make municipal decision-making more democratic. They could also fight to ensure the city made full use of available federal grant-in-aid programs and to improve the quality and delivery of city services. When government workers failed to push hard enough to shake up the system, organized and assertive low-income residents pressed them to move faster and fight
harder. Sanitation workers were not the only city residents fighting for decency and justice. As Margaret McCarty, the president of a Baltimore welfare rights organization, explained, her organization was also committed to winning “dignity, justice [and] democracy” for poor people. Conflicts emerged between government workers and service recipients. Yet workers and residents with low incomes also joined forces to fight encroachments on antipoverty funding. They defended programs that appreciably improved the lives of city residents, especially women who were struggling to provide for their families on limited means.

Black women who secured jobs in the municipal government entered positions in all levels of the city’s hierarchy. A few gained leadership posts, and a larger but still relatively small number joined the city’s cadre of professionals such as teachers, social workers and nurses. Those in professional jobs followed generations of middle-class African-American women who had combined paid work with efforts to contribute to the well-being of their communities. Most black women who entered the public sector landed low-wage positions at the bottom of the city’s hierarchy. Some filled jobs such as cleaners, laundresses and cafeteria workers, positions the city had long made available to African-American women. Others secured low-level positions in the growing workforces of the city’s human services agencies. Workers in the city’s lowest-wage positions often had much in common with recipients of welfare-related services. Some were but a training program removed from the clients they served, and the paltry incomes of many doubtlessly qualified them for means-tested social programs. As with the black women who secured professional positions, many who entered low-wage jobs were also schooled in traditions of community-based activism.
It is impossible to identify a single ideology shared by the thousands of African-American women who entered the public sector during the 1960s. Municipal employees were divided by their class backgrounds, as were many workers and service recipients. African-American women in the public sector also did not share a uniform assessment of the most effective approach to achieving racial justice. Some workers had roots in mainstream civil rights organizations such as the NAACP and BUL and no doubt shared those groups’ suspicions of the city’s new “militant” activists. Other workers sympathized with Black Power advocates and probably shared the contempt of the militants for the supposed “gradualism” of the older civil rights organizations. And most city employees, like most black city residents, lacked an affiliation with any civil-rights group, making it difficult to discern their perspectives on racial justice. Nor did African-American female workers share an evaluation of the appropriate role women, and black women in particular, should play in American society. In a national context characterized both by an increasingly visible and largely white women’s rights movement and by caustic rhetoric about black matriarchs and the deterioration of “the black family,” city workers probably shared the ambivalence about feminism common to many African-American women during the 1960s.64

Despite divisions and disagreements, the actions of female African-American public-sector workers indicate that many shared a set of political commitments. The commitments had ideological roots in New Deal liberalism. The women expected the government to play a significant role in bettering the lives of its citizens and to maintain a welfare system that guaranteed citizens the ability to support their families in decency. The women’s commitments also reflect the influence of recent civil rights and black
power activism as well as many of the tenets that distinguished Great Society liberalism from its Depression-era predecessor. They expected the welfare state to respond effectively to the diverse economic needs of citizens regardless of race, sex, employment or marital status. In fact, they expected the government to actively work to dismantle the institutionalized racism and sexism that prevented federally and locally-administered welfare programs from effectively responding to the needs of African Americans and white women. They also advocated self-help and community participation in social-welfare policy-making and actively worked to politically empower poor city residents. In this regard, they abandoned some of the maternalism of many New-Deal welfare advocates and replaced it with a commitment to pluralism.65

Many African-American men and Caucasians who worked in the human services shared black women’s dedication to strengthening the welfare state, empowering citizens, and improving the city’s delivery of services. By the end of the 1960s, African-American women outnumbered black men, white women and white men in the municipal workforce. Yet African-American men and white women won an unprecedented number of leadership positions in human services agencies during the decade. As was the case for black women, class tensions emerged among workers and between workers and service recipients. Racial solidarity and sisterhood only inconsistently characterized the relationships. Nevertheless, many black men and Caucasians in the human services maintained a committed to battling within the system for social and economic justice. The joined black women in making Baltimore’s federally-funded antipoverty agencies and municipal human services departments a bloc within the city bureaucracy committed to wealth redistribution and sustainable community development.
Public-sector workers encountered significant structural limitations, however, as they became part of the establishment. They assumed posts in the very agencies the most inspiring of social-movement leaders described as centers of injustice. Some activists eschewed government jobs entirely. Public-sector employment or even leadership positions on municipal boards also sometimes led to complacency. Workers who maintained their commitment to social justice had to contend with restrictions imposed on their agencies by the conservative City Council. At the end of the 1960s, several administrators left government services, driven out by what one described as “the strangling bureaucracy” that prevented workers from making meaningful changes.66 Others who were aggressively outspoken were expelled by city officials. In 1968, John O. Hopkins, an African-American man who headed the city’s community schools program and spoke often of institutionalized racism, proved too radical for the school board. Hopkins was fired. Still, municipal employment attracted workers committed to activism. Even members of CORE accepted positions with government and in the state and federal civil services.67

Public-sector workers advanced an agenda centered on increasing citizen participation in municipal decision-making. As political scientist Peter Bachrach explains, some of Baltimore’s municipal employees viewed the War on Poverty not simply as opportunities to improve services for poor people. They wanted to use federal funds and resources to fundamentally alter power relations within a city long dominated by whites and elites. Federal antipoverty legislation, Bachrach argues, provided inner-city residents what the Wagner Act had given workers during the 1930s; new laws sanctioned organizing, which lent the weight of the federal government to power
redistribution. Activists both inside and outside city government seized the opening. Community residents, the members of U-JOIN and CORE, and eventually many liberal appointees on the Mayor’s Task Force on Equal Rights took the lead in the mid-1960s in pressing elected officials to comply with federal regulations. The leadership and staffs of antipoverty and other human services agencies, however, quickly became the most active advocates of democratic decision-making and community mobilization. Their actions earned them the ire of City Council members enraged to find people on the city’s payroll fomenting discontent among poor residents. As Jon C. Teaford explains, elected leaders were outraged by “the unusual spectacle of government-sponsored rebellion.”

During the second half of the 1960s, the staff of the Community Action Agency (CAA) played the most prominent role in mobilizing poor residents and redistribute power in the city. In 1965, Parren Mitchell assumed the leadership of the CAA. Mitchell, the brother-in-law of the Maryland NAACP’s leader Juanita Mitchell, had served as the director of the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations. Committed to community organizing, his early enthusiasm paled in comparison to that of some of his employees. The staff of the CAA was largely African-American and, although the city did not monitor employment by sex during the 1960s, undoubtedly predominately female. CAA staffers were among the most activist of municipal employees. They ran forty neighborhood centers that offered a variety of legal, educational, medical, vocational, recreational, and family services while they mobilized residents into political action. Goldie Baker, a public-housing and community activist, recalls that the staff of the CAA neighborhood centers was important in bringing “people together…[and] telling them how to stand up, be strong and organize.”
Towards that end, the staff sponsored voter registration drives in Baltimore’s poorest neighborhoods—until the City Council prohibited the practice. Within a few years the staff had become more aggressive. In the spring of 1968, the agency mobilized a contingent of 800 to participate in the national Poor People’s Rally. The staff could also fairly easily garner large crowds for local demonstrations and protests.\textsuperscript{70}

The CAA’s success at helping residents to organize can also be measured in the frustration municipal agency heads felt upon receiving complaints penned on CAA letterhead. The largely female members of newly-formed neighborhood associations demanded cleaner streets, intensified rat eradication efforts, better parks and playgrounds and more youth programs and recreation centers. The CAA staff further complicated the jobs of municipal agency heads by helping recipients of AFDC form a welfare rights organization. And Robert Embry, the head of the Department of Housing and Community Development, was none too pleased when CAA staff members accompanied public-housing residents to a meeting in his office. The residents demanded a greater role in department decision-making; the meeting ultimately led to the creation of a Resident Advisory Board, which was one of the first of its kind in the nation. Black women, acting as CAA staffers, neighborhood residents, or both, played an important role in all the agency’s community organizing efforts. Mary Sallers was particularly active, winning herself a place on The Afro American’s “Honor Roll” as the result of her efforts to mobilize residents on behalf of programming for families, the elderly and public health.\textsuperscript{71}

African-American women also played an important role in organizing Baltimore’s Model Cities program around the principles of community participation and mobilization.
Elva Edwards, an African-American social worker who would later head the agency, recalls, “Model Cities started from the streets. It was born there.” The Model Cities project did not become a fully-functioning agency until the 1970s. During the late 1960s, an informal staff working out of the mayor’s office traveled through poor Baltimore neighborhoods and asked residents to identify the types of services they required. Grant applications to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which oversaw the Model Cities program, requested funds for projects residents proposed. The agency’s staff included as its community-relations specialist Walter Carter, who the City Council would later rejected as too radical to replace Mitchell at the CAA. Edwards, Carter and the other staff of Model Cities successfully fought political maneuvering by the mayor and some supporters to bias the outcome of elections for membership on the agency’s Steering Policy Board. Members of that board then fought to ensure that their body rather than the mayor would have authority over the agency. Thereafter, the staff, which was largely African-American and predominately female, continued to monitor resident participation on the board and to mobilize city residents. As local and federal support for community participation and the War on Poverty waned during the late 1960s and early 1970, the leadership and staff of Model Cities prevented the city from abandoning the concept of democratic decision-making.

Black women played an important role in fostering community participation and empowerment not only in federally-funded antipoverty programs but also in municipal agencies. As growing numbers of departments adopted iterations of community participation during the late 1960s, it fell to municipal employees to ensure that community members played a meaningful rather than symbolic role in decision-making.
In the Department of Education, Pearl Cole Brackett, an African-American former public school teacher, took the lead. In 1968, the school board hired Brackett as the assistant superintendent of community schools, a project championed by the BTU. She replaced Hopkins, who the board has recently dismissed from the position. Brackett encountered immediate resistance. She attributed her reception not only to the fact that she replaced an outspoken activist. Like many women in leadership positions, Brackett supervised employees reluctant to serve under a female administrator. Nevertheless, she was committed to community schooling and saw little that distinguished her vision from that of Hopkins.\footnote{74}

Financial constraints ultimately prevented Brackett from realizing all of her ambitions. She found it far easier to secure resident volunteers than funds for her initiative. By 1969, Brackett had organized community councils for each school in the program, directed by a citywide advisory board. Yet she lacked the resources to proceed. A five-month fight yielded a grant from the state. Thereafter, with limited resources, she, her staff and community residents instituted a multitude of programs. Community schools offered adult education courses, high school equivalency classes, job training programs, and child-care services for parents attending the schools. Some schools also housed social-service clinics and had staff conduct health screenings. Community councils also installed lights on playgrounds so that recreational facilities could be used after dark. Brackett also included law enforcement officials in the program. “The Police Department belongs in this project, so kids at an early age can see the police as someone to help them, not someone who is going to beat their brains in,” Brackett explained.\footnote{75}

Despite the success of many community school programs, funding remained a significant
problem, and some parents complained that many of their ideas did not result in programming. Other parents, however, remained enthusiastic. “I see great things coming out of community schools. I see people with a better understanding for the little child…I see clean streets, better housing, jobs for our boys,” enthused one mother.\textsuperscript{76}

Gordine Blount and F. Eulalian Ferguson performed for the Department of Housing and Community Development the role Brackett played in the Department of Education. Each worked as a social service coordinator responsible for linking public-housing residents to city services and promoting resident participation in agency decision-making. Some residents remember Blount, whose husband headed the CAC, particularly fondly. She helped them set up citywide elections for representatives to sit on the housing department’s Resident Advisory Board. She used her connections with local leaders in organizations such as the League of Women Voters to win public-housing residents access to resources needed to conduct the election. Her efforts also introduced middle-class women to the issues residents of public housing confronted. Because of Blount’s efforts, League representatives helped residents determine their election procedure and served as poll observers.\textsuperscript{77}

Despite the efforts of Brackett, Ferguson, Blount and other anti-poverty staffers, residents with low incomes often felt municipal employees did not push hard enough. Even the staff of the CAA sometimes trailed residents in ambition. In 1966, Action-Area residents countered a CAA proposal to increase community participation on the CAC to seventy percent by demanding eighty-five percent representation. Not surprisingly, the City Council honored neither request. City residents with low incomes also complained with some regularity that they were not treated respectfully by city employees.
Complaint letters generally passed through the office of Marguerite Campbell in City Hall. A Community Relations Specialist, she was probably the first African-American women to serve on a mayoral staff. Described by a local paper as an advocate of everything “from civil rights to equal rights,” she fought employment discrimination in the city’s civil service and supported residents’ demands for improved municipal services. She also interceded on numerous occasions to resolve conflicts between city workers and residents.78

Some of the most dramatic showdowns between service recipients and providers occurred between Mother Rescuers from Poverty and the staff of the Department of Public Welfare (DPW). Created in 1966, Mother Rescuers quickly became the city’s most active welfare-rights organization. Its founders, McCarty, Daisy Snipes and Zelma Storey, three African-American women who were recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and Joan Berezin, a young white activist, received assistance from the staff of U-JOIN. Protests by Mother Rescuers won AFDC recipients spots on the boards that oversaw the city’s and state’s Departments of Public Welfare. Though hard-won, the positions yielded limited influence over policy-making, and Mother Rescuers continued to demand more power. They also protested the disrespectful treatment welfare recipients sometimes received from DPW staff or as the result of department policies. As McCarty explained, “Welfare robs a person of his dignity and his rights. When you apply, automatically everything you say is assumed to be a lie. By the time you get on welfare, you just don’t think much of yourself. And once you get on the rolls there are ‘policies’ to keep you feeling that way.”79 Throughout the late 1960s, Mother Rescuers engaged in many forms of protest—including a dramatic sleep-in in the
DPW lobby—to pressure the agency’s leadership and staff to respond to their demands. It should be noted that state rather than local welfare officials were often the source of welfare recipients’ frustrations.⁸⁰

Despite tensions between public employees and service recipients, many government workers had considerable empathy for their clients. President Johnson’s method for organizing his War on Poverty had numerous critics in Baltimore, both inside the civil service and without. In 1965, Philip H. Van Gelder, chair of the Baltimore AFL-CIO Community Service Committee, complained that “an anti-poverty plan which does not put one more cent into the pockets of the poor is a mockery.”⁸¹ Many civil rights and community activists as well as poor residents echoed the labor leader’s concerns, adding complaints that the federal government’s financial commitment to the war in Vietnam robbed their communities of resources needed to combat pressing problems. Many government workers shared the activists’ concerns. Mitchell argued unceasingly that the CAA lacked the funds needed to achieve the “tall orders” with which the agency was charged, concern other employees in federally-funded antipoverty agencies likewise voiced. Workers were also outspoken about the miserly nature of the American welfare state. Perhaps not surprisingly given their intimate familiarity with the AFDC system, the staff members of DPW were among the most outspoken about the inadequacies of American efforts to alleviate poverty. During the 1960s, DPW was one of the few departments in the city headed by a woman. Ester Lazarus, a white liberal, joined the DPW staff in 1938 and assumed the directorship in 1953. During the 1960s, she repeatedly addressed the inadequacies of antipoverty programs. Even as the Model Cities project was being developed in Baltimore, she worried publicly that it would not win the
funding needed to change the lives of poor people. She also predicted that the agency would be forced to rely on staff borrowed from other government departments, which would mean that antipoverty resources would be merely reshuffled rather than enhanced. Lazarus did believe that wealth redistribution could work. “If our grants were ever adequate, it would make all the difference in the world,” she explained. The problem was that the grants were never adequate.\(^82\)

Other welfare department workers expressed similar frustrations, among them Barbara Mikulski, a white social worker employed in the community relations division of DPW and a future City Council member and Maryland Senator. In 1969, she and a welfare recipient gave a joint presentation on urban problems as part of a lecture series. Mikulski did not sugar-coat her message. “Public welfare keeps families in poverty,” she stated. Welfare payments did not raise recipients’ incomes even to the poverty line and intrusive surveillance policies, such as unannounced home visits, led to family break ups.\(^83\) Edmond Jones, a DPW social service director, seconded Mikulski’s critique. “Even if a recipient somehow kept every expense within the allotted grant,” he explained, “[the recipient] would have a maximum of $5 a month left over. If one child became ill and had to be rushed by cab to a doctor that would be it…Anyone ought to be able to see the agony of this kind of existence.” Jones also criticized the nation’s Food Stamp program, which the Johnson administration had made a permanent component of the welfare state. The program “was never intended really to aid welfare clients,” he said. “It is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and it is designed actually to aid farmers and the national economy, not to relieve the burdens of the poor.”\(^84\)
Government workers lacked control over local and national fiscal policies needed to correct the problems they cited. They could, however, increase the amount of federal money the city received by making sure Baltimore made maximum use of those grant-in-aid programs that the government made available. Intergovernmental aid was the fuel that powered not only federally-funded agencies like the CAA and Model Cities program but also many of the antipoverty efforts carried out by other municipal departments and private agencies. There were numerous federal programs that members of the City Council preferred not to bring to Baltimore. Human services agencies often played the leading role in fights to ensure that the city’s poverty-fighting arsenal included all of the tools the federal government made available.

Mitchell and the staff of the CAA repeatedly locked horns with the Council over funding requests. Because the Council created the CAA within the municipal bureaucracy and not as an independent entity, elected officials exercised considerable control over the agency’s budget, even though most antipoverty funding came from the federal government. In fact, slashing the minimal funding the Council granted the CAA became an annual sport at City Hall, a fact CAA officials attributed to racism. A particularly hard-fought battle between the CAA and Council followed the agency’s request for ten Legal Aid offices in Baltimore. The Council was not inclined to approve the CAA’s request to provide the masses with attorneys likely to ensnare the city in legal battles. The Legal Aid request was soundly denied, and the City Council cut the CAA’s budget by $150,000 to prevent Mitchell from going ahead with the program despite the decision.85
The CAA maintained pressure on the Council to reverse its decision, recycling the strategy that had won the agency community participation on its commission: they requested support for their cause from federal antipoverty officials. The strategy worked—to an extent. Federal pressure forced the City Council to permit a legal aid program in the city, but the Council allowed the CAA to seek funds for two, not ten, legal aid offices. The Council’s decision in the legal aid case mirrored outcomes of many battles between elected officials and agency staff. During the second half of the 1960s, the Council impeded, and in some cases undermined, CAA efforts to create food coops, credit unions and a resident-run housing and neighborhood sanitation program. That the city fought a war on poverty with any rigor at all was largely due to the efforts of Mitchell and the rest of the CAA.86

Other municipal officials also challenged the city to make better use of federal grant-in-aid programs. In 1968, Dr. Matthew Tayback, a Caucasian man who was the city’s deputy health commissioner, urged elected officials to create a single agency “to work with appropriate Federal and State offices so Baltimore may better receive an appropriate share of funds allocated for the nutrition of children.” Tayback estimated that a stunning 55,000 infants and children in the city could benefit from programs intended to combat malnutrition. Yet the city was failing to make full use of available aid. In the public schools of Washington, D.C., Tayback reported, children received free milk each day under a federally-sponsored program. “No such program of free distribution exists in Baltimore,” he worried. Worse, only 3,000 children received free school lunches. “To get the best for the city,” Tayback concluded, Baltimore needed a coordinate approach to securing funds.87 His alert prompted action. Although various agencies oversaw
nutrition-related programs, officials took steps to seek new funding sources from the federal government and to improve the distribution of existing programs. With the Legal Aid program and other CAA initiatives, assertive efforts by city workers like Tayback won Baltimore residents access to numerous federal programs. In her eloquent account of the War on Poverty in Las Vegas, Annelise Orleck describes the battles poor African-American women waged against locally-elected officials to secure federal funding for antipoverty efforts. In Baltimore, city workers were crucial figures in similar fights.\textsuperscript{88}

Public-sector workers also took the lead in securing grants to create demonstration projects and innovate public policy. In 1967, the interracial staff of the Community Relations Division of DPW won funds from the Social Security Administration for their “Community Organization and Services to Improve Family Living” program. The program was carefully crafted to demonstrate that AFDC could work. They modestly increased participants’ incomes to show that “\textit{given half a chance public welfare agencies can offer humane and adequate services}.” [Emphasis in the original.]\textsuperscript{89} They organized teams of families consisting not only of caseworkers but also of family aides and community organizers. Ultimately, the demonstration program helped over 275 families, the majority of whom included African-American mothers who had an average of six children. Participants gave the program enthusiastic endorsements. One woman wished “every mother in Baltimore” could receive the services, and another described the program staff as “wonderful.”\textsuperscript{90} The program certainly did not achieve the lofty goals on which it was based. Funding was but one of the problems. Perhaps to consol her enthusiastic employees, Lazarus explained, “We cannot expect that one small demonstration project will provide all the answers.”\textsuperscript{91} Although the program did not
become a national model for welfare reform, it did have local significance and certainly represents the commitment of DPW staff members to creating a welfare state more responsive to the needs of poor women.

During the mid-1960s, advocates for the poor added ‘decentralization’ to ‘community participation’ as a way of improving the delivery of municipal services. Supporters of decentralization believed that government agencies could be made more accessible, convenient, responsive, and accountable if service providers worked in facilities located within urban neighborhood rather than in centralized office buildings. Supporters also hoped that decentralization could help community residents gain increased authority over agency decision-making. Late in the decade, many city agency heads, under pressure from city residents, their own staff members and federal officials, adopted the method of organization. The Department of Education’s community schools and the Health Department’s comprehensive neighborhood pediatric centers and Inner-City Community Mental Health facilities all followed the decentralization model. The Police Department, plagued by a long history of tense relationships with African-Americans, likewise created community-relations centers. Mayor D’Alesandro proposed the city build mayor’s stations staffed by representatives from a range of agencies, a venture that came to fruition during the early 1970s. Decentralization was hardly compensation for the inadequacy of antipoverty funding. Still, the efforts enabled residents to secure services more conveniently and sometimes to gain increased influence in decision-making. Although scholars often rate the effectiveness of the welfare states of European nations well above that of their U.S. equivalent, many European countries did not adopt decentralization until the 1980s. British efforts, for example, occurred only
after the Thatcher government’s retrenchment policies compelled public workers to seek common cause with service recipients. In U.S. cities, many municipal employees had forged that solidarity two decades earlier.\(^{92}\)

Solidarity between service providers and recipients manifested itself during the 1960s not only in innovative methods of service delivery. City workers and residents with low incomes also joined forces in defense of welfare-state spending. Occasionally, professional organizations or unions sponsored demonstrations on behalf of public-welfare related programs. The PSTA, for example, rallied 3,000 teachers at City Hall in 1967 to improve the quality of public education. More often, municipal employees joined protests organized by fellow workers. Although men certainly played an important role in the protests, women generally made up the majority of participants. The predominance of women is not surprising. Many of the municipal employees attracted to protests worked in agencies that had largely female staffs. In addition, the recipients of the health, education and welfare-related services protesters defended were also overwhelmingly women. The joint activism by female service providers and recipients represents a form of cross-class, interracial feminist activism that has been largely overlooked in historical studies of the 1960s.

Despite confrontations and mistrust between the staff of DPW and AFDC recipients, the two groups—often working together—actively defended welfare programs and protested funding cuts. In 1968, 124 welfare workers signed a petition demanding the restoration of state funds for a work incentive program, which they sent to the director of the Maryland State Department of Public Welfare. Beatrice Langford, the supervisor of the DPW training department, initiated the petition drive. “The ways of the State can be
inscrutable, if not bungling and inhumane,” she complained. 93 Two year later, the expiration of the grant that funded the Family Living program fomented tremendous solidarity between workers and service recipients. The staff of DPW as well as service recipients inundated the mayor and other officials with complaints in an unsuccessful bid to win alternative funding to maintain the program. In addition to petition drives and letter-writing, DPW staff also took to the streets to secure improvements in the state’s welfare programs. In 1969, an interracial group of eighty AFDC recipients and DPW staffers traveled to Annapolis. There they demanded increases in the allotment the state granted to children in the AFDC program and an increase in the representation of people with low incomes on the state’s welfare board. In meetings arranged by a DPW staffer, the group presented their demands to both the governor and two legislative committees. Neither demand was met. The protest, however, like the other forms of activism, demonstrates the commitment not only of AFDC recipients but also of DPW staffers to improving the state’s welfare system. 94

The leadership and staff of the CAA frequently organized protests and demonstrations to defend spending on the War on Poverty or to improve the quality of municipal policies. Clarence Blount, who became the head of the CAC during the late 1960s, recalls that during the second half of that decade threats to antipoverty programs consistently drew large crowds of African Americans to rallies. While true, Blount’s contention about African-American participation obscures the fact that black women—both staff members of the CAA and residents—often made up the bulk of the protesters. Women were often the most active in what The Afro American described as the “war on
The 1967 rally that attracted 1,000 protesters to march on Washington, DC was but one demonstration sponsored by the CAA and attended by large numbers of women.96

The willingness of government workers and service recipients to defend War on Poverty and Great Society programs seems surprising given the considerable criticism scholars have leveled at the programs. Brewster’s assertion that the CAA’s programming helped her, and her willingness to sacrifice two-days worth of pay to participate in a forty-six mile protest march, belies the widely held contention that the War on Poverty was largely a failure. Clearly Brewster was using a yardstick other than the one scholars wield to measure the achievements of the War on Poverty. Recently, a handful of scholars have begun to reevaluate the War on Poverty by focusing on the experiences of service recipients. The new studies reveal the ways poor women, often women of color, mobilized limited federal resources to respond to pressing needs in their communities.97

Given the pressures on poor women as family caretakers, residents and city workers championed programs that helped to ease some of the responsibilities women shouldered as Federal grant-in-aid programs, including those that funded services provided by municipal agencies other than the CAA, reinforced poor women’s efforts. Though passed by Congress simply as antipoverty efforts, many Great Society initiatives had gendered consequences because they led the state to provide services for families that women had long performed. Hard-won federal means-tested and entitlement programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and Food Stamps, also contributed to easing women’s
gendered caretaking responsibilities. In Baltimore, the end of legal segregation in 1964 also made available to African-American women services of a higher quality which they had been denied entirely.

Federal nutrition programs were among Great-Society initiatives that helped ease the caretaking responsibilities of women with low incomes. During the second half of the 1960s, poor women repeatedly protested the quality of food they could provide their families. In 1966, Mayor McKeldin refused a meal prepared for him by Mother Rescuers that reflected the standard of food AFDC recipients were constrained to offer their families. Concern about food quality and availability also led some women with low incomes to work with CAA employees to create food cooperatives, initiatives the City Council squashed. City residents also pressured the Community Relations Commission to conduct a study of food prices in the city. Their effort stemmed from widely-held concerns that grocery stores charged higher prices in Baltimore than in surrounding suburbs. Although federal programs were hardly adequate to the task of remedying the problems poor women faced as they struggled to provide for the nutritional needs of their families, even structurally flawed programs such as Food Stamps alleviated to some extent mothers’ fears that they would not be able to care for their families. So too did school-lunch and other nutrition programs that city activists successfully pressed the city to adopt or improve during the late 1960s.98

Great-Society health care programs, combined with hospital desegregation and the limited decentralization of medical-services delivery in Baltimore, further relieved some of women’s caretaking responsibilities. During the 1950s, African-American women of all economic classes in Baltimore often assumed the responsibility of tending
to the ill who could not be accommodated in the over-crowded, separate and unequal healthcare facilities available to black city residents. Employment discrimination undoubtedly left more African-American than white families uncovered by employee-provided health insurance, and financial hardship delayed doctor and hospital visits, compelling women to fill the gap. By the mid-1960s, legal desegregation made more medical facilities in the city available to African Americans. The Medicare and Medicaid programs, meanwhile, enabled mothers, daughters and wives to hand off to medical professionals the awesome responsibility of tending to the ill. The decision by city officials to adopt some community-based health-services provisions and to include residents in decision-making bodies also made medical services more accessible and accountable. As one mother explained about a neighborhood pediatric center, “We can walk here…They have good doctors here, and everything you need is right here.” By 1968, 300,000 city residents, about a third of the population, were assisted by public-health programs. To be sure, serious problems persisted. The city relied on sixteen sources of federal, state and local funding to provide for public health. Each funding source had its own set of standards for implementation, and as a result, Matthew Tayback complained, service delivery was “confusing” and in some cases “inefficient.” Nevertheless, the greater availability and accessibility of medical services relieved pressure on poor women.

Federal funding for programming for the elderly and the young also enabled many women to hand off to the state caretaking responsibilities they had provided. Elderly African Americans and black women in particular, were overrepresented among the city’s poor. Their decades’ long exclusion from supposedly universal welfare programs
such as Social Security helps account for the problem. Black family members often tried to compensate financially for the income gap that separated African-American and white senior citizens. Working-age women, meanwhile, often supplied caretaking support. Not surprisingly, women pressed city officials to provide services to combat elderly poverty. Grant programs enabled both federally-funded antipoverty agencies and municipal departments to increase nutritional, medical, recreational, and housing services for the elderly, relieving their female caretakers of some responsibility.  

Grant programs also allowed city employees to improve services for children and youth. Head Start and other early-childhood educational programs granted women some child care relief while enabling them to give their children access to educational resources many families could not afford. Grant-funded programs carried out by the city’s public library system, museums, zoo, and symphony orchestra also enabled mothers to expose their children to enriching activities. Federally and locally-sponsored recreation programs and summer camps relieved mothers of not just supervisory responsibilities but also of the worry of finding safe places for their children to play. In fact, the inadequacy of recreation programs for youth galvanized mothers into political action during the 1960s probably more often than any other issue. Mothers frequently voiced concerns that youths deprived of recreational facilities and structured activities would end up in trouble with the laws.

The introduction or improvement of other municipal services during the 1960s also helped alleviate women’s caretaking responsibilities. As Margaret McCarty, the president of the Baltimore Welfare Rights Organization, explained, mothers who “lived in the slums” knew only too well the fear and sadness of “stay[ing] up nights chasing
rats...[and] listen[ing] to the wind whistling through the walls.” Not surprisingly, the quality of sanitation and housing services available in their neighborhoods was of considerable concern to mothers worried about safety and health. For decades, African-American women had played an important role in The Afro American’s annual clean block campaigns and other self-help initiatives intended to compensate for inadequate city sanitation services. These efforts continued during the 1960s, in some cases subsidized by federal funding. The CAA’s community-run Self-Help Housing program, for example, responded to residents’ determination “to expedite and supplement existing City services to improve housing and environmental conditions.” Like the “municipal housekeepers” of the Progressive era, women with low incomes were not willing to let city officials off the hook. Residents maintained constant pressure on municipal agencies to improve sanitation and rat-eradication programs. They also pressed housing officials to improve public housing facilities and enforce municipal housing codes. Even modest improvements helped to make neighborhoods and housing complexes cleaner and safer.

As the government took on some of women’s caretaking responsibilities, African-American women became the bulk of the workforce providing the new services. When federal funds ultimately landed in the coffers of private entities such as hospitals or nonprofit organizations, the government created a pool of gendered service jobs. Workers in these positions attracted the attention of activists from CORE and organizers from Local 1199 of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees. Despite some
important union victories, most private-sector service jobs were not unionized, and the growth of the sector created positions that kept working women in or perilously close to poverty. 105

Some women who assumed caretaking jobs in the public sector shared in the increases in wages and fringe benefits that AFSCME, BTU and CMEA helped win for city workers. Race and gender-based discrimination persisted in the municipal government, and African-American women held many of the city’s lowest-paid jobs, but the jobs were preferable to similar positions in the non-unionized private sector. Municipal employees received subsidized health and life insurance policies; pension plans; paid time off for holidays, illness and bereavement; and multiple other benefits. What’s more, African-American women also made up a growing segment of the city’s public school teachers and other professionals. In fact, although scholars generally focus on male employment in their interpretations of post-World War II urban history, women’s wages in the public sector, in combination with men’s, are significant in explaining the prosperity of African Americans in U.S. cities during the 1960s.

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The Keynesian policies of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations that expanded the government workforces fueled the public-sector labor movement. As industrial unions entered a period of decline during the 1960s, public-sector unions grew in membership and power. In Baltimore, where African-American activists had long been fighting discrimination in the government workforce with considerable success, public-sector union and civil rights victories were often intertwined. Meanwhile workers
in the city’s growing health, education and welfare agencies, who were predominately female and often African-American, used their positions in the state to influence the direction of public policy. They also became some of the city’s most staunch defenders of the welfare state. Working independently or with service recipients, they helped to make municipal decision-making more democratic and city agencies more responsive to the needs of all city residents, including African Americans and white women. Ultimately, human services workers helped to shape programming that eased some of the responsibilities poor women faced as family caretakers, an important, though overlooked, dimension of the War on Poverty. The ability of federal and municipal public unions to improve the conditions of employment for their members and policies that helped alleviate women’s unpaid family labor together help to account for rising African-American prosperity in Baltimore during the 1960s. The success of the public-sector labor movement and the policy achievements of government workers, however, owed much to political decisions made by federal-level policy-makers in Washington, D.C. Intergovernmental aid largely financed public sector growth and new municipal services. As city residents had begun to appreciate by the end of the 1960s, intergovernmental aid was proving a very unstable foundation on which to build a municipal economy.
CHAPTER 5

ANTIPOVERTY “INTERESTS:” REVENUE SHARING AND THE REDISTRIBUTION OF POWER IN BALTIMORE

By the early 1970s, Baltimore’s antipoverty and human services agencies had become a bloc within the municipal government determined to keep the city’s attention focused on the fight against poverty. The agencies’ largely African-American, female and liberal employees used the resources and clout of their departments to sustain the passion and activism for social and economic justice that had exploded in the city during the 1960s. To be sure, disillusionment with the War on Poverty was widespread across city agencies. Yet many workers remained committed to building a strong safety net that would enable residents to weather worsening urban conditions and remain active in policy innovation. In fact, as deindustrialization continued to wreak havoc on Baltimore’s economy, many government workers viewed their efforts to create an infrastructure of community-based and governed service agencies attentive to the experiences of African Americans and women to be Baltimore’s most urgent priority. Meanwhile, the city’s public-sector unions continued to make gains that improved the wages and fringe benefits of government workers. Because the public sector had become a vitally important employer of African Americans, the union victories bolstered
Baltimore’s black communities. But the independence of the city’s antipoverty warriors and the strength of its government unions were increasingly imperiled during the first half of the 1970s. Conservative federal policy derailed the activist agenda of antipoverty and human services workers and intensified conflicts between city officials and union leaders.

Scholars offer many interpretations to explain the shift to the Right of American political discourse and public policy during the late 1960s and 1970s. Many document the change through the bottom-up approach popularized by social historians during the 1960s. Some identify divisions among Democrats that weakened the Party, with a white backlash against welfare spending figuring prominently in their accounts. Their work has been enriched by scholars who demonstrate that the conservatism that produced the white backlash was evident far earlier than the 1960s. Other social historians describe efforts by grassroots conservatives to build a political base. Suburban tax revolts followed, during which voters demanded their elected officials reign in government spending. While most scholars point to social causes to explain the shift to the Right, others give political economy a prominent role. Although they disagree on the extent to which the postwar period was characterized by a labor-management accord, they largely concur that by the late 1960s, U.S. manufacturers encountered increasingly fierce competition from overseas firms. In response to a resulting crisis in profitability, corporate America became increasingly hostile to the regulatory state and to the cost of welfare programs. Pressure corporate executives brought to bear on elected leaders help to account for the turn to American politics’ turn to the Right.
While these accounts are critical to explaining the turn political transformations of the late 1960s and 1970s, it is also important to attend to the ways that U.S. presidents responded to major changes in the global economy. By the late 1960s, American leaders faced increasingly serious challenges to American global hegemony. The Bretton Woods agreements that established the rules of the postwar global economy had cemented the centrality of the U.S. in that system. To further strengthen American power, the U.S. also had committed massive resources to a long and violent Cold War. At the close of the decade, the Bretton Woods system verged on the brink of collapse, undermined by economic change and a losing war in Vietnam. In response, U.S. leaders scrambled to find a face-saving conclusion to the war. And they began to devise and impose a new set of rules to govern the global economic order. Aided by economists and international bankers who advocated neoliberal remedies to correct the U.S.’s faltering status, political leaders gradually constructed a new order during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.³

During the early 1970s, political leaders put the first pieces of the new order in place. The nation’s struggling cities quickly felt the ramifications. Expensive welfare states were incompatible with the emerging global economic order. What’s more, deregulation on a global level intensified competition for credit among localities worldwide. Decaying cities in the U.S. were hardly in a position to be competitive unless elected officials imposed harsh austerity programs. To be sure, the white backlash and corporate crisis of profitability fueled the turn to the Right. The shift, however, also stemmed from the decisions of American presidents on how to respond to the nation’s faltering economic and political hegemony.⁴
Although not the first U.S. president to confront the vulnerability of the Bretton Woods system, Richard Nixon took early steps to construct the system that would replace it. He also set out to fundamentally transform the method by which the federal government delivered aid to states and localities. His new system of dispersing intergovernmental revenue increased the control elected leaders had over federal and state funding. Consequently, those who ran municipal human services agencies saw their direct access to resources decline. In Baltimore, the combined impact of Nixon’s macroeconomic and domestic policies had weakened the independence of antipoverty and human services agencies, agencies in which African Americans and white women had gained significant influence over policy-making. They also made it increasingly difficult for public-sector unions, which represented large numbers of African-Americans and females, to negotiate generous contracts. To be sure, federal-level policies did not determine the outcome of local contests over Baltimore’s agenda. Federal policies did, however, significantly alter the distribution of power within the city government in a manner that made it increasingly difficult for antipoverty workers and public union members to achieve their goals.

At the heart of the Bretton Woods system was the promise of a stable currency intended to facilitate free trade. To achieve the stability, the system’s framers had linked the currencies of signatory nations through a system of exchange rates tied to the dollar, which was pegged to a fixed value of gold. The framers also set into place procedures for individual nations to follow should their currencies become significantly over or under valued. No authority could compel nations to follow the procedures, however. The
absence of such a mechanism would lead to the system’s unraveling. By 1958, when the system of convertibility came into full effect, it was already in trouble. The fixed value of the dollars in circulation outside the U.S. exceeded the value of gold in American reserves. Despite agreement worked out in Bretton Woods, much of the funding used to reconstruct war-ravaged Europe had taken the form of bilateral aid from the U.S., setting off a tsunami of dollars across the Atlantic. Maintaining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and funding rearmament sent additional waves of dollars to the Continent. Aid to Third World countries and the cost of hot and covert Cold War conflicts further increased the flood of dollars overseas. Meanwhile, U.S. corporations and banks had lost no time in seizing economic opportunities abroad. Their international ventures added to the flow of currency out of the U.S. American tourists also contributed to the supply of “cosmopolitan dollars.” By the late 1950s, the U.S. balance of payments was in such deficit that President Dwight Eisenhower had to fend off potential rushes on the U.S. gold reserves. President John Kennedy faced a similar crisis during his presidency.\(^5\)

When President Lyndon Johnson entered the White House in 1963, the U.S. was still sending massive quantities of dollars abroad while also spending a good amount at home. The escalating war in Vietnam accelerated the flow of dollars out of the country, while Great Society programs increased the circulation of dollars within the nation. The combination of foreign and domestic spending exacerbated the balance of payments deficit while pushing up inflation at home. The president’s economic advisors begrudgingly accepted limited inflation as the price the nation would have to pay for relatively high levels of employment. Johnson’s Keynesian economists understood inflation and unemployment as inversely related, and they were willing to sacrifice a dip
in the profits of money lenders and other costs of inflation rather than risk the jobs of working Americans. But mounting inflation, and especially the nation’s climbing balance of payments deficit, jeopardized the already vulnerable international monetary system. Alarmed by the possibility of a run on the nation’s gold reserves, the president’s advisors urged him to either cut spending or raise taxes. In 1964 and 1965, the president approved some capital controls—rules regulating the overseas ventures of U.S.-based multinational corporations and lending institutions—but he resisted further action. The anticipated run on the dollar by private holders of the currency occurred in March 1968. Johnson barely contained the crisis by cutting both domestic and war-related spending. He also limited dollar convertibility to gold only to the central banks of foreign governments. The banks, he realized, were susceptible to diplomatic pressure and less likely than private interests to risk toppling the international monetary system. The system of international cooperation, on which so many depended for stability, survived, but the seeds of economic upheaval had been sown.\(^6\)

Johnson left the economic crisis for Richard Nixon to handle. When Nixon entered the White House, he immediately targeted taming inflation in an effort to stabilize U.S. currency. His efforts to constrain both spending and the money supply failed to adequately control rising prices. They did, however, bring on a recession that cost Republicans seats in Congress during the 1970 mid-term elections. Thereafter, with his own reelection campaign to consider, Nixon abandoned his earlier strategy, unwilling to pay in votes for fiscal and monetary austerity. He prized his own popularity over ideological consistency, and became an adept swing hitter when it came to domestic economic policy. In 1971, for example, he announced an expansionary budget and
monetary policy intended to strengthen the economy prior to the election. “I am now a Keynesian,” the president proclaimed. Events very quickly belied the assertion—and even betrayed a strain of mercantilism. His policy reversals reopened the flow of U.S. currency overseas, eventually triggering a panic in foreign exchange markets. The report of an imminent run on gold led the president to abandon all pretense of international solidarity and instead assert the prerogatives of power. Astounding the nation’s allies, Nixon suspended gold convertibility in 1971. Adding insult to injury, the president also imposed a ten percent border tax on the nation’s trading partners.

Both the closure of the gold window and the border tax were initially intended temporary. Each also had critics within the administration. Several Nixon advisors feared the moves would worsen instability in the global economy and foster international resentment with the U.S. They had pressed the president to respond to the crisis by devaluing the dollar. Nixon feared devaluation would expose the U.S. as weak and prove unpopular among Americans. What’s more, Nixon had entered the White House hostile to the Bretton Woods system, and his mistrust had only intensified during his early years in office. He became increasingly suspicious that the system advantaged other nations at the United States’ expense. The president was determined to bolster the global economic power of the U.S. and was clearly willing to take draconian steps to do so. “It’s terribly important that we be #1 economically because otherwise we can’t be #1 diplomatically and militarily,” he asserted.

Nixon found an advocate of his decision to abandon the gold standard in monetarist Milton Friedman. Based at the University of Chicago, Friedman was quickly becoming the most famous among a group of economists who rejected Keynesianism and
advocated instead adherence to many of the principles of classical economic liberalism. Friedman and his colleagues did not believe in the business cycle, arguing instead that government intervention in the economy destabilized the natural workings of markets, causing economic swings. They favored economic policies that would reduce taxes, limit government spending and free industry from government regulation. The most important macroeconomic role they endorsed was limited manipulation of the money supply to ensure a stable source of credit. During the 1960s, neoliberals, as the economists would later be dubbed, won a growing number of converts to their ideas—and financial backing for their research—from elites, who had much to gain from the policy agenda. Friedman also won the admiration of Nixon. Even though the president had trouble following all of the economist’s theories, he nevertheless looked to Friedman for advice and found in neoliberal principles a path to reviving American global power.¹⁰

Although the move was intended as temporary, Nixon ultimately decided to close the gold window permanently. In its place, the administration advocated a system of floating exchange rates by which, theoretically, the free market would determine currency values. Because the dollar was the dominant currency in the world, it remained the de facto global currency after Nixon abandoned the gold standard. The new system, therefore, preserved the advantage U.S. multinational corporations and lending institutions had won at Bretton Woods, while unfettering them from the weak dollar. The decision to abandon the gold standard also allowed Nixon to maintain his domestic spending commitments. In the long run, however, the decision to allow currencies to float would imperil the ability of governments, including the United States, to exert control over their domestic economies. Unpredictable flows of capital around the globe
controlled by private interests could decimate an economy in one part of the world while profits mounted in an offshore bank in another. In the increasingly unrestrained free-market global economy that Nixon’s advisors began building to replace the Bretton Woods system the defensive measures that governments would take to strengthen their national currencies and protect domestic business interests would come at the cost of measures intended to ease poverty and redistribute wealth. The U.S. welfare state itself would be constrained by these macroeconomic policies, which were hardly the product of pressure from white backlash voters, angry suburbanites or American manufacturers concerned about profitability.  

As the Nixon administration negotiated the terms of the floating currency system, it also pressed its trading partners to abandon the capital controls they had set in place to protect their domestic economies from potentially destabilizing foreign investment. The U.S. likewise began to suspend such controls. The elimination of capital controls worsened deindustrializing cities’ vulnerability to capital flight and thus job losses. The change also created pressure on urban executives to adopt austere local budgets to make their locales attractive to investors. What’s more, the elimination of capital controls contributed to making credit markets increasingly competitive. Poor cities would find it increasingly difficult to secure funding for local projects.

The wrenching economic changes Nixon orchestrated in the global economy during the early 1970s intersected with dramatic shifts in federal urban policy. These shifts were not an outgrowth of the president’s macroeconomic policies. Instead, Nixon’s domestic agenda reflected values he shared with many backlash voters, suburban tax critics, American manufacturers and other conservatives. During his 1971 State of the
Union address, Nixon unveiled his domestic agenda, which he called the New Federalism. Revenue sharing was its hallmark. Appealing to backlash voters as well as to corporate concerns about the excesses of democracy, the president explained in his address that revenue sharing was intended to replace “present narrow-purpose aid programs”- in other words, the categorical grants that had sent antipoverty funds to cities and to African Americans specifically. In place of grants, the president proposed sending a portion of federal tax revenue to states and localities to use as locally-elected officials saw fit. Using backlash rhetoric, Nixon argued that revenue sharing would diminish the authority of the “bureaucratic elite in Washington” over policy-making and empower and provide relief to “homeowners and wage-earners.”

Nixon ultimately proposed two types of revenue sharing. The first, general revenue sharing (GRS), would transfer federal tax money to state and local officials to use with few restrictions. The proposal had roots in conservative economic ideology, which favored limiting federal authority and advocated instead strong roles for state governments. Conservative proponents of GRS were joined by the bipartisan members of the national organizations that represented states and localities, such as the National League of Cities, the Council of State Governments and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Collectively, the groups were known as the Big Seven, whose members enthusiastically supported GRS because they believed that the federal distribution of categorical grants robbed them of control over fiscal matters in their jurisdictions while empowering federal administrators. What’s more, categorical grants gave the directors of local public agencies, rather than elected officials, greater control over resources. Equally as problematic, from the perspective of locally-elected officials, were community-
participation mandates that further diminished their authority. By 1971, Nixon had already begun reorganizing the nation’s Model Cities program by vesting authority for local administration firmly in the hands of elected officials and diminishing federal oversight. In sum, elected officials anticipated the GRS would return purse strings to their hands.\textsuperscript{14}

The opponents of GRS included most urban progressives, civil rights organizations and labor unions. Notably absent from the coalition was AFSCME. The public-sector union’s leaders rightly predicted that the administration’s initiative would be a boon for many government workers, and they therefore sacrificed their organization’s reputation as a leader in the national fight for social and economic justice for bread-and-butter issues.\textsuperscript{15} Civil rights leaders made no such compromises. Some had feared the resurgence of states’ rights rhetoric since the presidential campaign of 1968. Shortly after Nixon’s election, Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had reacted with alarm to speculation that Nixon was considering transferring power and resources from federal to state officials. “It ought to be remembered,” he warned, “that the whole fight of black Americans for 70 years has been for federal legislation, federal executive action and federal court decisions precisely because many of the individual states grievously shortchanged them…The GOP plan, if adopted, will set black Americans back at least 30 years and force them to fight a weary war all over again.”\textsuperscript{16}

After Nixon unveiled his New Federalism in 1971, opponents lost little time in voicing their concerns. In testimony before the Committee on Ways and Means, Andrew Biemiller of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
(AFL-CIO) derided Nixon’s initiative as “no-strings, no-standards, and no-supervision revenue sharing.” He argued that the policy would enable local officials to evade federal equal-opportunity provisions, labor-standards laws and other regulations required of recipients of categorical grants. Civil rights advocates also charged that the policy would undermine community-participation in policy-making, which Congress could mandate of recipients of categorical grants. What’s more, the opponents of GRS offered an additional chilling critique. They predicted that the initiative would diffuse across multiple, in some cases wealthy, jurisdictions federal funds that should have been concentrated on the fight against poverty.¹⁷

Despite the opposition from civil rights and labor leaders, as well as the reluctance of some members of Congress to weaken their own authority in policy-making, GRS became law. The new iteration of intergovernmental aid transferred one-third of federal funds to states, while local governments shared the rest. Ultimately, GRS would only account for about five percent of state and local budgets. When paired with decreases in federal spending on the War on Poverty, the change would have profound ramifications in cities.

While they failed to prevent GRS, opponents had greater success in limiting the second type of revenue sharing Nixon proposed. Through the use of special revenue sharing, Nixon planned to consolidate multiple categorical grants into block grants with loose policy directives. Although Nixon initially proposed six block grants, only the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973 (CETA) and the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, which created Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), became policy. President Gerald Ford had replaced Nixon as president
by the time CETA made it through Congress. Ford was also in office when Congress passed Title XX of the Social Security Act in 1975. A block-grant type program, Title XX allowed states that had already qualified for federal support for social services programming to receive the funds as block grants.  

Although the Nixon and Ford administration’s created fewer block grants than intended, they had launched a dramatic shift in national urban policy away from the Great Society model. During their years in office Nixon and Ford committed more federal resources to grant-in-aid programs than had previous presidents. The regulations governing the use of federal funds also increased. In addition to earlier mandates, recipients had to attend to such concerns as age discrimination, environmental degradation, historic preservation, and accessibility for people with disabilities. Nevertheless, revenue sharing largely undermined the nation’s War on Poverty. Revenue sharing diffused among many localities funds that might have been directed towards antipoverty efforts. Moreover, because population counts figured into the formulas used to determine a locality’s appropriation, older cities with declining populations stood to lose funding while suburbs and Sunbelt cities with expanding populations gained.  

Locally-elected leaders exacerbated the problem in their jurisdictions. Revenue sharing directed federal funds to the leaders of state and local governments who had been inconsistently supportive of, or actively hostile to, the War on Poverty. Nationwide, most city officials allocated no more than one percent of GRS money for social services, and even officials in large cities committed only two percent. Block grants more effectively responded to urban problems. As with GRS, however, the federal government sent CDBG funds to local officials whose agendas did not always prioritize antipoverty
initiatives. It was sometimes tempting for elected officials to use block-grant funds not on poverty alleviation but on showy projects intended to attract the good will of middle-class voters. Revenue sharing caused an additional problem for those charged with providing social services. Because the method of distributing intergovernmental aid limited the ability of federal officials to direct and oversee public policy, administrators in local service agencies were abandoned to tackle complex problems with little guidance.20 By 1974, Vernon Jordan, Jr, of the National Urban League, expressed dismay at the extent to which the federal government had relinquished its commitment to fighting poverty. The consequences of revenue sharing, he despaired, was “a sorry story.”21

Federally-mandated community participation became an immediate casualty of New Federalism. During the 1960s, the War on Poverty had helped to foment a surge in community activism in cities throughout the nation. Despite protest from organizations such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors, federal officials, who held the purse strings of antipoverty funding, helped to enforce community-participation mandates. As a result, the editors of The Afro American explained, “The previously voiceless poor quickly became a loud, vocal and at times uncontrollable sector in the political arena.”22 Nixon’s urban policy deliberately redirected power back to elected officials. Knowing that community residents would recognize the slight, the U.S. Office of the Treasury responded defensively. In a booklet on GRS and civil rights, officials explained, “While it is the responsibility of local government officials to make the final determination of where and how revenue sharing funds will be used in the community, it is the residents of the community who have the responsibility to inform their elected officials of their needs
and desires.” (Emphasis in the original) Residents were encouraged to influence decisions by educating themselves, organizing citizen committees, meeting with officials, and “writing letters to the editors of local newspapers” - the booklet failed to mention that the federal government no longer intended to pay public-sector workers to facilitate community mobilization and democratic decision-making.\(^{23}\) As Jordan noted, revenue sharing was craftily based on “the false premise that local governments will be responsive to the needs of their poor citizens and that they will be willing to spend money on programs that organize poor people.”\(^{24}\) Federal legislation included no mechanism that compelled local officials to harness community interest. As a result, local officials could seek input when they found it politically expedient to do so and to avoid community involvement when that was more convenient.\(^{25}\)

Revenue sharing also contributed to undermining the War on Poverty by altering power relations within city governments. Categorical grants distributed by the federal government were earmarked for specific uses. When the federal government had allocated resources to antipoverty efforts, they had given administrators of social service programs a measure of security that their agencies would be funded regardless of the priorities of elected officials. GRS undermined this dynamic. National studies of the reaction of state-level officials to GRS found that agency administrators who ran government agencies and increasingly had to compete for resources in budget-making processes endorsed revenue sharing less enthusiastically than did those who controlled state’s budget-making processes and determined resource allocations. The results were
not surprising given that many elected officials supported revenue sharing in part to wrest authority from agency administrators, the frequent recipients of federal categorical grants.\textsuperscript{26}

A similar dynamic played out on the local level. There, too, revenue sharing increased the influence of executives and financial officers at the expense of agency heads. In Baltimore, the authority that African Americans and white women had gained in the municipal government during the 1960s was rooted in agencies that had received categorical grants, whereas the officials who controlled budget-making were almost entirely white and male. In fact, the city’s equal opportunity officers criticized the budget and finance-related offices as “pockets with severe resistance to change” because of their poor records of minority hiring.\textsuperscript{27} Nixon’s urban policies increased the already considerable power of those in pockets of resistance. To be sure, the city continued to receive categorical grants, and African Americans and white women continued to win leadership posts in the municipal government. But the dramatic shift in urban policy that Nixon introduced undermined the authority of those government officials the most sensitive to the concerns of African Americans and poor people in Baltimore and those who were the strongest advocates of a strong welfare state.

In particular, Nixon’s New Federalism increased the concentration of power in the office of the mayor. The Baltimore City Charter enabled the mayor to nominate all city department heads, including the director of the Department of Finance. The Department of Finance drafted the city’s annual budget, then presented it to the Board of Estimates for review. The Board had five members, including the mayor and two of his appointees.
With a guaranteed majority on every vote, the mayor could easily tailor the budget to suit his agenda. From the Board of Estimates, the budget, called the Ordinance of Estimates, moved to the City Council. Baltimore’s Charter, however, only empowered the Council to reduce budget allocations; the members could not increase funding for any department or program. As a result of this executive-dominated system, control over fiscal matters, as over city management, rested firmly in the office of the mayor. Nixon’s New Federalism enhanced the power of the position.28

The introduction of New Federalism coincided with a greatly anticipated mayoral election in Baltimore. In 1971, many of Baltimore’s African American were determined to follow in the footsteps of residents of Newark, Cleveland, and Gary, Indiana and elect a black mayor. The goal became feasible when the city’s sitting mayor, Thomas D’Alesandro III, announced he would not be seeking reelection or endorsing a successor. His decision raised hopes among African Americans, who made up almost half of the city’s population, although less than forty percent of registered voters. As had long been the case in Baltimore, the Democratic primary election would determine the outcome of the race. George L. Russell, a former judge who had been appointed City Solicitor by D’Alesandro, was the first to announce his candidacy. As City Solicitor, Russell held the highest post in the municipal government ever occupied by an African American. He entered the race with considerable support from both influential African Americans and Caucasians and made unity the theme of his campaign.29

Eventually William Donald Schaefer, the white sitting president of the City Council, and Clarence Mitchell III also became serious contenders. Schaefer had sixteen years of political experience in municipal office and enjoyed strong ties with背后-the-
scenes politicos. Mitchell was serving his second term in the state senate. His considerable name recognition was largely the product of his family’s prominent history—his mother, Juanita Mitchell and grandmother Lillie May Jackson, had run the city and state chapters of the NAACP for thirty-five years; his father, Clarence Mitchell, was the national NAACP’s chief lobbyist in Washington, DC; and his uncle Parren Mitchell had served as the director of the CAA before becoming the state’s first black representative in the U.S. Congress. Candidate Mitchell had also established his own reputation as a leader in the city as the result of his active participation in sit-ins during the 1960s.30

After Mitchell announced his candidacy, African Americans in the city immediately began to worry that two black candidates would split the black vote and hand Schaefer a victory. Many urged Mitchell, who was only 32 years old and lacked Russell’s experience, to back out of the race. He refused. Since his childhood, he and his family had believed that he would become the first African American to either represent Marylanders in the U.S. Congress or fill the mayor’s office. After his uncle eliminated the former option, Mitchell was determined to realize his fate in the latter—either as the result of the up-coming election or, some suspected with frustration, following a future contest when the mantel of first-black-mayor was still available. During the campaign, Russell and Mitchell spent considerable time attacking each other, while Schaefer largely stayed out of the fray and rallied white and some African-American supporters. Ultimately, Russell spent over ten times as much as Mitchell on the campaign, although some suspected whites opposed to a black victory of contributing to the Mitchell campaign. The Afro American endorsed Russell and pled with readers to make a strong
showing at the polls. The effort was to no avail. Schaefer won the election soundly; even the combined votes of Russell and Mitchell did not equal the support Schaefer amassed. Russell was the undisputed winner of the black vote. Intriguingly, however, Schaefer won a greater percentage of African Americans’ votes than did Mitchell. The failure of Baltimore to elect a black mayor in 1971 came as a huge disappointment to the many African Americans who had hoped to make the city the largest with a black executive. It also meant that as New Federalism invested the office of the mayor with increased power, African Americans in Baltimore were pushed to the margins.

Schaefer had received some votes from African Americans, of course. The support was not entirely surprising. Like the two black candidates, Schaefer was a Baltimore native. When he was seven years old, his parents had moved to a row house in a west side neighborhood called the Hill. With the exception of the years he spent in the military during World War II, he had continued to reside in his childhood home. As an adult, he shared quarters with his mother Tululu, living with her until her death in 1983. The demography of the Hill changed considerably during the years the Schaefer family lived there. What was once an exclusively white neighborhood had become home to large numbers of African Americans by the 1970s. Schaefer’s decision to remain in the Hill as most of its white residents left probably surprised many of his new neighbors and no doubt won him a measure of credibility among African Americans. Yet Schaefer was hardly a civil rights pioneer. In 1963, he was invited to hear Dr. Martin Luther King preach in Baltimore; he later admitted he had not previously known who the civil rights giant was. But, Schaefer compiled a decent voting record on issues of concern to black communities during his years as a City Council member. His record had won him the
endorsement of Juanita Mitchell and her husband in 1967 when Schaefer had run for City Council president, a position filled by a city-wide election. So the modest support he received from African Americans during the 1971 election, was not entirely unexpected. The mayor would garner between seventy and eighty percent of the votes of African Americans during the following three mayoral elections. He certainly would have numerous run-ins with Baltimore’s black leaders. Yet African-American support would also help Schaefer win Maryland’s governor’s race in 1987, a victory which finally forced him to vacate his home in the Hill and move to Annapolis.  

As mayor, Schaefer became the greatest booster the city had ever known. He used the authority New Federalism invested in his already powerful office with relish, as he was intent upon having a hand in every aspect of municipal governance. Schaefer saw a role model in Chicago’s mayor Richard Daley, who taught his Baltimore counterpart an invaluable lesson on dealing with intergovernmental aid. Daley urged Schaefer to understand the rules governing the use of federal money as guidelines rather than regulations. “Just do it, then convince Washington it’s legal,” his more experienced colleague taught him. Following the advice came naturally to Schaefer, who during the late 1970s would creatively use federal funds to chart a new course for Baltimore.

Schaefer was detail-oriented in addition to visionary. He dutifully called his mother at nine on the evenings he stayed late at City Hall. The calls were frequent as the task of keeping abreast of the minutia of municipal governance required much of his time. The mayor was known to prowl Baltimore’s neighborhoods in his Pontiac, seeking out broken street lights and abandoned cars. Come Monday morning, appropriate department heads could expect a to-do list on their desks and a follow-up call a few days
later to make sure the problem had been solved. Although unequalled in his devotion to the city, Schaefer also assumed what observers critically described as a “father-knows-best” approach to governance. \(^{34}\) “I believe I know my City better than anyone else and that includes the federal government, the state government and neighborhood groups which know their problems well, but cannot be expected to fully comprehend the totality of the issues and problems with which a city is faced,” Schaefer said.\(^{35}\) On the whole, he expected no more from his staff than he was willing to give himself. But he was also a relentless and sometimes condescending patriarch who required that attendance be taken at some cabinet meetings and recriminations doled out to those who were marked tardy or absent without an excuse.\(^{36}\)

One of Schaefer’s priorities upon becoming mayor was stemming the exodus of whites from the city. The new mayor was mindful of the anger of backlash voters and attentive to the concerns of moderate and middle-income families in the city. He immediately created a program to respond to the frustration of “outer-city” residents who had felt neglected during the 1960s, when federal and municipal resources seemed aimed only at the “inner-city.” Schaefer attended to the outer city to strengthen his political base. But he also agreed with many of its residents that a myopic focus on antipoverty efforts could not effectively solve the city’s problems. Schaefer believed that scarce municipal resources could be put to best use if a large proportion went towards salvaging neighborhoods in danger of decline and maintaining those in good health. He disagreed with those who would concentrate resources on the monumental task of resuscitating those areas already ravaged by poverty. His was a triage strategy not unlike those underway in other cities that were hemorrhaging working and middle-class residents.\(^{37}\)
Schaefer’s efforts to stem white flight aimed to interrupt the flow of tax-payers out of the city. Unlike most cities in the United States, Baltimore was not located within a county but was instead its own independent jurisdiction. As a result, the city did not receive tax revenue from those who moved to its suburbs. Baltimore also suffered higher rates of unemployment than the surrounding counties and was home to large numbers of poor and elderly residents. The demographics of the city were reflected in low yields from income taxes. The year Schaefer took office, Baltimore’s income tax revenue generated $33.38 per capita while neighboring Baltimore County, using the same tax rate, generated $62.50 per capita. White flight cost the city not just income but also property tax revenue, as those who left Baltimore were more likely than those who remained to be home owners. Because those who did pay taxes had to compensate for those who did not, property tax rates in the city were consistently higher than those in surrounding counties. In 1970, the tax rate in Baltimore per $100 of property value was $2.01 higher than in the city’s wealthier fringes. The relatively high property tax burden fueled on-going white flight, which worsened the city’s problems.  

The fact that working and middle-class African Americans were largely prevented by discrimination from joining whites in the flight to the suburbs probably gave Schaefer a measure of relief. Residential segregation was a source of considerable alarm among African Americans, however. During the decades following World War II, white suburbanites fiercely policed residential segregation in their neighborhoods. They were abetted by the real estate and lending industries. Politicians also prevented African Americans from moving to Baltimore’s suburbs through zoning laws and other practices. Although the number of African Americans who moved to the Baltimore suburbs grew
during the 1970s, the change was minimal. Black residents made up six percent of those in the suburbs at the beginning of the decade and nine at the end. As social scientists have demonstrated, segregation locked many African Americans into cities and neighborhoods in which job opportunities were few and poverty rates high. Meanwhile, inadequate funding of public transportation prevented many black city residents from benefiting from job growth in the suburbs. Black leaders in Baltimore during the 1970s knew the story well. Marguerite Campbell, an African-American woman who worked in the mayor’s office during both the D’Aleandro and Schaefer administrations, expressed a concern shared by many. “Until we have real provisions for decent and full elimination of residential segregation on the part of responsible government and those who are engaged in real estate,” she predicted, “our cities will continue to decay.”

Although Schaefer’s efforts to keep tax payers in the city did not eliminate the problem of white flight, it did win the mayor considerable popularity in many Baltimore neighborhoods—both black and white. His attention to the mundane but pressing problems of working and middle-class neighborhoods, such as deepening potholes, rat infestations in alleys and deteriorating playgrounds, earned him support throughout the city. What’s more, the mayor also encouraged the creation and activism of neighborhood associations and sought their input in decision-making—when he considered it relevant or useful. As city residents would discover at the end of the decade, however, there were serious policy decisions concerning the city as a whole that the man who knew his “city better than anyone else.”

Schaefer’s attempts to keep tax-paying resident in Baltimore were surpassed only by his efforts to keep businesses in Baltimore. Like elected officials in cities in
advanced capitalist nations around the world, Schaefer faced the daunting challenge of managing his city’s economic health within a global economy increasingly characterized by capital mobility. Until the crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s, corporate executives had earned profits for their firms by mass producing products in large facilities in or near big cities. Welfare states in the advanced capitalist nations had greased the wheels of the economic system by redistributing wealth to help ensure consumers had the means to maintain the demand required for profit-making. By the 1970s, however, it became cheaper for them to move production to sites where labor and other business costs were lower. Nixon’s decision to float currency rates and to push for the elimination of capital controls facilitated the changes. They also increased the vulnerability of cities like Baltimore to capital flight. Simultaneously, by mid-decade competition for credit that cities might use to fund expensive municipal services necessitated by high levels of poverty became increasingly fierce. Recession and inflation worsened Baltimore’s problems during the early 1970s. Schaefer, along with is finance and budget officers, and business leaders, responded to the problems with fiscal conservatism. The mayor kept a tight lid on spending, cutting jobs and services to keep the municipal budget in the black and closely monitoring Baltimore’s credit rating.41

Mayors in other U.S. cities responded differently to the fiscal strains of the 1970s despite the pressures Nixon’s macroeconomic and domestic policies imposed. Many executives in deindustrializing or cash-strapped cities, particularly those with stronger liberal-labor coalitions than existed in Baltimore, borrowed heavily to meet mounting social service obligations and public sector payrolls. Not unlike many Third World countries that also acquired significant debt burdens during the decade, these American
cities, such as New York, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., ultimately found it difficult to meet their obligations. Thereafter, creditors and private firms such as Moody’s Investor Services denied the cities credit or dropped their credit ratings, making it difficult for their municipal governments to secure additional loans or sell bonds in tight credit markets. A drop in their credit-rating created significant hardship. New York City’s financial crisis came to a head during the mid-1970s, when the city teetered on the brink of default because it could not secure additional credit. The financial community blamed liberal governance and public-sector unions for New York’s fiscal problems. Others, however, contended the financial community itself was responsible for the crisis. The critics charged creditors and bankers with undertaking a deliberate campaign to tame the social justice aspirations of the city’s democratically elected officials and reassert the authority of elites over the city’s economic management. Jerry Wurf, a native New Yorker and president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, was one such critic. “The banks that dominate municipal finance throughout the nation have their homes—but, most certainly, not their hearts—in New York City,” Wurf complained.42 Ultimately, the bankers got their way in New York when an unelected Emergency Financial Control Board was created to oversee fiscal affairs and citizens lost the ability to direct the way their taxes were spent.43

No such dramatic showdowns occurred in Baltimore. During the early 1970s, the city had just over a third of New York’s per capita debt, making Baltimore one of the least indebted of the nation’s largest cities. Those on the city’s political left no doubt wished for a less fiscally conservative administration. When New York’s financial meltdown made the headlines in 1975, however, the editorial board of The Sun seemed to
 marvel that there was at least one symptom of the urban crisis that Baltimore did not have. While the “Spartan” fiscal policies of the Schaefer administration meant that the city had relatively limited debt, it also meant fewer public-sector jobs and more limited city services than might otherwise have been the case.  

The mayor’s fiscal conservatism was rewarded during the mid-1970s when Moody’s Investor Service raised Baltimore’s credit rating from A to A-1. Aware that Baltimore was competing for investors with similarly downtrodden cities as well as Sunbelt upstarts, the city’s boosters hoped the improved rating would give Baltimore an edge. They celebrated the A-1 status in a twelve-page advertisement in Forbes magazine. In the hopes of attracting investors, they proudly dubbed Baltimore “the most exciting, fiscally sound port city on the Atlantic.” Alluding to the financial crises of northern and Midwestern rivals, the ad bragged that Baltimore’s fiscal health allowed it to “offer a host of advantages that our sister cities may not be in a position to offer.” Among those advantages were “industrial revenue bonds; State loans for building construction and equipment; State loan guarantees for construction and equipment; Tax exemption on equipment and machinery; Foreign trade zone (proposed); Tax exemption on manufacturers’ inventories; sales tax exemption on new equipment; Tax exemption on manufacturing materials; Accelerated depreciation of industrial equipment; [and] Free employee training.” As urban problems worsened in Baltimore, local officials had brokered tax relief deals for potential investors.

Schaefer’s efforts to interrupt white flight and attract investors took a toll on the city’s antipoverty and human service workers. Few in the city could reject entirely the
mayor’s revitalization goals. Yet many human-services workers believed the mayor’s priorities were ill-conceived. They did not believe the city’s poorest residents should suffer the loss of services and thus pay the price of revitalization. During the first half of the 1970s, however, Nixon’s New Federalism invested Schaefer with more control over intergovernmental revenue than mayors had had in the past. Federal-level spending cuts on War-on-Poverty programs, or “domestic bombing” in the words of one administrator, also threatened the continued existence of antipoverty agencies. And a growing white backlash to welfare spending enabled elected officials to constrain the independence of human services agencies. What’s more, Schaefer’s hunger for power in Baltimore and his ability to appoint officials of his choosing to top administrative positions enabled the mayor to root out the critics of his administration within city agencies.

City officials’ efforts to handicap antipoverty warriors had already met with considerable success by the early 1970s. The City Council had declared war on the federally-funded Community Action Agency (CAA) soon after President Johnson declared the nation’s War on Poverty. Despite its best efforts, the Council had not been able to contain the activism of the CAA staff during the mid-1960s. In 1968, however, four events undermined the agency’s momentum. First, Parren Mitchell resigned from the directorship of the CAA to pursue public office. The City Council then rejected former CORE leader Walter Carter as Mitchell’s replacement. Meanwhile, the imminent arrival of federal funding for the Model Cities project attracted CAA employees committed to community mobilization to the new and better-funded venture. And finally, the City Council carefully appointed to the CAA African-American directors who were more conservative and less assertive than Mitchell. By 1970, Lenwood Ivey ran the
agency. While certainly committed to alleviating poverty in the city, he prioritized service provisions over community mobilization and largely abandoned the agency’s effort to fundamentally redistribute power in the city. The “hell raising period is over,” Ivey explained to a researcher.⁴⁷

As the CAA was placed under relatively conservative administration, the staff of the Model Cities program replaced those at the CAA as the most activist among city workers. The Model Cities project was not a municipal agency, so the City Council had minimal control over programming. City executives, however, remained loath to extend control over federal funds to residents with low incomes. The Model Cities Policy Steering board established itself as the vigilant protector of community participation in decision-making. The board was one of the few oversight bodies in the city that included significant numbers of African-American women. Members of the board battled two city mayors, and also the black administrator of Model Cities, William Sykes, to establish themselves as the community representatives’ final authority on agency matters. They were wholly unsuccessful. As a result, despite their independence from City Council, the largely female and African-American staff of Model Cities still answered to elected officials. Still, the agency had considerable independence. Walter Carter led the agency’s community mobilization effort, and Elva Edwards, an African-American social worker who had canvassed Baltimore’s poorest neighborhoods seeking community input on programming, administered a number of the Model Cities programs. The agency developed a network of community-run neighborhood councils and also helped city residents with low incomes win representation on the boards of local institutions.⁴⁸
By the early 1970s, however, the Model Cities’ staff increasingly diverted the energy they had once put into community mobilization to efforts intended simply to prevent the agency from closing. The staff of the CAA faced similar pressures as federal spending cuts threatened the future of both agencies. In early 1972, Sykes sent a memo to all of the Model Cities’ project directors requesting “that priority be given to grantsmanship” so that they might find alternatives to the federal funding on which the agency had relied.49 A year later, Sykes announced imminent “expenditure controls,” “staff reductions” as well as “increased workloads” for those spared the pain of a pink-slip. “It will take a cooperative effort on the part of all of us if we are to survive this period of transition during which the degree of federal commitment to the kinds of activities supported by Model Cities is tested,” he reported.50

Even as the leadership and staff of the CAA and Model Cities tightened their belts, they also fought to save their agencies. They protested federal spending cuts, and some sought state sources of revenue. Lenwood Ivey played an important role in the battles to secure funding for antipoverty initiatives. He lobbied congress members on behalf of the CAA and joined others at the state capitol to campaign for state aid.51 John Ferron, an African-American civil rights advocate who later headed the CRC, recalled the Nixon years as a period of intense battle to save antipoverty agencies. As part of the campaign, CAA and Model Cities workers enlisted the help of the mayor. Although hardly an antipoverty warrior, Schaefer became an active participant in the effort to save the programs. While on the City Council, he had served on both the original Community Action Commission and the first Model Cities Policy Steering Board. He no doubt used both positions to keep the meddling Council abreast of the agencies’ doings.
Nevertheless, Schaefer valued the contributions the CAA and Model Cities made and appreciated their widespread support in the city’s African-American communities. What’s more, he was an exceptionally able urban administrator who was loath to see his city lose a cent of intergovernmental revenue. As a result, the staffs of the CAA and Model Cities won an important ally when Schaefer joined their cause.\(^\text{52}\)

To keep antipoverty programming, Schaefer and the staff of the CAA and Model Cities investigated the possibility of merging the two agencies. Staff, commission and board members worked together to come up with a plan. Schaefer sought additional assistance from his closest advisors. Although antipoverty warriors would determine the structure of a new antipoverty agency, Schaefer and his advisors would determine the method by which a new agency would be funded and directed. The issue of funding was particularly tricky. Theoretically, general revenue sharing and block grant money could compensate for the loss of federal antipoverty funds, an arrangement antipoverty activists appear to have endorsed. The mayor’s advisors, however, did not favor that plan. Robert Embry, the white administrator of the Department of Housing and Community Development, was among the leaders of the opposition. His department oversaw Baltimore’s public housing projects and was very involved in downtown commercial revitalization efforts. Embry anticipated that his agency would be a likely recipient of CDBG funds. So he did not want a new antipoverty agency to have privileged access to the source of revenue. Instead, he recommended to the mayor that the new antipoverty agency become one of various competitors for revenue sharing funds, which the mayor should distribute at his discretion. Mark K. Joseph, the city’s white Development Coordinator, seconded Embry’s proposal. “The new [antipoverty] group both as an
agency and its citizen advisory group should not be the agency which is charged with setting priorities for either revenue sharing or for special revenue sharing,” Joseph argued. [Emphasis in the original.]\(^{53}\) The mayor, assisted by a “neutral group” comprised of staff from the departments of finance and planning, should propose revenue sharing allocations, and the Board of Estimates, which the mayor controlled, should make the final budget decisions. On community participation in the new agency, the two advisors were also in agreement. Embry recommended that the mayor disband the Community Action Commission and Model Cities Steering Board and proposed that the administrator of a new agency be accountable only to the mayor. Joseph endorsed the sentiment. “We may want some citizen involvement,” he conceded, “but I would not see a heavy emphasis on it.”\(^{54}\)

Schaefer’s advisors largely won the day. In 1974, the CAA and Model Cities project merged to become the Urban Services Agency (USA). Not surprisingly, Schaefer decided to keep control over the distribution of revenue sharing funds in his office. As a result, those whose job it was to fight poverty in Baltimore became an interest group in annual budget-making battles. Overall, between 1975 and 1980, Schaefer directed eighteen percent of the almost $200 million Baltimore received in CDBG funds to USA. While the figure was considerably higher than what elected officials in other jurisdictions allocated to social services, it also reflected Schaefer’s decision not to revitalize the War on Poverty as enthusiastically as he promoted commercial revitalization. Ultimately, the funding USA received was considerably lower than the combined budgets the CAA and Model Cities would have enjoyed had they been supported at 1960s levels. Antipoverty advocates succeeded in winning a citizen’s advisory board for USA, the director of the
agency answered only to the mayor. Schaefer chose the relatively conservative Ivey to head the agency. The appointment no doubt frustrated staff members who remained committed to community empowerment and an aggressive fight against poverty.

Edwards became the agency’s deputy director. In her new post, she was one of a small but growing number of black women who were winning leadership positions in the municipal government even as their human services agencies were losing their clout.\textsuperscript{55}

Despite the constraints under which USA operated, the mere preservation of an antipoverty agency in the city was a victory, albeit bittersweet, for the staff, leadership and community advisors of the CAA and Model Cities project. During the first half of the 1970s, antipoverty agencies across the nation closed their doors permanently. In 1974, Schaefer sent Ivey a copy of a \textit{New York Times} article describing the closure of CAAs in Detroit and other cities. “In light of the attached article, I think we have done quite well,” Schaefer observed.\textsuperscript{56} The mayor was right. His efforts help to account for his on-going popularity. Yet USA would bear only minimal resemblance to the antipoverty agencies Parren Mitchell, Walter Carter and Elva Edwards had tried to build during the 1960s. Almost a decade before the USA was established, the framers of the War on Poverty had set out to create programs that would alleviate poverty and empower citizens with low incomes. They distributed categorical grants that deliberately invested antipoverty agencies with a measure of independence from elected officials. The distribution of federal aid as categorical grants also enabled Congress to mandate community-participation in antipoverty policy-making. In contrast, Nixon’s “no-strings, no-standards, and no-supervision” revenue sharing delivered intergovernmental aid directly to elected officials. Baltimore’s antipoverty workers fought hard first to maintain
their agency in Baltimore, and second, to ensure that the fiscally-conservative Schaefer use some of the city’s revenue sharing funds to fight poverty. With elected officials holding the purse strings and thus the programming of USA, however, the agency would not enjoy the independence antipoverty warriors had exercised. As a result, USA would not be the source of activism and opposition to Baltimore’s status quo that the CAA and Model Cities had been.

Baltimore’s antipoverty agencies were not the only entities in the city government to lose independence as a consequence of New Federalism. The staff of the Department of Health also found themselves becoming mere “interests” in battles over revenue sharing funds. During the 1960s, the Department of Health had not been a hotbed of activism. In fact, as one of Schaefer’s advisors noted, the department’s leadership was often critiqued for “not being radically innovative.” Instead, it was good at “aggressively pursuing the federal dollar.”

As Nixon turned to New Federalism, the skill could be put to less frequent use. Despite the lack of fire at the top of the department, during the early 1970s the city’s interracial cadres of community health nurses and aides joined the staffs of antipoverty agencies as an additional pocket of female workers committed to improving and expanding the state’s provision of welfare services. Even as Schaefer pursued his fiscally conservative agendas, nurses and aides pressed city officials to attend to urgent public-health concerns. Of particular concern to the nurses and aides were the health-care needs of women and children. They helped to create well-baby services and family-planning programming. In addition, they staffed tuberculosis and venereal disease clinics, made home visits to the elderly and disabled, advocated for lead-poisoning prevention remedies, and worked in the schools. Many of the public-health employees
were staunch proponents of community-based service provision. African-American nurse Leola Washington noted, “that’s why I like what I do. As a nurse, I deal with the complete person…Besides their medical problems, I see what they’re up against.”

By the end of 1973, the Health Department could claim some important achievements. Despite “changes in the Health Department services occasioned by cutbacks in federal funding,” department officials wrote in their annual report, the city’s African-American infant mortality rate had declined and was approaching the white rate. Public health aides and nurses could take particular pride in that achievement as well as in the city’s lowest rate of maternal deaths and tuberculosis cases in history. Although cases of lead poisoning had risen, the consequence of the city’s extensive stock of dilapidated housing, there had been a record low number of rat bites during the year. New nutrition programs for the elderly were also making a dent in public health figures. Officials at the Health Department were quick to point out that some of the improvements were the consequence of “many social and economic factors.” But the positive health statistic also “reflect[ed] the improved utilization of Baltimore’s expanded medical services” that Health Department staff fought to ensure that the city provided.

The ability of department staff and administrators to provide a high level of community-based health services was compromised during the first half of the 1970s, however. “Cutbacks of federal funding” were a significant cause of the problem. So too were Schaefer’s fiscal conservatism and the decisions the mayor made about how to distribute revenue sharing funds. As was the case in connection with the city’s antipoverty agencies, the health department could not recover in revenue sharing allotments what they lost in federal grants. As a result, some public-health workers’
efforts to provide community-based services stalled. During the early 1970s, the department operated five decentralized facilities but could only offer a limited array of services, which did not include primary care. The need for primary-care service mounted as private practitioners abandoned the inner city. Budget constraints severely constrained the ability of the department’s staff to compensate for the decline in private services and offer primary care in decentralized settings. Tight budgets also undermined the success of decentralized health centers. The health department’s citizens councils won few resources from the City Hall during the early 1970s. Researchers studying Baltimore’s decentralization efforts discovered that residents had begun to lose interest in the councils. To remedy the situation, the researchers suggested the mayor resurrect community governance by committing general revenue sharing or CDBG funds to the councils. City officials responded that those funds had already been “committed.”

The staff of the Department of Public Welfare, which had a longer history of activism than their counterparts in the Department of Health, also saw their agency’s independence and influence over policy-making undermined during the first half of the 1970s. In their case, Baltimore’s worsening fiscal problems and a growing white backlash enabled the Maryland legislature to strip the Baltimore agency of its independence and put it firmly under the control of the state welfare department. By the early 1970s, the Department of Public Welfare had been renamed the Department of Social Services (DSS). DSS employees, like the staffs of antipoverty agencies and the community health aides and nurses, served as the conscience of the municipal government, refusing to allow elected officials to ignore pressing human-services needs. In fact, some on the staff of DSS had earned such a reputation for activism that a local
newspaper reporter noted, “They often join militant Welfare Rights Organization demonstrators on a picket line.” Although the reporter’s characterization applied to only a minority of welfare workers, as social scientist Sharon Krefetz explained, the agency was known throughout Maryland for being independent and “very liberal.” Even some AFDC-recipients appreciated the workers’ empathy. As one explained, “sometimes caseworkers will tell us about harsh or unfair state regulations they can’t do much about and suggest that we try to do something, like organize a protest to the state.” Many members of the interracial staff proudly identified themselves as “client advocates” and confessed that they sometimes had to “bend the rules” to serve welfare recipients. DSS, for example, had no fund to help residents to pay for utility bills. It did, however, have a furniture allocation. “We’ll just say to the client: ‘don’t you need a chest of drawers?’” One worker explained about how she helped public-assistance recipients get the funds they needed to cover gas and electric bills. As DSS workers walked the picket line, fomented protest and circumvented the rules, they also tried to reform policies in their agencies. One group of employees created Concerned Social Workers, an organization that sought to improve the department’s efficacy and win workers greater autonomy from suspicious state administrators.

Activist leadership at DSS reinforced the assertiveness of the staff. In 1969, Maurice Harmon replaced Esther Lazarus as the director of DSS. A white social worker, Harmon was a very public proponent of the potential of the welfare state. “The issue should be how to redistribute the wealth of this county,” Harmon protested. Like many of the employees at DSS, he demonstrated for a more generous welfare state and believed that community participation in public-policy decision making was a crucial ingredient in
the fight against poverty. Towards that end, Harmon championed the decentralization of DSS, hoping the effort would make service delivery more convenient, accountable and responsive. Thanks to his efforts, by 1975 DSS operated twenty decentralized centers. The staff of the centers provided income maintenance and other services and championed community organization. To be sure, tensions between welfare workers and clients persisted. Yet Harmon and his staff introduced a system within the agency to respond to client concerns. While DSS was under his management, Marguerite Campbell, an African-American community relations specialist in the mayor’s office, reported she received far fewer complaints about the department than she had in the past.68

But Harmon’s campaigns provoked the ire of conservative Maryland officials, who began plotting to limit the independence of the city department by placing its staff under the control of the state civil service. Baltimore’s fiscal problems provided them with the bait they needed. In 1961, the Maryland legislature had passed a law that limited local contributions to welfare expenses to ten cents per tax dollar. As a result, state and federal governments became the primary sources of public-assistance funds. The local contribution was an expense officials in cash-strapped Baltimore could easily do without. By 1970, the city was home to seventy percent of the state’s welfare recipients, and the rolls rose over the next few decades. While the increases did not significantly impact the Baltimore’s budget, they did prompt suspicions among some officials that the DSS staff was enrolling ineligible applicants in public-assistance programs. In 1972, some state officials attempted to push a measure through the Maryland legislature that would swap Baltimore’s contribution to public assistance for firm state control over the city’s DSS. Many workers were outraged, as were the members of the citizens’ advisory board of
DSS. In a letter to a key Schaefer advisor, Harmon tried to persuade the administration to consider the matter cautiously. “It has been suggested that any such fiscal takeover would also entail complete State control of the City Department,” he explained. “I recognize the fiscal plight of local government and believe there should be increased federal and state assistance in these programs, but feel we should not abdicate whatever little control still remains with the City.”

In the end, the legislation did not make it through the Maryland legislature. The writing was on the wall, however. In 1973, anticipating that he might be “able to do more for the City from the State level,” Harmon accepted a position in Maryland’s welfare department. Activists hoped that Maude Harvey might be appointed in his place. As director of DSS, she would become the first African-American to head the agency, one of the few women in the city to hold a top administrative post and the first African-American woman to serve on a mayoral cabinet. Many on the staff of the agency endorsed her appointment, as did the members of the citizens’ advisory board and several African-American leaders. Schaefer appointed Harvey acting director, making the appointment permanent almost a year later.

As director of DSS, Harvey shared many of Harmon’s concerns about the inadequacy of wealth redistribution in the United States. “The nation’s priority does not seem to be people,” she worried. White backlash, she argued, disguised widespread greed. “When you talk about black and white, make it green.” Miserly state and federal spending on AFDC and other means-tested programs had created a “welfare mess” that frustrated everyone. Inadequate funding meant that “we have to administer by crisis instead of being able to sit down, look at what is needed and provide it,” she explained.
“We need more day care centers, more group homes for children in need of supervision; foster homes for the aged and services for people who have been taken over federally by SSI,” she proposed.73 As director, Harvey worked to achieve those and other progressive ends. She monitored federal welfare legislation to make sure the city took full advantage of available funding, lobbied on behalf of the Food Stamps program, and testified at the State House to improve welfare programming. She also oversaw the continuing decentralization of DSS.74

As Harvey worked to improve Baltimore’s DSS, pressure for a state takeover mounted. The move was opposed by the Maryland Conference of Social Workers, which included among its members some on the DSS staff. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) also fought the takeover, as did many city DSS employees and citizens’ advisory board members. The Conference of Social Workers offered several reasons for its opposition. Chief among them was concern for recipients. “Urban welfare needs cannot be satisfied by further alienation of the city’s citizens from the social services system,” the group argued.75 The leadership of AFSCME opposed the takeover in part for break-and-butter reasons. The city DSS was unionized whereas the state social service agency was not, and AFSCME leaders were undoubtedly suspicious that conservative elected officials backed a takeover in part to weaken the union and save money on wages and fringe benefit. Others criticized the proposed takeover because they believed state officials wanted to quell the activism of the DSS staff.76

Maryland officials did not concede to such motivations. Instead, they invoked anti-statist rhetoric which was becoming popular across the nation. They pronounced
public employees dangerously inefficient and incompetent. In the case of the Baltimore DSS, the link between supposedly inept government workers and so-called welfare cheats gave the accusation added appeal. So too, no doubt, did the prevalence of African-American women among both groups. Harvey found the accusations of worker incompetence deceitful. “State control does not necessarily mean better administration. The state has virtual control now. They control the budget and that is synonymous with control,” she argued.77 By 1974, however, the takeover was inevitable, and in 1975, the 2,400 members of the Baltimore DSS’ staff were transferred to the Maryland civil service. In return, localities no longer contributed to local welfare costs. To be sure, after the takeover welfare workers in Baltimore continued to advocate for a more generous welfare state. Like the city’s antipoverty agencies, however, Baltimore’s DSS had been a local source of activism and community empowerment and an agency in which African Americans, especially black women, had gained growing influence over public policy. The state takeover undermined the agency’s independence and helped to silence the passion for social and economic justice that many DSS workers were fighting to keep alive.78

Schaefer also all but eliminated the staff of the Department of Education as an organized source of opposition to business as usual in Baltimore. His weapon: good old-fashioned patronage, which turned the department into an agency controlled by African Americans—but only those sympathetic to the mayor’s administration. Schaefer achieved the goal slowly, and had to overcome significant opposition from African-American activists.
During the late 1960s, African Americans had launched an aggressive campaign to win control of the school system, which was increasingly populated by black children. Many activists shared the view of African-American educator Lena Boone that “we understand our children better than anyone else.” By 1971, racial tensions compelled a white superintendent to resign. Members of the school board, whose meetings frequently had deteriorated into chaos, selected the school system’s first African-American superintendent, Roland Patterson. As superintendent, Patterson was deeply concerned about the quality of public education in the city and the needs of African-American students in particular. He made decisions that quickly earned him the ire of many whites, including Schaefer, who won his first mayoral election just months after Patterson assumed his post. To reorganize and modernize the education department, the new superintendent replaced some high-ranking white administrators with African Americans. The changes engendered considerable bitterness among Caucasians. Patterson also worked cooperatively with black urban-education activists who many whites considered “militants.” Although the city was running a community schools program, its administrator, Pearl Cole Brackett, struggled with an inadequate budget. Patterson endorsed the view of local members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) that the community-involvement dimension of her program should be enhanced. Some of the connections Patterson made as he attempted to improve the city’s schools were with some of Schaefer’s most out-spoken critics. The new superintendent and mayor clashed repeatedly, and Schaefer’s administration subjected the school system to a level of scrutiny that paled only in comparison to the attention the CAA had once attracted from the City Council. Meanwhile, the white majority of the school board conspired to fire
Patterson. The issue came to a head in 1974, when the superintendent’s supporters learned that the board planned a vote to terminate Patterson. “Never have I seen the racist scum come through as it has tonight,” reported Parren Mitchell, a Patterson supporter, about the raucous meeting during which the superintendent was fired.80 Patterson filed a law suit, which delayed his dismissal. Schaefer bid his time. Although he wanted Patterson out, he treaded cautiously when it came to education issues because they were so racially explosive.81

Schaefer had grown to dislike Patterson not only because of the superintendent’s political views, independence and school reorganization plans. Patterson also broke an unspoken rule in the city when he looked outside of Baltimore to fill administrative positions. Verda Welcome, a former city school teacher, the first African-American women to represent Baltimore in Annapolis and the first black woman nationally to serve in a state senate, identified Patterson’s “mistake” in her autobiography. “The political connections between the mayor’s office and the school system had long been a well-kept secret. The thousands of jobs available at city schools naturally made them a magnet for patronage, and mayors had traditionally taken full advantage of this.”82 Schaefer intended to do the same. More specifically, he hoped to win future African-American electoral support through the distribution of Department of Education jobs. Patterson’s non-local searches for administrators derailed the mayor’s plans. As the city executive, Schaefer ultimately had the upper hand. By 1975, the mayor had appointed four new members to the school board, three African-American and one white. With the appointments, the mayor gained increased influence over board decisions. As the school year came to a close, board members held an eleven-day “trial” of Patterson, then
demanded his resignation. A federal court upheld the decision. Few doubted Schaefer’s involvement in the ouster. Thereafter, the mayor clamped down on dissension within the Department of Education. As Schaefer’s biographer C. Frasier Smith, explains, “Control over the schools was given over to African Americans as their inviolate pool of patronage.”83 Black Baltimore did not receive free reign over the system, however. Scholar Marion Orr observes that, although the department of education became the city’s “Black agency” and was consistently headed by local African-American administrators, “central office school administrators critical of the [Schaefer] administration were either demoted or transferred.” What’s more, Orr reports, “Not infrequently, school resources were allocated in a politicized manner to serve as a warning to dissenters at the school building level.”84

By the mid-1970s, Baltimore’s antipoverty and human services workers had lost much of the independence they had briefly enjoyed. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the agencies had served as sites of opposition to local, state and federal legislators whose actions imperiled the nation’s fragile welfare state. They had also been a source of policy innovation and improvement as the largely female and African-American staffs of the agencies had used their positions within that state in efforts to direct the course of public policy and make municipal services more accessible, useful and accountable to poor residents, especially African Americans and women. During the first half of the 1970s, the agencies had also served as a space within the city government from which staff members could assert progressive remedies to urban problems. They offered an agenda that prioritized sustainable community development and that served as an alternative to the business-friendly solutions of the Schaefer administration. New
Federalism helped to undermine the independence of the agencies as did the intensifying white backlash in Maryland. Baltimore’s “Father-Knows-Best” mayor further accelerated the change as he consolidated power. The waning independence of the agencies weakened the ability of the staffs to command attention to their policy prescriptions as the urban crisis in Baltimore worsened.

Even as the independence of city government agencies weakened, the public sector remained a vital source of employment for many African Americans. Baltimore’s government unions appreciated the significance of government jobs. During the first half of the 1970s, consequently, public-sector unions were also an important source of opposition to Schaefer’s fiscal conservatism. To make Baltimore attractive to business, the mayor kept city wages. Because the city government was one of Baltimore’s largest employers, Schaefer’s control over municipal wages enabled him to exert influence over labor costs in the city at large. Many union leaders and members were alarmed by the price Schaefer expected municipal workers to pay for the mayor’s revitalization efforts. AFSCME was particularly aggressive in challenging the mayor’s priorities. In some cases, workers struck in response to wage offers that kept them several paces behind rising inflation. In the process, city workers generally succeeded in winning for themselves better wages and working conditions. But public sector strikes also fueled the white backlash. Ironically, even as the power of public-sector unions grew in accordance with rising membership rolls, Americans increasingly viewed them as drains on public resources and the cause of high taxes. 85

During the early 1970s, collective bargaining negotiations between the city and its public-sector unions were annual reruns of a familiar drama. Unions’ wage demands
would force the layoffs of thousands of city workers, Schaefer would declare as negotiations got underway. The city is holding out, the unions would counter, suggesting that the mayor had caches of money he was hiding from underpaid and overworked employees. If you can find it in the budget you can have it, the mayor would retort, making available the city’s Ordinance of Estimates for union perusal. The wrangling would continue until the city and unions settled on terms that include raises that failed to keep pace with inflation and fringe benefits intended to partially compensate for the slow growth in wages.  

Union leaders and members sometimes strayed from the script. In 1974, groups of city workers took to the streets to demand better wages and working conditions. As they had during the late 1960s, the Baltimore Teachers Union set the stage for municipal worker activism with a month-long strike. Sanitation workers from AFSCME also maintained their tradition of leadership with a walk-out in July. School janitors as well as sewer, parks, dog pound, zoo, jail and highway workers followed the sanitation workers off the job and participated in the two-week strike. AFSCME-affiliated police officers also joined the ranks of protestors about a week after the sanitation workers started their strike.

The 1974 AFSCME strike was a clear indication of the unwillingness of many city workers to pay the price for Schaefer’s fiscal conservatism. In the 1970s, the Baltimore local provided union leaders the resources they needed for successful organizing drives throughout the state. The growing clout of AFSCME statewide, in turn, bolstered the union’s prestige at the bargaining table in Baltimore. But the city’s fiscal strains were quite real, and workers undeniably paid the price for Schaefer’s austerity.
The year of the strike, Baltimore ranked twenty-sixth out of thirty-one cities with populations over 400,000 in starting salaries for sanitation workers and for maximum wage rates for sanitation workers. Because the city was struggling, there was only so much union leaders could squeeze out of municipal coffers. In 1974, contract negotiations between AFSCME and the city won workers a wage and fringe benefit increase of six percent. Union members ratified the contract, but some of the city’s sanitation workers were not satisfied with the increase and walked off the job. They were also angry about a demeaning absenteeism policy that had recently been implemented in their department. Even if the protesters’ slogan “No Cash, No Trash” lacked the eloquence of their earlier rallying cry, issues of both “Decency and Justice” prompted the sanitation-workers’ strike. AFSCME officials initially urged the workers to return to work but then endorsed the strike. Union leaders Raymond Clarke, a former sanitation worker and the president of the local that included the wildcat strikers, and Ernest Crofoot, the president of the statewide AFSCME Council then helped to stage the strike by coordinating walk outs from various departments. As in 1968, few women participated in the strike. In 1974, the women’s absence was by design. Many of AFSCME’s female members worked in caretaking fields. Although some groups of female workers considered joining the protest, Clarke thought that the strike would quickly lose public support if cafeteria workers and hospital employees abandoned hungry children and patients. As garbage accumulated in mounds on the city’s streets, and Baltimore residents were treated to the smell of crab shells roasting in the summer heat, most women stayed on the job. Meanwhile, negotiations between the city and an AFSCME-affiliated police union stalled over the question of raises. Disgruntled police
officers initiated a workplace protest campaign. They completed lost property reports for items such as pennies that they found on the street and issued tickets—to the mayor among others—for the most minor parking and traffic infractions. When their actions yielded reprisals rather than concessions, some of Baltimore’s officers joined the AFSCME strike. According to a New York Times reporter, the five days they spent off the job became the most significant labor protest by police officers in a major city since the Boston strike of 1919.88

The activity in Baltimore quickly attracted the attention of officials in AFSCME’s International. Jerry Wurf and William Lucy, AFSCME’s president and vice president, traveled to Baltimore to lend support. Their participation in a protest at a landfill unexpectedly landed them in a Baltimore holding cell. Accounts vary as to why a Baltimore police officer arrested the union officials.89 Whatever the cause, Maryland’s Democratic governor Marvin Mandel was outraged when he discovered the situation. He demanded the union leaders’ immediate release. Meanwhile, analysts from the International were busy perusing Baltimore’s budget, seeking ammunition for their negotiators, who wanted to show Schaefer where he might find funds for raises. The analysts’ findings led them to question the fiscal priorities Schaefer had set for revitalizing Baltimore. Their concern reflected mounting alarm among AFSCME officials at the trickle-down approach to urban problems many municipal governments were adopting. AFSCME economist James Savarese flagged Schaefer’s decision to increase the municipal government’s operating expenses for the following fiscal year by only 1.5 percent while raising by thirteen percent the funds the city would commit to capital expenditures. The budget would lower payroll costs and the amount the city spent
on garbage collection. Simultaneously, the most significant capital project in which the city was engaged, Savarese explained, was highway construction. “Such a set of expenditure priorities is clearly geared to the more affluent commuters and not to low income inner city residents,” he said. In a second memo, Savarese raised his concerns again. The city was “acting irresponsibly by providing for such a large increase in capital spending. Some of this money should be moved over to cover operating expenses,” he argued. Nothing in the city’s Charter prevented budget makers from doing just that, he noted. “Baltimore is in the same fiscal bind that confronts many other large cities. The spending priorities in favor of freeways and other postponable capital construction projects makes the fiscal picture bleaker than necessary,” the analyst explained.

Workers paid the cost.

Meetings between AFSCME negotiators and the city took place behind closed doors, so it is difficult to know how Schaefer responded to the union’s concerns about his capital priorities. Ultimately, the talks produced terms that most of the approximately 8,000 striking workers could accept. AFSCME members won an immediate twenty-five cent per hour raise for about 3,000 workers and additional incremental increases over two years that would raise wages by seventy cents per hour. The city also agreed to fully fund workers’ health insurance. In addition, the union and city agreed to refer the unpopular absenteeism policy to arbitration and the mayor promised not to carry out reprisals against strike participants. The police officers also won wage concessions. The settlement demonstrated AFSCME’s influence in the city as did the popular support the strike attracted. Despite the inconveniences city residents experienced, a Washington, D.C.-based marketing firm hired by AFSCME found that a significant majority of
residents sympathized with the workers. The support the strike won from the Metro-Area AFL-CIO also demonstrated AFSCME’s growing clout in the city’s labor movement, even as the historically conservative building-trades unions remained a powerful force.

The workers’ victory and the power it reflected helps to explain why Neal Heintz of the city’s Bureau of the Budget and Management Research Office identified “increasing militancy of [public] labor organizations” over inflation, deindustrialization and crime as the city’s number one urban problem. It also accounts for AFSCME’s success the following year at winning closed-shop protections.

While the 1974 strike yielded city workers considerable results, the victory carried costs. Schaefer publicly promised not to punish the city workers who had engaged in the strike, he was not a leader who countenanced rebellion. Even as he announced the strike’s settlement, the mayor added that the cost of the raises would be made up in layoffs—which were likely to be concentrated in the sanitation department. In the months that followed, Schaefer wrote confidential memos in which he demanded an accounting of which workers suffered the effects of the layoffs that shrank the sanitation department’s workforce. Baltimore’s police commissioner Donald Pomerleau took charge of disciplining his officers. Appointed by the governor, Pomerleau was a notoriously intimidating figure who suspected of keeping J. Edgar-Hoover-like files on the who’s who of the city. During the strike, the commissioner took a hard line. “I sense that the moral fiber of this country has been deteriorating rapidly,” Pomerleau declared in a statement that no doubt resonated with conservatives statewide. He then announced “that there will be no general amnesty for those police officers who have failed their responsibility to the public.” Pomerleau followed through on his pledge. Despite a no-
reprisals promise from the governor, the commissioner fired, suspended or demoted 170
patrolmen and officers. Following the strike, the police union also lost its exclusive
bargaining rights with the city as well as its dues check-off privilege. The harsh
punishments alarmed Wurf, who personally intervened on behalf of the officers, to no
avail. The layoffs of both sanitation workers and police officers had a chilling effect on
the city’s public-sector labor movement. Although the union could call the strike a
victory, workers learned to trust Schaefer’s threats that raises and layoffs were connected.
Two years after the strike, AFSCME member and school cafeteria worker Marian Dicks
tried to counter her dismay at the outcome of her union’s collective bargaining agreement
with the city. “I’m not satisfied with the money we’re getting,” she explained, “but I’m
willing to accept it not to see people laid off from work.” Finally, AFSCME’s local
leadership literally paid a high price for the strike. A judge had imposed steep fines on
them for disobeying injunctions issued during the strike.

The 1974 AFSCME strike cost the public-sector labor movement not only in the
city but also nationwide. It contributed to a growing hostility among large numbers of
Americans who increasingly identified as militant and greedy workers they had only
recently associated with Martin Luther King and social justice. What had started as a
local protest in Baltimore soon made the national papers. The New York Times reported
that looting and arson had followed the decision by police officers to walk off the job but
that the governor’s decision to send in state troopers had quelled further disturbances.
On July 14, a front-page article in the paper informed readers that in Baltimore “city jail
inmates took three hostages tonight while striking guards picketed outside…” The
reports no doubt led many readers to believe that AFSCME was returning Baltimore to

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the chaos that had followed the King assassination. Governor Mandel’s assertion that Wurf had said that “Baltimore City would burn to the ground unless the City gave in to his demands” added fuel to the backlash. Although Wurf angrily denied having made the statement and continued to do so for the rest of his life, conservatives used the quote to defame the public-sector union movement. In fact, Ralph de Toledano, a leading conservative activist and co-founder of The National Review, alluded to the quote in a 1975 diatribe against government unions titled Let Our Cities Burn. The momentum de Toledano and other conservatives helped to build against public-sector unionization would contribute to undermining efforts by AFSCME to win federal legislation guaranteeing local and state government workers collective bargaining rights and other protections.

By the mid-1970s, AFSCME had never been as strong—or as vulnerable. The union’s membership continued to grow during the Nixon and Ford years, and leaders narrowed the gap that had separated the wages and benefits of public and private-sector workers. Yet the forces that had already begun to undermine the independence of Baltimore’s antipoverty and human services workers presented grave challenges to public-sector unions. Nixon’s macroeconomic policies, which had laid the foundation for the global economic order that would replace the Bretton Woods system, made it increasingly difficult for local jurisdictions to avoid fiscal austerity as they competed for both credit and investors. The changes made union negotiations increasingly contentious. Meanwhile, the white backlash and suburban and corporate resentment against high tax burdens further eroded support for generous spending on welfare programs and public services. AFSCME leaders quickly identified that attacks on public services were also
attacks on public workers. In Baltimore, where African Americans, and especially black women, had made significant employment gains in government workforces, the shifting mood of the national electorate threatened the economic health of black communities. Not surprisingly, AFSCME leaders as well as many African Americans nationwide hoped a Democrat in the White House would reverse recent policy shifts that had both eroded the power of antipoverty and human services agencies and made collective bargaining negotiations between government unions and elected officials increasingly contentious.
On a beautiful sunny day in July 1981, Baltimore’s mayor, outfitted in a yellow and red striped Victorian bathing suit and sporting a straw hat, stood on the edge of a seal tank beside his city’s brand new national aquarium. The mayor had already dropped his rubber duckies into the water and was preparing to follow them. He descended a set of underwater stairs until all that remained for the few hundred reporters and spectators to see was his hat floating on the water. After he resurfaced, the mayor swam to some rocks, making way for the tank’s rightful inhabitants. Released by their attendants, a group of seals slowly plodded down a runway to join the mayor in their new home. As the seals swam around Hizhonor the audience could not help being charmed by Baltimore’s quirky mayor. And as they looked up from the spectacle to glance around the inner harbor that the aquarium bordered, few could fail to be impressed by the recent changes. Looking southwest across the tip of the harbor, reporters sent by local, national and even international news outlets could see the Maryland Science Center, built some five years earlier to attract visitors to the waterfront. Spectators looking to the west of the seal tank and past the new World Trade Center got a glimpse of the mast of the city’s historic all-sail Civil War Navy ship docked at a new marina. Next to the ship and just
north of the Science Center, the two glass pavilions of Baltimore’s Harborplace mall, designed by nationally renowned developer James Rouse, hugged the harbor’s edge. Attached to one of the pavilions by a pedestrian walkway was the recently opened Hyatt Regency hotel. Just beyond the hotel was a new convention center, which city officials hoped would attract increased business now that the mayor’s swim with the seals was going to put Baltimore on the map.¹

Baltimore’s waterfront had changed a lot during the less than ten years that the mayor, William Donald Schaefer, had been in office. Schaefer had presided over the harbor’s revitalization with enthusiasm. He and his staff had labored with the same degree of dedication and passion that had fueled the city’s human services workers in their efforts to combat urban poverty during the 1960s and early 1970s. In fact, the mayor and some of his advisors understood the waterfront projects themselves as antipoverty initiatives. And just as federal funds had largely subsidized the city’s War on Poverty, grants from Washington, D.C. had underwritten much of the city’s recent facelift. The two methods of combating urban problems represented significantly different economic strategies, however. The Keynesian-inspired Great Society programs redistributed national wealth down the class hierarchy. In contrast, federal redevelopment funds, although they were targeted at poor cities, transferred government resources to those at the top of the economic ladder. Advocates of the supply-side, trickle-down approach were considerably more conservative than those who endorsed the Keynesian remedies. Ironically, however, Democratic presidents presided over the implementation of both sets of urban policies.
Jimmy Carter’s administration created many of the federal grant programs that helped fund Baltimore’s harbor development. During his campaign for the presidency, Carter made bold promises to city dwellers. Upon entering the White House, the president encountered an economic crisis new to the United States. Stagflation, the term coined to describe the phenomenon, combined rising unemployment and mounting inflation. In keeping with his campaign commitments, Carter initially prioritized the battle against unemployment. He faced mounting and intense pressure to combat rising inflation, however, especially from wealthy interest groups who were most hurt by the falling value of the dollar. In response, the Democratic president shocked his supporters by acceding to policy recommendations made by some of the same advocates of neoliberalism who had helped Nixon begin to reformulate the rules of the global economy. The macroeconomic remedies Carter pursued precluded the adoption of the ambitious urban agenda he had championed. By the end of his term, Carter had cut federal aid to cities and introduced Baltimore residents to trickle-down economics before the Reagan revolution even began. By so doing, Carter largely abandoned the Democratic Party’s commitment to using the power of the federal government to redistribute wealth and fight poverty. As the Democratic Party turned to the political right, urban African Americans and other city residents who had helped put Carter in office were left to fend for themselves.

To be sure, Carter’s shift to the right generated significant conflict. Although some historians describe the 1970s as a decade relatively free of political struggle, a bitter battle engulfed the Democratic Party. Civil rights organizations and labor unions, stalwarts of the New Deal coalition, mounted an impassioned campaign to forestall their
Party’s transformation. Among those most active in the battle were organizations that have received little attention from scholars. The leaders of the National Urban League (NUL), long considered the nation’s most moderate civil rights organization, united the heads of major African-American organizations behind a campaign that prioritized progressive economic reform. The NUL’s efforts belie the assertion by some historians of American liberalism that civil rights organizations of the 1970s championed little beyond identity-politics issues. The leaders of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) also became some of the nation’s most avid defenders of the welfare state. Although scholars have largely overlooked public-sector unions’ contributions to the American labor movement, AFSCME aggressively opposed what its officials identified as a reassertion of corporate influence over American public policy. In so doing, they gave voice to the views of many of their members, such as Baltimore’s human-services workers, who remained committed to wealth redistribution and community empowerment. Activism by civil rights organizations and labor unions, however, proved no match for the growing strength of the New Right, which began to coalesce during the Carter years.²

In Baltimore, Carter’s macroeconomic and urban policies had devastating consequences. The macroeconomic policies reversed some of the progress the city’s human services workers had been making in the battle against poverty. The Democratic president’s urban policies, meanwhile, undermined workers’ long-standing efforts to increase democratic participation in municipal decision-making. What’s more, both sets of policies tipped the scales in the battle over the strategies the city should adopt to combat urban problems that had pit municipal human-services workers against the
advocates of downtown commercial redevelopment. The result was an upward and whiteward shift in municipal power that also diminished the authority of women in the city government.

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By the time Carter assumed the presidency, U.S. domestic and international economic policies had become inseparable, a fact the new president clearly understood. The interests of the constituents of the Democratic Party and those of executives of multinational corporations and international financial institutions had grown increasingly disparate. Immediately upon his inauguration, Carter faced pressure from constituents to combat domestic problems such as unemployment and poverty. Business leaders and bankers, meanwhile, were demanding policies that would tame inflation and strengthen the dollar. Initially, Carter tried to respond to the concerns of his party’s traditional rank and file, raising the minimum wage and passing a stimulus package intended to combat unemployment. In terms of urban policy, the president took the first step in following through on his ambitious campaign promise for innovation by appointing a group of advisors to come up with a bold plan for cities. More immediately, he directed a greater concentration of national resources to poor cities. The administration responded to concerns that the distribution of Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) spread resources too thinly across jurisdictions with grossly divergent levels of need. It also revised the regulations on the block grants to target poor cities. Many in Carter’s administration also endeavored to resurrect the spirit of wealth redistribution that infused
earlier Democratic social welfare initiatives. In 1977, the administration used
Comprehensive-Employment-and-Training-Act funds to create 425,000 public-sector
jobs, a partial victory for those liberal Democrats in Congress who had long championed
job creation as a key to urban revitalization.³

Many observers in Baltimore lauded the change in CDBG policy, hoping that
increased funding for the city would help to combat pressing problems. Carter’s
increased investment in CETA also enabled the city’s pool of public-sector workers to
expand by almost two thousand. Under the leadership of Marion Pines, a white woman
who led the Mayor’s Office of Manpower Resources during the Schaefer years,
Baltimore’s CETA program had become a national model. Researchers found that the
program’s participants had high and enduring employment rates.⁴ The success of the
program, the staff believed, demonstrated the results the city’s municipal agencies could
produce if provided resources and a federal commitment. CETA training and job
experience programs largely prepared women for low-wage service positions.
Nevertheless, both male and female workers gained needed resume-building experience,
and the high demand for CETA jobs was evidenced by the long lines that formed outside
the city’s manpower centers. Joseph L. Washington, the director of the busiest center, in
west Baltimore, reported 50 to 100 job seekers waited for his doors to open on the three
days a week that he accepted applications. Those who won jobs made important
contributions to the city. As Pines explained, “We are providing some valuable services
to low income communities through our training and work experience programs.
Daycare for working mothers, health care for home-bound elderly persons, the
weatherization of old homes, and the renovation of vacant houses provides real employment skills for CETA participants and much needed services to our communities.” [Emphasis in the original.]\(^5\)

Even as the ranks of CETA workers in Baltimore grew, pressure mounted on the president to shift his administration’s economic policies rightward. Conservative demands began in Carter’s first year and only intensified. An oil shock that began in 1978 compounded the urgency of the situation. The U.S. automobile industry, once the symbol of American prosperity and strength, verged on the brink of collapse, and financial markets, the source of much new wealth in the postindustrial economy, took a huge hit. If the status of the United States in the global economy appeared bleak during Nixon’s watch, Carter confronted an even gloomier reality. Many of the president’s most trusted economic advisors ascribed to Keynesianism, but stagflation seemed to defy both their economic models and policy prescriptions. Conservative advocates of neoliberalism proffered solutions they promised would bring inflation under control. The economists, many of them colleagues or disciples of Milton Friedman, had exercised considerable sway in the Nixon White House even as the Republican president had vacillated between Keynesian and conservative economic strategies in a desperate scramble to combat inflation and maintain his popularity. Ironically, Carter adopted the conservative economists’ proposals more consistently than had his predecessor. Bruce Schulman explains, by the end of his term the president’s macroeconomic policy decisions would mark “a decisive watershed in American political economy—the emergence of a post-New Deal orthodoxy in the conception of economic policy and of new popular attitudes towards business, government, and the market.”\(^6\)
During the late 1970s, conservative economists proposed a host of remedies to cure the nation’s economic woes. Fiscal restraint, tax cuts and deregulation figured among their top policy recommendations. The supply-side solutions were intended to stabilize the marketplace by reducing federal intervention and concentrating capital in the hands of elites, who the economists agreed could put it to its most productive uses and thus stimulate economic growth. To combat inflation, the economists asserted that only a severe contraction of the nation’s money supply would cure the problem. The remedy would also strengthen the dollar and help revive the currency in global markets, a vital measure in the effort to reassert U.S. hegemony overseas. Keynesians balked at the monetarist remedy, which would inevitably spark recession and drive up unemployment. The nation’s most vulnerable citizens, they argued, should not pay the highest price for economic recovery. But the sun was setting on the Keynesians’ reign as the neoliberal era began to dawn.  

Wealthy elites who had much to gain from the adoption of neoliberal policies both domestically and globally used their considerable political clout and cultural influence to advance their agenda. To be sure, investment and international bankers, the captains of many American industries, the CEOs of corporations in high-tech and information-management fields, and other powerful groups did not share identical policy preferences. Nevertheless, the ascendancy of neoliberalism promised many of them substantial returns in a global economy favorable to their interests. To advance their programs, they made strategic and generous campaign contributions to supportive politicians. They also mobilized lobbyists and business-related organizations such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to pressure legislators. They fought to reduce taxes on
investment income and profits, limit government spending, defeat labor and consumer-protection legislation, and repeal government regulation in various industries. In addition, they exerted intense pressure on the president to fight inflation rather than promote employment. Simultaneously, they invested considerable resources in popularizing neoliberal economic ideas in the general public. They subsidized conservative think tanks and foundations, which published and promoted research that substantiated their views. The Heritage Foundation, one such think tank founded in 1973 with funding from the Coors Brewing Company, even sponsored a television series that featured monetarist guru Friedman.8

Given the tremendous investment elites made in promoting neoliberalism, it is not surprising that their macroeconomic ideas gained increasing mainstream currency. To many, neoliberalism had a common-sense appeal. It echoed the American political tradition’s celebration of freedom and private property. Wealthy advocates of fiscal restraint and tax relief easily found adherents among the nation’s backlash voters and suburbanites angered by their tax burdens. According to some researchers, working and middle-class Americans actually had relatively little to gain from an aggressive assault on inflation. During the late 1970s, for example, Joseph Minarik, an economist with the Brookings Institution, completed a study that concluded that “the average middle-income homeowner is the big winner in inflation” because housing appreciation continued even as mortgage payments remained unchanged. The benefit, he argued, more than compensated for rising prices and taxes.9 Americans alarmed by increasingly expensive trips to the grocery store and gas station largely missed that economic subtlety, however, and anger at mounting inflation grew in tandem with hostility to a large and active federal
government. As a result, many social conservatives were receptive to neoliberal economic proposals, and during the Carter years, the constituents of what would eventually be called the New Right began to take form.

In the face of intense pressure to solve worsening problems, Carter began adopting some of the policy recommendations of conservative economists. During his first year in office, as the president’s priority shifted from fighting unemployment to combating inflation, he and his staff replaced calls for liberal social-welfare job-producing initiative with endorsements of balanced budgets. Ultimately, Carter cut federal spending, reduced taxes for the wealthy and deregulated several industries. Most devastating of all to his constituents—and shocking to those who appreciated the significance of the move—in 1979 Carter appointed Paul Volcker to head the Federal Reserve, the nation’s central bank. Volcker, an alumnus of Princeton, Harvard and the London School of Economics, had earned his Wall Street credentials as an economist at the Chase Manhattan Bank. As he protected the Rockefeller fortune by day he became an associate of David Rockefeller’s. In 1973, the two were founders of the Trilateral Commission, a private organization that continues to work to influence international economic policy and includes as members many of the world’s richest and most powerful people. Volcker had also headed the New York Federal Reserve and served in the Treasury Department under presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon prior to securing the top post at the Fed. A “pillar of the East Coast banking establishment,” in the words of one historian, Volcker was described as “rigidly conservative” and “very right-wing” by two of the liberal economists Carter polled for reports on his potential nominee. As journalist William Greider notes, Volcker was decidedly “the choice of Wall Street” for
the Fed position. His appointment represented a significant Carter concession to powerful economic interests, who wanted a sympathetic economist to tame inflation regardless of the employment costs. Volcker lived up to their expectations. To combat inflation, he tightened the money supply so severely that he manufactured a recession worse than any the nation had experienced since the Great Depression.12

In Baltimore, Carter’s macroeconomic policies had a number of destructive consequences. Nothing hurt so much as the Volker recession, which sky-rocketed unemployment rates and devastated poor cities. By the end of the 1970s, Baltimore had the second highest African-American unemployment rate in the country, surpassed only by Philadelphia. In 1979, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the unemployment rate for black workers in Baltimore at eighteen percent, a figure which had climbed from fifteen percent in 1977 and was four times higher than the white rate. An economist with the Labor Bureau hypothesized that the high black unemployment figure resulted from the large number of African Americans seeking jobs in Baltimore. Officials from Mayor’s Office of Manpower Resources (MOMR) agreed. Job training and work experience, MOMR employees believed, had convinced formerly “discouraged” African-American workers, who would not have been counted in unemployment figures, to seek jobs. Simultaneously, the Volcker recession contracted an already tight job market. The combination created the city’s staggering black unemployment rate. Parren Mitchell, who had served as the head of the city’s Community Action Agency before becoming Baltimore’s first black congressional representative and the head of the Congressional
Black Caucus, predicted things would only “get worse.” The fiscal and monetary policies of the Carter administration spelled disaster for struggling cities and their African-American residents.\(^\text{13}\)

The president’s urban policies offered little relief. Although the president had created a task force to create the urban policy he promised during his campaign, the macroeconomic strategies he adopted to combat inflation severely constrained the options its members could consider, and they made little headway for over a year. “We are on a collision course between the demands of the urban constituency and the demands for a balanced budget,” one high-ranking official at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) told the New York Times.\(^\text{14}\) Another administration official noted the irony of the situation. “We’re in a pretty tight box politically. We’ve got a real problem with the people who put this President in office,” the anonymous source conceded.\(^\text{15}\) In early 1978, word leaked out that the urban policy task force was considering targeted urban economic development to the exclusion of social welfare programs. The people who put the president in office reacted with outrage, and even the Secretary of HUD, Patricia Roberts Harris, expressed skepticism. Given the tight credit squeeze, which prevented cities from easily securing funds for capital improvements, few urban advocates opposed development initiatives. But Harris, the first African-American woman to hold a cabinet position, worried that White House staffers and other federal officials were pressuring the urban advisors to forego social welfare initiatives. “Let us remember,” she cautioned, “that economic development is not the penicillin for urban decay, if at the same time there are no hospitals, no low-cost housing and no decent transportation.”\(^\text{16}\)
Finally, in March 1978, the Carter administration unveiled its urban program. Although the policy advisors had added a small budget for social-welfare initiatives, the thrust of the $10.4 billion two-year program was towards economic development. Despite Carter’s inspiring rhetoric during the campaign, his most significant contributions to urban policy were trickle-down solutions to poverty. The administration created Urban Development Action Grants (UDAGs), which made available federal funds to stimulate private investment in distressed cities. Although the law did not initially that the funds be used exclusively for commercial development, HUD’s selection process limited them to that purpose. Both cities and investors could qualify for support once investors committed to a viable project, which could include anything from an industrial park to a shopping mall. The Carter administration also directed the Economic Development Agency (EDA), created during the mid-1960s as part of the Johnson administration’s assault on rural poverty, to make available to struggling cities funds for commercial development. The administration also loosened restrictions of the use of CDBG money so the funds could be used to help cities attract new businesses. To be sure, poor cities were in desperate need of investors. The neoliberal remedies Nixon had adopted had undermined their competitiveness. And Carter’s initiatives ultimately attracted capital to cities far more effectively than had urban renewal efforts of the 1950s. Nevertheless, as his critics had warned, enticements for investors could hardly stand alone as an adequate solution the nation’s severe urban problems. Carter’s macroeconomic agenda, however, prevented him from doing more, indeed compelled him to do less. By the end of his term, Carter had cut overall aid to cities.17
Carter’s decision to adopt neoliberal macroeconomic remedies and accept the constraints the measures put on his urban agenda represented a dramatic departure from the policy strategies the Democratic Party had pursued since the 1930s. From the New Deal onward, the Party had engaged in a very delicate balancing act. Democrats pursued measures that advanced profit-making and corporate interests. They simultaneously maintained a measure of commitment to wealth redistribution and considered themselves the caretakers of the nation’s welfare state. During the late 1970s, however, Carter largely sacrificed the social-justice goals as he turned his party sharply to the right. His own faith in the power of government plummeted almost to the depth of some of his conservative critics. “Government cannot eliminate poverty or provide a bountiful economy or reduce inflation or save cities or cure illiteracy or provide energy,” the president concluded.18 By the end of his term, Carter’s policy choices and appointments made it difficult for many Americans to remember that the Democratic Party had once fancied itself the champion of the people against the interests. As Republican initiatives such as floating currency rates and the elimination of capital controls unleashed global capitalism from the tethers created in Bretton Woods, Carter sanctioned the Volcker recession and cuts in federal aid to cities entrenched poverty in cities. The Democrats seemed to have switched teams.19

To be sure, Carter’s shift to the right generated considerable dissension among many Democrats. By the mid-1970s, the New Deal coalition that had once powered the Party had splintered considerably. Carter’s election in 1976 had reflected less its resurgence than a renunciation of recent Republican transgressions. Nevertheless, among the remaining constituencies of the alliance, civil rights organizations remained
influential in the Party. In fact, Carter owed his narrow victory in the presidential 
election in part to the over ninety percent of black voters who gave him their support. 
Labor unions, which could less confidently claim a politically unified and loyal rank and 
file, nonetheless also continued to hold sway among Democrats. During the Carter years, 
leaders of both groups engaged in a bitter battle to prevent the Democratic Party from 
abandoning its commitments to a measure of wealth redistribution, the welfare state and 
the fight against unemployment. Among the organizations involved in the struggle, the 
National Urban League (NUL) and the American Federation of State, County and 
Municipal Employees (AFSCME) emerged as the most vigorous defenders of African 
Americans, residents of cities and public-sector human service workers.20

By the mid-1970s, the NUL was over a decade removed from its years as the 
voice of moderation within the civil rights movement. Under the leadership of Whitney 
Young, Jr., who became the organization’s president in 1961, the NUL had become 
increasingly politically active, joining the nation’s other leading civil rights organizations 
in aggressively demanding increased federal commitments to both racial and economic 
justice. Vernon Jordan, Jr., who succeeded Young as the organization’s executive 
director in 1972, equaled his predecessor’s commitment to a broad progressive agenda. 
In fact, during the Carter years, Jordan helped the NUL to become one of the nation’s 
most aggressive civil rights organizations. During his campaign, Carter had enthused, 
“When I finish my term, I want black people to say that I did more for them in my 
Presidency than any President in their lifetimes.”21 Jordan, a fellow Georgian who 
among African-American leaders was closest to the presidential candidate, expected to 
see the commitment honored. Within seven months of Carter’s inauguration, however,
he decided that the president was falling far short. At a luncheon at the Washington Press Club—just days before Carter was to address the NUL’s annual convention—Jordan excoriated the president for the shortcomings of his first months in office.22

Jordan was hardly the first national civil rights leader to criticize the new president, but his well-choreographed attack attracted considerable media attention. The New York Times described Jordan in a front page article as “emerging as the senior civil rights spokesman.”23 Jordan seized the moment in the spotlight to call for of a meeting of black leaders to discuss how they might best coordinate efforts to shape the Carter agenda. In so doing, he galvanized national civil rights leaders into taking an assertive stand toward the administration. A month later, fifteen civil rights leaders assembled at the NUL’s headquarters to discuss strategy. The group included Benjamin Hooks of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Jesse Jackson of Operation PUSH; Reverend Joseph Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); Coretta Scott King of the Full Employment Action Council, Martin Luther King Center for Social Change; Parren Mitchell; Dorothy Height, of the National Council of Negro Women; Bayard Rustin of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute; M Carl Holman of the National Urban Coalition; and Richard Hatcher, the mayor of Gary, Indiana, who would later head the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The meeting represented the first time the nation’s civil rights leaders had come together as a group to cooperate since the planning sessions for the 1963 March on Washington. Following their discussion of the “callous neglect” the Carter White House had showed African Americans, the group, which became known as the Black Leadership Forum, agreed to make full-employment their primary policy issue.24
During the Carter years, the NUL, along with the other members of the Forum, pressed the Carter administration and Congress to pursue stimulus budgets and other legislation intended to promote job growth. Although full-employment was the Black Forum’s primary goal, they closely monitored the president’s macroeconomic policies and sought to forestall Carter’s turn to the right. “It is unjust to impose on the poor and on minorities the burden of achieving price stability in this country,” Jordan charged as the president’s actions began to betray his decision to prioritize the battle against inflation over unemployment.\(^{25}\) In early 1978, Jordan helped champion the effort to derail a proposed $25 billion in tax cuts, and he complained bitterly and publicly that the cuts that were enacted favored the rich. And in late 1978, the members of the Black Leadership Forum demanded a meeting with the president to prevent proposed cuts in social programs. At the same time, full-employment remained a mantra among civil rights leaders. “We are insisting that the president make unemployment a twin priority with anti-inflation,” explained Lowery of the SCLC.\(^{26}\) Not surprisingly, Carter’s eventual sanction of monetarist remedies to combat inflation sparked shock and outrage among civil rights leaders. The president’s concession to the wealthy was among his policy decisions that would ultimately drive some civil rights leaders to the unusual move of endorsing Carter’s challenger, Edward Kennedy, in the 1980 Democratic primaries.\(^{27}\)

The NUL and the Black Forum also worked to shape Carter’s urban policy. The NUL demanded welfare reform, increases in public housing, the establishment of a national health system, and a host of other measures intended to reverse decline in American cities. During the 1960s, Whitney Young had proposed a similar agenda, demanding that the Johnson administration create an “urban Marshall plan.” Jordan
resurrected the plan in an attempt to force Carter to make good on his campaign commitment of an innovative urban policy. In late 1977, pressure from civil rights groups prompted Carter to visit the South Bronx as a symbol of his sympathy for the problems of cities. Jordan dubbed the trip “slum tourism” and pressed his advantage by calling national attention to the fact that the president had yet to produce an urban policy. He also raised the stakes in the urban-policy debate by calling for $50 billion in new aid. The critique led Carter to resuscitate his urban-policy task force. When word quickly leaked that the advisors favored plans for physical renewal to the near exclusion of social welfare initiatives, however, civil rights leaders immediately weighed in. Aware of the troubles cities faced attracting investors and winning credit, the leaders considered the creation of an urban development bank or similar venture a wise course of action. But they also considered social welfare initiatives crucial to dealing with urban problems. “The connection between economic incentives and social programs is crucial,” one member of the Black Forum commented. “You can’t plan one side without the other.”

Although it was largely due to pressure from Jordan that the president produced an urban policy at all, the NUL leader was the plan’s harshest critic. When Carter finally unveiled his urban policy in March 1978, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and many other urban politicians feigned a measure of enthusiasm for the program. Jordan, however, said that he was unimpressed. The civil rights leader called the policy “disheartening” and “a missed opportunity.” It fell “far short of being the domestic urban Marshall Plan the nation needs” and was “not on a scale commensurate with the problem.” Following Carter’s disappointing announcement, Jordan continued to work in coalition with both civil rights and other liberal organizations, lobby elected leaders, testify before
congressional committees, and produce research papers that documented the desperate need for the progressive urban policies they proposed. As Carter’s term progressed, Jordan’s task became more difficult. By early 1979, Jordan conceded, “This year we are reduced to trying to preserve the few and relatively meager programs currently in existence.”

Jordan and other members of the Black Forum did not ignore the role Democratic congresses played in transforming the political orientation of the Party. In fact, by the end of Carter’s term, they were frequently more critical of Congress than of the president. Jordan complained publicly after Congress weakened the president’s already inadequate urban policy and watered down the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment bill, for which members of the Black Forum had lobbied vigorously. What’s more, Jordan charged that Congress had become “a negative force in the country” instrumental in the “national backlash against the poor and minorities.” In years past, he noted, “there was a general consensus shared by whites and blacks alike that an activist government should achieve full employment, reverse the effects of discrimination and revitalize the cities. Today that consensus had been shattered, and in its place we see the formation of a new negativism in America that calls for a weak, passive government, indifference to the plight of the poor and abandonment of affirmative action.” Race, he argued, was “central to the rising support of the new negativism. People are not merely saying no to higher taxes and inflation; they are saying no to inclusion of black and brown people into the mainstream.” Congress not only fomented the new negativism, Jordan charged, but used it to advance an agenda that promoted the well-being of the elite. “It is disgraceful,” he asserted, “that the a nation with 40 million people crying out for food, jobs and homes
should have its Congressional representatives more concerned with preserving the remnants of colonialism in Panama and conferring still more benefits on the wealthy.”

The efforts by Jordan and the other leaders of the nation’s civil rights organizations to influence public policy and keep the Democratic Party active on issues of economic and social justice reflects the broad agenda African-American activists pursued during the 1970s. To be sure, affirmative action and other identity issues were also a priority for civil rights leaders. And Jordan acknowledged that the progressive macroeconomic and urban policies he and other leaders promoted were “based on enlightened self-interest.” They were also, however, “aims that will benefit far more white people than black.” What’s more, they were aims that had been on the Democratic Party’s platform since the 1930s and aims that white rather than black people were abandoning. During the late 1970s, civil rights leaders had not undermined but instead tried to save American liberalism. The fact was not lost on conservative commentator William F. Buckley, Jr., who responded to Jordan’s activism by urging the civil rights leader to stop weighing in on economic issues and stick instead to “race” politics.

The leaders of the American labor movement also aggressively fought Carter’s turn to the right. George Meany, who served as the president of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) until early 1980, battled with the U.S. president even during 1977, when Carter shared the union leader’s conviction that unemployment was the nation’s overriding problem. Meany’s frustration with Carter only grew over the next few years. By 1980, the AFL-CIO had organized a coalition of 147 liberal organizations quite consciously committed to saving their party. The groups
included the NUL and other civil rights organizations, the United Automobile Workers and other unions, and a variety of women’s, religious, urban, health, and environmental organizations. Lane Kirkland, who had succeeded Meany as the president of the AFL-CIO, described the group as engaged in “a struggle for the soul of political positions and programs” of the Democratic Party. Among the organization’s most significant goals was an effort to “oppose Administration and Congressional proposals that place the burden of the battle against inflation on those least able to cope with the problems in our society.”

As the AFL-CIO had become increasingly active in the liberal cause, the leadership of AFSCME emerged as a leading advocate of a strong and generous welfare state. To be sure, AFSCME had a vested interest in big government, the source of its members’ paychecks. But the union’s president Jerry Wurf and Secretary/Treasurer William Lucy had long been advancing a politically progressive agenda. Their efforts to steer Carter and congressional Democrats back to the fold became urgent during the late 1970s. The early phases of the ascendancy of neoliberalism directly threatened the jobs of government workers. AFSCME’s growth since the 1960s had outpaced that of most other unions in the nation. In fact, at a million members strong in 1978, AFSCME became the largest union in the AFL-CIO. Ironically, the union became acutely vulnerable at the very moment that its numbers yielded it more power than ever before. As a result, as union leaders fought what they identified as an aggressive reassertion of corporate and elite power over U.S. public policy, defensiveness blended with righteous indignation.
The union had good cause for its defensiveness. Despite its size and recent growth, AFSCME still struggled to win respect within the house of labor. Wurf served on the AFL-CIO’s executive council, and he worked both inside and outside of the labor movement to bolster the status of government unions. He complained bitterly, however, that many private-sector labor leaders and members failed to take the concerns of government workers seriously. Federal and local labor laws had positioned public-sector unions on the periphery of the labor movement, and Wurf found it difficult to overcome the legacy. Perhaps the service-related nature of the work of the public-sector failed to qualify as serious labor in some eyes. Others may not have identified AFSCME’s largely female membership as legitimate rough and tumble rank-and-filers. And certainly many private-sector union members enthusiastically lent their voices to the chorus of Americans complaining that their taxes were too high and blaming government workers and their unions for contributing to the problem.37

Growing public hostility to government workers cut more deeply than the condescension from organized labor. During the second half of the twentieth century, the U.S. underwent a sea-change in popular opinion regarding government workers. At mid-century, many American parents urged their children to try for a government post, which promised stable hours and a pension upon retirement. By the late 1970s, civil rights leader James Farmer, who at the time was the director of the Coalition of American Public Employees (CAPE), noted, “It has become high political fashion in recent years for candidates to run against ‘government,’ to vilify public employees as public leeches.”38 AFSCME leaders were just as angered by what they called the “slanders of public workers’ inefficiency and incompetence.”39 A level of frustration with
government bureaucracies was to be expected. Many Americans had experienced seemingly endless waits in a government waiting room while staff members appeared to be catching up on the latest gossip. And at some point many had received surly service over the telephone or had been sent the wrong forms. Such encounters, however, while certainly irritating, hardly warranted the intense level of hostility directed towards government workers during the late 1970s. Race undoubtedly factored into the equation. Although whites outnumbered African Americans in the government workforce, black workers had made visible inroad in the public sector. Many white Marylanders were predisposed to assume that African Americans made inefficient workers. What’s more, conservative Marylanders seemed to conflate government workers with welfare workers, who, like their clients, were largely African-American and female. Conservatives reserved a special brand of venom for welfare workers. Anger with public-sector unions, which was also tainted by racism, likewise undermined confidence in government workers. Although many Americans had sympathized with the AFSCME-led Memphis sanitation workers who attracted the attention of Martin Luther King in 1968, within a decade many viewed government unions as greedy rabble-rousers responsible for fiscal crisis, urban unrest and employment policies that enabled workers to loaf while in the clock. Although frustrated tax-payers often identified government workers as a cause of the nation’s economic woes, the advocates of public unions also noted the significant role elected officials and elites played in fomenting the anger. Farmer blamed politicians who were representing the interests of the wealthy for deliberately sowing “distrust against
government.” He and AFSCME leaders shared deep concerns about conservative rhetoric that undermined confidence in government workers by disavowing as inefficient labor not driven by the profit motive.

Hostility towards the government and its workers manifested itself most starkly in suburban tax revolts. AFSCME fiercely combated the phenomenon. The passage of Proposition 13 in California, which imposed caps on government spending, alarmed but did not surprise Wurf. The AFSCME leader had been anticipating such a “Threat to All Public Employees, Threat to All Public Services” In fact, he had already been promoting a revision of the U.S. tax structure to appease widespread frustration with taxes and forestall such a backlash. AFSCME argued—unconvincingly—that Proposition 13 stemmed not just from a “revulsion against welfare big government” but from popular anger at “the inequities of the tax system and inability and unwillingness of the Governor and legislature to respond.” The nation’s localities and states needed a more progressive method of taxation, according to union officials, because the solution to service-demands was not “bigger taxes” but “bigger taxpayers.” That is, the federal government needed to use the power it wielded over the distribution of intergovernmental revenue to compel state and local governments to adopt progressive tax structures to fund public services. In addition, AFSCME urged the federal government to promote progressive state and local property tax schemes, which states could then distribute from richer to poorer jurisdictions to fund services such as public schools. As AFSCME’s director of research explained in 1978, “the Federal Government should not be in the business of supplementing the revenue of states which continue to raise taxes from those citizens least able to pay, and thus adding further to the distress of those areas within a
state which are most in need of adequate public services and economic growth strategies.”

The solutions they proposed to suburban tax revolts would provide meaningful “tax justice” while also ensuring that elites and the business community contributed a fair share to society and did not end up the silent winners in impulsive schemes such as Proposition 13.

A second threat to public services and public workers that AFSCME confronted during the late 1970s emerged from mounting enthusiasm for transferring government functions to the private sector. AFSCME equated the practice of contracting-out with putting up a “government for sale” sign, warning that such arrangements promoted corruption and graft while undermining the nation’s civic society and commitment to providing quality services. “Public employees are being made the scapegoats for the current problems of state and local government,” explained an AFSCME consultant, “and some of the leaders of the anti-public employee chorus are businessmen who are trying to get their hands on more government dollars through lucrative contracts.” Although billed as a cost-saving measure, AFSCME noted that contracting-out circumvented merit-system reform that many governments had adopted nearly a century earlier to prevent politicians from using access to government resources to reward campaign contributors and amass power. Inflated contracts, political kickbacks and price-fixing often resulted when the government invited the private sector to play a role in service provision, AFSCME leaders insisted. Former Baltimore County commissioner, Maryland governor and U.S. vice president Spiro Agnew, union leaders reminded Americans, resigned from the Nixon administration in disgrace as a consequence of his involvement in such chicanery. Contracting out also contributed to diluting civic culture because decision-
making fell to unelected consultants rather than citizens and the government workers who job it was to serve the people. Service provision became the domain of those more attentive to profit margins than the common good. Concern for the bottom line, the union also suggested, could not substitute for thoroughness and thoughtfulness, the ingredients of quality when it came to such tasks as the education of children, the provision of services for senior citizens and the care of the ill. While the business model served an important role in American society, its principles were not applicable to all dimensions of public life.  

On most issues, AFSCME’s agenda mirrored those of other progressive groups. Public-sector unions made a defensive and cautious ally, however, when it came to full-employment. To be sure, the union advocated the goal. But AFSCME leaders and members feared public-sector job creation proposals. Many in AFSCME’s rank and file occupied the lowest positions in government hierarchies. The union prided itself on its success in raising the bottom of government pay scales and providing low-wage workers not only with fringe benefits and workplace protections but also upward mobility through training programs. Not surprisingly, the union balked at the possibility that the federal government might create a special category of poorly-paid public-sector workers outside the union’s domain whose lack of protection and clout could easily undermine the fragile gains AFSCME had won for its poorest members. Since the mid-1970s, AFSCME had maintained a “love/hate relationship” with the public-sector employment program created by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). Compelled by the desperate need for employment opportunities and fiscal relief in the nation’s poorest regions, the union had lent its support to CETA “despite the many problems it poses to
During the late 1970s, union leaders and workers remained suspicious of “make-work” schemes. As William Welsh, AFSCME’s director of intergovernmental affairs, explained, “it is impossible for a public services jobs program to operate smoothly and effectively when it is placed in a government structure which itself is crumbling because of either a national recession or chronic local fiscal distress. Irreconcilable conflicts develop between protecting the jobs of regular public workers and hiring the disadvantaged and other people unemployed in the private sector.” As a result, AFSCME enthusiastically put its weight behind urban economic development programs and proposed a stimulus spending package intended to stimulate private-sector job growth. Nevertheless, the union did also endorse limited and targeted public-sector job creation.

Like the NUL, AFSCME met with limited success in its efforts to shape the agenda of the Democratic Party. The union did help win counter-cyclical funding for cities intended to enable municipalities to maintain service provisions during financial downturns. But the union did not resuscitate Americans’ faith in government or inspire a new wave of civic-minded responsibility. By 1980, Lucy warned AFSCME members, “Big business is calling the tune in today’s politics, so much so that we currently have a Democratic administration, elected largely by labor and minorities, pursuing pro-business economic policies—high interest rates, scare money and cutbacks in public spending for human services. As a direct result, a new recession is building, and poor and working Americans will be the prime victims.” He urged AFSCME members to vote even as he
mourned that they no longer had two distinct major parties from which to choose. “The Democratic wing of the Democratic Party” had failed to prevent its Party’s turn to the Right.54

While the president’s macroeconomic and urban policies came under fire on the national level, some in Baltimore found programs they felt well-suited to the needs of their city. UDAGs and other initiatives intended to encourage public/private partnerships had particularly enthusiastic supporters in the mayor’s office. For decades, the city had been attempting to forge such partnerships on its own. During the 1960s and early 1970s, while many of the city’s human-services workers had called for strengthening the welfare state, many of the city’s planners, developers, financial officers, and local business leaders advocated downtown commercial redevelopment as the key to the city’s revitalization. Few in either camp considered human and physical development to be mutually exclusive. But members of the two groups differed starkly in their assessment of the priorities that should guide the city’s planning. Carter’s urban policies decidedly tipped the scales in favor of the trickle-down remedies of planners and business leaders, while his cuts to federal urban aid weakened the positions of human services workers.

During the second half of the 1970s, the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC), an organization of business executives, remained a vital player in the coalition of interests committed to revitalizing the city through commercial redevelopment. During the 1950s, GBC, founded by developer James Rouse, had hired urban planners who created a long-term development plan for Baltimore that the City Council ultimately adopted. Throughout his career, Rouse committed himself to proving that capitalism could
produce vibrant cities independent of government planning, and he staunchly advocated civic responsibility on the part of business elites. The first GBC venture the city undertook during the 1960s revitalized thirty-three acres in the heart of downtown. Both public and private investment funded the Charles Center project, which included the construction of offices, up-scale apartments and stores intended to attract businesses and the middle class to the city.  

Schaefer entered office an enthusiast of the GBC plan. His years on the Council and as the body’s head had given him ample exposure to the organization’s goals, which fit nicely with his own priorities of stemming the flow of businesses and tax payers from the city. In fact, Schaefer would prove even more ambitious than the members of GBC when it came to downtown development. While many of the mayor’s revitalization plans targeted keeping factories in or attracting them to the city, Schaefer also appreciated the folly of trying to rebuild Baltimore using blueprints from its industrial heyday. The city needed to forge its post-industrial future. During the early 1960s, as work on Charles Center was underway, an advertisement campaign funded by GBC helped convince city residents to approve bonds to support the second part of the organization’s urban plan, the revitalization of 240 acres around the city’s inner harbor. The long-term plans for the waterfront resembled those for Charles Center and included commercial, residential and recreational development. By the end of the 1960s, the city had begun clearing the site for future development, but investor confidence in the harbor project failed to materialize. Few private firms stepped up to gamble on Baltimore’s port, scared off, perhaps, by the dead fish that floated on the scummy surface of the harbor or the colonies of rats that made the city’s waterfront their home. Then Schaefer became mayor. Perennially
optimistic about Baltimore’s future, the mayor imagined possibilities for the harbor beyond those proposed by GBC. “Tourism?” one city employee remembers thinking incredulously when the mayor touted the idea at a civic breakfast. “It was like working for a crazy person.”

Schaefer’s ideas may have struck as outlandish those who could hardly imagine rusting Baltimore as a destination point for out-of-towners, but his enthusiasm for promoting urban tourism was not entirely original. As federal interest in cities waned in the 1970s, urban executives realized that they were being left to fend for themselves in a global economy characterized by destabilizing capital mobility and tight credit markets. The changes led to a shift in the responsibilities of local executives. As political scientist David Harvey explains, rather than simply managers of cities, mayors began to assume the role of entrepreneur. Local business elites often encouraged the change and the opportunity to make city governments more attentive to their needs. In Baltimore, Schaefer enthusiastically embraced the role of entrepreneur, convinced that trickle-down remedies were an important solution to his city’s problems. Tourism was a cornerstone of his entrepreneurial agenda.

Schaefer had a young and enthusiastic group of staffers committed to his agenda. So dedicated were some that they were dubbed “the Koolaid drinkers,” a reference to the devotees of cult figure Jim Jones who committed group suicide in Jonestown, Guyana in 1978. The mayor’s financial officers were equally as enthusiastic. The physical redevelopment of the city fell largely under the auspices of the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), which had been created in 1968 when the city centralized its housing agencies. HCD’s first director was Robert Embry, Jr., a highly
ambitious urban enthusiast. To Embry fell much of the responsibility for balancing the city’s commitment to neighborhood and commercial revitalization. He evinced a genuine concern for residents of the city’s poor communities. During the 1960s, he acceded to the demands of public-housing activists in the Community Action Agency (CAA) for resident participation in decision-making. Baltimore emerged as a leader in incorporating public-housing tenants in policy decisions. During the early 1970s, however, Embry’s commitment to community participation grew more tepid. As the city consolidated into a single entity its CAA and Model Cities program, he advised the mayor to abolish the advisory boards of the older agencies and make the director of the new entity accountable only to the mayor. As Embry’s confidence in War-on-Poverty era programs dimmed, his enthusiasm for public-private redevelopment ventures mounted. He worked in close collaboration with the GBC. In fact, Embry’s skillful management of public/private initiatives in Baltimore helped pique the interest of then presidential candidate Carter. Upon winning the White House, Carter invited Embry to serve as Assistant Secretary in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Among his responsibilities at HUD, Embry ran the UDAG program. Not surprisingly, Baltimore fared well with its former housing official overseeing grant distribution. Although some national observers complained Embry favored his hometown, his supporters joked that he was actually quite fair; he doled out UDAGs fifty-fifty—half for Baltimore and half for the nation’s other cities. But while members of the GBC and other advocates of Baltimore’s public/private ventures benefited from Embry’s success, those committed to neighborhood-based revitalization plans found less to celebrate. Under Embry’s watch HUD limited UDAGs to commercial redevelopment
projects. Embry disappointed neighborhood and other urban advocates in a second way as well. From his post at HUD, he served as the executive director of the task force that created Carter’s national urban policy. Few in the nation exercised more influence over the commitment the federal government might make to cities than Embry, who pinned his faith on trickle-down solutions to urban decay. “The urban problem was not created by the Federal Government and it will not be solved by the Federal Government,” Embry argued in response to critics who argued the urban policy he helped to draft provided inadequate resources for social welfare programs.61

Carter’s public-private partnership grants enabled Baltimore officials to realize many of their redevelopment projects. By 1981, the city had received $37 million in UDAGs and $50 million from the EDA. Some of the federal funding did help support neighborhood development projects. The city also used the aid to support industrial interests. General Motors, which was one of the few remaining large industrial employers in the city, had little trouble convincing officials that what was good for the corporation was good for the city. A $9 million UDAG enabled GM to expand its local production facilities. City and business leaders also used federal funds to reinvigorate the GBC harbor renewal plan. A $10 million UDAG helped the city secure a glitzy waterfront Hyatt Regency hotel, later considered a magnet for the harbor redevelopment that followed. In addition, $1.5 million from EDA helped cover the costs of an aquarium. Federal as well as state revenue also helped subsidize a convention center, a dock for the city’s historic all-sail U.S. Navy warship, a science center, shoreline landscaping, and a marina. The combination of intergovernmental revenue and Schaefer’s boosterism created what would soon provoke marvel as Baltimore renaissance.62
With various forms of development funds earmarked for public-private ventures, Schaefer decided that he needed an efficient method of overseeing the city’s development projects. He was reluctant, however, to relinquish authority over the delicate and sometimes time-sensitive business of deal-making. Schaefer believed that if the city was going to achieve its downtown metamorphosis, municipal deal-makers were going to have to move with to the rapid rhythms of the business world rather than plodding tempo compelled by city politics. Referenda took time and required city administrators to defend priorities citizens might not share. And City Council debate could produce contract riders requiring developers to hire only union workers or minority contractors—requirements that might squelch a deal with a firm that could quite easily turn to another more accommodating city. To evade such obstacles, Schaefer created a network of quasi-public corporations to handle deal-making and project management in the city. Because they were public, the corporations had the legal authority to exercise eminent domain to amass land and to distribute public resources. Because the corporations were also private, however, they could avoid federal regulations that mandated public disclosure, competitive bidding and affirmative action mandates.63

By the early 1980s, Schaefer had created between thirty and forty quasi-public corporations, such as the Baltimore Development Corporation and Charles Center-Inner Harbor Management, Inc. The most controversial of the corporations was the Baltimore City Trustees Loan and Guarantee Program, which served as the city’s development bank. The mayor appointed two trustees to run the outfit, one of whom was Charles Benson, the city’s Finance Director. During the 1960s, Benton had been highly critical of the ways African Americans who ran the city’s antipoverty agencies dispersed federal
funds. He frequently charged mismanagement and called for audits by municipal accountants. Ironically considering his espoused devotion to probity, Benton demonstrated considerable flexibility in the way he managed federal funds. As former Baltimore newspaper reporter C. Fraser Smith explains, “If he finagled the books, taking money that had been voted for one purpose and washing it bureaucratically for use in another project, or engaging in minor league arbitraging, investing federal government money and taking the interest for local uses, a prohibited practice, he knew how to retrace his steps or how to have those steps blessed by Schaefer and the Board of Estimates.”

Benton and a second trustee, Frank Baker of the Monumental Life Company, worked almost entirely free from public scrutiny, creatively packaging public funds, including UDAGs and Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs), to firms willing to invest in the city if offered generous incentives. Between 1976, when the bank opened, and 1986, when Schaefer shut it down to avoid uncomfortable questions during his successful bid for the governorship, the Trustees brokered $500 million in development deals, some of which were risky enough that traditional bankers would have balked. Some of the development funds went into Baltimore’s new postindustrial skyline and harbor redevelopment. Other projects were less successful. According to a calculation by Joan Jacobson, an investigative reporter at The Baltimore Sun, by 1992 the city had either written off or did not expect repayment on fifty loans with a total value of about $60 million.

Most people in the city knew nothing of Baltimore’s trustees and quasi-public corporations until a series of expose articles in The Sun in 1980 introduced residents to their “shadow government.” Many responded with outrage at what they saw as a
subversion of democracy in the city. L. H. Kohlman, for example, wrote to the paper to complain that residents were being stripped of their right to set municipal priorities. He wondered how Baltimore could find funds for hotel developers but not for textbooks for students in the city’s overcrowded public schools. Others, like Frances Froelicher, the founder of Baltimore’s Citizens Planning and Housing Association who had known Schaefer for years, attributed the mayor’s use of the secretive corporations to conceit. She surmised that the mayor “feels he doesn’t want to be bothered with citizens’ committees because he has listened to all that in the past. He is in power right now and he wants to accomplish what he has wanted to accomplish all these years.” Still others expressed alarm that the City Council was being circumvented and that the City Charter could accommodate such questionable practices.

Baltimore’s shadow government was not without supporters both inside and outside of the city, however. Some city residents resented The Sun’s attack on the mayor, whose Herculean efforts to redevelop the city was beginning to attract national and international attention. “We should be grateful to Mr. Schaefer,” John Miklos wrote to a Sun competitor, “for having the will and stamina to see the city grow from a deteriorating mess toward a beautiful masterpiece.” City development officials also consistently defended the quasi-public management system, which made Baltimore attractive to investors. “I think corporations appreciate being able to work with us because we’re here to smooth the way,” one development official explained to The New York Times in 1984. “It’s not like trying to deal with a government agency. We’re very entrepreneurial. We think government is a business.” Perhaps the most ringing endorsement of the shadow government came from the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The
organization studied Baltimore’s trustee system during the early 1980s and in a report subtitled “How Your City Can Make Use of Baltimore’s Approach to Creative Financing for Economic Development” recommended the system for emulation.\textsuperscript{68}

Despite the appeal of the corporations to municipal officials around the nation, members of Baltimore’s City Council did not respond positively to revelations of the shadow government. But the Council was hardly a match for Mayor Schaefer. During the late 1970s, the body suffered from exceptionally weak leadership, which Schaefer easily exploited. The Council’s president was Walter Orlinsky, who would be indicted while in office for minor corruption charges. Although they had once been running mates, during the late 1970s Orlinsky and Schaefer rarely saw eye to eye. In fact, as a \textit{Sun} reporter explained in 1978, the City Council president and mayor “quite thoroughly detest[ed] one another, [did] not speak to one another, and bad mouth[ed] one another at every opportunity.”\textsuperscript{69} Orlinsky did not channel his disdain for Schaefer into challenging the mayor’s development agenda, however. Instead, Orlinsky exercised little control during Council meetings and sometimes allowed them to deteriorate into chaos. Observers charged that poor management allowed the mayor to take advantage of the divided body. So successful was Schaefer at passing his agenda through the Council that it alarmed even his own supporters. Council member Clarence “Du” Burns, who became the city’s first African-American mayor when Schaefer moved to the governor’s mansion, complained, “There are no checks and balances whatsoever. I think there ought to be a separation of powers. We should not be just a rubber stamp.”\textsuperscript{70}

President Carter’s program of commercial redevelopment, exacerbated by Schaefer’s decision to create the shadow government, largely removed from the public
realm decision-making authority over Baltimore’s revitalization agenda. Carter’s Democratic predecessor Lyndon Johnson had used the distribution of federal grants to compel cities to give low-income residents and African Americans a voice in policy-making. Carter’s policies, in contrast, offered residents no say on how the city should combat its problems or the balance it should strike between commercial and residential revitalization and between trickle-down and social-welfare initiatives. Instead, residents could do little more than vote up or down those redevelopment projects that required the city to sell bonds. Carter’s urban policy proposal did include some funds earmarked for neighborhood groups as well as an appropriation for social welfare programs. Neither allotment was significant, however, evincing the president’s desire to gesture at but not commit to some of the long-standing priorities of the Democratic Party.

Because Carter’s urban policy did not extend to Baltimore residents the opportunity to debate strategies for addressing urban problems, it is hard to know in what direction they would have led the city. History, however, suggests residents maintained a healthy skepticism of schemes intended to economically revitalize the city’s commercial center but not address residents’ concerns for their neighborhoods. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, city officials wanted to build a highway through the center of the city to facilitate the transportation of goods and people in and out of Baltimore. In 1969, residents from several of the neighborhoods in the highway’s path formed Movement Against Destruction (MAD). Activists with roots in the municipal public sector championed the cause of the interracial organization. Barbara Mikulski, a social worker with the Department of Public Welfare, and Parren Mitchell, who had recently stepped down as the head of the CAA, both played leading roles. Like many of the city’s human
service employees, each firmly advocated community participation in municipal policy-making. The road wars served as further evidence of city officials’ shallow commitment to democratic decision-making. “This project is just another example of how the average citizen is excluded from meaningful participation,” Mitchell charged during the conflict.71 Mikulski was equally as outraged. Although the community was supposed to give input in the highway plan, she recalled, “We found out that meant we could choose what color the grid was going to be and what kind of stone we wanted the guard rails made out of.”72 The fight dragged out for years as residents took their cause to the courts. Ultimately, they won, saving many Baltimore homes. Downtown commercial revitalization, MAD members taught Schaefer, should not come at the expense of city residents and their neighborhoods. Perhaps the victory explains the mayor’s penchant for secretiveness during the late 1970s.73

Baltimore’s road wars produced a permanent organization that remained active in contestations over development plans during the Carter years. The Southeast Community Organization (SECO), which included over ninety neighborhood associations, was unusual among such groups nationwide because of its interracial membership. The organization fought to keep the city’s attention focused on neighborhood as well as commercial redevelopment. By the Carter years, SECO had a broad agenda that illuminates the views of at least some city residents on the meaning of urban development. In 1978, Gloria Aull, the vice president of SECO, explained that agenda to the Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations. She did not appear intimidated by her congressional audience. “Anybody who knows Gloria Aull from southeast Baltimore knows that she can talk,” she began, so she promised not to “belabor” the committee with
her “verbosity.” Instead Aull described her childhood experiences of walking the streets of Baltimore’s and encountering its neighborhoods. “It is an ethnic neighborhood and you know it because you can smell it before you get there, and depending on the smell, you know what you are going to eat there, whether it is spaghetti, sour beef, pastrami, soul food, corned beef, and cabbage.” Aull then explained that SECO wanted to revitalize Baltimore’s neighborhoods to restore a lost sense of community pride. Towards that end, the neighborhood associations of SECO targeted housing and street improvements, the maintenance of retail outlets, local access to health-care providers, and jobs for residents. They also hoped to attract middle-income and “educated” residents to their neighborhoods. SECO members pressed national elected officials to make a commitment to their goals. Not surprisingly, Carter’s urban policy largely disappointed them.

Carter’s urban policy disappointed a second group of Baltimore activists as well. Since entering office, Baltimore’s mayor had embarked on a sustained campaign to keep in and attract to the city members of the middle-class. During the second half of the 1970s, the back-to-the-city movement produced an unanticipated pool of potential taxpayers. Schaefer introduced several initiatives intended to lure the potential homeowners to Baltimore. Among them, he sold abandoned houses for a dollar to those willing to invest in significant resuscitation efforts. The homesteading venture and similar projects displaced moderate and low-income families. Baltimore did have a program for renovating housing for residents with low incomes, but the pace of construction was frustratingly slow. Patricia Roberts Harris, the secretary of HUD, appreciated the displacement problem, which was shared by residents in many cities. The federal
government, she argued, needed to make a significant commitment to programs that would help low-income families renovate homes. Acutely aware of Carter’s macroeconomic priorities as well as public hostility to welfare spending, she anticipated that such an effort “may be foreclosed at present by economic and political realities.” It was. Angered by the government’s lack of action, some low-income residents took matters into their own hands. Some joined Communities Organized to Improve Life, Inc. (COIL), a coalition of groups committed to fighting housing deterioration and dedicated “to convert[ing] as many tenants to homeowners as possible.” Others participated in the Citywide Coalition Against Displacement. And one particularly frustrated group of twenty-five women from the Johnson Square area joined by activist Ralph Moore staged a sit-in at the Department of Housing and Community Development. They had visited the office before to request a meeting with director M. Jay Brodie and on each occasion had been turned away. This time, they planned to stay until he saw them. When he relented, they told him of rodent infestations, shoddy construction and broken furnaces. They also demanded to know why downtown redevelopment projects proceeded much more quickly than the city rehabbed housing. As Moore explained to a reporter, “The ladies can see the need for revitalizing the city and firming up the tax base, but they do not want to see Baltimore become a tourist town at the expense of the poor.”

The desire for federal funding for neighborhood projects and affordable, habitable housing did not blind residents to their city’s deteriorating economic status. Like the Johnson Square women, few disdained commercial development entirely. Schaefer’s unrivalled confidence in Baltimore also proved hard to resist. When occasionally forced to put his downtown projects before the people, the mayor usually got what he wanted.
Voters did turn down a proposal to build a new stadium. Few seemed to find it distracting to watch late summer Orioles’ games on a diamond that bore the faint paint residue of the yard-lines the Colts used for their pre-season warm-ups. But after the Baltimore football team snuck out of town under the cover of darkness and moved to Indianapolis, calls for a new stadium became an easier sell. On other ventures, voters gave Schaefer a run for his money but ultimately granted the mayor the funds he sought. Critics of the plan to build the aquarium, for example, dubbed the project “the fish tank.”

They questioned the use of scarce municipal resources on the frivolous venture, particularly while the city was laying-off municipal employees. Even Parren Mitchell, who usually held his frustration in check, described the attraction dismissively as a place “where our unemployed city workers can go to look at fish they can’t eat.” Of course, that was before the city announced the aquarium’s steep admission prices. Another critic described the project as “unnecessary.” If the city had extra funds, he argued, it should have given municipal workers a more significant raise. And the leaders of the Baltimore Welfare Rights Organization found it inconceivable that the city would consider such a venture while so many residents were struggling to get by. Nevertheless, voters approved the fish tank.

Schaefer also won a hard-fought battle to build a waterfront shopping mall, which became the linchpin of the harbor renewal effort. The project was the brain child of James Rouse, who had founded the GBC over two decades earlier, then moved on to win a national reputation as a developer who first lured urban residents to the suburbs and then tried to attract them back to cities with showy downtown attractions. Initially, public resistance to the proposal appeared insurmountable. Restaurateurs in Little Italy
feared the competition the new mall would bring, and many city residents balked at the prospect of transforming open public space into a commercialized site. To counter the opposition, the city and the GBC launched an expensive public-relations campaign. Among their targets were the city’s African-American leaders. Few among them identified a shopping center as the appropriate solution to the city’s soaring black unemployment rate. To win their support, the city promised black contractors a share of new construction jobs. Mitchell and the leaders of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, aware that urban redevelopment money was the only show in town, eventually agreed to endorse the project. Slowly public opinion began to turn, and ultimately, fifty-eight percent of city voters approved building the Harborplace mall. The victory, however, like the outcome of the aquarium vote, cannot be interpreted to represent Baltimore residents’ endorsement of commercial redevelopment as the best or only approach the city should take to combat its problems. As the member of SECO and the women of Johnson Square well knew, President Carter had taken other urban revitalization efforts off the table.85

Workers in the city’s human-services agencies were also acutely aware of the urban policy options Carter did not extend to cities. For over a decade the largely female and African-American staffs of the agencies had been advocating for an urban agenda that prioritized sustainable community development. They had served as a counterweight within the municipal government to many planners, financial officers, and business leaders in asserting that commercial redevelopment was the most significant ingredient in Baltimore’s revitalization. During the early 1970s, Nixon’s revenue sharing had begun to weaken human services workers’ independence and authority. Carter’s urban policy all
but undermined it. Not only did the Democrat fund public/private partnerships but he also cut overall federal urban aid. Simultaneously, his macroeconomic policies deteriorated conditions in cities. Employees in the manpower office were not alone in watching the fruits of their antipoverty efforts reversed by sky-rocketing unemployment figures. As Schaefer breathed life into the waterfront, human-services workers had fewer resources to work with in the fight against poverty.

By the late 1970s, however, the agencies were no longer the source of protest and community mobilization they had been. Schaefer used his authority over both appointments and the municipal budget to ensure that government employees would not criticize his agenda and policy decisions. Lenwood Ivey, for example, continued to head the Urban Services Agency (USA). Ivey remained committed to the notion that USA should bend in accordance with the conservative winds blowing north from Washington, D.C. and focus narrowly on service provision rather than activism and community empowerment. The ever shrinking portion of USA’s budget the agency received from the city further limited the activities in which antipoverty workers could engage.

Between 1977 and 1980, as inflation mounted, the city reduced by a quarter its contribution to USA’s budget. Meanwhile, many in the city, most especially the mayor, considered USA and the Department of Education to be Baltimore’s African-American agencies. Schaefer expected loyalty in exchange for the jobs the departments provided. “Mr. Schaefer’s greatest personality failing in office is an autocratic instinct that attracts sycophants and brands others as enemies,” The Baltimore Sun explained. That instinct significantly undercut public-sector activism.
Miserly federal funding of social-welfare initiatives further reduced the ability of workers in human-services agencies to maintain the fight for sustainable community development. Both USA and the Baltimore City Department of Health depended on federal sources of support for a significant portion of their budgets. Given growing public hostility to welfare spending and mounting concern about inflation, agency staff found it difficult to predict if the grants on which they depended would be renewed. What’s more, few grant cycles were synchronized, and each grant was tied to a unique set of regulations, which demanded of agency staff considerable commitment merely to administrative duties. No workers faced greater responsibilities, however, than those at the Department of Social Services (DSS). “We’re loaded down with complexity and red tape…90 per cent of the forms, most of them time consuming, stupid and wasteful, could be eliminated,” complained an official at DSS. Welfare workers also faced the peril of budget cuts. In fact, during the late 1970s, cuts in federal funding for welfare services contributed to undermining the fragile solidarity that had earlier and occasionally existed between welfare workers and recipients. DSS official had to divide tight budgets between services and salaries, which caused conflict between residents with low incomes and public-sector workers. The needs of mothers in search of day care, for example, and workers dependence on raises that compensated at least in part for rising inflation were never easily rectified. Activists identified in salary increases for workers funds desperately needed to improve housing quality. Meanwhile, Maryland, although the third wealthiest state in the nation, ranked thirty-fourth in welfare grant generosity. In 1979,
the state’s Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefit left most recipients at two-thirds the poverty rate, which hardly facilitated trust on the part of recipients for DSS staff. 89

During the late 1970s, many human services workers became defensive rather than proactive. Many workers felt constantly scrutinized by an unsympathetic public. State officials also continued to accuse them of inefficiency and incompetence. What’s more, under pressure from Proposition-13 type supporters, few legislators felt inclined to raise welfare spending. As a result, in 1978, when the state had a surplus, legislators granted increases of nine or ten percent to many agencies but only increased the budget of the Department of Human Resources, which oversaw DSS, by 1.5 percent. 90

Meanwhile, welfare-rights advocates subjected workers to as much if not more criticism than backlash voters. “Push us ahead; don’t pull us back,” chided Fran Hargrove, the head of the BWRO. 91 Bobby Cheeks, the executive director of the BWRO, did Hargrove one better. His organization existed, he charged, “because of the incompetence of the Department of Social Services.” 92 With hostility coming from all directions, many welfare workers found it difficult to maintain the defiant spirit of the early 1970s.

To be sure, human-services workers did not give up entirely on their efforts to strengthen the welfare state. Schaefer appointees, although loath to criticize the mayor, did direct some anger at the Carter administration that applied equally to Schaefer. Quentin Lawson, the city’s director of human resources and one of the few African Americans in the mayor’s cabinet, for example, worried that downtown revitalization efforts neglected the needs of the people. The federal government had “traditionally emphasized…programs in physical development,” Lawson explained. What it needed
was an equal commitment to a national “human service plan.” Lawson also advocated on behalf of the BWRO’s efforts to regain funding for emergency centers after the state cut the program’s funding. Even Ivey at USA showed some spunk. He continued to give the BWRO a home in his facilities despite his conviction that Cheeks was an anachronism. Like many human-services agency-heads, Ivey increased rather than lowered his budget requests despite directives from the mayor. In 1980, he asked the city’s Board of Estimates to restore USA’s budget to its 1977 level. “I have already cut staff substantially in all programs. Further cuts would render most programs useless,” he complained.

Despite the anger they faced from both the public and welfare recipients, many DSS workers remained dedicated to convincing the state to make a more generous commitment to its poorest residents. Workers denounced the inadequate level at which the state funded both AFDC and its foster care program. They also undertook aggressive outreach programs and made maximum use of their decentralized service centers in an effort to get public services to as many as they could. By 1978, Baltimore had the second highest rate of AFDC recipients in the nation. The high figure indicated not only widespread poverty but also the agency’s success at reaching large numbers of people in need. The Baltimore DSS also continued to have activist leadership. In 1977, Kalman “Buzzy” Hettleman, a white lawyer and former tennis star who was popular among both DSS staff and welfare recipients, moved into the top post. When he moved into the same position on the state level in 1979, Ernestine Jones, an African-American social worker, replaced him at Baltimore’s DSS. Like those who preceded them, Hettleman and Jones attempted to use the authority of their position to convince the state to make a greater
commitment to social welfare. “The state has a grossly inadequate record of support for poor people and children at risk,” Hettleman argued. “What is missing in Maryland is a commitment to provide even a minimal, fair share of state resources and wealth for social service programs.”

Despite their on-going if muted efforts to keep the city’s attention focused on sustainable community development, human-services workers found it difficult to combat the consequences of Carter’s policies, public hostility and Schaefer’s zeal for downtown redevelopment. Employees at the Department of Education, however, did see one of their long-term goals partially realized. Since the 1960s, the Baltimore Teachers Union and the Public School Teachers Association had been fighting to force the state to equalize school funding among districts with discrepant levels of tax resources. As the leaders of AFSCME International argued, the practice of funding schools primarily from local property taxes resulted in grossly divergent budgets in rich and poor school districts. In 1978, a $2 property tax rate yielded $142 per student in Baltimore City but $900 per student in Baltimore County and over $1,000 in even wealthier counties. Baltimore’s educators, like many in poor districts around the country, demanded their state government revise its funding formula to remedy the inequities, which they argued reproduced class hierarchies across generations and reinforced racial discrimination. As it stood, Maryland contributed relatively little to the schools, and the formula it used weighed student population heavily, which disadvantaged Baltimore, where enrollment was declining. During the late 1960s, the teachers union had struck and publicly sanctioned the city to compel action on the problem. By the late 1970s, they knew better than to challenge the mayor head on. Instead they worked with Schaefer. African-
American school superintendent John L. Crew played an important role in the fight. Although Schaefer was notoriously uninvolved in education issues, the most egregious flaw of his administration even in the eyes of his supporters, Baltimore and two other relatively poor jurisdictions in Maryland sued the state. Crew, meanwhile, proposed an alternative funding scheme that would double the city’s allotment from the state. Finally, in 1980, the state government relented. Although the new formula continued to leave Baltimore’s schools behind many other districts, the state sent Baltimore greater aid than it had in the past.  

The leaders of Baltimore’s public-sector unions, insulated from Schaefer by a measure of independence, challenged the mayor on his development priorities more assertively than did city workers. The unions did so, however, largely rhetorically and in an effort to shame the administration into making concessions during contract negotiations. In 1978, the Classified Municipal Employees Association (CMEA), which represented about 4,500 of the city’s white-collar workers, argued that the mayor attended to downtown projects at the expense of the poor. A columnist for the union’s paper complained of “hotels receiving enormous tax breaks [and] funds being shifted from social programs and ‘loaned’ to commercial interests.” The columnist’s main concern, however, was with “city employees being layed-off [sic] and denied a decent wage.” Local AFSCME leaders, who represented about 10,000 city workers, more aggressively challenged Schaefer. To a large extent, local leaders left big political battles to the International and focused on bread-and-butter issues. Nonetheless, AFSCME leaders had for years charged Schaefer with inadequately responding to poverty and excessively focusing on capital improvement projects. In 1977, as harbor redevelopment
gained momentum and the mayor simultaneously threatened layoffs, the union attempted to raise eyebrows by pondering publicly “$2.5 million in property tax breaks for luxury high-rise apartment operators and three downtown hotels?” But AFSCME leaders, like their members, knew the lines not to cross when dealing with Baltimore’s “father-knows-best mayor.” Schaefer nurtured a grudge as masterfully as he brokered downtown deals. What’s more, as members of the regional AFL-CIO, AFSCME leaders felt an obligation to their co-unionists in Baltimore’s hard-pressed building-trades organizations, who had much to gain from downtown projects. Further, as Carter’s abdication of Democratic ideals appeared increasingly irreversible, public-sector unions appreciated commercial redevelopment as the only urban renewal show in town. And while they viewed it as ineffective as a response to urban poverty, municipal employees actually had much to gain from the city’s revitalization.

Baltimore’s public-sector unions fought on behalf of low-income residents and their city in Maryland’s capitol more assertively than they opposed Schaefer. In 1979, CMEA lobbied Maryland’s governor to devote the state’s surplus to a fiscal assistance package for the city. The following year, the union requested assistance from Baltimore officials in professionalizing their lobbying efforts on behalf of the city. Similarly, AFSCME opposed initiatives in Annapolis that would be harmful to the city and its low-income residents. Just as Wurf fought on the national level for a progressive state-tax structures, Ernest Crofoot, the president of the AFSCME council that included Baltimore workers, pursued the goal in Maryland. In 1977, he opposed a proposal by the governor to increase revenue by raising the Maryland sales tax. AFSCME’s members, Crofoot
argued, “have long felt that Maryland had one of the most regressive of all state tax structures.” His effort showed conviction, but the era of public-sector activism was largely over.

While human-services workers and public-sector unions became a less effective source of activism than they had been earlier in the decade, government jobs in Baltimore’s ravaged economy grew increasingly valuable. Deindustrialization continued at full speed during the 1970s, and Schaefer’s downtown projects promised to replace factory jobs with largely low-wage service positions. Because race and sex-based discrimination had been illegal in the government workforce longer than in the larger marketplace, and because activists could more easily scrutinize and influence hiring decisions made in the public sector than in private companies, African Americans and white women had made significant gains in public employment. The gendered nature of many of the health, education and welfare jobs created by federal anti-poverty programs had proved particularly beneficial to Baltimore’s female workers. Yet discrimination remained widespread, and Schaefer largely failed to improve on the hiring and promotion practices of his predecessors. Aware of both the significance of the public sector in the troubled local economy and persistent inequities, African Americans and white women became increasingly assertive in demanding redress for discrimination. They worked both independently and through their unions. The identity-based battles represented a concerted effort to win for black and female workers a larger slice of Baltimore’s meager economic pie. They also reflected growing alarm at the declining influence African Americans and white women exerted over public policy-making in Baltimore. Shifts in urban policy during the decade concentrated power in the hands of a small group of
white, male city officials. African Americans and white women demanded greater
certainty over charting the city’s future.

Within the municipal government, the Community Relations Commission (CRC)
played a vital role in advocating for improved employment opportunities for African
Americans and white women. The CRC, which had been the city’s Equal Employment
Opportunities Commission, closely monitored hiring and promotion in the city
government. Its studies during the 1970s documented the continued concentration of
African Americans and white women in low-wage positions and in a small number of
city agencies. As a largely African-American controlled agency, the Department of
Education provided thousands of relatively lucrative positions for many black workers as
well as white women. Outside of the education department, however, African Americans
and white women held few positions of authority. A 1976 report by the CRC showed
that white men held seventy-six of the city’s eighty-six top-paying jobs. White women
occupied seven—and black men three—of the remaining ten. In addition, outside of the
school system, only twenty-five percent of African Americans, compared to sixty percent
of whites, earned more than $10,000 a year. What’s more, although black workers made
up the majority of the municipal workforce, they occupied many federally-funded
positions, including vulnerable CETA jobs, whereas whites held over sixty percent of the
city’s non-education jobs financed by municipal revenue. Women, meanwhile, made up
most of the city’s clerical workforce, but beyond that, they were well-represented only in
health, education and welfare agencies. Less than thirty percent of women earned
salaries over $10,000 a year.\textsuperscript{101}
To reverse the patterns of discrimination and exclusion, John Ferron, the director of the CRC, urged the mayor to adopt affirmative action programs. Although the CRC made its first formal proposal for a plan in 1974, by February 1976 the city had held only one meeting on the issue. Frustration at the CRC was palpable. “I frankly feel that the city of Baltimore has been extremely fortunate that the federal government hasn’t taken the city on for its failure to implement such a plan,” Ferron told a newspaper reporter.102

As they had for decades, black community leaders also pressed the mayor to improve his record on minority hiring. For nearly a century, African Americans had viewed the public sector as an important source of relatively stable employment for black workers, and since the 1960s, they had also used government employment in an effort to help compensate their lack of formal power in the city. Both goals gained increased urgency during the late 1970s. Baltimore’s feminist organizations also became increasingly assertive on behalf of employment issues in the public sector. They demanded not only improvements in hiring and promotion but also attention to the workplace-related concerns of government employees, such as childcare. Pressure on the mayor finally compelled him to issue an affirmative action and equal opportunity plan at the end of December 1976. A few months later, the city took great pride in announcing the appointment of three white women to top posts in the Department of Health, long the exclusive terrain of men. Schaefer’s critics lauded the tardy appointments but hardly considered their task complete. “Pinpointing a need,” Ferron noted, “…is not the same as effectuating change.”103 The Afro American called on Schaefer to aggressively promote the new policy, community leaders kept a watchful eye on Schaefer and the CRC remained vigilant.104
At the same time, African-American and female employees gained an invaluable advocate in the Civil Service Commission. When Hilda Ford entered the Schaefer administration, she became the first African-American woman to head the city’s department of personnel. She quickly targeted for reversal the mayor’s poor record on minority and female hiring and promotion. On behalf of affirmative action goals, she instituted hiring procedures that expanded the pool of candidates from which supervisors could choose when filling vacancies. She was a particularly strong advocate on behalf of female. She undertook a massive study of municipal clerical jobs and instituted a reclassification plan that resulted in wage increases for many. In addition, Ford held management workshops for women to encourage them to seek advanced positions and she urged Schaefer to pursue calls from municipal employees for childcare services.105

AFSCME also took an increasingly active role on behalf of female employees. During the 1960s, AFSCME International had proudly staked a claim as an aggressive advocate of African-American workers and social justice. The International moved more slowly on women’s issues. During the early 1970s female staffers pushed the International to take note of the fact that its membership included hundreds of thousands of women and the union likely ranked fourth in the nation in the size of its female rank and file. Female AFSCME staffers pressed the union to take a stand opposing sex discrimination and to establish a committee to consider how AFSCME could best address women’s employment concerns. Shortly thereafter, the International began to encourage its locals to address issues such as maternity leave, child care and inequities in fringe-benefits packages during contract negotiations. The International also encouraged local unions to establish women’s committees and to consider the needs of women during
organizing drives. In addition, women in the International, and probably on the ground as well, reminded the union of its need to clean its own house. By the mid-1970s, few women held positions of authority in the International or local unions. Feminists in AFSCME urged the union to encourage women to seek a greater number of positions as stewards and officers and to include women on bargaining committees. Additionally, they pushed for more job training opportunities for women and for AFSCME leaders to work with state and local government officials to create job ladders that would create opportunities for low-wage workers.  

In Maryland, local AFSCME officials adopted a number of the recommendations coming from the International. In fact, Crofoot served as the vice chair on the International’s first women’s committee and gained a sense of women’s frustrations in the union first-hand. Among the most aggressive actions Maryland locals took on behalf of women were investments in training programs and the creation of job ladders. The issues were of particular significance to African-American women, who were concentrated at the bottom of most hierarchies. For hospital workers, AFSCME created training programs that enabled workers to advance incrementally from aides to nurses. In the Department of Social Services, union officials opened opportunities for promotion by helping to create ladders workers could use to climb out of dead-end jobs. Maryland’s AFSCME officials also fought to force the state and local governments to enforce equal pay legislation. Over time, many bureaucracies had created sex-specific job titles for workers who performed essentially the same function. The problem was particularly pervasive in the custodial field, and AFSCME’s leaders combated the inequity and also trained women to seek traditionally male positions because they offered more opportunity.
for advancement. Meanwhile, the number of women in the leadership of AFSCME locals and on bargaining committees also began to increase, especially in Baltimore. In fact, Ray Clarke considered the opportunities AFSCME created opening for women the union’s most important accomplishment. During the late 1970s, some female municipal workers in Baltimore clearly agreed that AFSCME had much to recommend it. In 1979, a group of African-American municipal nurses determined that the Maryland Nurses Association was providing them with less effective representation than AFSCME was providing the health aides with whom they worked. The nurses voted to change their affiliation.  

Ironically, pressure by public-sector workers, activists, unions and some within government bureaucracies mounted at the very moment that fiscal insecurity undermined the gains African Americans and women had made in government workforces. By 1976, public-sector unions could celebrate nearly a decade of sustained improvements in the conditions of government employment. A study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of the nation’s twenty-four largest cities found that municipal salaries had increased to equal those in the private sector. In addition, a BLS investigator noted, “Job security sometimes makes city work more attractive than private employment.” An article by an investigative journalist for The Evening Sun reported that the pensions of Maryland State workers were more generous than those available from some major corporations in the state.  

Growing conservatism in the nation and hostility to government workers led union officials to worry that they could not maintain the gains. During the late 1970s, contract negotiations with the city grew increasingly strained. AFSCME had long suspected Schaefer of being less than forthcoming when
accounting for the city’s resources prior to contract negotiations. Local AFSCME leaders brought in financial analysts from the International who were able to spot the slights of hand that Schaefer used to hide some resources. “We used to have to take everything the city said as true, but now we know that’s not always the case,” Crofoot reported. But even the close scrutiny could not produce the level of revenue needed to grant city workers wage hikes that kept pace with inflation. As an official of the Baltimore Teachers Union reflected, there was no reason to strike if the city legitimately did not have the money for raises. Unions did have a measure of success during the Carter years at winning non-economic benefits for workers. Despite opposition from the Maryland Chamber of Commerce, AFSCME won agency shop protections, and the union also convinced the city to respect seniority when making layoff decisions. The desire to prevent layoffs altogether took a toll on the wage demands unions could make. As a result, the contracts city unions negotiated infuriated some of the city’s notoriously aggressive employees, mostly sanitation workers and jail guards who Crofoot complained “would vote to strike even if we got them 100 per cent raises.” But other city workers, many of whom traveled to work each day passed boarded up factories and abandoned homes, were more resigned. “I’m not satisfied with the money we’re getting,” reported Marion Dicks, a city-school cafeteria worker, “but I’m willing to accept it not to see people laid off from work.”

In the end, layoffs proved inevitable. In mid-1977, Schaefer announced he was cutting 900 workers. The same year, the city hired a consulting firm to find ways to trim the cost of municipal pensions. Ferron worried about the toll layoffs would have on African Americans and women, who were often the “last hired and first fired.” None
could appreciate the irony more than Ford of the Civil Service Commission. Her office was charged with simultaneously enforcing the new affirmative action plan and creating the city’s layoff plan.\textsuperscript{114}

Increasingly during the late 1970s, human-services workers turned their attention to the security of their own jobs. Simultaneously, city residents grew more vocal in questioning the effectiveness of the trickle-down remedies to urban poverty the city had. Residents worried, and statistics later confirmed, that poverty was rising in many predominately African-American neighborhoods under Schaefer’s watch. Meanwhile, critics worried that the mayor’s downtown priorities were replacing factory jobs with low-wage service-sector positions. Downtown redevelopment did create higher-end service jobs. But by the end of the 1970s, city residents held less than forty percent of the professional and managerial jobs in Baltimore’s central business district, whereas suburban commuters made up about seventy-five percent of downtown workers earning between $25,000 and $50,000 a year. Although community activists had succeeded in getting the municipal government to grant hiring preferences to city residents in the public-sector, they could not exert the same influence over private companies. In 1981, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights confirmed many of the concerns of the mayor’s critics. After holding hearings in the city, the Commission concluded that “Minority economic development has not been a priority in Baltimore City.” The neglect accounted for the “comparatively minimal level of minority participation in the city’s redevelopment.”\textsuperscript{115}

To be sure, Schaefer remained intensely popular among black and white voters alike. Few in the city failed to notice the psychological boost the harbor’s facelift gave
residents. The downtown projects also bolstered the city’s tax-base, and revenue from the redeveloped area grew from $13.8 million in 1976 to $44.3 million in 1987. The city used some of the funds for neighborhood projects. What’s more, the development eventually created about 27,000 jobs, sixty percent of which were filled by African Americans. Commercial redevelopment might have won the city even more rewards had the mayor pursued some of the concessions officials won from developers in other cities. In San Francisco, officials required contributions for housing, day care and transportation from those developing office spaces larger than 50,000 square feet. Boston officials required downtown developers to contribute to housing initiatives and to hire local workers, and the Chicago city government also made efforts to link center city and neighborhood redevelopment. Schaefer’s shadow government had foreclosed the possibility that Baltimore’s City Council and activists could broker similar deals. Nevertheless, even some who had originally opposed the harbor mall had to admit the venture, which attracted 18 million visitors in 1981—even more than Disneyland—was a commercial success.116

Yet neglect of antipoverty efforts took a serious toll on the city. Increasingly Schaefer’s critics argued that downtown revitalization was creating “two Baltimores—one black and poor, the other white and largely well off.”117 The claim was not entirely accurate. Baltimore had sizable African-American working- and middle-class populations. But at the bottom of the economic ladder, race and class were becoming indistinguishable. And, as the mayor’s critics noted, trickle-down remedies to urban poverty offered little to reverse the problem. As a result, many in the city shared the doubts of Felicia Willett, a public high school student (and a novice on the typewriter), 281
who wrote to the mayor with her concerns in 1979. “I would like to know why,” she asked, “when the city wanted to build the project for the Inner Harbor [sic], the city managed to find a few million dollars for it. There are people who are straving, [sic.] living in [sic.] homes without heat, and people living in homes with [more] roaches and rats than the number of people living in the house. Mr. Mayor, I know the Harbor is important to the growth of the city but the people should also be considered.”

The mayor replied to Willett as he did to the many others who expressed similar frustrations. Schaefer argued that downtown redevelopment reflected not necessarily his personal policy preference but the efforts of entrepreneurs and the will of officials in Annapolis and Washington, D.C.. “Many of the improvements in the Inner Harbor are not the result of City funds,” the mayor explained. “A very large percentage of the monies spent is the result of private investments and the City’s ability to successfully lobby for specific state and federal grants, that were in many incidents, earmarked to assist in the development of the kinds of improvements realized in the harbor.” The mayor’s defense was not completely true. His enthusiasm for downtown commercial revitalization predated the availability of intergovernmental revenue for the ventures. During the early 1970s, Nixon’s New Federalism had concentrated in his hands the power to decide how the city dispersed its revenue. The mayor had helped Baltimore keep an antipoverty agency open, during a period of deep cuts in federal spending. But he had not adopted the approach to arresting urban decline advocated by the city’s human-services workers. Instead he championed redevelopment—and then won funds for his projects from the state and federal governments.
But Schaefer’s defense also had merit. During the second half of the twentieth century, the nation’s struggling cities had grown increasingly dependent on intergovernmental sources of aid. During the 1960s, much of that aid came as grants from Democrats to fight poverty. With that funding, the city fought poverty, and although many did so enthusiastically, the mandate came from Washington. During the 1970s, however, U.S. presidents adopted macroeconomic policies intended not just to resuscitate the domestic economy but also to revive the faltering status of the United States in the global economy. The neoliberal policies they imposed—the elimination of capital controls and monetarist approaches to fighting inflation—undermined the already limited economic competitiveness of struggling American cities, exacerbating urban poverty. In addition, the macroeconomic policies precluded presidents from redistributing significant quantities of national wealth to poor cities. Public opinion made the decision to abandon the strategies easier than it might otherwise have been. Within that context, Schaefer faced few options on how to revive Baltimore. The city was hardly in a position to forge its own path independent of outside aid. When Washington’s Democrats told Schaefer to line up investors for economic revitalization grants, he did. And although he embraced the effort as enthusiastically as Baltimore’s antipoverty warriors had theirs, the mandate had again come from Washington.¹²⁰

Increasingly, however, it became apparent that the Democrats’ trickle-down policies were an inadequate substitute for their antipoverty efforts. The Party’s abdication of its commitments to wealth redistribution and a generous welfare state left poor urban Americans without an advocate in national politics. And efforts by organizations like the NUL and AFSCME had failed to reverse the change. Thus it was
not surprising that on the same day that Schaefer took his acclaimed dip with the seals at the city’s new harbor-front aquarium, an opinion piece in the *Evening Sun* by a former public-school counselor expressed a view not unlike Willet’s. Certainly Baltimore’s downtown renaissance was a boon to the city plagued by decades of deindustrialization, depopulation and decline. “But can it not be said that the enormous success of Harborplace is diminished by the poverty on its fringes?”121
“The reactions in Maryland are predictable: Reagan’s crushing defeat of Carter draws cheers in the suburbs and moans in the city,” read a headline in a Baltimore newspaper on November 11, 1980. Although the mayor circumspectly noted that he was “very disappointed,” in sections of the city the moans were accompanied by shudders of fear. During the Carter years, Baltimore had ranked fourth in the nation in winning redevelopment funds from Washington, D.C. Although Carter had pushed city officials to find trickle-down solutions to urban poverty and had cut overall federal aid to cities, Democrats in the capitol had nonetheless largely funded Baltimore’s acclaimed renaissance. Few expected the city to reap the same benefits from Ronald Reagan’s administration. The new president himself had given city officials clear cause for worry during a presidential debate. “I think one of the problems today with the cities is federal aid,” the Republican challenger had charged, rehearsing logic about the detrimental consequences of “handouts” he would apply to recipients of welfare. In Baltimore, where many believed that that one of the biggest problems the city faced was insufficient
rather than too much federal aid, Reagan’s assertion had not gone over well. City officials worried about the potential loss of redevelopment dollars, and others expressed concern about the potential consequences of the new president’s policies on poor residents. Phyllis Allen, a resident of east Baltimore, feared the effects Reaganomics would have on African Americans, who by 1980 made up fifty-five percent of the city’s population. “I think Reagan is going to be against black people,” she explained to a newspaper reporter after the election. “He’s going to cut out a lot of funding for social welfare programs. He was talking about taking away medical assistance from poor people. And when people get sick, how are they going to pay the bills?”

The concerns of city officials and residents proved prescient. The Reagan administration did drastically reduce the supply of federal aid to cities both for redevelopment efforts and social welfare programs. The president’s policies had devastating consequences in Baltimore, particularly for African Americans. Despite the profound impact of Reaganomics on the nation’s struggling cities, however, the Republican president’s macroeconomic and urban policies have received limited attention from scholars who study the urban crisis. In fact, it was during the Reagan years that social scientist William Julius Wilson won great acclaim for his diagnosis of urban problems that ignored political decision-making entirely and focused instead on structural changes in the national economy. Wilson attributed the urban crisis to ongoing deindustrialization, which he argued robbed black men of unionized factory jobs. His account of the urban crisis, which he derived from a study of Chicago, quickly attracted enthusiasts among both social scientists and historians who used his narrative to explain high levels of poverty in other cities.\(^2\)
While deindustrialization had certainly transformed much of the nation’s old industrial core and contributed significantly to urban joblessness, a narrow focus on factories and male unemployment has led scholars to overlook a second late twentieth-century transformation of urban economies that plunged cities into the most acute phase of the urban crisis. In postwar urban America, the public sector had become a critical source of jobs to black workers, especially women. In Baltimore, by 1980 nearly forty percent of employed black women and close to thirty percent of employed black men held government posts. Reagan’s neoliberal macroeconomic policies wrecked havoc on the public sector, destabilizing a source of employment—and of influence over public policy—of vital importance to the economic health of black communities. The concentration of federal-level budget cuts in health, education and welfare hit hardest those agencies in which African-American women had made the most impressive job gains. And Reagan’s macroeconomic agenda had an additional gendered consequence. In addition, reductions in funding for social-welfare programs and public services disproportionately impacted women, who bore gendered responsibilities for family caretaking. Women were forced to provide themselves or find alternative sources of services that had been available from the state. Neoliberalism, in other words, required that women absorb into the domestic sphere—and provide without compensation—services the government had earlier paid for and identified as economic activity. The savings to tax-payers were shifted up the economic ladder. But because women, particularly those with low incomes, could not possibly fully compensate for the absence of public services, the urban crisis deepened.
Carter’s economic policies during his last years in office paved the way for the Reagan revolution. In 1981, the incoming Republican administration did not struggle as Carter had while weighing the interests of the needy against the needs of the interests; the new administration’s allegiance to the wealthy was never in doubt. Like his predecessors during the 1970s, Reagan worried that the United States had lost its position of global dominance. To reassert American hegemony and restore the nation to the position of global dominance it had held prior to the Vietnam War, Reagan set several major priorities. He intended to revive the American empire by bolstering the strength of the U.S. military. He also aimed to continue his predecessors’ efforts to formulate new rules for the global economy that advantaged the United States. And he was determined to create a domestic economy that enhanced the ability of U.S. corporations, especially lending and financial institutions, to thrive at home and compete successfully abroad. To achieve his objectives, Reagan wholeheartedly endorsed the macroeconomic remedies advanced by conservative economists such as Milton Friedman and his associates at the University of Chicago. In fact, Reagan offered Friedman to join his administration. Although the economist declined, his ideas and those of his conservative colleagues had a profound influence over U.S. macroeconomic policy during the 1980s. Although Nixon had also sought Friedman’s counsel, and Carter had adopted conservative economic policies, in the Reagan White House neoliberal economic ideas became the foundation of U.S. public policy.\textsuperscript{5}
The Reagan administration pursued multiple strategies to institutionalize neoliberalism as the theory governing the rules of the global economy. Although it occasionally supported protectionist measures intended to shield U.S. industries from foreign competition, the administration aggressively promoted free markets and free trade. Reagan favored reducing the regulatory role of governments and international bodies in economic affairs. The administration was not above using coercion to achieve its goals. During the 1970s, even as distressed American cities had struggled to secure credit for capital projects, many international bankers based in the U.S. lent liberally to developing nations. Oil shocks and recession late in the decade had devastating consequences worldwide but particularly in poor countries. International commodity prices plummeted as interest rates rose, making it difficult for developing nations to meet their debt obligations. By 1980, the combined deficit of non-oil producing developing countries reached $86 billion, and two-thirds of the nations of Latin American and Africa faced staggering debt. As in 1970, New York City, where bankers used the city’s economic vulnerability to impose fiscal austerity, advocates of neoliberalism pressed their advantage over developing nations during the 1980s. Unwilling to see American bankers take a hit for what in many cases had been injudicious loans, the Reagan administration used the influence of the United States in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and later also the World Bank, to compel developing nations to reorganize their economies along neoliberal lines. The international financial institutions brokered structural adjustment programs that enabled poor countries to restructure their debt in exchange for adopting a combination of policies that included liberalizing their trade policies, stabilizing their currencies and cutting domestic spending.\textsuperscript{6}
Reagan pursued domestically many of the same macroeconomic policies he compelled developing nations to follow. He sanctioned the continuation of the Federal Reserve’s tight monetary policy even though it catapulted the unemployment rate in the country into double digits. Reagan also advocated supply-side tax cuts and deregulation. To balance the cuts, the president pledged to shrink the size of the government, which he argued had become intrusive, bloated and inefficient. He also proposed reducing federal spending on social welfare programs. His administration justified the cuts by arguing that wealth redistribution had engendered a culture of poverty and dependency among the nation’s needy citizens, a contention his white-backlash supporters found convincing.7

Reagan’s urban policies fit neatly into his macroeconomic agenda. Shortly after the new president assumed office, the Evening Sun noted, “It is clear that the way in which the Reagan administration will address [urban poverty problems is]…not with direct federal grants for urban renewal, model cities, neighborhood grants and all the Great Society programs, but with maximum utilization of the private sector.”8 This approach seemed likely to make even Carter’s public-private partnership programs appear progressive by comparison. Although Carter had advocated trickle-down approaches, his administration also funded grants intended to attract business to impoverished cities. In contrast, the Reagan administration argued that even subsidies to private investors distorted market forces. As The President’s National Urban Policy Report argued, “These programs had the unintended effect of channeling credit to less competitive firms. The private market is more efficient than Federal program administrators in allocating dollars among alternative uses.”9 The Reagan administration proposed that cities largely go it alone in their redevelopment efforts. “While the Federal
Government concentrates on establishing the conditions for increasing rates of growth in the gross national product, State and local governments will find it is in their interests to concentrate on increasing their attractiveness to potential investors, residents and visitors,” Reagan’s urban policy report concluded. Accordingly, the president’s budget director David Stockman aimed to eliminate general revenue sharing (GRS), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and even Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG).

Reagan’s policy prescriptions met with considerable opposition from civil rights organizations, labor leaders and others concerned about the plight of struggling cities. Among the most active were those who had also fought the resurgence of corporate power in the United States during the late 1970s and Carter’s turn to the right. The National Urban League (NUL) was especially vocal among civil rights groups in challenging the new president’s proposals. In keeping with its mission, the NUL focused primarily on the effects federal policies were likely to have on urban African Americans. The leadership of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) also played a major role in trying to forestall Reaganomics. The new administration’s efforts to redefine the role of government threatened both union members and the vital public services they provided their communities. Aggressively joining Reagan’s opponents during the early years of the administration was an unexpected figure. Baltimore’s mayor William Donald Schaefer distinguished himself among urban elected officials in the nation in challenging Reaganomics’ effects on struggling cities. In 1981, where The Washington Post described him as “stalk[ing] the halls of the U.S. Capitol, pleading with one congressional committee after another to
reject proposed federal cuts in a wide range of urban programs.”12 During his visits to the Capitol, Schaefer vociferously championed those Carter initiatives that had funded Baltimore’s recent facelift. But he also attempted to portray the human face of urban life and the toll cuts in social welfare spending would have on people in his city. Although many other organizations and individuals also actively opposed Reaganomics, collectively the NUL, AFSCME and Schaefer identified the most worrisome likely consequences of the new president’s agenda on the nation’s struggling cities.

Vernon Jordan and the NUL combated Reaganomics in congressional testimony and other public speeches as well as in print. Their assessment of the contradictory role the federal government had historically played in older American cities—and the contribution Reagan’s policies were likely to make to that legacy—was particularly astute. Decades of federal policies had contributed significantly to undermining the economic viability of the nation’s older cities, Jordan argued. Most significantly, postwar government housing programs and policies that enhanced the competitiveness of suburban and Sunbelt regions had promoted the out-migration of people and jobs from cities.13 During the 1960s, however, the federal government had also funded efforts that helped to alleviate urban poverty. “Two-thirds of the black underclass were lifted from poverty between 1967 and 1975, primarily as a result of government programs,” Maudine Cooper, the vice president of the NUL argued in 1981.14 Given the federal government’s mixed record in urban America, Reaganomics struck NUL leaders as particularly cruel. A bipartisan report by the Joint Economic Committee predicted that the president’s first budget request was likely to stimulate business activity in areas already experiencing growth. What’s more, the report’s authors explained, “Tax proposals to promote
investment will generally reinforce current regional and urban growth trends, since they, on balance, favor new investment over investment in older structures.”

Given the geographic biases his economic policies reinforced, the president’s free-market rhetoric struck NUL leaders as duplicitous. Worse, the Reagan administration also proposed cutting the social welfare programs that helped alleviate the urban poverty the federal government had a hand in creating. As a result, Cooper argued, “Present federal efforts may construct a revolving door for impoverished people seeking access to this nation’s economic mainstream.”

The new president method for achieving reductions in federal funding for social welfare programs also alarmed the NUL leadership. Richard Nixon had attempted to consolidate into block grants the categorical grants the federal government allotted to states, localities and public agencies. Nixon had introduced block grants in an effort to reduce congressional oversight over the use of federal revenue. Reagan advocated his own iteration of Nixon’s New Federalism, which differed from his predecessor’s in two important ways. First, the president argued that the consolidation of categorical grants into block grants justified significant spending reductions because administration costs would be reduced. Second, while Congress and other pressure groups had compelled Nixon to send the bulk of intergovernmental aid to localities, Reagan intended to direct it to state governments. The revival of states’ rights alarmed the leaders of the NUL, who were painfully aware of state officials’ historic indifference to the problems of African Americans. To counter Reaganomics, the NUL advocated an alternative economic strategy for eliminating the need for social welfare programs. “…The only way, and it cannot be stressed too strongly—the only way—to limit federal social programs is to
implement full employment with jobs for all who want to work,” Jordan proposed. “To suppose that simply unshackling the private sector is going to create jobs for all is a myth. The federal government will still have to shape its tax and regulatory policies in a way that encourages job creation where it is most needed, and not, as at present, in a way that drains jobs from our industrial heartlands to other regions or other countries.”

AFSCME leaders offered an equally biting critique of Reaganomics. Following the 1980 election, they admitted with dismay that many union voters had contributed to Reagan’s presidential victory. Simultaneously, they announced “a multi-pronged campaign to save public services and jobs from President Reagan’s budgetary butcher knife.” The union was an important organizer of Solidarity Day, a march on Washington, D.C. in 1981 to oppose Reagan’s agenda that attracted over a quarter of a million protestors. The union also sent lobbyists to visit Congress members, participated in coalitions fighting Reagan’s agenda, and rallied members to vigorously protest the new president’s policies. AFSCME leaders also voiced their concerns in congressional testimony, during speeches and television interviews, and in print and film. As frequently as possible, they warned the public of the perils of Reaganomics. Reagan’s victory, the union insisted, represented the triumph of corporate interests over public policy. Rather than an entity that served the people, AFSCME secretary/treasurer William Lucy warned, the president’s backers would turn the government into a power protecting the privileges of elites. Jerry Wurf, the union’s president, argued, “corporate America, the new masters of the federal government,” was demanding reductions in spending on social programs to reduce its tax burden. But Wurf also protested, “Tax
breaks for the rich do little to create jobs. The money just ends up in the pockets of the wealthy like it always has in the past.”21 The union’s legislative director, Joe Beeman, predicted the “misery index will hit unprecedented heights”22

Public-sector workers were among the groups who would pay the highest price for the reassertion of corporate power, AFSCME leaders asserted. “You don’t need a calculator to figure out why the federal budget is so important to AFSCME members. A federal budget that cuts aid to state and local governments spells disaster for us and public services everywhere,” AFSCME’s assistant public policy director Marcia Caprio explained.23 Those who used public services would suffer as well, with the highest price paid by the most vulnerable, many of them women. As Lucy explained, “Many would lose their jobs and others on unemployment and welfare programs would see their already meager benefits slashed or wiped out.” Proposed cuts to spending on the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), which provided federal funds for jobs and job training, would also disproportionately impact women, many of whom were heads of households. Those cuts, along with reductions of spending on daycare programs, “[spell] disaster for thousands of women who for a brief time could see a glimmer of hope.”24

What’s more, union officials worried, the public-sector workers most likely to lose their jobs were often staunch advocates for the poor. In an article in The Public Employee, AFSCME’s monthly newspaper, the union’s staff challenged the accuracy of Reagan’s constant refrain that he championed “family values.” “In our opinion, the people really supporting the family have been the workers—especially AFSCME members—who see the family firsthand: AFSCME workers who process unemployment
forms, who provide day care, who counsel the distressed and nurse the ill. AFSMCE members who, on their own, collect food for the hungry, contribute money for heating bills, make a home for neglected and abused children, give of their time without making cruel judgments,” the papers staff countered. In 1982, the union recommended Congress adopt a stimulus plan to jump start the economy. The union advocated increased government spending on public health, transportation and employment and training. Reagan rejected the proposals.

Mayor Schaefer offered a perspective from the trenches. He knew intimately of Baltimore’s dire need for intergovernmental revenue. During the early 1980s, while Baltimore was home to seventeen percent of Maryland’s population, it housed sixty percent of the state’s poor. By comparison, fifteen percent of the state’s population—but only five percent of Maryland’s poor—resided in neighboring Baltimore County. The concentration of poor people in Baltimore meant that the city yielded little in comparison to nearby suburbs on the piggyback income tax Maryland law permitted county-level or equivalent governments to assess. During the early 1980s, Baltimore collected $99 per person from its income tax revenue while Baltimore County coffers grew by $179 per person. Minimal changes to property tax rates also produced significantly different revenue streams. A one-cent tax-hike in Baltimore earned the city sixty-eight cents per person, while the same rate increase in Baltimore County’s produced double the city’s return.

Yet Baltimore had serious need for tax dollars. The city’s shrinking population and industrial base had not diminished the city’s need for costly municipal services. Although the total number of city residents had declined since the end of World War II,
Baltimore’s acreage had not. Miles of sidewalks and thousands of streetlights still required repairs even if fewer people roamed the city. As an older city, many of the rooms of Baltimore’s houses were coated in lead paint, which was costly to remove. Lead poisoning required expensive treatments even when patients could not pay. The disease also caused learning difficulties the city’s public school system had to address. Old houses also meant old wiring, which could keep the fire department busier than it might be protecting newer homes. Suburban commuters also cost the city money in road maintenance and traffic planning. High numbers of residents living in poverty created demand for expensive municipal services as well. Homelessness, hunger and addiction, for example, gave rise to the need for programs in less demand in wealthier jurisdictions. In other words, the city’s costly urban problems persisted even as its population declined.28

During his trips to Washington during the early 1980s, Schaefer tried to describe conditions in his city. It was not an easy job. “It is not very nice for me to come over to tell you about the problems of Baltimore,” Schaefer confessed to the Joint Economic Committee. “We are, in a way, a very proud city. We’re proud of what we’ve been able to accomplish with federal help, with state help, and with our own initiative. So now I continually come over in a way on the defensive to tell you the difficulties that we’re having.”29 Hardly a radical, Schaefer believed firmly in seeking private-sector solutions to urban problems, as his enthusiasm for the city’s harbor and downtown redevelopment programs demonstrated. Yet he also argued that Baltimore’s business community could
not compensate for federal obligations to cities. The federal government, he told committee after committee, had to maintain its commitment to both poor cities and people.\textsuperscript{30}

Much of that commitment had to come in the form of targeted assistance to cities, the mayor argued repeatedly. The federal government had to set aside funds specifically for distressed cities and send the aid directly to urban officials. Within weeks of Reagan's arrival in the White House, Schaefer had written the new president in defense of the UDAG grants, which he pointedly reminded the conservative leader stimulated private investment in cities. Many policy makers assumed that UDAGs would be safe from Reagan budget cuts because, as one federal administrator commented, “It’s such a Republican-type program.”\textsuperscript{31} But Schaefer worried. In fact, some in Reagan’s administration understood Baltimore as the poster child of liberal federal urban policies. Richard Williamson, the assistant to the president for intergovernmental affairs, said that Schaefer had received so much money from the Carter administration that “Baltimore is about to sink into the [Chesapeake] bay.”\textsuperscript{32}

Schaefer desperately feared the loss of the funding. Overall cuts in federal spending, the mayor anticipated, would lead cities to rely even more than they already did on private-sector growth. As it was, the governments of Baltimore and Maryland offered potential investors considerable tax relief. It was hard to imagine what additional incentives could be granted were the city to lose the lure of UDAGs. Schaefer was keenly aware of the disadvantages Baltimore would continue to face in the global, free-trade market economy that Reagan's policies fostered. Corporations could locale-shop until landing an incentive package most to their liking. Baltimore needed UDAGs to give
it an edge over wealthier jurisdictions. As the mayor explained, “If you were going to locate an industry, would you come to Baltimore where all the problems are or would you go to an area where there are very few problems? And that’s something that really concerns me. Where would you locate?”

Schaefer did not limit his testimony to defenses of UDAGs and other economic development aid. He also alerted Congress to the potential impact of federal reductions in welfare spending. He was alarmed that Reagan’s version of New Federalism would send intergovernmental resources to state rather than local governments. Schaefer anticipated that Baltimore would not do well fighting for resources in Maryland’s state house. Baltimore could effectively solve its problems if assisted with federal resources and provided them directly, he told the Joint Economic Committee. “But when the money is pulled away and when the state really doesn’t understand the plight of a city like ours and where I go down [to Annapolis] and I tell them ‘the poor,’ and the answer is, ‘They’re your poor.’ Well, they’re not my poor. I think they are everyone’s poor, and I think we must take some cognizance of the fact that the city where the poor are located need special consideration. I don’t want to preach but I get just a little concerned about what is happening in our cities.”

Schaefer worried about Reagan’s New Federalism not only because it would direct resources to state officials but also because the president intended to reduce overall funding of the grants in aid. The Reagan administration had proposed consolidating twenty-six health-related grants into two block grants, arguing that the reconfiguration would lower administrative costs and justified a funding cut of twenty-five percent. Schaefer disagreed. In Baltimore, he explained, a twenty-five percent reduction in
funding would result in “1,100 fewer youth, 2,900 adults and 500 drinking drivers losing
access to alcohol programs; 2,500 people not being served by mental health programs;
600 pregnant adults and 600 pregnant teenagers not receiving maternal and infant care
(increasing infant mortality); 15,000 fewer code enforcers for rat eradication programs;
3,600 students who won’t be immunized; and 6,000 fewer children than in the past tested
for lead poisoning.” In other words, the mayor argued, “The assurance that a 25%
reduction of federal expenditures will not hurt local delivery units is simplistic and
uncritical.” What’s more, the mayor worried, the consolidation of twenty-six
categorical grants into two block grants could eliminate funding for important health
programs. A victory by the advocates of one type of health program would reduce
funding for an unrelated yet also vital program. Those defending critical health programs
with small constituencies—such as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome—might lose out
entirely.

Schaefer’s battle against Reagan’s budget ax won him accolades in the city even
from those sometimes critical of his local policies. John B. Ferron, the African-American
Director of the city’s Community Relations Commission, who had long been suspicious
of the mayor’s commitment to affirmative action, was among those who offered praise.
“Though we have occasionally disagreed on some matters in the past…my primary
purpose for writing, Mr. Mayor, is to share with you my intensified respect and
admiration for you as the top executive in the City of Baltimore…especially in view of
the fact that you appear to be the one person on the national level who has the courage to
challenge the new order of priorities set by the National Administration.”

Many others in the city, including one woman who sent a card in the shape of a Christian cross, inundated the mayor with their thanks.

Meanwhile, human-services workers mounted their own defense of their agencies and the services they provided. Although their influence over municipal public policy had declined since the mid-1970s, they were not willing to have the Reagan administration to topple the welfare state without a fight. Although some activists in the city continued to mourn the passing of the passion of the 1960s, responses to Reaganomics demonstrated that the spirit of rebellion remained entrenched in the city’s human-services. To be sure, the protests of the 1980s did not equal those of the 1960s; under-funded and understaffed welfare agencies employed many battle-wearyed workers; the reassertion of corporate power over public policy and the shift of the nation’s political discourse to the right had also taken a toll on morale in government welfare offices and among service recipients. Nevertheless, in response to Reaganomics, service workers across city agencies pulled out tattered playbooks that had provided many of the protest strategies used during the 1960s and early 1970s.

Workers at the Urban Services Agency (USA), the product of the 1974 merger of the Community Action Agency and the Model Cities program, were among the municipal employees who engaged in protest. By the early 1980s, USA was a shadow of the aggressive antipoverty agencies from which it emerged. Still, some of its employees and members of its board had been associated with the city’s War on Poverty at its start. Elva Edwards, an African-American woman who served as the agency’s assistant director had started her career with Model Cities by canvassing the city’s poor neighborhoods seeking
ideas for antipoverty programming. In response to Reaganomics, she and other antipoverty warriors mobilized city residents to engage in political activism. They circulated a fact sheet to service recipients and other allies detailing the successes of the “social programs of the sixties and seventies.” They explained that the “Reagan administration will end 40 programs, including the Community Services Administration which funds CAA, the Legal Services Corporation which funds Legal Aid, and low-Income Energy assistance which provides fuel assistance. They will take funds proposed for these and reduce the total by 20-25% and send this amount to the states in the form of block grants. These reductions in many program levels and elimination of others will impact the heaviest on the poor, the elderly and minorities, those already suffering the most from inflation and unemployment.” To counter the attack, the USA staff rallied community residents to join them in opposition to Reaganomics.

Many of the employees of the city’s and state’s other human services agencies also spoke out in opposition of Reaganomics. Samuel Banks, the African American coordinator of social studies in the Baltimore City Public Schools, wrote an opinion piece for The Evening Sun in which he argued, “Each day, it becomes painfully evident that Baltimore’s black majority and the poor will have to coalesce for their mutual survival. No salvation or relief is to be found in President Reagan’s supply-side economics or his much heralded New Federalism.” Lawrence Worthington, an African-American job-service counselor with the state, worried about imminent staff reductions in his department. Given alarming rates of unemployment, especially in Baltimore, he failed to see the logic of reducing the number of workers whose job it was to help people find work. Laura Moseley, an African-American eligibility supervisor for the state of
Maryland and an AFSCME officer, was also a Reagan critic. She worked in the income maintenance program of the Department of Human Resources, the state’s welfare agency. There, she saw first-hand the devastating consequences the president’s policies had on families in Baltimore. “There was a time when only the down-and-out and destitute turned to public assistance. Now we’re seeing people who’ve been working for the past 15 to 20 years but, due to Reaganomics, budget cuts, and layoffs, are joining the welfare rolls,” she explained. “These people need money to keep a roof over their heads, food in their stomachs, and clothes on their backs—just the bare necessities to keep body and soul together.”

Ruth Massinga, the African-American director of the state’s social services program who in 1983 became the director of Maryland’s Department of Human Resources, echoed the concerns about budget cuts. She expressed particular ire in regards to Reagan’s assertion that the consolidation of categorical into block grants justified spending reductions. “It is Reagan mythology that 25 percent [of costs] is due to administrative overhead. None of us have administrative fat. It makes a pretty speech, but in reality, we are going to hurt and hurt badly.”

Kalman R. Hettleman, who preceded Massinga as the director of the Department of Human Resources, put matters more starkly. “This is not only an economic but an ideological assault on every social welfare program in the state,” he argued.

Human service workers did more than worry about budget cuts. To combat Reaganomics they joined forces with the members of the boards of their agencies, workers in private welfare agencies, welfare rights organizations, and other service recipients. Recalling a strategy of the civil rights movement, they held a mass meeting in 1981. At the gathering they denounced Reaganomics and debated their course of action.
Ultimately, two strategies emerged. Public-sector workers and their allies protested against Reaganomics. They met with their congressional representatives, wrote angry letters, testified in defense of welfare spending, implored state officials to compensate for federal funding cuts, attempted to politicize service recipients, and also joined local, state and national campaigns against Reagan’s policies. Simultaneously, they worked to help mitigate the blow of cuts on service recipients. “Cuts of this magnitude will require radical changes in the service delivery system,” the newsletter of the Department of Human Resources reported in 1981.46 In response, government human-services workers worked within and across public and private agencies and with clients to coordinate programming reorganization. The Department of Human Resources created a checklist for AFDC recipients to use to determine if they would be impacted by federal cuts. Public and private welfare workers also tried to consider the state’s entire landscape of social services when determining where to make cuts, struggling to limit service reductions to programs available from charities and other non-profit organizations.47

The protest failed to influence the president’s agenda. Although Democrats in Congress prevented the administration from winning all of the draconian welfare cuts it proposed, changes in eligibility requirements spelled disaster for many families, especially among the working poor. Congress did not prevented as effectively the president’s assault on intergovernmental aid, which decreased by thirty-eight percent during the 1980s. In 1982, Reagan eliminated over 100 categorical grants by combining close to sixty programs into nine block grants and cutting others entirely. Simultaneously, the administration reduced funding for and federal oversight over the use of the funds. Congress also failed to repel Reagan’s reduction of targeted aid to cities.
Programs on which urban communities had come to depend took a particular hit. The administration reduced funding by twenty percent Community Development Block Grants. In 1986, it discontinued General Revenue Sharing. And in 1988, the administration finally succeeded in eliminating the UDAG program. Overall, between 1981 and 1984, federal aid to cities fell by almost twenty percent. By 1989, it had dropped by an additional fourteen percent.  

In Baltimore, Reaganomics struck a blow to a city already mired in problems. The gradual undermining of the War on Poverty and related programs had already begun to reverse the achievements of anti-poverty efforts of the 1960s and early 1970s. By the early 1980s, Baltimore had the highest poverty rate among frostbite cities of comparable size, with twenty-three percent of city residents living in poverty. To be sure, deindustrialization had also taken a huge toll on the city, and on African Americans in particular. Decades-long battles to improve black workers’ access to jobs at all skill levels in the industrial sector reaped more than piecemeal rewards during the mid-1970s. But those victories occurred as deindustrialization accelerated. Between 1970 and 1984, Baltimore lost 73,000 entry-level jobs, many of which had been in factories. Layoffs immediately imperiled the security of some black families, and the overall job losses dimmed the prospects of many more. Meanwhile, critics continued to charge that Schaefer’s trickle-down downtown redevelopment efforts were creating two Baltimores. As Henry Koellein, Jr., the president of the Metropolitan Council of the AFL-CIO, concluded, “We just can’t make it on fast food and hotels…I think it’s approaching crisis proportions, because you can’t replace 2000 steel workers and 2000 shipyard workers,
who are making $8, $10, $12 an hour with 2000 or 4000 fast food, hotel, or restaurant employees, or office employees, who are making minimum wage to $5 an hour, because your tax base is eroding.”

Reagan’s macroeconomic and urban policies considerably worsened condition in Baltimore. In particular, they removed power over the municipal agenda from the control of city residents, especially African Americans and those with low incomes. During the 1960s, the federal government had attempted to empower both groups through the War on Poverty’s community-participation mandates. Richard Nixon had rescinded the federal government’s commitment to community participation and helped reverse the trend towards democratic decision-making in Baltimore. Jimmy Carter had also reduced the influence city residents had over local public policy. Reagan’s urban policies further undermined the ability of Baltimore residents to determine municipal policy. Important budgetary decisions that affected the city’s future would be made not in City Hall but in the state house in Annapolis. As the editors of The Afro American explained, Reagan shifted resources to the states regardless of the fact “that the states proved themselves inefficient and unfair in operating those programs in the past.”

The shift in the method by which the federal government distributed intergovernmental aid occurred at a moment when Baltimore was already struggling to defend itself in Maryland’s state house. Some Maryland suburbanites, inspired by the 1978 California tax revolt, favored imposing tax caps to limit government spending. Worried Baltimore officials calculated that, were a measure like California’s Proposition 13 to pass in Maryland, the city would lose close to $137 million in revenue. Thus they kept close tabs on tax initiatives not only on the state but also on the county level. They
were particularly attentive to events in Maryland’s growing Washington, D.C. suburbs, whose voters were quickly becoming the heavy-weights in state politics. Ultimately, a tax-cap initiative did pass in Prince George’s County, just outside of the nation’s capital. Voters in neighboring Montgomery County defeated a similar measure, however, and fortunately for Baltimore, tax-revolt fever did not become contagious in Maryland.  

Nevertheless, the task of Baltimore’s delegation to the state house remained daunting. The representatives had to counter a white backlash against welfare expenditures as well as suburban and rural suspicion of urban profligacy. During the 1970s, under Schaefer’s crafty stewardship, Baltimore had won much of what it requested from the state. At the end of the decade, however, the goodwill of representatives from non-urban jurisdictions had begun to wear thin. A Montgomery County representative eventually dubbed Baltimore “the city of greed.” Although their jurisdictions had been growing in population for some time, it was only during the early 1980s that officials from the D.C. suburbs finally began to appreciate their ability to challenge legislation from the city. The Sun acknowledged the shift warily in an article that warned Baltimore residents that Montgomery County, for one, was “shed[ding] its weakling image in state politics” and “get[ting] rid of [its] ‘kick me’ sign.” To counter hostility towards the city from officials from throughout the state, Janet Hoffman, the city’s chief lobbyist in Annapolis, organized tours of Baltimore for state legislators. Elected officials enjoyed a harbor cruise, which provided them with a stunning view of the city’s new aquarium, Harborplace mall, Hyatt Regency hotel, and other new waterfront attractions. The delegation also visited a city housing project. Having shown
the legislators both the productive uses to which the city put intergovernmental funding and the severe need for antipoverty relief in the city, Baltimore officials hoped for sympathy votes in Annapolis.\textsuperscript{54}

The need for sympathy intensified in 1983. Because of depopulation, the size of the delegation Baltimore sent to Annapolis had shrunk over the preceding decades. During the early 1980s, state-level reapportionment further reduced the number of elected officials city residents could send to the state house. In 1983, Baltimore residents voted into office six fewer delegates and three fewer senators than they had in the previous election. A worried city paper described the congressional delegation as “the weakest in recent memory.”\textsuperscript{55} The delegates and senators shouldered the weighty responsibility of defending Baltimore’s need for a disproportionate share of the state’s resources. Because Reagan’s New Federalism directed most intergovernmental aid to states rather than localities, and because overall federal funding was down, the city’s dependency on its small delegation was tremendous. Baltimore’s status in Annapolis was not entirely bleak; the likelihood that Schaefer would win the state’s next governor’s race bolstered the city’s prospects. Nevertheless, from the perspective of city residents, municipal public-policy making hardly seemed a local affair.

Reaganomics had a second major consequence in Baltimore. Between 1981 and 1986, the city’s grant revenue fell from $220 million to $124 million. Additional reductions in intergovernmental funding cut even more deeply. Overall, according to the Johns Hopkins Center for Metropolitan Planning and Research, the city lost $569 million in revenue for its 1982, 1983 and 1984 budgets. In a city in which half the population received some type of welfare benefit, and only a third earned enough to pay taxes, the
cuts were devastating. Baltimore’s elected officials anticipated that a property tax increase to raise revenue would only accelerate the movement of tax-paying residents out of the city. To compensate for lost revenue without significantly altering the property tax, city officials raised rates for city services. Tuition went up at the community college and the city even tried to raise funds by increasing parking-meter fees. Ultimately the city had no option but to eliminate jobs. Between 1980 and 1990, the city government reduced its workforce by 18,400 positions, a loss of thirty-seven percent.56

Job cuts took a toll on all city workers, but they had a particularly significant impact on African-American women. In the early 1980s, African Americans made up over fifty-five percent of municipal employees. Black women alone were close to forty percent of the workforce, outnumbering black and white men and white women. They represented close to seventy percent of the city’s minority employees and almost two-thirds of the female full-time classified workforce. To be sure, the cuts also dealt a blow to African-American men, who accounted for about fifteen percent of municipal workers, and also to Caucasians. But black women bore the brunt not only because of their prominent representation in the municipal public-sector but also because they were concentrated in health, education and welfare jobs—the very agencies hardest hit by the effects of Reagan’s budget cuts.57

The first workers in Baltimore to feel the bite of federal cuts were those receiving jobs or training through Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) programs. Shortly after taking office, Reagan eliminated the jobs-creation mandate in CETA and cut overall funding for training. By October 1981, 2,531 workers in Baltimore had been laid off; two months later, fewer than half had found new jobs. The
1981 cuts to CETA also resulted in 1,300 fewer general training opportunities and 6,500 fewer employment and training places for young people in a city in which 43,000 adults and 25,000 youth were unemployed. The loss of the training and employment programs interrupted a record of accomplishment that had won the city’s CETA program a national reputation.\textsuperscript{58}

Many of those who lost their positions had worked in social welfare agencies. For two years, African-American Health-Department employee Pat Green had worked for the city inspecting houses for lead paint, one member of a larger army of city workers attempting to combat lead paint poisoning among children. Green had been given a week’s notice before being laid off. She collected unemployment insurance as long as she could as she searched in vain for a new job. The $408 a month she received did not go far as she attempted to provide for four teenagers and a grandchild. “I knew there were going to be changes when the new administration took over,” she told a reporter, “but I never thought I’d see the day when I had to resort to feeding my family hot dogs and beans every day, and then having to explain why. I’m in debt way up over my head…my credit is bad…all thanks to President Reagan. He’s living in style and comfort, while I’m living in pure hell.”\textsuperscript{59} But CETA funding cuts did not impact program participants alone. By 1984, the Mayor’s Office of Manpower Resources, which coordinated CETA programs and had a majority African-American and female staff, lost almost 1,000 positions.\textsuperscript{60}

The Urban Services Agency (USA), which also had a majority African-American and female staff, suffered significant layoffs as well. The cuts at USA were particularly symbolic of the reassertion of corporate priorities over U.S. public policy because many
of the employees who lost their jobs were veterans of the city’s War on Poverty. They were direct-service providers, and some had grown up in the neighborhoods where they continued to work. Maxine Garland-Bey, an African-American woman, had been with the agency for seventeen years and, despite changes in federal policies that sapped the War on Poverty of its energy, remained committed. She had a reputation for working through lunch and for delivering surplus food to senior centers at the end of her day. Evelina Ryce, who also lost her job, had been nominated by the residents she served for “Baltimore is Best” certificates and won them two out of the preceding years before she was laid off. “It is with real regret that I must abolish your position…The need to do this is through no fault of your own, but is a direct result of reduced funding,” Lenwood Ivey wrote to her in 1983.61 By March 1986, federal-level cuts had shrunk the agency’s staff by two-thirds. Additional cuts that month prompted seventy USA employees to take to the street in protest. As they demonstrated at City Hall, the workers who had most recently lost their jobs expressed concern about their uncertain futures. They were also alarmed by their clients’ prospects. As one woman explained, “We handle families that have multiple problems such as eviction proceedings, lack of food, truancy among young people, teenage pregnancy a whole host of difficulties. We cut through the red tape that sometimes keeps people from getting help. We get a lot of referrals from other agencies because we really follow our cases through. Sometimes on our own time…I don’t know what some of our clients are going to do once we close the cases.”62 Veronica Johnson, a USA staffer who was laid off, shared her co-worker’s concern, continuing to perform some of the functions though she was no longer being paid. “Even though I’m not working now I do some volunteer work to help some of my residents who are elderly or
unable to get around well,” she explained. “…The residents still need help whether people are laid off or not.” USA workers could not easily afford to replace paid employment with volunteer work. Yet they faced a dismal Baltimore job market.

Meanwhile, the funding cuts all but decimated USA. The agency consolidated several day care centers into one and closed some food distribution sites. By August 1986, Clarence Blount, an African-American man who had begun serving as the commissioner of the Community Action Agency in 1968 and continued his service as the director of the USA board into the 1980s, bitterly described the antipoverty agency’s utility in Baltimore following the budget cuts. “Of course it doesn’t do enough. It isn’t supposed to do a lot. It can’t do a lot. Urban Services is nothing more than a toothpick for a problem which requires a shovel. But what are you supposed to do? Throw out the toothpick?”

While human service providers took some of the hardest hits during the 1980s, few departments were spared the pain of staff reductions. Layoffs, however, were not the primary way that the city reduced its workforce. More often, city administrators simply abolished rather than filled vacant positions. Baltimore’s 1984 budget required 125 layoffs but eliminated 550 positions through attrition. The City also responded to fiscal pressures by transferring to private management services formerly provided by municipal workers. In 1982, Baltimore officials handed over the management of the city’s public hospital to the Johns Hopkins Hospital (JHH), an arrangement made permanent in 1984. The city brokered a deal with JHH that guaranteed hospital workers their jobs—at least through the transition. But all of the employees, including the forty percent who were African-American women, lost their status as municipal employees. As a result, it became more difficult for the African-American community to effectively mobilize
political pressure to combat discrimination in the hospitals. As Afro American reporter Gerald C. Horne cautioned, “Those who appoint or help set the standards for hiring public sector employees can be voted in and out of office. Those who appoint and set standards for private sector employees are voted in and out by shareholders and boards of directors—where black representation is near nil.” Meanwhile, hospital workers who hoped to return to the city’s employ faced an uphill battle. After the transfer, Hilda Ford, the African-American director of the city’s Civil Service Commission (CSC), assembled reemployment lists of hospital workers. She worried as she did so that some names were missing. But she realized that “my fears are of little value because very few of the persons will ever be rehired.”

Baltimore’s public-sector unions did not stand by as the city reduced its workforce. Ironically, the wrenching economic changes of the 1980s made government unions simultaneously friends and foes of the Schaefer administration. Outside of the city, the unions and mayor found common cause. Raymond Clarke, the president of the AFSCME local that represented most city workers, and Ernie Crofoot, the director of the AFSCME council that included Baltimore locals, rallied members and residents to participate in Solidarity Day, providing buses that transported many city residents to the D.C. protest. “Reagan makes certain that his actions benefit business and industry while pulling ever more from the pockets and purses of the taxpayers,” Crofoot complained. “Pass the buck back to business…where it belongs.” AFSCME’s efforts on the national stage reinforced the mayor’s congressional testimony. The unions and the mayor also joined forces in Annapolis. The Classified Municipal Employees Association mobilized its political action committee to help Schaefer and the city’s state-level elected officials
win needed funding for the city. And in 1982, AFSCME members helped organize a Maryland Solidarity Day to protest Reaganomics and implore the state to mitigate federal cuts.68

On the home front, however, the unions and mayor did not always see eye to eye. AFSCME, which represented many of Baltimore’s CETA workers, could do little in the face of the 1981 layoffs, since the union was prohibited from grieving the layoffs of the special category of workers.69 The union could, however, rally to the cause of those members who lost their jobs at USA. Union representative Sallie Williams led a campaign to restore the jobs. The efforts failed, as the cuts were the consequence of federal-level spending reductions that specifically corresponded to the jobs of those who were laid off.70 AFSCME was somewhat more successful in defending the employees it represented at the city hospitals. The union could not prevent privatization, a practice it was fighting throughout the state. It did, however, win the right to continue to represent hospital workers through the transition to JHH management. Meanwhile, AFSCME and the city’s other public-sector unions organized among city employees and attempted to negotiate generous contracts for the workers it continued to represent. There were only limited concessions public-sector workers could win from cash-strapped Baltimore. And, there was little they could do to combat downsizing through attrition.71

The contraction of the city government’s workforce by more than a third during the 1980s eliminated jobs that had been an important source of income for thousands of families in Baltimore, especially African Americans. Certainly discrimination persisted. Female city employees earned considerably less than their male counterparts, and black women held a disproportionate share of the city’s low-wage jobs. Although both male
and female African Americans had won some positions of authority in the city
government, especially in social service and race-relations agencies, they were
concentrated at the bottom of hierarchies and were all but excluded from the city’s
planning departments and in the public-private corporations that determined how
Baltimore’s development money was spent. In 1983, the NAACP filed a complaint
against the city with the U.S. Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division.72

Yet despite persistent gender and race-based discrimination, African American
women and men had made great strides in the public sector. And Hilda Ford, of the CSC,
was among the city’s most outspoken defenders. During the 1970s, she made significant
personnel changes in her department that helped increase African-American and female
employment. She also oversaw a reclassification of the city’s clerical workers that raised
many salaries and created job ladders above formerly “dead-end” jobs. Between 1976
and 1983, the percentage of the city’s workforce from minority groups had increased
from forty-five to fifty-six percent. The change had come, Ford noted pointedly, despite
an overall decline in the number of city employees by 5,000. In addition, she argued,
African Americans managed almost forty percent of the city’s operating budget, and
black and white women as a group controlled a third of the budget. About twenty-two
percent of the city’s female workforce earned $25,000 or more per year, which Ford
compared favorably to the national figure of eight percent. In addition, the gap between
male and female earnings was lower in the municipal system than it was nationally.
Municipal jobs offered other advantages as well. Unionized city employees earned
health insurance, pensions and additional fringe benefits many private-sector workers in
Baltimore lacked. What’s more, AFSCME, and to a lesser extent the city’s other public-sector unions, had improved the working conditions and promotional opportunities of city workers, especially women.73

City employees were not the only public-sector workers in Baltimore affected by government downsizing. State employees who lived in the city also worried about being “Reaganized,” as The Afro American dubbed the job-cuts phenomenon. Theoretically, the president’s New Federalism appeared to bode well for state-level public employees because his administration was intent on shifting to them some government functions formerly performed by the federal workforce. But state officials recognized immediately that they too would take a hit as Reagan attempted to reduce the size of government. “We’ve told the governor the block grants mean that he gets more and more flexibility to do less and less,” Maryland employee Bill Benton reported.74 After the president proposed his first budget, Maryland officials projected a $215 million reduction in funds for the state. As a result, in June 1981, Maryland’s personnel secretary Theodore Thornton, Jr. announced the state was reducing its 65,000 workforce by 1,800.75

The prospect of layoffs created anxiety among all state workers, but fear ran especially high in human service agencies, where Reagan’s cuts would strike the deepest. In June 1981, more than 2,000 employees of the Department of Social Services (DSS) met in Baltimore to discuss their prospects. If faced with cuts, a majority of the staff endorsed a “shared lay-off” plan proposed by their director George Musgrove. They intended to adopt a four day week and accept twenty percent reductions in salaries, benefits and leave time to prevent layoffs. African Americans at DSS and in other state agencies were among those the threatened cuts made most nervous because, as
Baltimore’s municipal workforce, it was largely in human services agencies that they had made significant job gains. Overall, African-American workers were not as well represented in the state workforce as they were in the Baltimore city government. Nevertheless, a study by the Maryland Commission for Women found that by the end of the 1970s, minority women, most of whom were African-American, made up twenty percent of Maryland’s employees. They had offices not only in Annapolis but throughout the state, and many lived and worked in Baltimore. As in the city, discrimination persisted in state employment, and black women were concentrated in the lowest job grades. By the late 1970s, African Americans as a group held fifty-seven percent of the state’s service and maintenance jobs and forty-six percent of paraprofessionals positions but only eight percent of administrative posts. Although black women had reached near income parity with white women, female state workers’ annual earnings fell well below those of white men. Black women earned on average $600 less per year than white women, close to $1,700 less than black men, but a staggering $5,000 less per year than white men. Aware of the salary discrepancies as well as of the difficulties African Americans faced securing promotions in the state government, in 1983 the NAACP filed a complaint against Maryland with the U.S. Justice Department.76

Black leaders were determined to protect the state jobs African Americans had secured. Shortly after Thornton announced the state’s decision to cut its workforce, a group of over twenty African-American legislators and community leaders met with Maryland’s governor Harry Hughes to offer proposals that would prevent black and female employees from suffering the brunt of the layoffs. The leaders explained to the governor that many of the workers lacked seniority in the state system because of
legacy of employment discrimination. African-American state legislators Pete Rawlings and John Douglass, both from Baltimore, projected that the job losses would have tragic ripple effects in the state’s black communities. As Afro American reporter Sue Williams explained, they “estimated that as much as $20 million could be lost, not only in terms of actual workdays missed, but in terms of the reduction of goods and services purchased by blacks from blacks.”\textsuperscript{77} To prevent proposed employment reductions from reversing recent gains, the leaders suggested the governor take immediate action. Some proposed awarding African-American employees credit for four extra years of service. The governor pledged to establish guidelines concerning layoffs and to send progress reports to the congressional black caucus on job losses. “We shall make every reasonable effort to protect the gains of our affirmative action programs against the threat posed by the Reagan cutbacks,” he announced.\textsuperscript{78}

Ultimately, the Maryland state workforce did not suffer the high losses experienced by the city. But the state was not spared the strain of staff reductions. In 1984, state officials announced that Maryland had lost a total of $825 million in federal support, or $193 per person over the last three years. Maryland was among the top ten states in the country to experience the most severe cuts in funding for education, education of the disabled, health resources, health services, urban mass transit, and several other programs. Job cuts had been inevitable. Between 1960 and 1980, Maryland’s workforce had more than tripled. During the early 1980s, the state reduced its workforce by about six percent. By 1987, however, the overall number of state workers had rebounded and increased by over 4,300 since 1982. The gains resulted largely from the use of part-time workers because the number of full-time positions had
declined by over 3,000. The full-time job losses were greatest in education and among hospital employees, many of whom no doubt lost their jobs as a result of deinstitutionalization. The workforce of the state’s welfare department did not decrease during the mid-1980s, but the growth in the agency’s staff, which had increased from 64 in 1962 to over 6,200 in 1982, slowed almost to a standstill. Meanwhile, the judicial, legal and corrections departments expanded, a reflection of Reagan’s law and order programs.79

Job losses also reached into the federal government. The Social Security Administration’s headquarters just outside of the city and its satellite offices within city limits supplied the majority of Baltimore’s federal jobs. In fact, the agency was one of the city’s largest employers. Because the Reagan administration entered the White House pledging to shrink the government workforce and because the Social Security Administration (SSA) was a social service agency particularly vulnerable to cuts, Baltimore residents had good cause for worry. “We can measure Reagan by seeing his impact on black civil servants,” local activist and Morgan State University professor G. James Fleming warned.80 Fears mounted in July 1981, when The New York Times reported that total number of jobs in the federal government had declined for the first time since 1947.81 On the last day of 1981, The Sun reported, “Minority group members and women who have attained high-paying administrative jobs in government are losing them at a high rate in President Reagan’s drive to reduce the size of the federal work force.” The cuts did not impact only top-level employees. The paper recounted that “minority group members are 50 percent more likely to lose their jobs than whites.” Maryland Representative Michael D. Barnes guessed what many in Baltimore feared: that
members of minority groups were experiencing particularly high job losses because they
were concentrated in health, education and welfare agencies. Lynn Revo-Cohen, a
representative from the organization Federally Employed Women, feared that the job
losses “will decimate the gains by women and minorities.”82 Lonis Ballard, of the
national organization Blacks in Government, argued, “The Administration has shown, in
its Economic Recovery Plan, little concern for the severe impact of the personnel
reductions on the lives of Federal Employees. The Federal employees seem to be the
forgotten people in this great, unfolding drama. Yet, these civil servants have played a
leading role in the development and delivery of essential services.”83

Although early reductions in the federal workforce evoked sympathy among
Baltimore residents, few felt the full reverberations of downsizing until 1985. It was then
that the Reagan administration directed the SSA to cut its national workforce of close to
80,000 by 19,000 jobs over three years. The administration had concluded on the basis of
a commissioned study that SSA had grown extravagantly large and required trimming.
Computerizing tasks formerly done on paper, the administration added, could make
redundant large numbers of employees. Others familiar with the internal organization of
SSA disagreed. It “sounds pretty ridiculous to me,” commented Robert Ball, who had
been the Commissioner of SSA from 1962 to 1973. He explained that the operating
expenses for SSA came out of the payroll deduction tax and that only one and a half cents
of each dollar went for administrative costs. In fact, given SSA’s efficiency, he argued,
the government should actually increase the staff of SSA to make the agency more
convenient. Members of the House Select Committee on Aging and the American Association of Retired Persons, meanwhile, worried about the impact the cuts might have on senior citizens and the disabled. 84

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), which represented many Social Security employees, also protested the proposed cuts. The leadership of the union’s largest local—located in Baltimore and comprised of many on the staff of the SSA headquarters—played a leading role in the battle. They faced a formidable opponent in the Reagan administration. Early in his presidency, Reagan had demonstrated his unveiled disdain for public-sector unions. In 1981, he had fired 11,000 striking members of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). The PATCO members had been engaging in an illegal strike; federal workers were prohibited by law from engaging in work stoppages. Several of Reagan’s predecessors had also been confronted by illegal strikes by federal workers and had chosen to negotiate rather than terminate the employees. Reagan did not exercise such flexibility. After his confrontation with PATCO, he worked steadily to undermine the influence of federal public unions. Like public-sector unions generally, federal unions faced legal restrictions that limited their ability to advocate for their members. Only in the late 1970s had federal unions won the authority to negotiate over promotion procedures. They could not, however, bargain over wages. Reagan tried to reverse some of the federal unions’ recent hard-won gains. He attempted to eliminate the federal seniority system and targeted fringe benefits for reductions. In 1981, the administration made its first effort to cut the retirement packages of federal workers; by 1986 the federal government was offering new employees pensions less generous than those previously available. Federal
employees also began paying more for health insurance. Given the antipathy of the administration for public unions, AFGE had limited success fighting downsizing at SSA. They were able to save 2,000 jobs, however, and they won an extension of the timeline during which the staffing reductions would occur.85

The SSA staff braced for painful changes. Prior to downsizing, about seventy percent of SSA’s national workforce was female. Minority women made up almost a third of SSA’s employees, the result of equal-opportunity battles that had increased their representation from twenty-two percent in 1970. In the Baltimore region, SSA employed about 20,000 workers, an invaluable contribution to the depressed local economy. At headquarters, where many anticipated the bulk of the cuts would be made, morale plummeted. In the end, staffing reductions shrank the national workforce of the SSA by eighteen percent between 1983 and 1989, a cost of 13,500 jobs. Other federal agencies suffered even more severe cuts. Although defense-related federal employment increased during the Reagan years, by 1989, the Departments of Labor, Commerce and Housing and Urban Development had lost more than twenty percent of their workers, and over a third of the jobs at the Department of Education had been eliminated. In Baltimore, the SSA headquarters suffered a disproportionate share of the agency’s national job loses. Downsizing was achieved through attrition, however, and, as a result, most of the city’s SSA employees were spared the pain of layoffs. Many did find their workloads increased as they compensated for short-staffing. Downsizing also imperiled the ability of SSA’s equal opportunity office to achieve its goals. Prior to leaving office, Carter had changed entrance-examination procedures that had impeded some African Americans from securing federal jobs. As a result, the number of black federal employees had begun to
rise. Downsizing made it difficult to improve upon those gains. Barbara Sledge, the director of SSA’s equal opportunity (EO) office, explained in 1984, “The problems facing the EO program at SSA today are difficult ones. This agency is getting smaller, and we won’t have the opportunity to make the same rate of progress we made in the past, when the agency was growing.”

In Baltimore, government jobs had helped many working and middle-class African-American families become homeowners and send children to college. The jobs were especially important for single mothers. As the door to government closed to a crack during the 1980s, a new generation of African-American women, and men, found far fewer opportunities in a sector of the economy that the generation that preceded them had fought to open.

The contraction of government workforces had other implications as well. The public sector had also been important to city residents who did not pursue careers in the government but instead used public-sector employment as a launching pad into the private sector. As a witness explained to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights during a hearing in Baltimore in 1981, the government workforce had become “very critical for minorities at the entry level.” It enabled workers to establish an employment history and thus served as a stepping stone to future jobs. What’s more, during the 1960s and 1970s, government workers had served as an important source of job tips for their friends and relatives seeking employment. Although civil service procedures prevented public employees from exercising the same gate-keeping functions in hiring decisions that members of some unions maintained, many government workers kept on top of job announcements and passed the information on to those in search of work. Because most
of the reduction in government jobs in Baltimore occurred through attrition, job postings became far less frequent during the 1980s than they had been during the two previous decades.  

The dramatic contraction of the public sector during the Reagan years worsened conditions that had already produced heart-wrenching scenes in Baltimore. In 1980, during the Volcker recession, SSA had listed openings for seventy-five entry-level positions. Twenty-six thousand lined the streets to apply for the coveted spots. A year later, the U.S. Post Office sparked a second stampede. Rather than advertising, the agency issued a press release and posted notices on its bulletin boards announcing twenty openings for mail handlers. Word of the jobs spread like wildfire. Fifteen thousand queued up for a shot at the posts. The Afro American covered with obvious sadness both demonstrations of the dire straits faced by the city’s job seekers. The paper also made a gloomy prediction. Thousands would again participate in yet another futile exercise in job-hunting since the Post Office was preparing to open several labor-custodial positions.

The contraction of the public sector had another implication. From their posts in government agencies, many African-American women during the 1960s and 1970s had played important roles in shaping public policy and improving the delivery of human services. This had particularly been the case within the municipal government, although state welfare workers had also used government posts to influence policy. By the mid-1970s, the influence of human services workers over policy had waned in response to shifts in federal urban policy. Nevertheless, through the decade, and especially as Schaefer attempted to mobilize city and federal resources behind Baltimore’s downtown
commercial Renaissance, the city and state’s army of human service workers served as advocates of the dispossessed whose efforts limited the extent to which the champions of redevelopment could neglect the concerns of the poor. Reaganomics shrunk the space within the state that black women used to influence policy. Simultaneously, because Reagan dispersed most intergovernmental aid as block grants to states, the president further eroded the ability of most African-American government workers to determine how federal funding was spent.

Just as the president loosed cities to the forces of free-market capitalism, he also untethered them from the constraints he believed federal social welfare spending imposed. Reduced spending and the tightening of eligibility requirements also took a tremendous toll on women in Baltimore, particularly among the working poor. In November 1981, about 18,000 city residents were eliminated from the AFDC rolls, and almost 16,500 had their monthly benefits reduced. In addition, 10,000 were dropped from the Food Stamp program and 69,500 learned they would be receiving smaller allotments. Although Baltimore had 45,000 residents on waiting lists for public housing and the projected wait time was five years, the city’s funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development was also cut. As a consequence, the city’s 58,000 recipients of subsidized housing were required to pay thirty rather than twenty-five percent of their incomes on housing. John A. McCauley, the city deputy commissioner for public housing, expressed alarm at the change. “People will simply use the income that used to go to buy food, clothing or medicine and pay the extra rent. While 5 percent doesn’t sound like much, to a family on welfare, an extra $10 to $15 makes all the difference,” he said. Simultaneously, Maryland’s funding for unemployment insurance
dropped by $10 million even as the Volcker recession increased the numbers of the jobless. Although Congress would later restore some of the lost benefits, they cuts deepened poverty.

The Reagan administration also reduced federal funding for social service programs provided by states and localities. Title XX of the Social Security Act, from which Maryland received seventy percent of its funds for social services, was cut by twenty percent. The reduction impacted both income maintenance programs and other vital services. Although reverberations would be felt throughout the state, “Baltimore’s poor will bear the brunt of the cutbacks,” a newspaper reporter predicted. Allotments for fuel assistance plummeted by $7.5 million. In December 1981, as city residents braced for winter, Richard Aull, the head of Baltimore’s weatherization program, reported that his agency would be serving only half the number of residents it normally helped. What’s more, he would no longer be offering furnace-cleaning and related services. Simultaneously, funds to support the community-services activities sponsored by antipoverty agencies dropped by $200,000. Among the consequences service providers anticipated was longer waits for day care service. The reductions in welfare and social services spending compounded problems caused by cuts in federal funding for education, health, urban mass transit, legal aid, jobs and training, and other vital programs. At the start of the 1980s, Baltimore depended for over half its budget on intergovernmental sources of revenue. By November 1981, Reagan’s budget cuts had already cost it $70 million. By 1983, the city had cut municipal services by twenty-five percent, and by 1989, Baltimore’s expenditures per year were thirty-six percent lower than they had been in 1975.
Women paid a particularly high cost for the cuts because it often fell to them to compensate for the lost services. For some older African-American women in Baltimore, the conditions created by the program cuts might have engendered a sense of déjà vu. Until the early 1960s, the city’s provision of inadequate Jim Crow services had compelled black women to assume time-consuming, and in some cases tremendously burdensome, responsibilities for their families that the state had provided or helped ease for white women. Reagan’s macroeconomic and urban policies seemed destined to return women in the city to the conditions black women had battled during the age of segregation.

The neo-liberal turn in U.S. public policy multiplied women’s gendered caretaking responsibilities in countless ways. Women have long utilized innovative strategies in their homes to help their families accommodate financial hardship. Neoliberalism compelled many women in Baltimore to return to such strategies. Elrae Singletary, an AFDC recipient, cooked meals for her four children from scratch to avoid the expense of ready-made food. She also mixed powdered milk with regular milk and replaced shampoo with bar soap to cut down on expenses. Mary Turner, another AFDC recipient, likewise struggled with food costs. In response, she tried to keep on hand a constant stock of potatoes and other staples to feed her four children. Cuts in the Food Stamp program, on which one in four Baltimore residents depended in 1981, and nutrition programs, which provided 90,000 students with lunch every school day, intensified women’s struggles to feed their families. When the school year started in September, increases in the cost of subsidized lunches had pushed 6,000 children out of the program. The funding cuts sent increasing numbers of women to food pantries and soup kitchens, increasing the time, effort and stress associated with food preparation.
Meanwhile, food charities staggered under the weight of increased need. “…Soup kitchens are overcrowded. And those who administer the programs are having trouble doing their jobs because of layoffs, low morale and high turnover,” The Baltimore Sun reported in December.94

Cuts in other programming also intensified women’s gendered caretaking responsibilities. Although some could afford to purchase lost services in the private or informal sectors of the city’s economy, women with low incomes often had to provide the services themselves or watch their families do without. Poverty limited many women to the city’s most dilapidated housing, for example. Cuts in funding for public housing and housing-related programs, fuel assistance, sanitation services, and municipal rat and other pest-eradication efforts intensified the challenges they faced as they tried to keep their families healthy. Many found that even the most diligent housekeeping could not prevent windows from leaking, lead paint from peeling and germs and illness from spreading. AFDC-recipient Singletary exerted considerable effort to keep her family safe in inadequate housing. During the winter, she taped plastic garbage bags over her windows to keep out the cold. She also waged unrelenting warfare against roaches and mice, and she perpetually worried about the well-being of her children. Turner waged a similarly unsuccessful battle with the winter. She tried to compensate for cracks in her walls and insufficient funds to pay for fuel by nestling her two children in front of her oven. Her efforts kept her children warm but landed her with an exorbitant utilities bill. Worse, she contracted pneumonia and spent three days recovering in the hospital.95

Other mothers experienced greater tragedies as a consequence of poverty and poor housing. In 1983, Bob Cheeks, the executive director of the Welfare Rights
Organization, told Mayor Schaefer that a broken elevator in a public housing high-rise had delayed a mother who was rushing to seek medical attention for her sick infant. The delay, Cheeks charged, cost the child his life. He blamed Schaefer for the death because the mayor’s “single-minded focus to build hotels, restaurant, shops, and housing for the rich” had come at the expense of “the concerns of the poor.” Certainly the mayor had prioritized downtown development. But two years earlier, Reagan had halved federal spending on public housing, which accounts for the broken elevator.

While most mothers who faced health care emergencies did not suffer the tremendous loss experienced by the high-rise resident, federal cuts in spending on health compelled women to assume considerable nursing responsibilities. The Reagan administration’s decision to tighten eligibility requirements for Medicaid worsened the burden. Meanwhile, CETA lay-offs cost many health providers their jobs. The cuts imperiled the on-going efforts of the city’s public health nurses and aides in the Department of Health to improve the battle against lead-paint poisoning and other health problems. With fewer public-health programs available, woman with limited means often had no choice but to assume responsibilities for caring for ill family members who might have been better served by professional health-care workers. The task of tending to the ailing could prove particularly challenging when women provided care for elderly relatives. During the early 1980s, the African-American elderly poverty rate in the U.S. was triple that for whites. Conditions for the elderly had actually improved in Baltimore during the 1960s and 1970s, due in large part to the efforts of activists and human services workers. Reaganomics jeopardized these gains. In 1981, an elderly African-
American man attending a small rally in Annapolis to protest budget cuts, whispered his concern to a reporter. “Things had been getting better for old folks for a while. Now I’m afraid that everything will go back to the way it was,” he said.98

The changes occurred as the city’s day-care services, which had never been adequate, became more expensive and harder to access. One day-care center in northwest Baltimore saw its fees more than triple, rising from $5 to $17. Staff and family members protested the cuts by helping children served by the agency to write protest letters to both Reagan and the Maryland governor. The efforts did not reverse the fee increase. Reagan policies also reduced funding for municipal parks, recreation programs, libraries, and museums, making child care all the more difficult. By January 1984, the Department of Parks and Recreation was laying off employees for the fourth time in two years and seeking volunteers to mow grass and trim bushes. Funds for special services for teenagers and money for summer camps were also cut. Fewer public spaces and programs were available to young people just as conditions in many neighborhoods deteriorated, rendering them unfit for play and increasing the need for adult supervision.99 Singletary prohibited her children from playing near mounds of garbage that accumulated near her home, attracting rats. “I don’t want my children to grow up in this neighborhood,” she said to a newspaper reporter.100 Shelia Rhyne expressed similar concerns about finding safe places for her children to play. In a letter to the Baltimore Afro-American she explained, “My youngest son has been hospitalized with a torn tendon in his hand from glass in the yard surrounding the building. Why do the low to
middle class people have to live in projects where they must watch their children’s every move because they don’t know whether their children will be killed, raped or God knows what else?”

Women protested the cuts in ways other than letter-writing. Some encountered significant obstacles. One woman who sought help from Legal Aid, for example, learned that the agency’s staff had been shrunk from 125 to 107 lawyers. As a result, she could receive nothing more than sympathetic advice. Among the most alarming of the suggestions she received: the staff urged her to take a course in legal rights. Women also worked collectively to repeal Reaganomics. In 1981, the Baltimore Welfare Rights Organization filed a class-action suit against the state for terminating AFDC benefits without providing recipients sufficient warning. The organization won its case. But the victory only restored benefits for a month. High-rise public-housing residents also worked together. Following the death of the infant whose mother had been stymied by the broken elevator, a group founded M.O.M., an organization of mothers united to “Save Our Children From High Rise Housing.” Even collectively, however, it was impossible for women with low incomes to patch on their own every hole Reagan’s cuts had rent in the U.S. safety net.

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The policies of the Reagan administration deepened an urban crisis that by the early 1980s had already gave Baltimore one of the highest percentages of poor people in the nation. Reagan entered office determined to reassert the dominance of the United
States on the global stage and to strengthen the power of corporate and other elites over public policy. His macroeconomic agenda and New Federalism furthered those goals. The policies had devastating consequences in Baltimore, with the effects falling particularly hard on African-American women. Reaganomics shrank a sector of Baltimore’s economy in which black city residents, and African-American women in particular, had made significant job gains over the preceding two decades. In addition, the president’s policies undermined the authority over social-welfare policy that African Americans, and again black women in particular, had gained. Finally, the Reagan administration’s assault on the welfare state also disproportionately impacted black women because they had to compensate for lost services.104

By the end of the Reagan years, it became very clear in cities like Baltimore that despite their best efforts, women with low incomes could not possible compensate for the widespread loss of public services. As a result, the urban crisis in the United States entered its most acute phase. Thus it was with good reason that a Baltimore Afro-American newspaper reporter covering job losses at the Urban Services Agency and the protest by its employees in 1985 explained to readers, “There is tragedy on both sides of the layoffs.”105 The women unemployed by the cuts faced a dismal job market in post-industrial Baltimore. And the recipients of the services the government used to provide, among the most vulnerable in Baltimore's population, had been abandoned by a state that had once been committed to its citizens.
CONCLUSION: STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AMERICAN-STYLE

In the mid-1990s, Baltimore’s mayor Kurt Schmoke made an alarming observation: “It is an unfortunate fact of life that we have in certain parts of our city health problems, [and] housing problems, that resemble those in Third World Countries.” Schmoke, who in 1987 had become the city’s first African American to be elected mayor after William Donald Schaefer moved to the governor’s mansion, had been working to relieve poverty since his election. Desperate problems called for desperate measures, and in 1994, Schmoke embraced a new strategy. The city would “try Third World remedies” The Baltimore Sun reported.

The mayor engaged the city in a cooperative project with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), known worldwide for its work in developing countries. As part of USAID’s Lessons Without Borders program, nine city health care and development personnel traveled to Jamaica and Kenya, where they observed successful child immunization programs. The Baltimore city workers were impressed with what they saw. Kenya’s immunization rate for two-year olds was eighty percent, while Baltimore’s lagged at fifty-six percent. Adopting Third-World health-care
techniques, Baltimore’s workers designed a major door-to-door immunization campaign. They reached 39,000 children, bringing the city’s immunization rate for school-aged children up to over ninety-five percent. Pleased with the results, Schmoke sent a contingent to Bangladesh to study community health programs and dispatched other groups to developing countries to collect strategies for responding to gang violence and disseminating information about environmental health risks.3

Despite Schmoke’s efforts to apply Third-World remedies to Baltimore, the poverty rate in the city increased slightly during the 1990s, rising from twenty-two to twenty-three percent. And by the end of the decade, poverty was up five percent from its 1970 level. Poverty also spread. Neighborhoods that entered the 1990s with less than twenty percent of residents living in poverty saw their rates rise by five percent. Meanwhile, median household income in Baltimore dropped by over $1,000 during the decade. Other economic indicators described the tragic consequences of the widespread poverty as well. In 1991, Baltimore had the third highest infant mortality rate in the country, and African-American babies died at twice the rate of white infants. By the mid-1990s, nearly a tenth of the population struggled with drug addiction, and Baltimore had the second highest crime rate and third highest homicide rate of the nation’s fifteen rustbelt cities. For all of the decade’s economic glitter, the 1990s offered little relief to the poorer of the two Baltimores.4

The free-market orthodoxy that had come to dominate American public policy precluded the assault on poverty that Baltimore’s problems warranted. City residents hardly found a champion in Republican president George H. W. Bush. And Democrat Bill Clinton far surpassed Jimmy Carter in moving his Party to the Right. As Clinton
negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Empowerment Zones he created in poor cities like Baltimore to encourage economic development and business growth failed to revive Baltimore’s poorest neighborhoods. The first Democratic president in twelve years also assigned his vice president to shrinking the government and its workforce as much as possible and “ended welfare as we knew it.” The burden the city’s poorest women bore for neoliberalism’s ascendancy only grew.⁵

Neo-liberalism had its benefits. The city’s downtown revitalization remained vibrant. Baltimore became an increasingly popular tourist destination, and the visitors infused as much as a billion dollars a year into the local economy. Harbor-area projects continued apace during the 1990s. The city built the Orioles a stadium at Camden Yards and then financed a nearby $260 million home for the Ravens. The cuts the city made to the public library system the year it undertook the football stadium project certainly sparked protests by those frustrated with municipal priorities. But the downtown revitalization ultimately did win Baltimore a place of distinction in the global economy. In 2005, Frommer’s, a leading publisher of tourist guidebooks, included Baltimore on its list of the world’s top ten list of up-and-coming tourist destinations. Baltimore joined Belize, Barcelona and the Cook Islands. The designation pleased the city’s tourism officials but left residents scratching their heads in wonder. “They’ve got Baltimore in with what?” asked one Little Italy restaurateur, while a newspaper reporter suggested those who compiled the list had imbibed a few too many Natty Bohs, the colloquialism for a beer once brewed in the city.⁶ Although guessing the reason Baltimore had made it
to the big times quickly became a local pastime, it was hard to deny that Mayor William Donald Schaefer’s “crackpot” idea to promote tourism in decaying Baltimore had been a tremendous commercial success.

But the poverty on the fringes of the redeveloped harbor area continued to haunt the city, and during the 1990s and early 2000s, Baltimore gained a national reputation and even some international fame for its crime and violence. NBC’s “Homicide: Life on the Street,” based on a book by former Baltimore Sun reporter David Simon, and HBO’s “The Wire,” which Simon writes and produces, are both set in Baltimore. The television dramas show viewers the depth of Baltimore’s urban crisis. “Homicide,” which aired from 1993 to 1999, makes it hard for viewers to forget that the city is a frequent runner-up for the annual designation “Murder Capital” of the nation. “The Wire,” which premiered in 2002, portrays the city’s illegal drug industry as the devastating and destructive source of African-American male employment that it has become. In the shadows of decaying factories and abandoned homes, dealers discuss supply and demand and employ the latest ivy league-generated entrepreneurial strategies to expand their businesses. The program depicts the poverty and violence of some of Baltimore’s neighborhoods so starkly that elected officials worry that the publicity will scare away the city’s tourists. Ironically, “The Wire” also gives many who live in Baltimore their first intimate look at the grave problems in their backyard. As city resident Pamela Haag explains, “I grew up in Baltimore, and I live in Baltimore, yet I encounter my city most vividly on HBO…The violent, drug-saturated streets of West Baltimore that the series dissects…are about three miles from my house, but they might as well be 3,000.” Her comment reveals the extent to which the gap separating the two Baltimores has widened.
Yet the glitz of the city’s postindustrial skyline and the violence and poverty of “The Wire” obscure another Baltimore reality. The ‘two Baltimores’ metaphor, while valuable for dramatizing the city’s tremendous economic divide, implies an equally as stark racial divide. The reality is far more complicated. While class and race are largely conflated at the bottom of the city’s economic hierarchy, both African Americans and whites inhabit non-poor Baltimore. And the economic changes of the late twentieth century have pushed many, particularly large numbers of African-American women into a third group, which teeters precariously between the two worlds. Each morning in Baltimore, hundreds of thousands of city resident set off to work, with African-American women are most numerous among them. Far fewer black women travel to government jobs than did during the late 1960s and 1970s, however. By 2000, close to 18,000 fewer black female city residents worked for the government than had been the case in 1980. Black flight accounts for some of the decline. During the 1990s Baltimore’s African-American population declined for the first time in the twentieth century. Much of the decline in the number of government workers, however, is attributable to the contraction of the public sector. With fewer government jobs available, large numbers of African-American women fill low-wage service positions in the city’s largely non-unionized private sector. Many work in healthcare and social-assistance or educational-services fields, which have been growing in recent decades, reflecting the nation’s mounting reliance on private sector workers to provide human services. Others hold administrative positions or work in the hotel and food services industries. While the wages of some of the newer jobs rival those available in the public sector, many others pale in comparison.
They also lack the security and fringe benefits unions have won for government workers. And they do not provide black women with the influence over public policy government jobs had.⁸

To be sure, black women do not lack access to political power in Baltimore. In fact, in September 2007, in the Democratic primary that determines the outcome of the general election, city residents picked African-American women to fill the posts of mayor, president of the City Council, and city comptroller, the three highest positions in the city government. Sheila Dixon, who had served as the city’s first African-American female City Council president, moved into the mayor’s office in January 2007 to complete the term of Martin O’Malley, who had been elected governor. Her ascent to the city’s top job made her the only female African-American mayor in a city of Baltimore’s size in the nation. Stephanie Rawlings-Blake won the election for City Council president, and Joan Pratt was reelected as comptroller.

As the city’s top executives, the three women face many daunting challenges. Dixon, who includes on her resume a job as an adult educator with the city’s Head Start program as well as a position as an international specialist with the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, will find it difficult to strike a between her commitments to social-welfare programs and downtown development. The federal funds needed to combat Baltimore’s urgent crisis just are not there. Like the African-American women who won high positions in the municipal government before them, Baltimore’s newly-elected top administrators have gained authority over policy-making at a time when their positions give them limited power to influence problems created by decades of federal-level macroeconomic decision making.⁹
For a brief period in the mid-twentieth century, a different future for the city had seemed possible. During the 1950s, leaders of the Baltimore Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), concerned by the tremendously high level of poverty in African-American communities, wrenched a fair employment ordinance from a very reluctant and almost entirely white City Council. Mainstream civil rights leaders’ aggressive efforts to end Jim Crow and improve the quality of public services also created the backdrop against which federal officials outlawed segregation and turned their attention to urban poverty. During the 1960s, liberal black leaders fought City Hall to win African Americans positions on municipal boards and commissions, public-sector jobs and leadership positions at the helm of city agencies. Discrimination certainly persisted. Yet the new public-sector positions gave African Americans, who remained largely excluded from elected office, unprecedented control over policy-making, particularly in human services agencies. Lillie May Jackson, who served as the president of the Baltimore NAACP from the mid-1930s until 1970, “made [Baltimore] a lot closer to what it ought to be than anybody ever imagined it would be,” Clarence Mitchell explained, “and I think she did it by the sheer force of her determination with very little resources to work with.”

The African-American workers who entered the public sector, particularly those who joined human services agencies, also did their share to make the city “closer to what it ought to be” -- and “with very little resources” as well. During the mid-1960s, Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society dramatically expanded the public sector. Many of the new jobs were in health, education and welfare agencies, positions conventionally gendered as
female. Though they failed to provide an antidote to structural male unemployment in Baltimore, they did create an opening for black women, who had long been confined to domestic service and other low-wage, insecure positions. From their positions at the bottom of municipal hierarchies, African-American women worked with black men, who gained more public-sector leadership positions than black women, and with white liberals to make recently desegregated social welfare agencies more responsive to African Americans, women and residents with low incomes. They participated in policy innovation and implementation as well as in demonstrations, petition drives and other forms of activism to increase funding for antipoverty efforts. Although tensions existed between public-sector workers and low-income service recipients, the groups found common ground. They hardly secured all the policies and programming they sought, but they did win improvements in the city’s provision of many services.

New services helped relieve the consequences of poverty for many city residents. They also had specifically gendered effects that provided particular relief to African-American women. Jim Crow had been an affront to the dignity and well-being of all black residents, but it had required of women especially burdensome responsibilities as their families’ caretakers. The desegregation of existing services and new federal and local initiatives improved the city’s provision of programming in health care, recreation, education, nutrition, child and elder care and sanitation, thus relieving women of some of the caretaking challenges they faced.

Baltimore’s public-sector unions were also pushing the city closer to what it ought to be. During the 1960s, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), led locally by African-American former sanitation worker
Raymond Clarke, organized among the city’s lowest-paid employees—garbage collectors and custodians, laundry and cafeteria workers, and eventually some of the human services workers who filled antipoverty jobs. Along with the Baltimore Teachers Union, AFSCME helped city workers win collective bargaining rights, which had long been denied government workers. At the bargaining table, AFSCME raised municipal wages and won for many of its members city-paid health insurance, a vision plan, improvements in the municipal pension, leave-time systems, a grievance procedure, and recognition of seniority. Few low-wage workers in Baltimore’s troubled labor market enjoyed such benefits and protections. AFSCME also opened paths for upward mobility for city workers. The union created training programs that enabled workers to qualify for higher positions and built job ladders that union members could use to climb out of formerly dead-end positions. What’s more, as the female membership of the union swelled, AFSCME worked to police sex discrimination and open opportunities for women. AFSCME’s efforts helped make the public-sector a vital source of security for many African-American families in Baltimore despite ongoing deindustrialization.

But Baltimore’s forward movement proved to be very brief. White backlash voters and suburbanites angered by taxes played a crucial role in reversing the fortunes of Baltimore and other poor cities. Displaying a strain of conservatism scholars have shown had a decades-long history, they elected into office like-minded politicians and created an American political culture hostile to federal efforts to fight poverty.

While backlash voters created the opportunity for political change, however, they did not shape the particular contours of federal policy. As the status of the United States in the global economy began to wane during the late 1960s and 1970s, U.S. presidents
took aggressive steps to reverse the decline, embracing a set of policies favored by neo-
liberal economists and their supporters in the business community. The decisions to 
abandon the gold standard and allow currencies to float; to eliminate capital controls and 
deregulate trade; and to strengthen the dollar with severe recession-inducing monetarist 
remedies are not generally associated with urban history. Yet the policies undermined 
the economic viability of many of the nation’s older cities, weakening their 
competitiveness in industries that might have alleviated high levels of African-American 
male unemployment. The policies also made it difficult for elected officials in any level 
of government to pursue policies that strayed from neoliberal logic. Federal urban policy 
during the 1970s and 1980s compelled cities to pursue trickle-down remedies to poverty, 
such as the development of a tourism infrastructure in Baltimore, which hardly responded 
to acute urban problems.

To be sure, the changes in macroeconomic policy of the 1970s and 1980s faced 
considerable opposition. Civil rights leaders fought particularly hard to prevent the 
Democratic Party from moving to the Right. Public-sector unions mounted an aggressive 
battle to save the nation’s welfare state and the jobs of those who staffed it. And human 
services workers, their influence undercut by over a decade funding cuts, tried to 
maintain Baltimore’s commitment to combating poverty. Ultimately, however, the 
combined activism could not reverse the shifting tide of U.S. public policy. By the end 
of the Reagan years, nearly two decades of punishing macroeconomic and urban policies 
had plunged Baltimore into the most acute phase of the urban crisis.

The crisis was not simply local – or even national. It was global. During the 
1980s, the Reagan administration played a major role in imposing on developing nations
many of the same macroeconomic policies American political leaders had tested
domestically on U.S. cities. Using the United States’ influence in the International
Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, American officials helped to create Structural
Adjustment Programs. These programs compelled developing countries with significant
debt burdens to reorient their domestic economies so as to integrate them into the global
capitalist economy. To achieve the transformations, leaders of the developing countries
had to adopt neoliberal policies, which included reducing public expenditures by cutting
spending on health, education and welfare programs. During the 1980s, about two-thirds
of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America reduced per-capita spending on
social services, while in both the Dominican Republic and Sri Lanka, public spending on
health care declined, and in Jamaica, spending on social services was reduced by forty-
four percent.\textsuperscript{11}

Structural Adjustment Program met with immediate opposition from activists and
scholars who identified them as symbolic of the price the world’s poorest populations
paid for the global reassertion of elite power and the ascendancy of neoliberalism. The
champions of the structural adjustment promised economic growth and lower poverty
rates. Critics countered that in most developing nations only a small number of elites
benefited from the economic transformations. Feminists took particular note of the
impact neoliberalism had on women, discovering problems already familiar to African-
American women in Baltimore. In developing nation’s women were severely hit by cuts
in public-sector employment due in large measure to their concentration in human
services agencies. As the result of the job losses, anthropologist Takiwaa Manuh
explains, many women lost positions that provided regular wages and hours and a
measure of social security. In addition, as the caretakers of their families, women had to compensate for cuts in services. As in Baltimore, the burdens women took on remained largely invisible to policy-makers, since national governments and international lending agencies did not calculate the economic value of women’s caretaking work. Health statistics, however, revealed a grim reality. Malnutrition, disease and death rates rose in many countries. Despite their best efforts, the world’s poorest women could not fully compensate for lost public services.¹²

During the 1980s, as women in Baltimore whose Food Stamps had been cut by the Reagan administration anxiously paced the aisles of their local grocery stores and worried that they lacked the resources to feed their family, similar scenes played out across the world. In the outdoor markets of Zambia, where generations of women had strolled among stalls displaying regionally-grown produce, the global capitalist economy intruded on shoppers’ world. In 1985, the price of maize—one of Zambia’s most popular stables—rose by fifty percent after the government eliminated a subsidy that had controlled its price. Almost 4,000 miles away in Sri Lanka, women in search of bargains in their local shops saw the cost of rice rise almost 160 percent while wheat flour and bread and milk powder climbed over 300 percent as their government stripped away long-standing subsidies. Few in Baltimore—or anywhere in the United States—took much note of economic changes in Zambia, Sri Lanka and other countries around the world. Yet the link between U.S. urban poverty and “Third World” poverty was unmistakable, and the handiwork of neoliberals, with their insistence on the curtailment
of public spending at home and abroad, a tragic success. Little wonder that Mayor Schmoke turned to Third World examples as he sought remedies to Baltimore’s version of the urban crisis.\textsuperscript{13}

American urban historians would do well to follow Schmoke’s example, probing the similarities between policy and poverty in U.S. cities and developing countries. Such work would greatly enrich discussions of the late twentieth-century American urban experience. They would situate struggles in and over cities within larger contests over the distribution of global resources and power. They would also connect the histories of poor urban African Americans to those of populations in developing nations, making it difficult to justify conservative claims that attribute U.S. urban poverty to cultural dysfunction among city residents. What’s more, they would demonstrate the far reaching gendered consequences of late-twentieth century macroeconomic policies, revealing the extent to which the reassertion of elite power during the late twentieth century not only undercut many women’s positions in paid labor markets but also depended on poor women the world over to fill the void created by the state’s abdication of its responsibilities to its citizens.
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**Dissertations and Theses**


ENDNOTES

Chapter 1: Introduction


Jones, Labor of Love.


Chapter 2


5 Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged and When Work Disappears. See also Derrick Bell, Are We Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice (New York: Basic Books, 1987) and oral histories Bertha Brown, Fay Smith and Louise Tolliver.


11 Black stevedores were a notable exception. African Americans longshoremen controlled a powerful segregated AFL union that negotiated “checkerboard” contracts. They were respected as elites and, according to a Gulf Coast longshoreman, the stevedore “was the aristocrat of southern black labor, and was conscious of it.” Quoted in Linda Zeidman and Eric Hallengren, “Radicalism on the Waterfront: Seamen of the 1930s,” in The Baltimore Book: New Views of Local History, eds. Elizabeth Fee, Linda Shopes, and Linda Zeidman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991) 182. See also Ryon, “Ambiguous Legacy” and War m. M. Banner, A Review of the Program and Activities of the Baltimore Urban League and A Brief Analysis of Conditions in the Community which it Serves (New York: National Urban League, October-November, 1949) 110. Papers of the National Urban League, Part III, Folder 9 “NUL Research Department Baltimore, Maryland Study October- November 1949, 1 of 2,” 452, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereafter LC).
15 By the mid-1930s, a 1902 law that required all new-comers to the state to declare in court their intention to vote a year prior to elections remained objectionable to African Americans who said the measure was said to be enforced selectively. Margaret L. Callcott, The Negro in Maryland Politics, 1870-1912 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969) 101-138; Reid, 216-218; and David Terry, “‘Tramping for Justice’: The Dismantling of Jim Crow in Baltimore, 1942-1954,” Ph.D. dissertation, Howard University, 2002).
16 On gerrymandering see Argersinger, New Deal, 13-16; Shirley Kyle, “FEPC Hearing Set for Tuesday, 1 p.m.,” The Afro-American [Late City Edition], (April 24, 1954) 1, 7; Callcott, Maryland, pp. and Durr, Backlash, 13-15; Juanita Mitchell, “A Demand for Negro City Councilmen,” The Baltimore Sun (May 3, 1941); and Warren M. Banner, “A Demand for Negro City Councilmen,” The Baltimore Sun (May 3, 1941).


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Morris, Origins and Farrar, Afro-American.


28 Letter to Miss Lucille Black from Ella Baker ([1941]). NAACP Branch Files, 1940-1955; Baltimore, Maryland, 1941. Library of Congress.


40 [Editorial], “Full Employment Possible,” The Afro American (August 21, 1945) 4. Julius A. Thomas of the NUL also testified in favor of the bill during congressional hearings. In addition, the NUL sent President Harry Truman a report documenting the organization’s reasons for supporting full employment as well as other employment-related legislation. Hamilton and Hamilton, Dual Agenda, 66-71. See also “Employment Crisis Tops Reconversion Problems,” The Afro American (August 28, 1945) 15 and “Urban League Battles for Jobs,” The Afro American (August 28, 1945) 15

41 A. L. Glenn, Sr., History of the National Alliance of Postal Employees, 1913-1955 [National Alliance of Postal Employees, 1956]; Hamilton and Hamilton, Dual Agenda 63-64; “Postal Alliance had its Beginnings in 1913,” The Afro American (October 24, 1967) 10; and “Report of NAACP Labor Department at the 38th Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.” (June 26, 1947) NAACP Papers; Watson, Lion in the Lobby, 152-156.

The League also noted that African Americans were concentrated in the lowest four pay grades. Warren M. Banner, A Review of the Program and Activities of the Baltimore Urban League and A Brief Analysis of Conditions in the Community which it Serves (New York: National Urban League, October-November, 1949) 45, 150. Library of Congress, Papers of the National Urban League, Part III, 452, Folder 9 “NUL Research Department Baltimore, Maryland Study October- November 1949, 1 of 2.”


The BUL did note that MDES also employed several other African-American white-collar workers. (They were the only professionals, the organization observed with dismay, among the State of Maryland’s 349 Baltimore-based black employees.) They worked exclusively with African-American clients, however, while their white co-workers handled both black and white cases. Banner, A Review, 12, 56-59. See also Anderson, “Last Hired,” 95-96. During World War II, the federal government had taken over the operation of public employment agencies such as MDES, but as the war neared its end, federal officials began planning their return local control. Clarence Mitchell worried that without federal oversight, local employment officials would accommodate racist hiring practices, and the NAACP opposed the transfer. When efforts to avert it failed, Mitchell helped to organize a coalition of groups that included the NUL, the American Jewish Council, the CIO, the AFL and organizations representing Japanese Americans and Latin Americans. The coalition urged the Secretary of Labor to create policies that would combat discrimination by state employment agencies. They recommended the secretary withhold federal funds from states without “policies and procedures for promoting the full utilization of minority groups in local employment and training programs serviced by the agency.” They requested in addition that the federal government mandate that states have in place adequate personnel to monitor practices and prevent discrimination, that agencies be disallowed from accepting discriminatory job orders, and that southern employment offices be desegregated. Their efforts did not meet with success. As a result, when states resumed operation of their employment agencies, local officials were free to discriminate with impunity. Quote from “Report of the NAACP Labor Department at the 38th Annual Conference in Washington, DC” (June 26, 1947). Papers of the NAACP. 3. See also Dona Cooper Hamilton and Charles V. Hamilton, The Dual Agenda: Race and Social Welfare Policies of Civil Right Organizations (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 62-63, and Desmond King, Actively Seeking Work? The Politics of Unemployment and Welfare Policy in the United States and Great Britain (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 98-99.


Mark Stern. A notable example of when this was not the case occurred when the United Auto Workers used seniority provisions to win the reinstatement of black workers and Glenn Martin. CIO unions also did try to investigate the prevalence of racism in the industrial sector during the war. Dennis Dickerson, Out of the Crucible: Black Steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania, 1875-1980 (Albany: State University of New York, 1986) 168-9. At the end of the 1950s, almost a third of Bethlehem Steel’s 29,600 employees were African-American. Equality: Baltimore’s Progress Report (Baltimore: The Sidney Hollander Foundation, Inc., 1960) 63. In 1974, in response to a suit filed by black workers, a consent decree ordered the company and union to open skilled jobs to African Americans. Maryland Commission on Human Relations, “Systemic discrimination: A Report on Patterns of Discrimination at the Bethlehem Steel Corporation Sparrows Point, Maryland” (December 18, 1968) folder “Black and White (2),” box 492, 26, 9, BCA.

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Chapter 3

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23 Demands for control over the provision of segregated services had been a cornerstone of civil rights battles in the city since the end of the nineteenth century. Terry, “Tramping.”


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33 U-JOIN received support from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, AFL-CIO, the United Auto Workers, the International Association of Machinists, and the Baltimore Teachers Union, AFL-CIO, Charles Capper to Lewis Williams, Sr. (August 26, 1964) folder “434 Unions,” box 439, 25, 9, BCA;

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The participants of the meeting also urged the mayor to call a meeting with all of the members of the City Council and to “dramatically” state the “imperative reasons” for passing the amendment to the city’s public accommodation civil rights law that was before them. The participants further urged the mayor to set up a meeting between those council members on the fence on the civil rights bill and the Cardinal, leading rabbis in the city, and, perhaps even, the Bishop responsible for Baltimore. Participants also advised the mayor not to re-introduce open-housing legislation unless he could be assured of its passage. Reflecting the sense of urgency they felt about CORE’s announcement, they noted, “the failure of either of these pieces of legislation would be catastrophic at this time.” David L. Glenn to Theodore McKeldin (April 27, 1966) folder “126 CORE Target City[1],” box 381, 25, 9, BCA. See also Alan Lupo, “‘Why Us?’ For CORE Target, Officials Ask,” The Evening Sun (April 1966); folder “1966,” 128, Series IV, CGEE, UB.


50 Alan Lupo, “‘Why Us?’ For CORE Target, Officials Ask,” The Evening Sun (April 1966); folder “1966,” 128, Series IV, CGEE, UB.

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56 “Morgan Faculty Spanked for Staying ‘Aloof’ from Inner City” The Afro American (September 12, 1967) 24.
58 “Recommendations to the Mayor—Civil Rights Coalition Boards and Commissions” (January 9, 1968) folder “348 Civil Rights,” box 495, 26, 9, BCA.
63 Harry B. How, Jr. to Theodore McKeldin (July 27, 1967) folder “111 Concentrated Employment Program (2),” box 378, 25, 9, BCA.


In 1950, only seven percent of employed black African-American had worked in the public sector, and black men made up only ten percent of city residents who worked for the government. By 1970, over


Williams, Public Housing. 164.


86 Paul D. Samuel, “Russell Ruling Seen Opening Negro Jobs,” Don’t know which paper or date. EPFL, “Officials and Employees- Baltimore-1960-.


89 In many cases, federal officials did require the commitment of some local resources to programs they funded, but the contributions were generally minimal.

Chapter 4

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10 Calvin L. Fleet to Howard W. Jackson (September 2, 1938). See also Leo Whiling [corporation president] to Howard W. Jackson (March 7, 1938); Albert C. Hofrichter [Real Estate Board] to Howard W. Jackson (May 12, 1938); Nelson T. Turner [corporation president] to Howard W. Jackson (April 14, 1938) and [Chairman of the Employers Association of Maryland] to Howard W. Jackson (March 31, 1938) folder “D-1-1137 (2),” box 234, 20, 9, BCA. On the negative response of the Commission on Government Efficiency and Economy, an organization of prominent business leaders, to government organizing, see “Criticizes Plan for Unionizing City Employees [sic.]” The Evening Sun (March 23, 1938), folder “Officials and Employees—Baltimore,” VF, EPFL. The conservative Baltimore Sun echoed the sentiments of the city’s corporate elites. See for example Editorial “Balance Sheet,” The Baltimore Sun (March 5, 1938) folder “1938,” 139, VI, CGEE Collection, UB.
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Hall Light (February 1970) 1.  In the early 1960s, the organization even used the word “demands” in a headline. “CMEA Presents Demands!”, The Hall Light (February 1969) 1. By 1970, the organization even used the word “demands” in a headline. 


22 Ironically, given that the union would lock horns repeatedly with elected officials over the next decades, Baltimore City Council president Thomas D’Alesandro III and city boss --- Pollack helped instigate the drive with overtures communicated through AFSCME by the Baltimore Labor Council. The political


23 Richard Frank, “City Union Asks $4 Million in Hike, Benefits,” The Evening Sun (June 22, 1960); “Firemen’s Union Seen as Biased,” The Baltimore Sun (May 31, 1960) and “Union Asks City Employee Plan,” The Baltimore Sun (December 17, 1962) folder “1954-1963,” box 139, VI, CGEE, UB; John Calvert (President Local 44) to Theodore McKeldin (May 9, 1963) and (June 18, 1963) folder “434 Unions,” box 439, 25, 9, BCA; AFSCME, AFL-CIO Local 44, “Proposal Concerning Employee Relations in Baltimore, Md.” (September 4, 1964) folder AFSCME, VR, EPFL; P.J. Ciampa to Theodore R. McKeldin (January 14, 1965) folder “293 Personnel Policy and Salary Advisory Committee (3),” box 409, 25, 9, BCA; and “City, County Employees Eye Strikes,” The News American (May 23, 1966). See also “City Workers Want Pay Talks,” The Baltimore Sun (July 1, 1966) both in folder “1966,” 139, IV, CGEE, UB.

24 “City, County Employees Eye Strikes,” The News American (May 23, 1966). See also “City Workers Want Pay Talks,” The Baltimore Sun (July 1, 1966) both in folder “1966,” 139, IV, CGEE, UB.


27 Call from Eddie Mosmiller to Arnold S. Zander (April 7, 1961) folder 12 Organizing, box 85, AFSCME President Zander, Walter Reuther Library, Detroit, Michigan.

28 Kathy Kraus, “Trash Strike Shatters Mayor’s Labor Image,” The News American (September 8, 1968) 2-B.

29 “City Employees-Know your CMEA,” The Hall Light (June 1961) 1. On the immediate increasing assertiveness of CMEA see also, “CMEA Sponsors ‘Triple Fringe Benefits,” The Hall Light (September 1961) 1; “Salary Board Recommendations Ignored by Board of Estimates,” The Hall Light (November 1961) 1. Articles in the paper over the decade also reflect the rise in aggressiveness in making requests of the city for municipal workers. “CMEA Presents 69-70 Goals!” The Hall Light (February 1969) 1. By 1970, the organization even used the word “demands” in a headline. “CMEA Presents Demands!” The Hall Light (February 1970) 1.


40 “A Community of Interests,” Oasis (June 1965) 8.


Oral history Ernest Crofoot and oral history Harold Shaw.

On the Baltimore riots see http://www.ubalt.edu/template.cfm?page=1639. In 1968, for example, the leaders of the Poor People’s Campaign at a rally in Washington, D.C. identified an ally in AFSCME. They called on public-sector workers nationwide to strike to protest persistent U.S. poverty. The rally was attended by a hundred AFSCME members from Baltimore, and Crofoot, while he did not commit the union to the strike, pledged, “We will participate in whatever way we can to help bring about the fulfillment of the goals of the Poor People’s Campaign.” Alvin P. Banoff, “Leaders of Poor Call for Strikes,” The Baltimore Sun (June 28, 1968) C 14.


“Not to Be Tolerated,” The Baltimore Sun (September 4, 1968) folder “1968,” 139, IV, CGEE, UB.

Among the public-sector workers who attended the meeting were David Glenn, who headed the Community Relations Commission; Walter Carter, formerly of CORE and currently with the Model Cities program; James Griffin of CORE, who worked for the state; and Frederick L. Nims, Jr., who oversaw the city’s job training programs. Roger Brown, a social worker for the city and the head of a social workers’ union also attended. Stephen J. Lynton, “Rights Heads Back Strike,” The Baltimore Sun (September 7, 1968) folder “1968,” 139, IV, CGEE, UB.


“An Ill-Considered Strike,” The News American (September 6, 1968) folder “1968,” 139, IV, CGEE, UB.


Ernest Crofoot, oral history (2).

Helen Spencer, Louise Coleman, Hilda Grace Speaks, et.al. to The Mayor of Baltimore City (December 10, 1964) folder “Personnel Policy and Salary Advisory Committee (2),” box 409, 25, 9, BCA. As additional examples see Agnes Vanek [laundry worker in City Hospitals] to McKeldin (June 17, 1964) and [Cafeteria workers] to Troy Brailey (December 16, 1964) folder “293 Personnel Policy and Salary Advisory Committee (4),” box 409, 25, 9, BCA.


Many also shared the passion of the time. One group of workers, for example, created a training program to help African Americans prepare for federal civil service exams. Oral history.


65 Quoted in Williams, Public Housing, 163-164.


WomanPower, Inc. was an African-American organization established by Victorine Adams, who became the city’s first black female City Council member. “Mrs. Ferguson Named Service Coordinator,” The Afro American (October 29, 1968) 7 and Williams, Public Housing, 179.


Lee Lassiter, “Welfare: Reform or Revolt—Income, Dignity, Democracy,” The News American (May 1, 1969) Folder “Social Welfare,” VF, MR, EPFL. Within a few months of its creation, Rescuers had a mailing list of 200 and seventy-five members, and McCarty, Snipes and Storey had participated in a convention that helped establish the National Welfare Rights Organization.


Philip H. Van Gelder to J. Millard Tawes (January 27, 1965) folder “107 Community Action Commission Anti-Poverty Program (6),” box 378, 25, 9, BCA.


See, for example, Madeline W. Murphy to Theodore McKeldin (October 15, 1965) and Community Action Commission, “Press Release: Statement of the Community Action Commission to the Board of Estimates” (October 19, 1965) folder “107 CAC Community Action Anti-Poverty Program (2),” box 377,


72 D’Alesandro’s idea met with initial resistance from the staff of the CAA, who suspected the initiative was intended to undermine their fledging efforts at community organization and empowerment. On decentralization efforts in Baltimore see Baltimore City Department of Social Services, “An Evaluation of the Effect of Decentralization on the Delivery of Income Maintenance and Social Services” (November 1974) 17; Bachrach and Baratz, Power and Poverty; George J. Washnis, Municipal Decentralization and Neighborhood Resources: Case Studies of Twelve Cities (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972). On decentralization internationally, see, for example, Chris Miller, Public Service Trade Unionism and Radical Politics (Aldershot, England: Dartmouth Publishing Company Limited, 1996).


77 See for example, Kornbluh, Battle; Madison, Welfare Warriors; Naples, Grassroots Warriors; Orleck, Caesar’s Palace; and Williams, Public Housing.

78 “The Meal the Mayor Wouldn’t Eat,” (July 15, 1966) folder “Poverty/Rights Action Center “The Birth of a Movement,” June 30, 1966,” box 19, 27, 10, NCNW Papers, Bethune House; On food cooperative efforts see Michael Stetz, “War Stories: A History of the Urban Services Agency,” The City Paper (August 1, 1986) folder “(Dept) Urban Services Agency,” box 940, Schaefer (27), 9, BCA and Williams, Public Housing. On the supermarket study see Baltimore Community Relations Commission, “Findings of the Supermarket Pricing Survey” (May 1968). Available at EPFL or LR, City Hall. Nutrition programs only slowly became available and accessible in Baltimore. In 1968, for example, Tayback estimated that only a quarter of eligible families that received AFDC and fifteen percent of other eligible families were enrolled in the program. (In response, DPW increased the number of distribution centers it operated.) McGeehan, “City Agency,” C 24, C 7.


80 On efforts to improve services for the elderly see, for example, Health and Welfare Council of the Baltimore Area, Inc., Social Welfare Planning in Baltimore City (Baltimore: Health and Welfare Council of the Baltimore Area, 1966). On programming for the elderly see, for example, Community Action Agency,
Recreational programming was a major concern of CAA Action Area residents. See, for example, James R. Conant, “Slum ‘Hangover’ Hampers Life in Housing Areas,” The Evening Sun (May 26, 1962) 1 A, 6A; “Council Speeds Bill for Riot Overtime Pay,” The Baltimore Sun (May 21, 1968) C 8; Community Action Agency, “Community Action Agency of Baltimore City: Summary Program Report” (January 1968) 5-6; folder “355 Community Action Agency (2),” box 497, 26, 9 BCA; and Williams, Public Housing, 163.


Chapter 5

1


3 The advocates of the new system included influential economists from the University of Chicago such as Milton Friedman and George Stigler and Wall Street bankers like Paul Volcker. They relied on the economic theories of Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek, whose ideas had fallen into disfavor during the Keynesian revolution of mid-century. They aimed to free capital from government-imposed constraints so that it could be put to productive use across the globe. Advocates promised the new system would create jobs and eliminate poverty. David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

4 David Harvey, Neoliberalism; David Harvey, The Condition of Post Modernity (Cambridge, 1989); David Harvey, “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism,” in The City Cultures Reader, Malcom Miles, Tim Hall and Iain Borden eds. (New York,


10 Calleo, The Imperious Economy; Gowan, Global Gamble; Matusow, Nixon’s Economy; Nightingale, “Flucture;” and Reeves, Nixon.


15 When Jerry Wurf testified on behalf of revenue sharing, he was critical of the measure and did stress that “funds must be allocated to those jurisdictions which have the most serious fiscal difficulties.” “Statement of Jerry Wurf...” in Revenue Sharing: Hearings Before the Committee on Finance, United States Senate (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972) 189-209.


23 Department of the Treasury, Revenue Sharing and Civil Rights (Washington, DC, [1975]) ii.


30 Smith, Schaefer; Welcome, Life; O’Keeffe; and Fleming, Baltimore’s Failure.

31 Fleming, Baltimore’s Failure.


33 Quoted in Smith, Schaefer, 65.

34 Tom Chalkley, “The City that Builds,” City Paper (November 12, 2003). Although the city’s major paper endorsed Schaefer for mayor in 1983, it complained that his “greatest personality failing in office is an autocratic instinct that attracts sycophants and brands others as enemies…The administration’s greatest
pithfall is a self-righteous secretiveness that, when combined with cronyism, is fraught with danger.” [Editorial], “Sun Endorsements” For Schaefer, Clarke, Douglass,” Baltimore Sun (August 28, 1983) K 6.

35 “A Mayor Looks at Model Cities,” [n.d.] folder “Model Cities Agency,” box 151, 26, 9, BCA.


37 Smith, Schaefer.

38 Between 1950 and 1977, the median income of the city’s residents fell from 98 to 68 percent of the median suburban income. Callcott, Maryland, 84; United States Commission on Civil Rights, “Staff Report,” B9; and “Statement of Hon. William Donald Schaefer, Mayor of Baltimore, MD,” Revenue Sharing: Hearings Before the Committee on Finance United States Senate (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972) 297-300.


40 Smith, Schaefer.


Although she did not mention Ivey by name, he was clearly an administrator when “black people, mostly black males,” gained high ranking or influential positions and “just back off.‖ Evelyn Burrell, an original member of Model Cities, explained that disunity resulted from “unnecessarily large workforce as well as federal funding cuts.‖ She knew also of the frustration of administrators and staff members, who had to deal with mountains of paperwork to secure inadequate funds to fight poverty. Yet in a speech on the Model Cities agency, Schaefer argued, “I want to go on record as saying that I get very annoyed with those people, locally and nationally, who knock the program without offering anything better.”

Other CDBG allocations also contributed to combating poverty. Three percent went into public housing security and modernization. Janet Hoffman to The President and Members of the Baltimore City Council (December 9, 1975). BCA, Schaefer Papers, Box 283, Folder “New York City - Crisis” and Editorial, “One Crisis Baltimore Can Sit Out,” The Sun (October 16, 1975) A 18.

William G. Sykes to All Staff Members (January 31, 1973) folder “Model Cities Agency,” box 151, 26, 9, BCA. Sykes concede to Schaefer in a confidential memo that staff reductions were the product of an unnecessarily large workforce as well as federal funding cuts. Bill Sykes to Mayor Schaefer (January 9, 1973) folder “Model Cities Agency,” box 151, 26, 9, BCA

Other CDBG allocations also contributed to combating poverty. Three percent went into public housing security and modernization. What’s more, neighborhood-improvement projects that received the bulk of the funds probably occurred in poor as well as moderate and middle-income neighborhoods “Baltimore’s Housing and Community Development Programs” (May 1981) 13 folder “Neighborhood Convention #162,” box 410, 26, 9, BCA and Marc Levine, “A Third-World City in the First World: Social Exclusion, Racial Inequality, and Sustainable Development in Baltimore, Maryland,” in The Social Sustainability of Cities: Diversity and the Management of Change (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 123-156. William Donald Schaefer to Allen T. Clapp (April 5, 1974) folder “Urban Services 1974,” box 132, 26, 9, BCA. In reflecting on changes in Baltimore’s African-American communities during the 1970s, for example, Evelyn Burrell, an original member of the Model Cities board, explained that disunity resulted when “black people, mostly black males,” gained high ranking or influential positions and “just back off and stop pushing.” Although she did not mention Ivey by name, he was clearly an administrator Schaefer

56 William Donald Schaefer to Lenwood Ivey (May 23, 1974) folder “Urban Services 1974,” box 132, 26, 9, BCA.

57 Bill Sykes to William Donald Schaefer (July 23, 1974) folder “Mayor’s Office of Human Resources,” box 410, 26, 9, BCA.


59 Baltimore City Health Department, “Baltimore Health News,” (January-February 1974) 118. The African-American infant mortality rate had declined to 22.6, while the white rate was 18.5.


70 Maurice A. Harmon to William Donald Schaefer (January 31, 1973) folder “Social Services 12/71-12/73,” box 160, 26, 9, BCA.
83 See for example, Maud Harvey to Richard A. Batterton (September 9, 1976) folder “Human Resources Childcare,” box 251, 26, 9, BCA; Maud S. Harvey to Elizabeth Hight (January 30, 1975) folder “Social Services 1973-1975,” box 160, 26, 9, BCA; and Quentin Lawson to Maud s. Harvey (March 8, 1976) folder “Social Services 1976,” box 437, 26, 9, BCA.
84 Maryland Conference of Social Workers, “The Maryland Conference of Social Workers Opposes the Takeover . . . ” and “The Relationship Between the Baltimore City Department of Social Services and the Maryland State Department of Employment and Social Services” (March 22, 1973) folder “Social Services Takeover- Baltimore City Department of Social Services,” box 160, 26, 9, BCA.
Also represented municipal employees in Baltimore. Local 44 represented the bulk of city workers who were in the union, but employees at the Baltimore Housing Authority, Department of Social Services and antipoverty workers were among other city employees also represented by AFSCME. AFSCME, “Statistical Report for Maryland” (January 31, 1974) folder “16 #67 1974,” box 137, AFSCME President Wurf, Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit.


Lucy attributes the arrests to the overzealousness of an ambitious officer bucking for a promotion. Labor’s Last Angry Man. Crofoot offers an alternative account. He recalls that the officer who arrested Wurf and Lucy did so only reluctantly. An AFSCME local, after all, was in the process of negotiating the officer’s salary. Crofoot contends that Wurf provoked the police and left the officer no choice. According to Crofoot, although the powerful president of AFSCME International could curse and booze it up with the most macho of union leaders and boasted a long history of activism, he had somehow failed to acquire an arrest record. The deficiency, Crofoot reports, was a source of embarrassment to Wurf. As a result, he jumped at the chance to get arrested in Baltimore. Ernest Crofoot, oral history. See also David Michael Ettlin, “Trash-Strike Charges Dropped,” The Baltimore Sun (November 21, 1974) C1, C2.


Donald Kimelman,” Union Ratifies City Pact,” The Sun (July 8, 1976). Reuther, AFSCME Collection President Wurf, Box 129, Folder “12 Maryland No. 67 76.”


Chapter 6

1 C. Fraser Smith, William Donald Schaefer: A Political Biography (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
2 On assertions that identity politics undermined American reform liberalism see, for example, Alan Brinkley, The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf,


“Proposition 13: Threat to All Public Employees, Threat to All Public Services,” *The Public Employee* (July 1978), 1.


AFSCME,” “How to Help America’s Cities Without Raising Taxes” [n.d.] folder “(A-Z) Classified Municipal Employees Association of Baltimore City, Inc.,” box 356, 26, 9, BCA.


56 Quoted in Smith, Schaefer, 143. See also Lyall, “Bicycle,” 40 and Levine, “Downtown Redevelopment,” 103-123.


Smith, Schaefer, 203.


Smith, Schaefer, 199-200.


“Testimony of Mrs. Elaine Smith, President; Mrs. Gloria K. Aull, Vice President and William Ariano, Executive Staff Director, Southeast Development, Inc., Baltimore, MD., a Panel,” in Urban Policy in

75 Testimony of Mrs. Elaine Smith, President; Mrs. Gloria K. Aull, Vice President and William Ariano, Executive Staff Director, Southeast Development, Inc., Baltimore, MD., a Panel,” in Urban Policy in America Hearings before the Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations of the Committee on Governmental Affairs of the U.S. Senate (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978) 53.


81 Thomas Edsall, “Parren Mitchell Criticizes Mayor on Workers’ Layoffs,” The Sun (June 28, 1977). City Hall, Department of Legislative Reference, Clippings Files, “Civil Service Employees.”

82 Letter to Mr. Mayor from Michael Lenivy (June 1, 1979). BCA, Schaefer Papers, 336, “City Employees.”


84 Lenwood Ivey to William Donald Schaefer (December 18, 1980) folder “Urban Services Agency,” box 455, 26, 9, BCA, Baltimore.


97 "Grapevine,“ *The Hall Light* (April 1978) 1. See also “Grapevine,” *The Hall Light* (February 1979) 2. Available at EPFL.


100 Ernest B. Crofoot to Editor (February 1, 1977) folder “2 Maryland,” box 144, AFSCME President Wurf, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan. On CMEA see DeAngelo to William Donald Schaefer (December 26, 1979) folder “(A-Z) Classified Municipal Employees Association of Baltimore City, Inc.,” box 356, 26, 9, BCA and Paula Singer, “Equitable Wages for City Workers,” *The Hall Light* (February 1979) 5.


107 “AFSCME Interim Committee onSex Discrimination Report to International Executive Board,” (October 1972) “1 Discrimination,” box 5, AFSCME Program Development, Wayne State; Oral histories Ernest Crofoot, Raymond Clarke, Cecelia Fabula, Tom Keheller, Harold Shaw, and Nancy Speckman; Veneda Smith, “Helping Those Who Have Lost Their Jobs,” The Public Employee (June 1983) 6; Ernest B. Crofoot to Community Health Nurse (January 2, 1980); “City Nurses Switch Unions,” The Baltimore Sun (January 17, 1980) D 2; and “March is Membership Month,” News From AFSCME (courtesy of Nancy Speckman).

108 “City Employees’ Pay Matches Private Level,” The Evening Sun (December 7, 1968) folder “Civil Service Employees,” Clippings File, Department of Legislative Reference, City Hall, Baltimore.


110 The analysts found that Schaefer had not included in his figures the previous year’s counter-cyclical aid, the current year’s, which the city hadn’t received yet, and $2 million in property taxes. In addition, they found that the mayor had anticipated that he would receive only a ninety-seven percent return on local taxes but he usually got ninety-eight. “Baltimore City Employees Fight Layoff Threat,” The Public Employee (July 1977) 7 and Oral History, Ernie Crofoot.


Box 356, 26, 9, BCA; “Minutes, Meeting of the Civil Service Commission (December 15, 1977) microfilm records of the Civil Service Commission, 5453, BCA; and Francis P. Lucier to Walter S. Orlinsky (June 19, 1975) folder “Closed Shop,” box 336, 26, 9, BCA. See also Rough Road to Renaissance 264.


118 Letter to William Donald Schaefer from Felicia Willett (March 20, 1979). BCA, Schaefer Papers, 90, “Department of Housing and Community Development 1979 [I].”


120 When Schaefer entered office, Baltimore got about forty-four percent of its budget from the state and federal government. The budget proposed for 1979 depended on fifty-seven percent from intergovernmental sources. Jeff Valentine, “Bulk of Higher City Revenue from Md., U.S.,” The Evening Sun (March 28, 1978) folder “Urban Policy, President Carter’s,” box 464, 26, 9, BCA.


Chapter 7


3 The figures do not include those African-American workers who were self-employed. Discrimination certainly persisted in the government workforce and was a source of civil rights activism. U.S. Department of the Census, MicroUse Data, 1980 (CD-ROM).
On the origins of Neoliberalism see David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).


See, for example, “UL Raps Reagan’s State’s Rights Concept” The Afro American (March 24, 1981) 7.
24 William Lucy, “Report International Secretary Treasurer,” The Public Employee (April 1981) 11. Intriguingly, Lucy, who was African-American himself and the founder of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, failed to draw attention to the tragic impact cuts in public-sector employment were likely to have on African Americans, who were overrepresented in the employment category. Perhaps, given the power of the white backlash the Regan administration helped to incite, Lucy did not feel discussing race would help in the fight against Reaganomics. Gerald McEntee, who became AFSCME’s president following Jerry Wurf’s death in 1981, also worried that Reaganomics took a particularly harsh toll on women. See for example, “AFSMEC Women’s Advisory Committee Plans Action Agenda,” The Public Employee (April 1982) 1.
Not applicable.


Lenwood Ivey to Evelina Ryce (January 24, 1983) folder “Urban Services Agency,” box 455, 26, 9, BCA, Baltimore.


Ernest B. Crofoot, “From the Director’s Desk,” Maryland Public Employee (June 1981) 2 and Ernest B. Crofoot, “From the Director’s Desk,” Maryland Public Employee (February 1983) 2.


Ernie Crofoot and Tom Kelleher, Oral Histories.


Tom Kelleher, Oral History and Ray Clarke, Oral History.


77 Sue Williams, “Public Workers are Scared of being Reaganized: Hughes Promises He Won’t Forget Affirmative Action,” The Afro American (June 27, 1981) 1.


committee, Schaefer noted that the number of soup kitchens in the city was on the rise. William Don
Welfare, 1970 94 Declines,‖ Federal Cuts, WEDS #141;‖ and Richard Berke, "City's Economy Cited as Vital to State, but State Aid
Cuts, Schaefer tells City Agen
Papers, "Reagan Budget Cuts, WDS # 141;‖ Nathan, Doolittle and Associates, The News American
Reagan Associations
Conditions smaller,‖ AFSCME "AFSCME Resolution: Title XX,‖ (Resolution No. 216, 26
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Greater Baltimore Commitment: A Study of Urban Minority
Bertha Brown, oral history and Roger Waldinger, Still the Promised City? African-Americans and New
Laura T. Hammel, "Social Services will ‘Hurt, Hurt Badly," The News American (December 14, 1981)
folder “Social Welfare, 1970-,” VF, MR, EPFL. See also “Housing Activists Vow to Help Poor” (March
12, 1985) 1.
Laura T. Hammel, “Social Services will ‘Hurt, Hurt Badly,” The News American (December 14, 1981)
Laura T. Hammel, “Social Services will ‘Hurt, Hurt Badly,” The News American (December 14, 1981)
Some funding was restored by Congress in 1983, and states also sometimes compensated for the cuts.
HelenWinternitz, “Families Tell of Hard Times,” The Baltimore Sun (March 11, 1979) folder “Social Welfare, 1970-,” VF, ER, EPFL, Baltimore. In 1983, while testifying in front of a congressional committee, Schaefer noted that the number of soup kitchens in the city was on the rise. William Donald


Chapter 8


2 Scott Shane, “Baltimore to Try Third World Remedies,” The Baltimore Sun (June 6, 1994).


