Democracy in Action: Community Organizing in Chicago, 1960-1968

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Renee A. LaFleur

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RENEE A. LAFLEUR

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and the College of Arts and Sciences by

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Kevin Mattson

Professor of History

—————————————————————

Howard Dewald

Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

ABSTRACT

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Director of Dissertation: Kevin Mattson

Like the settlement house movement of the Progressive Era, the neighborhood

organizations of the 1960s spoke of great democratic ideals. Both the New Left and the

civil rights movement questioned the future of democratic participation in America. This

quest for a more democratic society is apparent in both the New Left's idea of

participatory democracy and the civil rights movement's emphasis on integrationist

nonviolent direct action. At the same time, an older organizing tradition experienced a

revival. Created by Saul Alinsky years earlier, this method strove to put power back in

the hands of ordinary people by building community organizations. Each of these

methods sought democracy in different institutions and forms.

In this dissertation, I examine the democracies of three groups in Chicago: the

New Left organization, JOIN; Alinsky's The Woodlawn Organization (TWO); and a civil

rights group, the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO). The

conditions in Chicago produced by a rediscovery of poverty, the momentous civil rights

revolution, and a powerful political machine tested these democratic forms. This

dissertation examines the ideology each group espoused and compares it to the actual

structure of the organization to provide a better understanding of the nature of community

groups and the workings of democratic forms. In addition, a study of this nature helps us

understand how community organizations adjust their ideology when confronted with

issues of poverty, race, and hierarchical systems. Moreover, this dissertation explores the effects of community control in its successes and failures.   From this, we can begin to understand which democratic methods succeeded in creating change and use that as a model for future community organizing and reform efforts at a local level.

Approved: _____

Kevin Mattson

Professor of History

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ABBREVIATIONS

Used in text:

AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
CCUO	Chicago Committee on Urban Opportunity
CCCO	Coordinating Council of Community Organizations
CFM	Chicago Freedom Movement
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
ERAP	Economic Research and Action Program
JOIN	Committee for Jobs or Income Now, later JOIN: Community Union
IAF	Industrial Areas Foundation
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
OEO	Office of Economic Opportunity
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SNCC	Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee
TFIS	Teachers for Integrated Schools
TWO	The Woodlawn Organization
UAW	United Auto Workers
UPW	United Packinghouse Workers
UPC	Urban Progress Center

Used in footnotes:

MLK Center	Martin Luther King Center
U of C	University of Chicago
UIC	University of Illinois, Chicago
WHS	Wisconsin Historical Society

INTRODUCTION

"A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from realizing the full import of their activity."—John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*[1]

"In these communities they, under a democratic society, express their desires and dictates through their own organizations. These are organizations that are genuinely of the people, by the people and for the people—organizations that by their very character formulate and articulate a dynamic democratic philosophy. It is clear that the existence of these organizations is vital to the functioning of democracy, for without them we lack all drive for the development of the democratic way of life."—Saul Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*[2]

Community organizations have a rich tradition in American society. Beginning with the benevolent trade societies and church charities, people have found ways to make their lives better through local, non-governmental collective activity. This continued with the settlement house movement of the Progressive Era, the work of the Congress of Industrial Organizations and Saul Alinsky in the Back of the Yards during the Great Depression. And, the 1960s brought a flowering of community organizations stemming from civil rights and the New Left traditions, which continues today in coops, neighborhood associations, and tenant unions.

Breaking with the conformity of the previous decade, the 1960s brought an era of activism and change. Young Americans pondered President John F. Kennedy's call to "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." They joined VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) at home and the Peace Corps abroad.

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[1] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: MacMillan, 1916), 101.
[2] Saul David Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 46–47.

Building on the triumph of *Brown v. the Board of Education,* African Americans

integrated schools, bus stations, and lunch counters through direct, grassroots action.

While students on college campuses orchestrated the Free Speech Movement and shared

governance, white liberal organizations like the United Auto Workers Union joined the

cause to fight for civil rights and end poverty. In their activities, these groups attempted

to create a more democratic society where individuals could participate in the decisions

that affected their lives.

Like the settlement house movement of the Progressive Era that created

community centers where working class citizens could take classes, find childcare, lobby

for street clean up, and other social services, the neighborhood organizations of the 1960s

spoke of great democratic ideals. Both the New Left and the civil rights movement

questioned the future of democratic participation in America. This quest for a more

democratic society is apparent in both the New Left's idea of participatory democracy

and the civil rights movement's emphasis on integrationist nonviolent direct action. At

the same time, an older organizing tradition experienced a revival. Created by Saul

Alinsky years earlier, this method strove to put power back in the hands of ordinary

people by building community organizations. Each of these methods sought democracy

in different institutions and forms.

Participatory democracy, integrationist nonviolence, and community

organizations all came together in Chicago from 1960 to 1968. The conditions in

Chicago produced by a rediscovery of poverty, the momentous civil rights revolution,

and a powerful political machine tested these democratic forms. Examining the ideology

each group espoused and comparing it to the actual structure of the organization provides a better understanding of the nature of community groups and the workings of democratic forms. In addition, a study of this nature helps us understand how community organizations adjust their ideology when confronted with issues of poverty, race, and hierarchical systems. Moreover, this dissertation explores the effects of community control in its successes and failures. From this, we can begin to understand which democratic methods succeeded in creating change and use that as a model for future community organizing and reform efforts at a local level.

In each of the organizing methods, democracy served two functions. First, it formed the basis of the organization's structure. How the organization made decisions, how it chose leaders, and how it determined membership all depended on its interpretation of democracy. In this way, each group's notion of democracy gave it an identity. In addition, democracy was the means to create change in the broader urban community. Through democratic participation in the community, city, government, schools, and other civic and community entities, these organizations endeavored to help communities influence the decisions that affected their lives. Though the three organizing methods all worked toward building democracy, each took different routes. In this dissertation, I will examine the democracies of three groups in Chicago: the New Left organization, JOIN; Alinsky's The Woodlawn Organization (TWO); and a civil rights group, the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO).

Despite debates within the New Left over what participatory democracy meant, one theme transcended others: Letting the "people decide."[3] Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) based its organization on the idea and created the Economic Research and Action Program (ERAP) as a means of putting participatory democracy into practice. Wanting to create an interracial movement of the poor, ERAP sent students into poor communities to organize poor whites to overcome racism and poverty.[4] While participatory democracy might have worked in the early days of SDS, it proved difficult in a community of poor transient whites who might not share common goals. A common definition of participatory democracy describes an organization without leaders. With this understanding, some critics have argued that it would fail in community organizing where leaders are needed to build the structure and programs.[5] Francesca Polletta in her study of participatory democracy, however, notes that it is not simply a lack of leadership. Participatory democracy allows an open discourse in which the group attempts to understand all points of view thereby creating greater acceptance.[6] ERAP utilized this style of participatory democracy in Chicago. Although open discourse was workable in SDS, the student activists failed to consider the problems with participatory democracy in circumstances where the participants are not committed to the same ideal

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[3] For more on participatory democracy, the New Left, and community organizing see Harry Boyte, *The Backyard Revolution: Understanding the New Citizens' Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968: The Great Refusal* (New York: Praeger, 1982); Robert Fisher, *Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America*, Updated ed. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994); Jennifer Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor: Community Organizing and the New Left in the 1960s* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

[4] Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor*.

[5] Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left*, 141.

[6] Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 131–137.

and are not respectful of others.[7] Before Chicago, ERAP never discussed how participatory democracy would work in an urban community where most residents were transient and did not know each other. These are the exact conditions JOIN (Chapter 1), the ERAP venture in Chicago, faced.

JOIN and ERAP in general possessed an idealistic definition of democracy, one developed in project papers, manifestos, and discussions amongst other activists. While activists in JOIN arrived with a distinct theoretical notion of democracy, when they applied it in the neighborhood of Uptown in Chicago they discovered a disconnect between thought and reality. A clear example of the problem of applying participatory democracy in JOIN was when a clearly intoxicated community member who refused to stop talking monopolized a JOIN meeting. In a meeting where everyone's opinion is valued and where there are no structures and rules for agenda setting, how do citizens and activists deal with disruptions? Eventually, JOIN's members shifted their organizing style from open meetings with no membership to parliamentary procedures and clear membership definitions. JOIN modified their initial ideology to one that better suited the situation. The transition clearly shows that JOIN's notion of participatory democracy changed as the organization worked in the community. However, throughout its existence, JOIN's democratic approach maintained a theoretical feel less rooted in actual practice than in ideal form.

Whereas JOIN's organizing method began as intellectual discussions based on idealism, Alinsky's organizing efforts began in the realities of organizing the 1930s Back

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[7] Jane Mansbridge describes this as a "unitary democracy" because all involved have a common interest as opposed to "adversary democracy" where citizens' interests are in conflict. See Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

of the Yards, a working class neighborhood in the meatpacking district of Chicago.[8]

There he gathered disparate ethnic groups under one organization to fight for common

interests against the meat packing industry. From this experience, Alinsky developed a

pragmatic method of community organizing and style of democracy. Putting power in to

the hands of community people, he built organizations through the Industrial Areas

Foundation (IAF) where the people where able to negotiate in their own interests.

Known for his confrontational style, Alinsky worked to "rub raw the resentments of the

people of the community; to fan the latent hostilities of many of the people to a point of

overt expression."[9] In his later career, he threatened Mayor Richard Daley with a "shit-

in" where a community organization would fill all of the bathrooms at O'Hare Airport.

Devoted to the Jeffersonian style of ward democracy, Alinsky focused on building power

in the community. His community focus led Harry Boyte and Robert Fisher, in their

books on community organizing, to accuse his organizations of being too insular, of

having little concern about the effects on other neighborhoods.[10] More recently, Mark

Santow has argued that Alinsky limited the community's ability to solve its problems by

restricting its attention to local issues without considering that urban problems usually

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[8] For Alinsky's own descriptions of his organizing techniques see Saul D. Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, Vintage Books edition. (New York: Vintage Books, 1969); Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals; a Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1971); For analysis and criticism of the Alinsky method see Sanford D. Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1989); Joan E. Lancourt, *Confront or Concede, the Alinsky Citizen-Action Organizations* (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1979); Nicholas Von Hoffman, *Radical: A Portrait of Saul Alinsky* (New York: Nation Books, 2010); Boyte, *The Backyard Revolution*; Fisher, *Let the People Decide*.

[9] Saul D. Alinsky, "From Citizen Apathy to Participation," October 19, 1957, 3, Box 32, Folder 523, Industrial Areas Foundation Collection, University of Illinois--Chicago, Richard Daley Library. [Hereafter cited as IAF Collection, UIC]

[10] See Fisher, *Let the People Decide*; Boyte, *The Backyard Revolution*; Hillary D. Rodham, "'There Is Only the Fight...': An Analysis of the Alinsky Model" (senior thesis, Wellesley College, 1969); Frank Riessman, *Strategies Against Poverty* (New York: Random House, 1969).

have roots beyond a community.[11] In the Woodlawn Organization (TWO), Alinsky

helped build an organization based on self-determination (Chapter 2). Though interested

primarily in Woodlawn, TWO not only worked with organizations outside the

community, it sought solutions outside the community as well as within. For example,

TWO worked with other Chicago organizations to fight a citywide problem—school

segregation. In addition, TWO looked outside of Chicago for the means to fight poverty

by appealing directly to the Office of Economic Opportunity. A better way to describe

Alinsky's style of organizing is democratic pragmatism. He demonstrated a willingness

and flexibility when advising organizations that let them to capitalize on cooperation or

conflict, whichever worked. TWO directed its first action at the University of Chicago's

urban renewal plan that would annex part of Woodlawn. TWO objected because the

University did not consult Woodlawn before taking the plans to the city. In this instance,

TWO confronted the University. But later when the two have mutual interests, TWO and

the University worked together on an experimental high school. Alinsky's pragmatic

style allowed TWO to adapt and always work in their best interests.

Alinsky's pragmatism extended to the manner in which he advised and built

community organizations. While his ultimate goal was to create an organization that

would give the people power, during its formative stage, Alinsky and his staff organizers

exerted considerable control over decision-making. The IAF staff chose targets and

tactics, sometimes ignoring the desires of the people. Alinsky argued that this was the

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[11] For more on the limits of Alinsky's community based method see Mark Santow, "Saul Alinsky and the Dilemmas of Race in the Post-War City" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2000); Mark Santow, "Self-Determination: Race, Space, and Chicago's Woodlawn Organization in the 1960s," in *"We Shall Independent Be": African American Place Making and the Struggle to Claim Space in the United States*, ed. Angel David Nieves and Leslie M. Alexander (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2008).

best means to build a power organization and that he and his staff knew from experience which lines of attack would be most fruitful. Alinsky's model of organizing allowed the people to decide when it was advantageous and preserved the staff's right to veto the people when needed. Alinsky's right hand man, Nicholas Von Hoffman recalled this process in his memoir on Alinsky, "We organized people to determine their own destinies except when we determined them."[12] This pragmatism allowed TWO to achieve a number of successes both within the community and in the city.

If JOIN had idealistic theory and Alinsky had pragmatic experience, the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO) had neither (Chapter 3). Before Martin Luther King, Jr. and Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) came to Chicago, the CCCO struggled to find a path. Founded in response to the fight against school segregation, the CCCO did not have an organizing ideology before becoming an organization.[13] As an organization of organizations, the CCCO represented groups with diverse understandings of democracy and action. Although the member organizations focused on integration, they disagreed considerably on the means. In a movement where means was as important as ends, the CCCO engaged in adversarial democracy, though they had a common interest in ending school segregation. Jane Mansbridge's definition of an adversarial democracy is when the "citizens' interests are in constant conflict." The nature of democracy in the CCCO can be described in similar

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[12] Von Hoffman, *Radical: A Portrait of Saul Alinsky*, 57.
[13] For more on the CCCO and its role in the Chicago civil rights movement see Alan Anderson and George Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986); James R. Ralph, *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993).

terms.[14] There was much debate among constituent organizations over confrontational

tactics such as school boycotts, with some organizations even recanting before offering

full support. The diversity of opinion and the adversarial nature meant that CCCO

practiced a coalition style of democracy; one where conservative, middle class voices

moderated the militant or activist voices. The time and effort spent deliberating and the

difficulty in finding a common method of attaining power meant that the CCCO's

coalition style crippled its ability to affect change. In short, its practice of democracy

prevented it from attaining its common goal of integration. When SCLC started its

Chicago campaign in 1965, it brought nonviolence as an organizing tactic to CCCO's

coalition style democracy. Though this would seem to bring unity to the group, the

adversary and coalition continued.

King and SCLC's nonviolent direct action led to tremendous changes in

segregation laws in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma.[15] Translating this to work

with de facto segregation of the North required modifications. The nature of northern

racism and the presence of existing groups influenced the practice of nonviolence.

King's method was deeply ideological and moral. By putting pressure on sources of

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[14] Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, 3.

[15] For King's philosophy on nonviolence see Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1958); Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Signet Books, 1964); Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Martin Luther King, Jr., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991); For the workings of SCLC see Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: W. Morrow, 1986); Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987); Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters*, vol. 1,(New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988); Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-65*, v. 2 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998); Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-68*, v. 3 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007).

power, King hoped to embarrass leaders and help them come to the moral conclusion that segregation was wrong. The foundation of nonviolence is brotherly love—where the well-being of the opposition is also central to the goal. King's tactics in using nonviolent direct action changed throughout the 1960s, as seen in his later writings. Faced with black power, ghetto riots, and a resistant northern movement, King's method of encouraging nonviolence becomes more pragmatic. While he empathized with the feelings behind black power and riots, he kept his commitment to nonviolence. But his greatest challenges were SCLC's alliance with the CCCO and the obstructionist practices of Chicago's political machine.

Similar to the strains between the different factions within CCCO, the tensions between SCLC and CCCO were persistent. Members of the CCCO, the established civil rights groups in Chicago, often used different tactics and sought different goals than SCLC. While the SCLC wanted to focus on slums, many of the organizations within CCCO had their own projects in addition to the organization's emphasis on school desegregation. Once SCLC came to town, CCCO projects ended up on the back burner. Member of CCCO also worried about what would happen when SCLC left Chicago. King and his organization had a history of sweeping into an area with media attention-grabbing demonstrations, then leaving the community to its own devices. Furthermore, King and SCLC's commitment to nonviolence conflicted with those CCCO organizations that were interested with black power. Because of the diversity of method and opinion, the CCCO and SCLC partnership continued the practice of coalition democracy. This limited their ability to make significant changes in race relations in Chicago.

Once we understand the democratic nature of these organizations, we can look at how groups with differing theories worked together for common goals. The growing popularity of black power and the effectiveness of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty were all crucial issues in 1960s Chicago. By looking at community organizations through these issues, one can see how they implemented their ideas about democracy and why. This is especially important when considering how these community organizations interacted with government agencies in a less than democratic Chicago run by the Daley machine. This dissertation, then, examines how well groups holding varying perspectives on democracy can work together. In short, their democratic nature determined how they responded to the machine, poverty, and black power (Chapter 4).

Richard J. Daley's political machine ran the city of Chicago from his election as mayor in 1955 to his death in 1976. Daley controlled not only the mayor's office; he also held the position as Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party, which allowed him to determine several of Illinois's electoral votes. This made Daley powerful inside and outside the city. Gathering votes and doling out patronage jobs was a way of life in the Windy City.[16] In addition, the machine worked in such a way that it exploited the votes of the city's black citizens who swayed elections but did not reap the benefits of

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[16] For more on Daley and the Chicago political machine see Roger Biles, *Richard J. Daley: Politics, Race, and the Governing of Chicago* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995); Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor, *American Pharaoh: Mayor Richard J. Daley - His Battle for Chicago and the Nation* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2000); Leon Mathis Despres and Kenan Heise, *Challenging the Daley Machine: A Chicago Alderman's Memoir* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005); Milton L. Rakove, *We Don't Want Nobody Nobody Sent: An Oral History of the Daley Years* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979); Mike Royko, *BOSS: Richard J. Daley of Chicago* (New York: Signet, 1971).

patronage.[17] The undemocratic nature of the machine ran counter to everything for which

the community organizations stood. Yet, they had to fight or work with the machine if

they wanted programs that met the needs of their communities. The nature of each

group's democracy would determine their success in dealing with the Daley machine.

With the publication of John Kenneth Galbraith's *Affluent Society* (1958) and

Michael Harrington's *The Other America* (1963), Americans rediscovered poverty.[18]

Most notably Lyndon Johnson declared war on poverty as part of the Great Society.[19]

But, the desire to fight poverty was not limited to the executive branch of the federal

government. The New Left was also concerned with the effects of poverty; this concern

helped spur the creation of ERAP. Civil rights groups readily acknowledged the link

between racism and poverty. Fighting poverty was a way to fight racism and vice versa.

Alinsky also knew that poverty was a problem for community power. He guided

communities to self-determination in part by eliminating poverty in the community.

However, when these groups attempted to utilize the community-based programs of the

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[17] For an exploration of the Daley machine's relationship with black citizens see William J. Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1931-1991* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[18] For more on the rediscovery of poverty see Robert Hamlett Bremner, *From the Depths: the Discovery of Poverty in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1956); Michael B. Katz, ed., *The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993); James T. Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century*, New ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[19] For more on the War on Poverty and the Johnson administration see Irving Bernstein, *Guns or Butter: The Presidency of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996); Sar A. Levitan, *The Great Society's Poor Law: a New Approach to Poverty* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969); Daniel P. Moynihan, ed., *On Understanding Poverty; Perspectives from the Social Sciences* (New York: Basic Books, 1969); John A. Andrew, *Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1998); Noel A. Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs* (State University of New York Press, 2007); Leila Meier Rice, "In the Trenches of the War on Poverty: The Local Implementation of the Community Action Program, 1964-1969" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1997).

Office of Economic Opportunity they met with resistance from the Daley political

machine. "Maximum feasible participation" of the poor was nearly impossible in a Daley

run Chicago. In examining the attempts of community organizations to gain control of

welfare programs in a city that lacked the democratic means to make the system work we

see the groups exercising their democratic notions with limited success.

At the root of the Daley machine and the War on Poverty is the fight for power.

In the mid-1960s, a new power ideology began circulating—black power.[20] Each of the

community organizations addressed the popularity of black power reflecting their

understanding of democracy. JOIN, as an organization of poor whites and student

activists, attempted to shape black power to fit their class interpretation of race relations.

Arguing for poor people's power, JOIN used the parts of black power that fit with their

notion of democracy and ignored the rest. With its focus on the community above all

else, the Alinsky method complements the black self-determination that is at the center of

black power. Arthur Brazier's memoir of his time as TWO's president is a testament of

black power titled *Black Self-Determination*.[21] Yet, like JOIN, TWO adopted the aspects

of black power that fit with its understanding of democracy. The complicated

relationship of CCCO and SCLC meant that its interaction with black power would be

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[20] The original book on black power is Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967); For the current debates on black power see Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 2006); John T. McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies: An Essay in African-American Political Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Jeffrey Ogbonna Green Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[21] Arthur Brazier, *Black Self-Determination: The Story of the Woodlawn Organization* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969).

under the adversarial nature of the organizations' decision-making process. SCLC's commitment to non-violence meant the alliance could not endorse black power, but due to the coalition in CCCO, the partnership could not completely discount black power either. Instead, SCLC and CCCO were forced to forge a middle path that recognized the frustrations that lead to black power without endorsing the ideology.

One might be tempted to place this dissertation in the movement towards a history of the civil rights movement in the north. Thomas Sugrue and others have led the way to document the dynamic northern movement that in many ways was distinct from its southern counterpart.[22] As Sugrue correctly points out, the northern movement was more than King's attempt to integrate Chicago and the school battles in New York City. Blacks and whites in northern cities had been fighting for equality long before the Montgomery bus boycott and the nonviolent movement that developed from it. They created their own local organizations and joined national groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League, and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). This was the case in Chicago. Civil rights organizations were active before this dissertation picks up the story. However, to label this study a history of the civil rights movement cuts it short. This is a story of democracy in the quest for black civil rights, the fight against poverty, and the struggle against the political machine. It crosses the lines of race to encompass all Chicagoans interested in making a more democratic America. Yes, it is part of civil rights history, but is not limited to such.

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[22] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 2008); Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

This dissertation more correctly fits in the studies of local control in cities in post-war America. Each of the groups under study here, in their pursuit of democracy, wanted the community to have control over the decisions that affected their lives. Guian McKee's book, *The Problem of Jobs*, explores urban renewal efforts and job creation in Philadelphia during the 1960s.[23] One group he studies in depth, Opportunities Industrialization Centers (OIC) was successful in creating job training and employment opportunities in black neighborhoods by using government funds. Run by the community members themselves, the OIC was a model of local control and blossomed under the community action programs of the War on Poverty. While it did not solve the problem of jobs in Philadelphia, the OIC demonstrated the benefits and limits of local control. Similarly, Jerald Podair's look at the Ocean Hill-Brownsville strike, *The Strike that Changed New York*, illustrated the problems of local control.[24] In this example, an experimental program created a community school board to determine curriculum and policy for the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school. Situated in a black community, this was an experiment in community control. The school board, however, conflicted with the white liberal community, specifically the teachers' union. After a series of strikes in 1968, the local control of the school board ended when liberals sided with white teachers over the black parents. Both books document the successes and failures of community control and this dissertation falls in that tradition. JOIN, TWO, and CCCO all pursued a democracy that would grant the community the control over the decisions that affected their lives

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[23] Guian A. McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
[24] Jerald E. Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

whether it was school integration, urban renewal, War on Poverty funds, welfare benefits, or job training. And like Podair and McKee's books, this dissertation documents both the successes and failures of local control.

In the midst of the rediscovery of poverty, the momentous civil rights revolution, and the power of the Daley machine, these organizations tested their notions of democracy. By examining the democratic theory espoused by each group and comparing it to the actual structure of the organization, we gain a better understanding of the nature of community groups and the workings of democratic forms. A study of this nature provides some hints as to how community organizations adjust or conform their ideology when they confronted issues of poverty, race, and political opposition. An organization's understanding of democracy influenced their success and failure in addressing the concerns facing communities in 1960s Chicago.

CHAPTER 1: JOIN: A PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY OF THE POOR

> If we did get people in Uptown ready to move, there always has to be somebody
> on top. There always has to be a leader. And I'm just thinkin' about how really
> fucked up the world is, and back when I started in JOIN I was thinkin': say we get
> control. What was puttin' me kinda up tight then was, How are these people
> gonna be when we build the organization, who supposedly are the leaders? Are
> they gonna be using the people that they're supposedly leading into justice? It
> seems that people has always lived off other people. –Buddy Tompkins, JOIN
> member[25]

"Little" Dovie Coleman and her aunt "Big" Dovie Thurman arrived at the

storefront office of JOIN Community Union with apprehension. The previous day a

JOIN staffer had handed them a leaflet reading, "Are you tired of late checks, no checks,

midnight raids, caseworkers' harassment? Come to a meeting." Both women were too

familiar with the complexities and hassles of the welfare system in Chicago. Tired of

feeling helpless, they made up their minds to see what this organization could do.

Walking into the smoky room, they hesitated. Not used to being around so many white

people, Little Dovie asked her aunt, "Do you think it's alright to go in?" The group had

been discussing welfare. As way of invitation, they asked Little Dovie if she had

anything to add. She said, "I'm sick and tired of this welfare system. I don't know what

to do about it, but I want to fight, too. It's doing the same to all of us." Her first attempt

at speaking to a group of people, and white people at that, met with applause. JOIN

invited them to return. At the next meeting, Little Dovie was elected chairperson. Thus

began the Dovies' involvement in community organizing. They both became active in

welfare rights as part of JOIN and an offshoot group Welfare Recipients Demand Action

(WRDA). In later years Little Dovie remembered, "What was most exciting was

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[25] Todd Gitlin and Nanci Hollander, *Uptown; Poor Whites in Chicago* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970),
424.

somebody wanted me. I didn't even know what a chairperson was. I had a lot inside me that I always wanted to say, but never knew how to get it out."[26] JOIN gave Little Dovie the opportunity to speak her mind and to do something about the problems that used to leave her angry.

The JOIN Community Union was part of the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) arm of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). It organized itself around the principles of participatory democracy and attempted to build an organization that let the people make the decisions that affected their lives. The process was complicated and slow because conditions in Uptown were not what JOIN anticipated. Students had difficulty relating to residents, the sense of community was weak due to the transient nature of the neighborhood, and how they understood the nature of the problems faced by the poor changed over time. But the fundamental difficulty student organizers faced was balancing their dominant position in JOIN while promoting a participatory democracy led by community people. Ultimately, the result of this struggle would determine the fate of the organization. At the same time that it tried to create an organization controlled by the people, JOIN attempted to reform society along the lines of participatory democracy by getting government and social institutions to listen to the poor as well. As both a social goal and an organizational method, participatory democracy was the guiding force in JOIN. As one promotional letter stated, "We believe

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[26] Studs Terkel, *Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel about the American Obsession* (New York: New Press, 1992), 57–58.

in democracy, in systems where people make the decisions which determine the direction of their lives."[27]

Participatory Democracy

Because JOIN was a child of SDS, the latter's definition of participatory democracy set the stage for understanding the former's use. SDS policy statements emphasized the need for participatory democracy as a political goal and a solution to the complacency that permeated political and social life. At the same time, participatory democracy also worked as an organizational tool. SDS itself functioned as a participatory democracy in which the members accepted all ideas as valid, and the leadership acquiesced to shared governance.

SDS called for a more participatory democracy in its 1962 manifesto the *Port Huron Statement*. The document pointed to the contradictions in American society—the ideal of democracy in the face of inequality and segregation, Cold War nuclear arms race while speaking of world peace, material affluence without the benefit of fulfilling work. A general sense of complacency in America fostered these paradoxes. As a remedy to this sense of apathy, SDS encouraged active involvement in society through participatory democracy. By creating an engaged public, individuals would have a say in the decisions that affected their lives. "As a *social system,*" SDS asserted, "we seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation, governed by two central aims: that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life;

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[27] Peter Freedman to Friend, 1965, 1, Series 2B:38, Students for a Democratic Society Papers (microfilm). [Hereafter cited as SDS Papers]

that society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their common participation."[28]

SDS's interpretation of participatory democracy as a political goal showed the influence of John Dewey and C. Wright Mills.[29] Both thinkers called for "face to face" communities to counter the complacency of distant bureaucratic government without removing existing representative democratic systems already in place. For example, the *Port Huron Statement* emphasized ending the isolation and complacency felt by many Americans, not the destruction of the current political system. The document asserted, "Politics has the function of bringing people out of isolation and into community, thus being a necessary, though not sufficient, means of finding meaning in personal life."[30] In encouraging a more participatory style of politics, the *Port Huron Statement* argued for a more democratic society through a revitalized party system and voluntary associations to increase public involvement.[31]

SDS further explored the details of participatory democracy in *America and the New Era*. Approved at the June 1963 national convention, *America and the New Era* called for an end to the "official ideologies which served to increase consensus and inspire passive acquiescence rather than an active quest for freedom and fraternity." Like the *Port Huron Statement*, this document embraced democratic engagement. The authors "seek to participate in the construction of a society in which men have, at least, the

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[28] Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement," in *"Democracy is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago*, by James Miller (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 333.
[29] For an exploration of the intellectual influences of the SDS and its early leaders see James Miller, *"Democracy Is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).
[30] Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement," 333.
[31] Ibid., 362.

chance to make the decisions which shape their lives. Our quest is for a political and economic order in which power is used for the widest social benefit and a community in which men can come to know each other and themselves as human beings in the fullest sense."[32] Unlike the Port Huron document, however, *America and the New Era* offered examples of where this process was taking place. Looking to new insurgencies that were "thinking and acting in radical ways," the document pointed to groups such as civil rights workers fighting segregation and seeking rights that would transform society as the vanguard of a new era of insurgent politics. The language in *America and the New Era* reaffirmed SDS's commitment to participatory democracy: "The outcome of these efforts at creating insurgent politics could be the organization of constituencies expressing, for the first time in this generation, the need of ordinary men for a decent life."[33]

An integral part of this conception of participatory democracy is equality. If a group of people were denied access to the decision making process, then the face-to-face community did not exist. In the context of SDS and JOIN, equality generally implied racial equality. The Southern civil rights movement inspired and mobilized SDS. In the sit-in movement and the development of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) SDS saw direct action used to create a more democratic society.[34] Members embraced the movement and the equality that it sought. In the *Port Huron Statement,* they noted that while the United States espoused notions of democracy "whole constituencies are divested of the full political power they might have."[35] Especially

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[32] "America and the New Era," 1963, 1, Series 4B:314, SDS Papers.
[33] Ibid., 15.
[34] Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973), 23, 29.
[35] Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement," 337.

critical of the one-party system in the South, the statement also documented racial

discrimination in education, housing, and employment.[36] Inequality represented more

than just low paying jobs and undemocratic practices; it limited the functioning of the

society. The *Port Huron Statement* explained that distant race relations caused damage

beyond the black community: "Not knowing the 'nonwhite,' however, the white knows

something less of himself. Not comfortable around 'different people,' he reclines in

whiteness instead of preparing for diversity. Refusing to yield objective social freedom

to the 'nonwhite,' the white loses his personal subjective freedom by turning away 'from

all these damn causes.'"[37]

Between the Port Huron convention and the 1963 annual convention, civil rights

activity grew in the south. Major campaigns in Albany, Georgia and Birmingham,

Alabama brought media attention to the efforts of SCLC and SNCC to integrate the

cities. Most notably, activists in Birmingham battled police dogs and fire hoses when the

commissioner of public safety, Bull Connor, tried to stop the marches throughout the

summer of 1963. Moreover, days before the SDS convention, Kennedy announced his

decision to take on civil rights and propose civil rights legislation. Electrified by these

events, SDS doubled its efforts on racial equality in *America and the New Era.* The

document devoted much space to documenting the possibilities of the civil rights

movement. It also argued that racial equality was part of creating a face-to-face

community: "It is absolutely essential that Negroes and other minority groups be free to

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[36] Ibid., 352–353.
[37] Ibid., 354.

organize and yield independent political power in their own interest. To see such representation is in the best democratic tradition."[38]

Tightly linked to racial equality in the minds of SDSers was economic opportunity. Influenced by the "rediscovery" of poverty, the *Port Huron Statement* drew from the writings of Michael Harrington and John Kenneth Galbraith.[39] Both noted the invisibility of the poor in the shadow of an affluent society. Galbraith explains this as a consequence of "the transition of the very poor from a majority to a comparative minority position."[40] Harrington, on the other hand, credits the invisibility of the poor to their location "off the beaten track," but more importantly, they are invisible because most of American does not want to see them or think of them.[41] Both authors credited a culture of poverty for the continued existence of want despite widespread economic abundance. Harrington wrote that poverty was more than an economic status, it was "a culture, an institution, a way of life."[42] Galbraith argued that the first step to ending poverty was to ensure that it was "no longer self-perpetuating" by reaching the children of the poor. Proper schooling, nourishing food at school, health services in the community, and other outside influences would overcome the disadvantages that cause poverty to follow a family.[43] Both authors argued that whatever the cause, America needed to address the persistence of poverty. "In a nation with a technology that could provide every citizen with a decent life," Harrington wrote, "it is an outrage and a scandal that there should be

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[38] Students for a Democratic Society, "America and the New Era," 22.
[39] Both John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* (1958) and Michael Harrington's *Other America* (1962) led the discussion of poverty in 1950s and 1960s American society.
[40] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), 328.
[41] Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (Baltimore: Penguin books, 1962), 11.
[42] Ibid., 22.
[43] Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 330.

such social misery."[44] SDSers knew that without economic opportunity the poor would

continue to be powerless, existing on the margins of society. This cycle affected blacks

in particular. The "oppressed are conditioned by their inheritance and their surroundings

to expect more of the same: in housing, schools, recreation, travel, all their potential is

circumscribed, thwarted, and often extinguished."[45] The only way out of the cycle was a

widespread poverty program that would include housing, health care, welfare, and social

security programs.

Increasing automation in the workplace threatened to expand poverty in America.

Writers of the *Port Huron Statement* feared the consequences of increased mechanization

namely unemployment. As jobs became obsolete, other obstacles would present

themselves: "the marginal worker is made more insecure by automation, high education

requirement, heavier competition for jobs, the maintenance of low wages, and a high

level of unemployment."[46] Labor unions, the source of workers' power, were

increasingly ineffective. Suffering from decreased membership and limited by Taft-

Hartley, they have become mired in their own bureaucracy. The *Port Huron Statement*

argued for a more equitable distribution of work that would promote leisure rather than

unemployment. It also chastised labor unions for their ineffectiveness and challenged

them to represent workers' interests better.

America and the New Era continued the discussion of economics and the fears of

automation. The document worked from arguments of two crucial 1963 analyses. One,

The Triple Revolution, a memoranda sent to President Johnson by the Ad Hoc Committee

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[44] Harrington, *The Other America*, 24.
[45] Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement," 353.
[46] Ibid., 343.

on the Triple Revolution and signed by social activists and scholars, argued that

revolutions in cybernation (automation), weaponry, and human rights are all

interrelated.[47] Funds to create a more equitable society could only come from those

diverted from weapons production. In addition, equal opportunity would be meaningless

if jobs were lost to automation. Only through managing these revolutions with careful

policies will a democratic society be formed. The second analysis that *America and the*

New Era looked to was economist Ray Brown's presentation at the Nyack Conference on

Unemployment and Social Change. Brown argued that the problem was not simply a

lack of jobs but rather a population outgrowing the job supply. Based on these analyses,

America and the New Era concluded that "while America continues to ride on a surface

of visible prosperity, the economic crisis has been most directly manifest for two groups

in the society—young people and Negroes."[48]

An Interracial Movement of the Poor

Both the *Port Huron Statement* and *America and the New Era* illustrated that SDS

believed participatory democracy could achieve racial and economic equality. However,

only through research, analysis and most importantly, experimentation, would the errors

in American society be corrected thus producing a just and democratic society. While

experimentation was certainly a key point of the desire to reach a participatory

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[47] *The Triple Revolution* was signed by Donald G. Agger, Dr. Donald B. Armstrong, James Boggs, Lois Fein, W. H. Ferry, Maxwell Geismar, Todd Gitlin, Philip Green, Roger Hagan, Michael Harrington, Tom Hayden, Robert L. Heilbroner, Ralph L. Helstein, Frances W. Herring, Hugh B. Hester, Alice Mary Hilton, Irving Howe, Everett C. Hughes, H. Stuart Hughes, Gerald W. Johnson, Irving F. Laucks, Stewart Meacham, A. J. Muste, Gunnar Myrdal (with reservations), Linus Pauling, Gerard Piel, Michael D. Reagan, Bayard Rustin, Ben B. Seligman, Robert Theobald, John William Ward, William Worthy. For the full text see The Ad Hoc Committee on the Triple Revolution, *The Triple Revolution*, 1963, http://www.educationanddemocracy.org/FSCfiles/C_CC2a_TripleRevolution.htm.

[48] Students for a Democratic Society, "America and the New Era," 5.

democracy, SDSers realized that they could not go into action without a plan. They used

the action component of participatory democracy to test their theories and encourage

democratic discourse. As illustrated throughout both of SDS's founding documents,

complacency and consensus are the death knell of democracy. In its attention to

experimentation, SDS acknowledged the need for action to test options and create

change. The *Port Huron Statement* called for a "search for truly democratic alternatives

to the present, and a commitment to social experimentation with them."[49] Although SDS

argued that the time was ripe for action, they needed "serious study and deliberate

experimentation, rooted in a desire for human fraternity," to create "blueprints of civic

paradise."[50] *America and the New Era* reaffirmed the need for experiments, warning, "In

the long run, the encroachment of the engineered consensus will permanently frustrate

the long human struggle to establish a genuinely democratic community."[51] Only

through openly debating alternatives would America break out of its complacency. By

the time SDS approved of *America and the New Era* in June 1963, some SDSers were

ready to move from strict analysis and criticism to action and experimentation.

    The Southern civil rights movement proved to SDS that action and

experimentation were the best methods to eliminate racial and economic inequality. The

Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) success in Birmingham and the

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom confirmed to SDS that what students really

desired was action. The direct action and community organizing efforts of SNCC also

inspired them. While SDS knew that analysis and research were important, they craved

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[49] Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement," 329–331.
[50] Ibid., 365.
[51] Students for a Democratic Society, "America and the New Era," 10.

action as seen in *America and the New Era's* emphasis on the new insurgencies. In

September 1963, SDS created the Economic Research and Action Program (ERAP).

Although initially it focused on research, action eventually won the day.

Echoing the message of the *Port Huron Statement* and *America and the New Era*,

ERAP was committed to racial and economic equality as well as action as a way to

achieve participatory democracy.[52] ERAP organizers believed, "Fundamentally, what is

needed is the organization of people to protect and achieve economic rights and security,

to ensure decent working conditions, to demand a share in the fantastic profits made

possible by automation, to demand the public investment in the social capital needed for

human development. This means the organization of workers, of Negroes, of youth, of

the unemployed, of white collar and professional employees."[53] Economic and racial

equality were only part of the ERAP's commitment to participatory democracy. ERAP

also demonstrated a devotion to experimentation. As noted in a resolution, "The SDS

program in community action was designed deliberately to stress innovation in program

and in strategy."[54]

ERAP moved SDS members into neighborhoods to help people "protect and

achieve their economic rights and security."[55] Ideally, these community unions would

organize workers in the place of residence rather than at the workplace as a labor union

would. They wanted to create an "interracial movement of the poor" where blacks and

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[52] Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left*; Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor*.
[53] "SDS Economic Research and Action Project: An Introductory Statement," 1964, 2, Series 2B:2, SDS Papers.
[54] "Resolution of the 1964 S.D.S. Convention on its Community Organizing Program," 1964, 1, Series 2A:11, SDS Papers.
[55] "SDS Economic Research and Action Project: An Introductory Statement," 2.

whites joined to fight the causes and effects of poverty. Illustrating its commitment to

economic and racial equality, ERAP sought to organize the unemployed. ERAP believed

that powers in American society prevented policies that supported full employment.

They argued, "The problem of unemployment will not be dealt with until the unemployed

organize and act in their own interest."[56] In particular, they took Stokely Carmichael's

advice at a National Student Association meeting in 1964 to organize in the white

community.[57] By tackling the common issue of poverty and unemployment, ERAP

sought to address issues of both racial and economic equality. By showing poor whites

that they were economically oppressed just as were African Americans, ERAP hoped to

alleviate white backlash to the civil rights movement while also addressing real concerns

about poverty and unemployment. With unemployed whites as their target, ERAP set

about creating its first project.

Organizing the Unemployed

ERAP supporters within SDS chose Chicago as its first site because of "its

substantial rates of Negro and white unemployment, the varied nature of its workforce,

[and] the extensive and diverse nature of its white slums." Taking cues from the

community organizing tactics of the SNCC, ERAP sent Joe Chabot, a sophomore at the

University of Michigan, to Chicago to organize white unemployed men. Chosen for his

"wide range of work and organizational experience" as well as his familiarity with the

city, Chabot arrived in Chicago in September 1963 to initiate the ERAP experiment.[58]

With the bravado of youth, ERAPers believed they were following "the next step in a

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[56] Richard Flacks, "Chicago: Organizing the Unemployed," April 7, 1964, 1, Series 4B:91, SDS Papers.
[57] Sale, *SDS*, 102.
[58] Flacks, "Chicago: Organizing the Unemployed," 2.

political sequence which began only about five years ago with sit-ins, peace marches, and anti-HUAC rallies."[59] Later, they "consider[ed] themselves a critical (often more radical) part of the civil rights movement."[60] But no one in ERAP was really sure what form this "political organization of the urban poor" would take.[61]

Although SDS was largely an organization that produced critiques and ideology, it seemed to have put limited thought into what exactly Chabot was supposed to do once he arrived in Chicago. Initially, Chabot and ERAP believed approaching unemployed youth would be the way to organize a movement. ERAPers thought that young people would be the most "ready" for organizing because "their problems were the most severe (statistically) and the ingrained inhibitions against acting against the system which exist among white adults would be less evident among youth."[62] The young people in Chicago, Chabot soon found out, had little interest in being organized. Chabot reported that the adolescent men he approached "are suspicious of me as well as everyone else who tries to have anything to do with them."[63] When it became clear that unemployed youth would not be the catalyst for change, Chabot met with organizations and unemployed adult men to determine what exactly ERAP should or could do in Chicago. These meetings were fruitless until he approached the United Packinghouse Workers (UPW). In a sense, the UPW was simply waiting for an opportunity such as ERAP to come along. Earlier that year, the UPW had "received a rather enthusiastic response" to

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[59] Richard Rothstein, "JOIN Organizes City Poor," 1965, 1, Box 2, Folder 22, Lee Webb Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society. [Hereafter cited as WHS]

[60] Richard Rothstein to Al Lincoln, May 30, 1966, Box 5, Folder 9, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.

[61] Rothstein, "JOIN Organizes City Poor," 1.

[62] Flacks, "Chicago: Organizing the Unemployed," 2.

[63] Sale, *SDS*, 103.

efforts in organizing unemployed members. The union was reluctant to commit funding

to such a project, however, because they did not see a way to organize both white and

black unemployed together and "felt it would be unwise to build an unemployed

organization solely of Negroes." Now with Chabot and ERAP to organize white

workers, the UPW could commit to working with black unemployed.[64] With the help of

Jesse Prosten and Leon Beverly of the UPW, Chabot developed a structure for organizing

the unemployed. They named this operation JOIN—The Committee for Jobs or Income

Now. JOIN opened storefront offices adjacent to unemployment compensation offices in

the Northwest and Southside neighborhoods of Chicago. Chabot and ERAP ran the

Northwest office focusing on white workers whereas Beverly and the UPW operated the

Southside office to recruit blacks thereby setting JOIN on the path to organize whites.[65]

In its early stage, JOIN's Northwest office targeted men seeking unemployment

compensation. With the help of SDSer Danny Max, Chabot felt that "the prospects for

organizing a union of unemployed in Chicago [were] good."[66] Despite this prediction,

the SDS Executive Meeting expressed concern with the possibility of organizing the

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[64] Though the UPW worked with JOIN on this project, there was a tension between the New Left and labor from the days of the Port Huron Statement when SDSers debated criticizing the bureaucracy of labor unions in its manifesto. Labor intellectuals, too, questioned the effectiveness of unions to instigate change after World War II. Sidney Lens, C. Wright Mills and Harvey Swados, intellectuals of the Old Left, once had hope in the possibilities of labor unions only to become disappointed once unions grow and become entrenched in the system they had once fought. The student New Left swayed from seeking labor's help to criticizing labor depending on what was beneficial at the time. For more on labor and the Old Left see C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*, Galaxy book GB3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956); Sidney Lens, *The Crisis of American Labor* (New York: Sagamore Press, 1959); Harvey Swados, *A Radical's America*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962); C. Wright Mills, *Powers, Politics, and People; the Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963); Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Jeffrey W. Coker, *Confronting American Labor: The New Left Dilemma* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002).

[65] Flacks, "Chicago: Organizing the Unemployed," 6.

[66] "Chicago, Illinois," *The ERAP Newsletter*, 1964, 7.

white unemployed in January 1964. Those at the meeting wondered if organizing around unemployment was really the way to go. And if this route failed, what would be the next move? The next month Paul Potter wrote a lengthy letter to Chabot outlining possible recruiting strategies suggesting that engaging potential members was more difficult than originally thought.[67] In spite of these doubts, JOIN soon found an organizing rhythm. Their office next to the unemployment compensation office gave them easy access to the target group. Chabot and Max took turns leafleting workers in line for compensation and talking to men who came to the office. In the first six weeks, more than 500 men participated in discussions at the JOIN office. They formed a steering committee to decide organizational policy and a grievance committee to help with compensation problems.[68]

Despite making hundreds of contacts, JOIN still faced recruitment problems. Like their assumptions about organizing unemployed youth, JOIN organizers soon realized that the contacts they made did not represent the best group for activism. The recruits were "older, less skilled, and less socially integrated than the average white on unemployment compensation." The workers JOIN identified as ideal, skilled and semi-skilled middle aged, thought of themselves as only temporarily unemployed, therefore showing no interest in an organization of unemployed men.[69] Again, JOIN and ERAPers had to reassess their notion of organizing.

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[67] Paul Potter to Joe Chabot, February 9, 1964, Box 7, Folder 16, Lee Webb Papers, WHS.
[68] "JOIN is located...," Spring 1964, Series 2B:54, SDS Papers; Flacks, "Chicago: Organizing the Unemployed," 1.
[69] Flacks, "Chicago: Organizing the Unemployed," 6.

Focusing on building a movement of the unemployed from those they could recruit, JOIN realized they needed a program, not just talk to continue interest in the group. In fact, Carl Wittman had argued for this in February writing, "I think that our major problem is not to analyze the situation, but to change it."[70] For their first public action, they joined forces with the Southside JOIN office in May of 1964 to sell apples and leaflet in the Loop as a way to relate the plight of the unemployed with those in the Great Depression.[71] Additionally, JOIN began to help recruits address grievances with the compensation office such as red tape and bureaucratic errors as well as demanding jobs.[72] In general, "the attempt will be made to plan a 'trajectory' of action designed to involve an ever increasing number of unemployed around a more and more specific and meaningful political program."[73] Education was also part of the plan to mobilize the unemployed. According to JOIN organizers, their recruits were unable "to think clearly about the society in which they live," which made building a radical movement difficult. Supplying literature, offering a speaker series, and holding discussions would remedy this problem.[74]

JOIN increased its organizing efforts that summer. Former Boston University student and National Secretary of SDS, Lee Webb, took over the project and oversaw twelve full-time student organizers. Despite the increased number of organizers, building a movement of the unemployed progressed slowly. Recruits lacked the enthusiasm JOIN

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[70] Carl Wittman to Paul, February 18, 1964, Series 2B:38, SDS Papers.
[71] The Southside office worked with Northwest JOIN on another apple selling project but beyond that cooperation was limited. Additionally, the Southside JOIN office shared funds with the Northwest office— on at least one occasion sending a check of $175. Yet, by the fall of 1964, the two offices split completely.
[72] Flacks, "Chicago: Organizing the Unemployed," 7.
[73] Ibid., 8.
[74] Ibid., 8–9.

organizers expected and needed to form a movement.[75] Perhaps blinded by the romanticism of SNCC's organizing success and their own egos, organizing proved more difficult than they anticipated. They discovered that the cause of interest in the organization was hard to pinpoint. Webb suspected that "the fact that the leafleter was usually a girl, is always pretty, that we have coffee, and can help people with problems of compensation is as important to getting people into the office as is our stand on full employment."[76] Once in the office, JOIN staff helped the unemployed with problems they had with housing, unemployment compensation, and related issues. After providing advice, the staffer led the discussion to JOIN, the economy, and the power of an organization of the unemployed. JOIN organizers were surprised that the unemployed often thought in terms of class analysis, though not consciously. The biggest obstacle to building a lasting organization was the lack of follow-up activities to promote leadership and commitment.[77] Nonetheless, JOIN attempted to create a well-structured program to encourage continued involvement with their contacts from the unemployment lines.

As a way to continue involvement with recruits, JOIN began to explore the option of organizing in communities rather than outside of the unemployment compensation office. While working at the current location gave JOIN organizers access to large numbers of unemployed, they only interacted when it was time to pick up a check or when someone had a problem with the office. By organizing in the community, JOIN would be able to have continued communication with contacts. Through block organizations and home visits, JOIN would retain the interest of new contacts. However,

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[75] Lee Webb, "JOIN Has Expanded it Program," July 1964, 1–2, Series 2B:54, SDS Papers.
[76] Lee Webb, "Up until the beginning...," July 17, 1964, 2, Series 2B:38, SDS Papers.
[77] Ibid., 3.

they did not plan to organize around community issues. Unemployment was still the

central issue in "trying a long process of building the rudiments of an organization that

will not bear fruit for months or perhaps a year."[78]

JOIN/GROIN Debate

After the summer ended and the temporary student workers returned to school,

JOIN continued to confront the problem of maintaining its membership. Underlying this

problem was a debate within ERAP over the viability of organizing around

unemployment. Called the JOIN/GROIN debate, ERAPers argued over benefits of

organizing around jobs or income now (JOIN) or community specific issues like garbage

removal or income now (GROIN). The JOIN method asserted that the unemployed were

the catalyst for democratic change in American society. Due to increasing

unemployment, their economic situation would make them readily radicalized and

organized. In this sense, those that supported the JOIN model disagreed with Mills's call

for the New Left to kick the "labor metaphysic." In "Letter to the New Left," he

encouraged young activists to shed the "labor metaphysic"—the Marxist notion that labor

was the agent of radical social change. Mills wrote that it was simply "a legacy from

Victorian Marxism that is now quite unrealistic."[79] The GROIN model, on the other

hand, insisted that organizing around jobs was not enough. Instead, ERAPers needed to

appeal to problems that immediately affected the lives of the poor—welfare, housing,

health care, etc. The GROIN method also necessarily lent itself to community

organizing—housing as a community issue. Though they did not make this argument,

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[78] Ibid., 3–5.

[79] C. Wright Mills, "Letter to the New Left," in *The New Left: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Priscilla Long (Boston: P. Sargent, 1969), 22.

the GROIN method showed remarkable parallels to Alinsky's model for organizing and gaining community power around local issues. JOIN organizers argued that these issues lacked radicalizing properties that unemployment had. GROIN organizers countered that they used issues like welfare as a gateway to participatory democracy.

The debate manifested itself in correspondence within Chicago JOIN. In September of 1964, Richard Rothstein quit school and relocated to Chicago to head up JOIN. Knowing that the project was in a state of disrepair after the summer staff left (leaving only two full-time staff) and the failures of the summer program, Rothstein was not sure where the project was headed or what to do with it. The greatest problem of the summer, according to Rothstein, "was the lack of consensus among the staff members about the project's strategy."[80] Although JOIN had begun organizing local committees in neighboring communities, there was little to connect these committees to the goal of full employment. In general, the local committees were struggling. Attendance shrank to two or three during the fall. Rothstein blamed the collapse on a lack of program, but also the scarcity of staff. In addition, the committee members had their own doubts about the efficacy of JOIN, one member told Rothstein, "Talk is cheap." The one exception to this doom and gloom scenario was the block club at Broadway and Wilson. Members attended meetings regularly without the help or guidance of staff and they created their own programs. Key to the success of this committee was that "the issue of unemployment is real enough to these men to become a continuing issue."[81] The accomplishments of the Broadway Wilson Committee encouraged thoughts of relocating

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[80] Richard Rothstein to Rennie Davis, September 13, 1964, 1, Series 2B:38, SDS Papers.
[81] "Chicago Report," September 25, 1964, 1–2, Series 2B:2, SDS Papers.

the JOIN office to the community with the possibility of organizing around GROIN-type issues.[82] In the meantime, "the experimental nature of the project continue[d]."[83]

In spite of a continued staffing shortage, a disappointing turnout at JOIN's most successful committee, and a bank account consisting of four dollars on rent day, the staff was compelled to reflect on their purpose and definition of success. In their weekly report to the ERAP national office, JOIN wrote, "We don't really know whether to be elated or depressed because we have no clear notion of what the criteria of success for a project like this is." Is it the number of people reached, thoroughness of creating "working class rebels," or a committee that meets regularly and blindly agrees with what the staff says?[84] The frustration was evident in the next report: "We still have not found the organizing ticket." But JOIN staffers were gradually moving towards GROIN organizing and reevaluating the viability of unemployment as an organizing issue. The levels of unemployment JOINers predicted automation would cause did not happen, resulting in levels that were simply not high enough around which to build a constituency. In addition, unemployment, according to a new assessment, was "not sufficiently radicalizing" because it did not "confront our people with the power structure, with society, with a them as opposed to us, in a way that will shake them up." A shift in tactics was necessary to find a radical lever, so to speak. JOIN began to canvas the Broadway Wilson area to follow up on contacts made at the office, "but exactly what

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[82] Rothstein to Davis, September 13, 1964, 2.
[83] "Chicago Report," 3.
[84] "Chicago Report," October 5, 1964, 1–2, Series 2B:2, SDS Papers.

local issues we will find, and how these issues relate to our ultimate goal of building,

stimulating a genuinely insurgent radical white movement, are unsolved questions."[85]

Richard Flacks, an early member of JOIN and SDSer, complained that "the

central problem in organizing the unemployed is the development of a continuing

program of activity for JOIN groups—a program whose relevance is obvious to the

participants, which can potentially recruit new members and which can have some

political significance." Before becoming a psychology professor at the University of

Chicago, Flacks contributed to the intellectual development of SDS as the primary author

of *America and the New Era* and as an advisor to the ERAP projects. In this capacity,

Flacks suggested organizing around a recently introduced federal full employment bill

that "revive[s] the spirit of the Full Employment Bill of 1946." He pointed to other

leftists supporting the bill as "the focus of left opposition to the Administration in within

the congress." [86] Others within ERAP, however, did not see the full employment measure

as a solution to JOIN's problems. Rennie Davis, ERAP director and a founding member

of SDS, argued that the problem was beyond a lack of programs. JOIN was built on two

critical notions: that the economy would increasingly fail to produce jobs and that a

program for full employment was a "radical" program requiring political and economic

change. Ultimately, the problem of chronic unemployment due to automation was not

the problem ERAP once thought. Moreover, Davis admitted, "There is little indication

that we can build a movement of unemployed, at least among whites."[87] Those that are

unemployed, while they have radical potential, lack a program that would motivate

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[85] "Chicago Report," *ERAP Newsletter*, October 19, 1964, 1–2.
[86] Richard Flacks to Rennie Davis, October 19, 1964, 1, Series 2B:38, SDS Papers.
[87] Rennie Davis to Richard Flacks, October 21, 1964, 1, Series 2B:54, SDS Papers.

members as well as put pressure on established powers. Davis suggested a new

conception for the project: "I think that our experience increasingly shows that JOIN

must recruit beyond the ranks of the unemployed and there is experience to suggest that

initially the organization is likely to be more viable in a community than a city-wide

context."[88]

The organizational crisis led the group to try some unorthodox tactics in search of

recruits and GROIN issues. Paul Millman, the youngest SDS member of JOIN,

attempted to organize high school dropouts by socializing with them. However, he and

the rest of the JOIN staff quickly found risks in recruiting this way. "The kids here play

very rough, probably as rough as any city gangs in the country" forcing Millman to walk

the line between observer and participant. A second attempt at recruitment that avoided

the door to door standard had Davis, Rothstein, and Glenn Thureson hanging around a

street corner in the tavern district "to make acquaintances and become visible." Their

justification for lounging on the street corner or bar in cold weather was to discover

GROIN issues by talking to people about their problems.[89]

Though they were interested in finding GROIN type issues, JOIN was not ready

to give up on organizing the unemployed. The JOIN/GROIN debate was a leading issue

on the agenda at the National ERAP Meeting held in Cleveland in November 1964. Still

resisting GROIN persuasion, Richard Rothstein advocated strongly for organizing the

unemployed working class. He contended that the unemployed he encountered in

Chicago understood social alienation and political powerlessness. Although they were

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[88] Ibid., 4.
[89] Glenn Thureson, "Chicago Report," *ERAP Newsletter*, November 26, 1964, 2–3.

already radicalized, JOIN had difficulty creating a radical program to address the lack of jobs. Using non-radical issues, according to Rothstein, would be a step backward. Others at the meeting opposed this position. These non-radical issues were actually "tangible manifestations of people's alienation." It was the duty of the organizer to make the connections clear and illustrate the connection in their programs.[90]

Rothstein seemed to come around to the idea after the national meeting. In a letter to Peter Freedman, he summarized the situation as a debate between immediate and gradual radicalization. The recruits based on employment were already radicalized and did not show interest in GROIN issues. Though this group of radicalized workers has never met as a group, Rothstein believed "they are a confirmation of the Marxian not Erapian [sic] hypothesis: that the radical class is the industrial working class and not the 'lumpen' underclass."[91] Nevertheless, the problem remained: what program would engage these members? Ultimately, the lack of radical programs for the working class recruits encouraged JOIN's shift toward GROIN style organizing. To do this JOIN would need to focus itself on a community instead of meeting people at the compensation office. Increasingly, JOIN staffers found themselves working in the Uptown neighborhood where they lived. When Rothstein arrived at JOIN he recalled, "I guess the first thing which was apparent was that this organization had a disadvantage which other organizations did not have—there was no locus to organize around." With no community around which to center organizing and with contacts spread across the city, the JOIN staff divided Chicago into eight districts. They stacked contact cards according to location.

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[90] "Ann Arbor Report," *ERAP Newsletter*, November 16, 1964, 2–3.
[91] Richard Rothstein to Peter Freedman, November 22, 1964, 2, Series 2B:38, SDS Papers.

The district with the largest pile would determine where JOIN would start its new community union organization. Ultimately, the Uptown neighborhood had the most contacts.[92]

The Radical Potential of the Poor

In 1965, JOIN "discarded last summer's attempts to recruit solely on the unemployment issue and began to struggle toward forming a community union."[93] Changing its name from JOIN—The Committee for Jobs or Income Now to JOIN Community Union, the student organizers moved the project to Uptown Chicago—an area predominantly made up of white Southern Appalachians and a number of American Indians and Hispanics. Located north of the central business area or Loop, Uptown is bordered on the east by Lake Michigan. Between the Lake and JOIN's neighborhood was a length of high-rise apartment buildings called the Gold Coast. Uptown's median income varied considerably from block to block. One census track in Uptown had a median family income of more than $10,000 whereas the blocks JOIN worked in had a yearly income around $4,000. This affected housing as well. Some areas in Uptown endured a rate of "substandard condition" housing at 60% while others were as low as 1.4%. Similarly, unemployment rates varied from 7.9% in the census tracts with the lowest incomes to 2.5% in the highest income areas. For the poorest in Uptown, this put the unemployment rate well over the 5.2% for the city as a whole.[94] JOIN now focused

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[92] Norman Fruchter and Stanley Aronowitz, "Chicago: JOIN Project," *Studies on the Left* 5, no. 3 (1965): 109.
[93] Richard Rothstein to George Brosi, March 10, 1965, 1, Series 2B:38, SDS Papers.
[94] Evelyn Mae Kitagawa and Karl E. Taeuber, *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1960* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Community Inventory, University of Chicago, 1963), 21, 3.

its programs "around welfare recipients, tenants in slum apartments, working men in unorganized shops, day labor employees, high school drop outs and the unemployed."[95]

The radical potential of the poor quickly replaced the potential of a working class organization. After the transition in the winter of 1965, JOIN began to recruit the underclass based on bread and butter issues. But in keeping with his criticism of GROIN organizing, Rothstein stressed that they recruited people on ideological grounds: "We talk constantly about the distribution of power in Chicago and the nation, about why poor people don't make any of the important decisions which affect them, about exploitation, etc." While the issues were important, JOIN was looking for radicals not "people with gripes."[96] The organizers felt that they could not build a movement around grievances alone. They feared that someone recruited on a single issue would not progress to include "a broader political perspective." Organizers made clear from the time they knocked on an Uptown resident's door that they were beginning a movement that had goals beyond rent strikes.[97]

The connection to JOIN's commitment to participatory democracy becomes clear in the new analysis of a poor people's movement. Confronting government programs that the poor depended on, yet had no authority over, demonstrated the lack of participation of the poor in the decisions that affected their lives. Rothstein explained that the new focus on the War on Poverty programs derived from the fact that "those programs control the lives of those who had no voice in preparing them."[98] JOIN's

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[95] Rothstein to Brosi, March 10, 1965, 1.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Richard Rothstein to Dorothy Burlage, March 22, 1965, 1–2, Series 2B:39, SDS Papers.
[98] Rothstein to Brosi, March 10, 1965, 1.

commitment to democracy forced them "to confront the fact that poor people are powerless at least in part because they have been given no opportunity to express themselves, to share their deepest feelings."[99] JOIN's use of participatory democracy to combat poverty was twofold. On the one hand, participatory democracy served a therapeutic purpose by ending the cycle of dependency, instilling a sense of self-determination in the poor, and building connections between poor whites and blacks. At the same time, JOIN was convinced that the poor were in the best position to direct anti-poverty programs because, as the target of these programs, they knew what was wrong with the current system.

Focus on the poor also continued JOIN's commitment to building an interracial movement of the poor as a means to combat racism. In the JOIN newsletter, Lee Murao wrote about politics and the common man. He pointed to the privileged nature of politics that foster an elite class in America. Political power would not only give the common man have more control, it would join poor whites with the poor of other races. "It's time to forget where we or the other guy was born, the color of his skin or his religion," advised Murao. "He is our neighbor and we have a common bond of needs and living conditions."[100] Community member Ras Bryant summed up JOIN's approach to race: "If you're gonna work for JOIN you gotta be like Jesus and love everyone. I'm like Jesus. I love every one of em in JOIN, colored and whites alike."[101]

The JOIN staffer to best articulate the new focus on a movement of the poor was former SDS president Todd Gitlin. Having become involved in radical issues in his days

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[99] Freedman to Friend, 1965, 1.
[100] Lee Murao, "Politicians and the Average Man," *JOIN Community Union (newsletter)*, March 19, 1965.
[101] Gitlin and Hollander, *Uptown; Poor Whites in Chicago*, 136.

at Harvard as a member of Tocsin, an anti-nuclear weapons organization, he became

president of SDS in 1963 before joining the Chicago project. Concentrating on the

transfer of power to the poor, he found that the poor were the catalyst for change. The

poor were "not just victims, but they have potential power." JOIN provided an almost

therapeutic effect on the poverty-stricken. By showing the residents of Uptown that they

had valuable traditions and competences, they would eventually take themselves

seriously.[102] In his 1966 essay, "Power and the Myth of Progress," Gitlin explored power

relationships in the United States. "The brute reality," he asserted, "is that for most

Americans the reins of power-control over elemental life decisions are remote."[103] This

was most evident in urban renewal and the War on Poverty programs where decisions

were made for the poor without consultation. "The new consensus is that the poor must

be changed because they have been 'left behind,'" therefore "we know what the poor

need: they need what we have."[104] The only solution was to share power with those

affected. Moreover, Gitlin believed the poor were ripe for organization. "They exhibit a

potential for movement—for understanding their situation, breaking lose and committing

themselves to a radical alternative."[105] In short, the poor were less committed to the

status quo or the establishment. Because they fell outside mainstream society, they were

most open to change. But the key was to use a multi-issue platform, not just

unemployment. "In this way," Gitlin argued, the organization "reaches a greater variety

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[102] Todd Gitlin, "JOIN: Coal-Operatin' in Uptown," June 1966, 1, Box 7, Folder 1, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.

[103] Todd Gitlin, "Power and the Myth of Progress," in *Thoughts of the Young Radicals, and Four Critical Comments on Their Views of America* (Washington: New Republic Book, 1966), 18.

[104] Ibid., 21.

[105] Todd Gitlin, "The Radical Potential of the Poor," in *The New Left: A Documentary History*, ed. Massimo Teodori (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 137.

of people, generates a feel for the relatedness of issues, binds different types of people together, and lessens the chance that success or failure on any one issue will determine the fate of the budding movement."[106]

With the radical potential of the poor articulated and agreed upon, the reality of making a movement out of local community issues proved more difficult than JOIN had anticipated. Reconciling their desire to build a political movement and getting people involved in community relevant projects took effort. Rothstein reported that he had to make a conscious effort to work with recruits on their issues, not JOIN's or his personal agenda.[107] Too much attention on local issues and the big picture was lost. People naturally organize around issues that affect them. Nevertheless, how do you expand a welfare demand into a movement for social change? "In Chicago," according to JOIN staffer Judy Bernstein, "we've been doing 'ideological' organizing; that is when we talk to people about issues, we try to tie one issue into another and show how the power structure should be changed." An unfortunate consequence of this tactic was that once people realized the number of changes that needed to occur, they quickly became overwhelmed and frustrated.[108] Casey Hayden, a JOIN staffer in 1965 and a veteran of the Southern civil rights movement, noticed that the people of Uptown usually recognized the problem but not the cause or the oppressor because it was often difficult to see or identify.[109] The connection between a dirty neighborhood and the corrupt patronage of the Daley machine and the general lack of true democracy in America was

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[106] Ibid., 139.
[107] Rothstein to Burlage, March 22, 1965, 2.
[108] Judi Bernstein to Ken McEldowney, April 9, 1965, 2–3, Series 2B:38, SDS Papers.
[109] Casey Hayden, "Notes on Organizing Poor Southern Whites," *ERAP Newsletter*, August 27, 1965, 7.

not apparent to most residents of Uptown. In addition, finding the balance between creating a community and connecting that community to a broader movement complicated the radicalization of the poor. JOIN became distracted with building a community around itself by offering activities and services that included hairdressing and legal advice. In an interview for *Studies on the Left*, Rothstein said, "I think it becomes more difficult to conceive [of a political movement that connects to other movements], only because I have become more and more involved with people in this community, in this particular part of the movement, rather than cross-movement problems."[110]

Participatory Democracy in JOIN

JOIN's programming and recruitment policies clearly reflect its commitment to participatory democracy as a social system. It sought to give people the ability to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives through economic and racial equality as well as experimentation. Throughout, JOIN was committed to racial equality by encouraging poor whites to consider what they had in common with blacks. Through class identification, JOIN hoped to overcome racism. In addition, JOIN experimented with its programming goals and recruitment to find the best means of achieving a participatory democracy. The shift from focusing on the unemployed to the poor was indicative of JOIN's experimental nature. First, JOIN centered its attention on the unemployed as a means of attaining this goal. After the reality of the job market demonstrated that the number of unemployed was much too small to create a revolution, organizing around community issues seemed more pragmatic. By switching to JOIN Community Union, the

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[110] Fruchter and Aronowitz, "Chicago: JOIN Project," 122–124.

organization changed its focus from the unemployed to the poor. The underclass would now be the catalyst for the changes necessary to attain a participatory democracy.

SDS used the notion of participatory democracy as a social goal as well an organizational method. In order to achieve participatory democracy, SDSers and JOIN staff used it to run meetings and empower the general membership of the organizations. While the long-term goals of organizing were to build a movement that "could end racist exploitation and imperialism, collectivize economic decision-making, and democratize and decentralize every political, economic, and social institution in America," creating an organization that could sustain a movement was a short-term goal of the ERAP project. Though creating a participatory democracy on a grand scale was daunting, "the short-run problems of beginning to build a movement which could someday achieve the power and skill to organize society in a humane, collective, decentralist, and democratic fashion were much more difficult," according to Rothstein.[111] Developing leadership, "creating institutions of local control which give people a livening vision of the democracy to be," and choosing the issues around which to organize were significant hurdles JOIN had to overcome. In this way, JOIN tested participatory democracy as an organizational structure.

Organizers in JOIN meant for participatory democracy to tackle the problems of running an organization as well as have a ripple effect that gave control to the poor. Participatory democracy "has influenced the analysis of the problem of poverty in an affluent society by stressing political voicelessness and lack of organization as a root

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[111] Richard Rothstein, "ERAP and How It Grew," in *Don't Mourn, Organize: SDS Guide to Community Organizing* (San Francisco: The Movement Press, 1968), 23.

cause of deprivation."[112] The creation of a grassroots organization that mobilized the

poor, according to this theory, would help end poverty. Casey Hayden also believed in

the power of participatory democracy to alleviate poverty. Although liberals were ready

to address the issues of the poor, they approached it from the wrong direction. Increasing

welfare budgets would not solve the problems, according to Hayden. Instead, the poor

should have some control the welfare department because "it is the paternalism and the

bureaucracy which degrades them and keep them in the cycle of poverty."[113] Rothstein

made a similar argument when he noted that the culture of poverty identified by

Harrington and Galbraith was more than an issue of educational deficiencies. It also

included being powerless to outside forces. In short, dependency was the greater

problem. "Any program which tries to eliminate poverty without insuring that no feeling

of dependency on the perpetrators of that program develop—such a program is doomed

to failure," he argued. "Democracy, the organization of the poor to develop their own

programs, is the basic ingredient for a successful attack on poverty."[114]

Building a community union where the poor have power, however, was a difficult

undertaking. As Hayden noted, "Being on the bottom not only means that you have no

power over the forces that shape your life; it also means that because you want to eat, you

want some power."[115] The potential for an organization of the poor was clear; they were

hungry for food and power. However, organizing them around issues and creating a

situation where the poor had control over the organization was problematic. Organizers

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[112] Richard Flacks, "On the Uses of Participatory Democracy," *Dissent* XIII, no. 6 (December 1966): 702.
[113] Casey Hayden, "Raising the Question of Who Decides," in *Thoughts of the Young Radicals, and Four Critical Comments on Their Views of America* (Washington: New Republic Book, 1966), 45.
[114] Richard Rothstein, "Yale Political," 1965, 3, Series 2B:54, SDS Papers.
[115] Hayden, "Raising the Question of Who Decides," 43.

did not have a manual they could follow for tactics and procedures. Once in the field, JOIN organizers realized, "Community organization is so different from plant organization around a tangible bread and butter issue."[116] JOIN had to forge its own path.

Simply put, implementing participatory democracy in JOIN meant continual experimentation in the face of challenges. In a fundraising letter, JOIN acknowledged the difficulty: "We constantly grapple with the problems of instituting a dream, of somehow making democracy work for a group of students and poor people whose lives were never orientated towards participation in decision-making."[117] They knew that democracy could not come from intellectuals and theories, rather democracy must have its foundations in the people.[118] JOIN must ameliorate alienation by forming an organization "in which each has a voice, in which decisions are arrived at by consensus, in which programs are directed at the felt needs of the people involved."[119] The organization must belong to the people therefore the participation of the people must be authentic. The organized must be the decision-makers. All of this was well and good until they tested it in the field. JOIN "was constantly forced to revise strategy, constantly learning from the ghetto residents who really know what they need."[120]

JOIN failed to consider the problems with participatory democracy in circumstances where the sense of community was weak among its residents. This process worked best when its participants were committed to the ideal and were

[116] Richard Rothstein to Robb Burlage, March 16, 1965, 2, Series 2B:38, SDS Papers.
[117] Tony Kronman to Dear Friend, April 20, 1965, Series 2B:38, SDS Papers.
[118] Rothstein, "JOIN Organizes City Poor," 2.
[119] "The Chicago ERAP Project of SDS--JOIN," 1965, Series 2B:39, SDS Papers.
[120] Richard Rothstein, "Short History of ERAP," *SDS Bulletin*, March 1966, 1.

respectful of others. A clear example of the problem of applying participatory democracy

in Uptown was seen when a clearly intoxicated community member who refused to quit

talking monopolized a JOIN meeting.[121] While early ERAP documents proudly wrote,

"Today, an ERAP community union meeting is probably the only institution in the world

where a destitute alcoholic can stand up and give a lecture, occasionally brilliant but

usually incoherent, on political strategy and be listened to with complete respect," in

reality, letting the people decide was not always possible.[122] In one instance, JOIN staff

invited gang rivals to a general meeting. When the enemies discovered they were going

to be at the same meeting, each threatened the other with imminent and violent

destruction. As news of impending fight spread, the meeting was lightly attended. One

JOIN community member commented:

> I wasn't there that night, but they had a big fight out there one night, run in there
> and got iron pipes and run out with em and all that junk, and scared a lot of
> people. They (JOIN community members) said they'd never be back, and they
> hain't come back yet either. They (JOIN) had about sixty or seventy comin there
> every night fore that. I know it wasn't JOIN's fault, but see they just got afraid to
> come back there, fraid they'd get knocked in the head or shot or somethin-or-
> other. I'll tell you the truth about it now, that they (JOIN) just allow too much
> drinkin around the office. Course it's kind of a problem to stop it but I'd stop it
> one way or the other.[123]

Drinking and fighting were not the only disruptions to JOIN meetings. Some members

would storm out of meetings due to a perceived slight or disagreement. One member,

John Dawson, was known for his outbursts. On one occasion, according to JOIN

organizer Todd Gitlin, Dawson, "sputtering alcoholically, began to denounce Martin

Luther King…for making money off the poor niggers, and when Little Dovie (an African

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[121] Gitlin and Hollander, *Uptown; Poor Whites in Chicago*, 1–2.
[122] Rothstein, "Short History of ERAP," 3.
[123] Gitlin and Hollander, *Uptown; Poor Whites in Chicago*, 231–232.

American community member) asked him to desist, he burst outside and tore up his JOIN card…railing against 'niggers' and 'draft dodgers.'"[124] In a meeting where everyone's opinion is valued and no structure or rules for agenda setting, how does one deal with disruptions such as this? These unexpected problems forced JOIN to adapt.

The question of how to create an indigenously led movement without dominating the organization themselves continually plagued the JOIN staff. The students were concerned that they might be manipulating the poor in the same way that every other institution had. The very thought "was enough to turn the hardest stomach" of JOIN organizers.[125] Initially, ERAPers had the image of an organizer that never organized. From SNCC's example, ERAPers got the impression of someone "who by his simple presence was the 'mystical medium for the spontaneous expression of the people.'"[126] While the JOIN staff admired the SNCC method of leaderless organizing, they soon realized that the organizing tactic that worked so well in Southern black communities did not translate well to a Southern white community located in Chicago.

JOIN staff had many barriers to break before taking the place of an organizer that did not organize. One such barrier was cultural. Initially JOIN staff simply did not know how to relate to poor people. "Until those cultural differences were overcome and mutual respect could exist between organizer and resident as human beings," remembered Rothstein, "persuasion would be manipulation."[127] One JOIN organizer expressed her doubts at bridging the divide in a letter to another ERAPer:

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[124] Ibid., 207.
[125] Rothstein, "Short History of ERAP," 2.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid., 3.

> I've begun to feel I should be working with student[s] because I am far enough away from understanding poverty culture that I really don't know how to reach a poor person in a way that I feel I am satisfying myself—using my imagination, being challenged or intellectually honest. Because of this, I think the emotional relationship I can have w[ith] a poor person is not honest because I cannot express myself to him—like I can only talk about the movement and not the fears I have about it.[128]

Other organizers were better able to adapt. Rothstein described initial disgust with the racist attitudes of the poor Southerners living in Uptown. After working the neighborhood, he "learned to love the people in this neighborhood, to try to understand their fears and hates and only occasional glimmerings of hope."[129] Building from her experience, Casey Hayden limited her organizing to a group she knew she could "understand best: Women, mostly on welfare, mostly southern."[130] But misgivings about the ability of middle class students to connect with people in the ghetto plagued JOIN. They wondered if they, as outsiders, could truly represent the poor people of Uptown. The issue was complicated by "the fact that you take a bunch of sensitive ERAP kids...and put them into a ghetto, they tend to over-identify with the alienation which they ascribe to community people in the ghetto" and was "compounded by the fact that we barely know the community or the people where we work." Rothstein, in a moment of frustration admitted, "It was arrogant to think that we could come in and organize people of an entirely different class and culture around issues which affected their whole ways of life."[131]

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[128] Stevie to Ken McEldowney, April 17, 1965, 2, Series 2B:39, SDS Papers.
[129] Rothstein to Burlage, March 22, 1965, 1.
[130] Hayden, "Notes on Organizing Poor Southern Whites," 7.
[131] Rothstein to Burlage, March 16, 1965, 2.

The notion of leaderlessness presented debates within the organization. Though the staff tried to limit their positions as leaders, some going as far as stepping aside when the leadership impulse became too great, others questioned if this was intelligent. While it was important to be conscious of the possibility of dominating the organization, "there will always be certain natural leaders and it is best that all of them assert their leadership tendencies."[132] Paul McGowen agreed in the staff bulletin, "It's definite that we do need some kind of leadership because we're all disorganized it seems."[133] In short, JOIN lacked a figure of authority. When financial or critical situations arose, no one knew who was in charge or who had the authority to make a quick decision. The diverse approaches to organizing students brought to JOIN complicated these problems. One outside analysis of JOIN noted, "Some JOIN students have said that it is very hard to run a true democratic organization. There is too much confusion."[134] While the student organizers insisted there was no one leader, community people named Rennie Davis as leader to the outside researcher and also looked to others for leadership.[135] Emulating leaderless leaders and organizers that do not organize only led to disorganization within JOIN.

At least one student staffer disagreed with the notion that JOIN should emulate the SNCC organizer that never organized. Born in segregated east Texas, Casey Hayden became politically active while attending the University of Texas. A believer in nonviolence, she joined SNCC at its inception in 1960 and participated in many of its

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[132] Richard Rothstein, "No. 4 of the thing. [staff bulletin]," July 9, 1965, Box 7, Folder 8, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.

[133] Richard Rothstein, "[Staff Bulletin] No. 5," July 10, 1965, Box 7, Folder 8, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.

[134] Sara Preston, "Community Organization Survey Questions," 1966, 17–18, Box 7, Folder 4, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.

[135] Ibid., 16.

organizing activities including Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964. Married at one time to SDS founder and young intellectual Tom Hayden, Casey was active in both groups. In 1965, she was on loan from SNCC to organize poor whites in JOIN. Hayden, having experienced organizing in both groups, correctly pointed out that the culture and community of poor whites differed significantly from that of poor Southern blacks. Whereas the notion of no leaders in SNCC meant to combat "uncle toms" and battle a sense of inferiority, these were not conditions faced by poor whites. Poor Southern whites needed their own leader because there were plenty of white leaders that did not represent them. The organizer must go beyond slogans of letting the people decide. "I feel fairly certain," Hayden wrote, "that the organizer working with poor whites must be much more active and directing, at least initially, and probably more persuasive than the organizer in rural Southern Negro areas." But, at the same time, she recognized the difficulty of this prospect. Mountain people were suspicious of outsiders "combined with the fact that it's very hard for the people to understand what we're doing there causes me to question whether students can organize on a large scale in poor white areas on the pattern of Southern movement work."[136]

With or without student leadership, creating a democratic organization meant incorporating the thoughts and opinions of community members. "People need institutions that belong to them," Hayden asserted, "that they can experiment with and shape." In short, they needed to have ownership over the organization. Seeing that their involvement led to results encouraged further participation and ensured the vibrancy of

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[136] Hayden, "Notes on Organizing Poor Southern Whites," 8, 10–11.

the organization.[137] However, there was also a sense that the community should run the

organization because they understand what needs to be done. That the poor know best

was the reasoning for moving into the ghettos, "to know its people, begin to work with

them, learn from them…."[138]

A central component of participatory democracy and organizing yourself out of a

job meant being replaced by local leaders. However, finding and making indigenous

leaders posed a challenge to JOIN organizers. Getting residents to find time simply to be

involved limited the number of potential leaders. The staff recognized that they were in

Uptown to organize "the guy that works 12 hours a day" but that that work was what kept

him from attending meetings.[139] In her attempts to organize women, Hayden discovered

that JOIN "need[ed] to meet particular problems [women] have by searching for ways to

pull them out of their homes and away from the kids, setting up centers of operations in

their immediate neighborhoods which they seldom leave."[140] Even if an Uptown resident

became active in JOIN, the transient nature of the neighborhood limited the effectiveness

of programs. Judy Bernstein worked with a group of women to organize a day care

center; however, the group and program fell apart when the strongest women moved

away.[141] The fluidity of the Uptown population also impaired the development of

community in the neighborhood. The majority of residents were Southern migrants

looking for work as mines in the South shut down and other forms of employment dried

up. Despite the lack of opportunity "back home," many residents felt they belonged to a

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[137] Hayden, "Raising the Question of Who Decides," 46.
[138] "The Chicago ERAP Project of SDS--JOIN," 1.
[139] Peter Freedman to Abbott, March 30, 1965, Series 2B:39, SDS Papers.
[140] Hayden, "Notes on Organizing Poor Southern Whites," 7.
[141] Fruchter and Aronowitz, "Chicago: JOIN Project," 112.

community when they lived in the South and that Chicago was an unfriendly place. Their

continued connection to their Southern homes meant that residents would move south

then back again depending on the opportunities in each place.[142] The lack of community

in Uptown suggested that JOIN had to build one, and then the leaders, if they still resided

in Uptown, would come from that.[143]

Even when potential leaders remained in Uptown, JOIN staffers realized that the

indigenous leadership they found was largely ill prepared. Rothstein described the

"ideological hang-ups" of the people he organized. One woman believed that all black

kids were bad and should be separated from whites because some black students beat-up

her son. Yet, she was integrationist when it came to adults. Likewise, a man came into

the office decrying the government's inevitable swing towards socialism. Then he

proceeded to argue for the people to take over all industries to prevent the abuses of big

business.[144] While this lack of understanding made Rothstein's job interesting, it also

illustrated the need for community education before finding leaders. Leadership had to

come from residents that were not just angry about an issue. They needed to be

knowledgeable about the system and programs JOIN criticized.[145] When residents

identified local problems and their causes, they had difficulty connecting these issues to

the larger movement without the student organizers' help. While they actively

participated in militant actions against the welfare office and conducted rent strikes, their

radicalism ended there. The programs that focused on local issues created indigenous

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[142] For more on the transiency of Uptown see Todd Gitlin and Nanci Hollander, *Uptown: Poor Whites in Chicago*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).
[143] Fruchter and Aronowitz, "Chicago: JOIN Project," 118.
[144] Rothstein, "JOIN Organizes City Poor."
[145] "Purpose of JOIN," 1966, 4, Series 2D:91, SDS Papers.

leaders that "have not been exposed to situations enabling them to learn to think realistically about the nature of society as a whole, about the history of their movement, or about a strategy for social change."[146]

The diversity of groups within the community JOIN attempted to organize further confused organizing the poor. In particular, women and young men not only had different sets of concerns, but they each required different organizing tactics. Casey Hayden and Judy Bernstein emphasized organizing women in the community. Welfare, childcare, and housing were significant concerns for women with children. Hayden found a pre-existing network that she could tap to build a viable organization. The women she encountered had other women within the community that they turned to in times of need. If she made contact with one women, that would lead her to other women. These Uptown residents fought the welfare system as best they could. And, they created their own support network for emergencies. Hayden worked to convince these women that they could work together to prevent emergencies from occurring in the first place. Hayden believed there was "real potential in organizing welfare women" because they are tied to welfare, therefore are already politicized.[147] Bernstein agreed, "The thing I understand about the neighborhood is that people have the feeling that they are pushed around and do have gripes about the Welfare Service and I think that those are areas we should concentrate in."[148] While this plan seemed to work for organizing women, Hayden concluded "from scattered conversations with adult men and teenagers is that

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[146] Richard Rothstein to Robb [Burlage], October 21, 1966, Box 6, Folder 1, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.
[147] Hayden, "Notes on Organizing Poor Southern Whites," 7–8; Fruchter and Aronowitz, "Chicago: JOIN Project," 116–117.
[148] Fruchter and Aronowitz, "Chicago: JOIN Project," 112.

their needs, activities, and perceptions of causes for their condition differ from each other and from the women's that work with different groups will have to be somewhat specialized."[149]

Indeed, Rennie Davis's work with young men was specialized. He recounted to *Studies on the Left* his attempts to organize the young men hanging out on the corner near the JOIN office. A gang of unemployed, high school dropouts, Davis felt "they are the potential revolutionary force in Uptown Chicago" because they are the least afraid of police, have a sense of justice, and are willing to act on that sense. Once accepted by the group, Davis turned angry rants to conversations about the true source of their complaints and how JOIN could help. However, there were many complications to organizing young men. "You must live their way," according to Davis, "you run, and fight, and drink, and do the things they do and still have the capacity to direct it towards something." The fact that to get the gang to accept him, he spent the first week "virtually drunk" and "ready to fight" further complicated organization possibilities. The violent nature of the gang necessarily conflicted with the nonviolence that JOIN supported. In fact, Davis suspected that what would separate this movement from the civil rights movement was its violent character. "I don't think there will be talk of nonviolence," he explained, "except very strategically—people may hold back—but it will be much more explosive when it comes—if it comes." This contradiction with the philosophy of nonviolence did not seem to bother Davis. In fact, he joined in verbal affirmation of violence on one occasion by threatening "to whip every mean son of a bitch there."[150]

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[149] Hayden, "Notes on Organizing Poor Southern Whites," 8.
[150] Fruchter and Aronowitz, "Chicago: JOIN Project," 113–115.

Due to the experimental nature of organizing, the idea of a democratic

organization that JOIN started with had to change over time. Originally, JOIN's structure

reflected SDS's influence. The goal was to create a democratic organization where the

issues came from the community and where the students would eventually "become

unnecessary as a result of the increasing activity and responsibility of community

people." But the organization never clearly understood how to build an internally

democratic organization. Abstractly it meant that people should take part in making the

decisions that affect their lives. The structure necessarily must encourage the

participation and expression of all members of the organization, meaning meetings

without rules, discussions that continue until "the last participant has had the last word,"

and few official officers.[151] The weekly meeting had a rotating chairmanship held by a

community member to help foster the participatory nature of the group. However, cracks

in the foundation were soon apparent. One JOIN staffer identified the problem as the

"transition from what one believes abstractly and beginning to act those beliefs out." The

staff had an idea of how democracy was supposed to work in meetings, nonetheless "it is

very evident how people become defensive and withdraw or try to compensate for a

dominant place."[152] By the fall of 1965, cracks in the structure became critical.

Richard Rothstein outlined the problems with the current structure of JOIN.

Actually, it was the lack of structure that caused JOIN's problems. Rothstein wrote that

while traditional organizations are undemocratic because they focused too narrowly on

structure and procedure, JOIN's programming largely came from student organizers.

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[151] Ibid., 16.
[152] Stevie to McEldowney, April 17, 1965, 1.

This was due in part to the fact that the students were simply more knowledgeable about the issues and they spent more time organizing than community people. But community people also held the JOIN students in high esteem, so the ideas and programs were easily accepted. Staff tended to dominate meetings, sometimes intimidating people from the neighborhood and boring them as well by turning meetings into "an SDS seminar."[153] However, Rothstein believed it was preferable to have a program "initiated and adopted by community members without [recommendation] by the students." One way to put power into the hands of the community was to move from the informal decision-making process to one where weekly meetings included discussing and adopting programs. [154] "With an informal structure," Rothstein concluded, "influence, not formal power rules." And the staff had too much influence over the weekly meetings, "thus, at this point the community, despite its meetings and officers, has little actual or formal power in JOIN."[155] Although the staff had an inordinate amount of power over the weekly community meetings, within the staff itself, decision making was nearly impossible because no one knew who had the right to make decisions.[156]

To solve these issues of disorganization, Rothstein recommended JOIN create a limited set of structures and rules. JOIN should continue to have free and open meetings with a monthly elected chairman. However, the day-to-day running of the community union would fall to the newly created JOIN Organizing Committee. The chairman would appoint the committee from student organizers and active community members. JOIN

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[153] Richard Rothstein, "Staff Bulletin, No. 3," July 1965, Box 7, Folder 8, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.
[154] Rothstein, "Chicago Report--JOIN's History and New Structure," 17.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.

bank accounts and assets would become the property of the Organizing Committee. In addition, the committee would decide on broad and specific policies with agreement from the weekly meeting.[157] In this way, Rothstein tried to combine structure and unstructure to create an organization that does not function solely on the backs of student organizers. It was an experiment in creating a more participatory democracy.

JOIN implemented the reorganization suggested by Rothstein. Throughout 1966, the organizing committee made the important decisions for the organization. And the committee consisted of at least half community people. Programs included welfare, housing, publishing a newsletter, and offering food and clothing to those in need.[158] Despite claiming in February that "the community union, at all levels, is controlled by people indigenous to the poor community," by the fall trouble surfaced. Although many community members had positions in the organizing committee, their involvement was only ever part time. Most had commitments outside of JOIN whereas the student staff devoted the majority of their time to building the organization.[159] One remedy to this dilemma would be to pay community people to be full time staff. In November of 1966, the opportunity to do just that came when JOIN received a substantial donation. The Organizing Committee decided to use the money for staff salaries because it was "the only way in which JOIN could truly become a democratic community union."[160] Notwithstanding the attempt to encourage community involvement through wages,

[157] Ibid., 19–20.
[158] "JOIN Progress Report," December 16, 1965, 2, Series 2B:54, SDS Papers; "JOIN Community Union: Program for 1966," February 27, 1966, 4, Series 2B:54, SDS Papers.
[159] Richard Rothstein to Kris Ronnow, August 27, 1966, Box 6, Folder 1, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.
[160] Richard Rothstein to John Henderson, November 9, 1966, 1, Box 6, Folder 1, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.

building indigenous leadership was a significant difficulty. A high rate of turnover in the

community population was one source as was the constant issue of the student staff

themselves. They were the key recruiters, programmers, and doers. In short, they

provided the initiative and dedication to keep JOIN functioning.[161]

JOIN made another attempt at restructuring to increase community decision-

making in the spring and summer of 1967. This time the move toward building structure

was more pronounced with a plan that called for a council of representatives. Previously,

the monthly rotating chair appointed the organizing council's members. Now, JOIN

considered using electoral units allowing for one representative to every ten due paying

members.[162] The representatives then constituted the JOIN Council. These

representatives acted like most, they helped make decisions at Council meetings, reported

to constituents about the proceedings, and represented the needs and desires of the

constituents in decision-making. The Council had the power to hire and fire staff as well

as assign duties. This was a serious attempt to place the majority of control in the

community run Council and out of the hands of the student staff going as far as to state:

"JOIN Council is the boss of JOIN. These decisions of the JOIN Council must be obeyed

by everyone who works for JOIN."[163] Most importantly, JOIN finally had a lead

decision-maker. The chairman of the council was the official spokesman for JOIN and

made any emergency decisions.[164] The transition to such a system was not easy for the

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[161] Preston, "Community Organization Survey Questions," 6–7, 20.
[162] "Proposal for an elected Executive Committee," 1967, Box 7, Folder 1, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.
[163] "The JOIN Council," May 1967, 1, Box 6, Folder 2, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.
[164] Ibid., 5.

student organizers. Shortly after forming, the new JOIN Council held an emergency

meeting to issue a statement about the student staff.

> That all members of JOIN are expected to abide by the decisions of this governing
> body; failure to comply with these decisions shall constitute grounds for
> expulsion from the organization if it is deemed necessary.
> That JOIN is not moving in the direction that we as members and interested
> community people fee that it should.
> That domination of JOIN by students has to stop.
> That positions of decision making should be filled by community people.
> That real action be started toward making JOIN a self-supporting organization.
> […]
> That students return to their jobs as organizer.
> This declaration is in no way meant to drive anyone out of the organization but it
> is hoped that it will be recognized as the realization of the dream of the people
> who started JOIN.[165]

The position of the student organizers was a constant thorn in the organization. With the

formation of a community driven council, it "was able to carry out some of its aims, but it

was still greatly intimidated by the 'students' and felt dominated by them, and so the

Council too finally fell apart." In December 1967, the community members attempted,

again, to assert control over JOIN. They created the National Community Union and

were approved at the SDS National Council meeting in Bloomington, Indiana. "And so it

came to pass that the JOIN people who had gone to Bloomington scared and uncertain

came back to Chicago with a new-found strength and pride, faced with the exciting job of

building THEIR organization up again," recalled a JOIN community staffer. Revitalized,

the community people asked those with student backgrounds to leave the organization.

Without the interference of students, JOIN became "a group of working-class people

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[165] "Emergency Council Meeting of July 6, 1967," July 6, 1967, Box 6, Folder 2, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.

eager to build an organization that will speak to, for, and about our own people in a language and with actions that can be understood by them and that they can relate to."[166]

Implementing participatory democracy in a community organization posed problems from the start, but scholars have been quick to blame it for the failures of ERAP and JOIN. According to Wini Breines, execution was difficult because community organizers could not be leaders; "they should neither dominate nor use their skills instead giving away their power and teaching their skills to the community."[167] Similarly, Robert Fisher writes, "It is critical in community organizing to provide leadership, to do organization building, and to teach leadership and rudimentary organizational skills, but most new lefters (sic) thought this ran counter to the idea of letting the people decide."[168]

While the examples outlined above certainly complicated participatory democracy, former JOIN participants disagree with scholars' interpretation that participatory democracy was the downfall of ERAP and JOIN. Instead, former organizers point to the dominance of the organization by students as the central problems. Doubts about their ability to organize the poor are clearly evident in the descriptions of the organization earlier in this chapter. However, throughout its evolution, JOIN staff struggled with their position in the organization. The students worried about manipulation and cooptation. They participated in numerous discussions and wrote countless essays hashing out the role of an organizer. But in the end, the student staff could not balance their role as outsiders and organizers without dominating JOIN. While

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[166] Peggy Terry and Doug Youngblood, "JOIN/NCU to End the Rumors," *New Left Notes*, February 26, 1968, 2, 8.
[167] Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left*, 141.
[168] Fisher, *Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America*, 116.

cognitively committed to participatory democracy, staff continued to exert power over the project. After student organizers Bob Lawson and Diane Sager left JOIN in 1967, they remembered the problems they posed as students: "In the beginning a distinction was made between the 'students,' who weren't really people, and the 'community' people, who were true people."[169] Ultimately, "there were so many organizers around they would usurp the roles of the organization and it would become the organizers' organization rather than the communities'."[170] Rothstein argued that the dissolution of ERAP projects including JOIN was due in part to the inability to define the role of an organizer beyond a simple catchphrase. "'Let the people decide' was a powerful mass slogan," he wrote. "Mass slogans, however, are not always adequate tools for understanding one's own political practice; in this case it led organizers to pretend (at times even to themselves) that 'the people' were deciding issues that only organizers knew about, let alone understood."[171] Community members agreed as evidenced by the community takeover of JOIN in 1967. Doug Youngblood, a community leader, put it this way: "Entirely too many people are running around with the idea that an organizer is some kind of super-human being with a computer for a brain and an incredible charismatic power that enables him to influence, sway, or change the direction of another person's thoughts and ideas at the drop of a hat."[172] After the creation of the National Community Union and the community take-over of JOIN, community members Peggy Terry and Youngblood explained that students were asked to leave because "their

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[169] Bob Lawson and Diane Sager, "A Perspective for Community Organizing," 1967, 2, Series 4B:213, SDS Papers.
[170] Ibid., 5.
[171] Richard Rothstein, "Representative Democracy in SDS," *Liberation* (February 1972): 16–17.
[172] Doug Youngblood, "About Organizing," *New Left Notes*, April 29, 1968, 4.

unwillingness, or inability, to fade from the scene, began to produce tensions that in some cases resulted in open hostility, and the loss of community people from what, in theory, was their own organization."[173]

Lack of leadership was not the problem that plagued JOIN. Rather, too much leadership by the student organizers hurt JOIN's attempts to become a community organization run by the community. Although ERAP meant to test participatory democracy in the field and JOIN made laudable attempts at the process, ultimately, the students were too involved. They did succeed in creating an indigenous leadership, but only after that leadership removed the students from decision-making power. As a social goal, participatory democracy also failed. In the chapter on the War on Poverty and the Daley political machine we will see that the challenges JOIN faced were too momentous to overcome.

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[173] Terry and Youngblood, "JOIN/NCU to End the Rumors," 5.

CHAPTER 2: TWO: AN EXERCISE IN PRAGMATIC DEMOCRACY

In 1968, Herman Blake found The Woodlawn Organization (TWO) headquarters "a veritable beehive of activity."[174] The Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation had sent him to determine whether its financial contributions had helped TWO fulfill the foundation's mission to improve citizen participation in communities.[175] Blake "made a special effort to determine if TWO really involved the grassroots members of the community or whether it was a 'middle-class' movement" of outside experts. After attending meetings and talking with members, he discovered that all levels of the community participated and cooperated in the organization.[176] Blake demonstrated not only that TWO was fulfilling the foundation's mission but also fulfilling Saul Alinsky's dream of putting power in the hands of self-reliant people. Blake noted that TWO did not solve community problems, but showed the people "that it is their organized efforts which bring them results." Along the way citizens learned that their "independence, self-reliance, self-determination, and success will require effort on their part in terms of participation and finance--through TWO dues."[177] For example, the head of TWO's Social Welfare Union, Annie Jackson, approached TWO with a welfare problem and

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[174] J. Herman Blake, "Citizen Participation, Democracy and Social Change: A Report to the Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation," December 1, 1969, 27, Box 4, Folder 12, Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation Records, University of Chicago.

[175] The Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation was founded by Emil Schwarzhaupt to fund programs that built citizenship and participation for powerless groups, especially immigrants. In 1953, the Foundation began applying funds to help citizens organize at the community level. The Industrial Areas Foundation secured numerous grants from the Schwarzhaupt Foundation, including funding for The Woodlawn Organization. For more on the history and mission of the Schwarzhaupt Foundation see Carl Tjerandsen, *Education for Citizenship: A Foundation's Experience* (Santa Cruz, CA: Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation, 1980).

[176] Blake, "Citizen Participation, Democracy and Social Change: A Report to the Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation," 139.

[177] Ibid., 122.

stayed on to become an active member.[178] This was a common occurrence amongst

TWO members. Blake's study concluded, "Not only does TWO serve the community, it

continues to build a people-based organization, appealing to the rational self-interest of

the various segments of the community."[179] In this way, The Woodlawn Organization

accomplished Alinsky's objectives for a democratic community organization. In

Woodlawn, Alinsky followed a pragmatic approach utilizing a controlled democracy

where IAF organizers influenced strategy and program decisions to build an organization

that had the power to make the decisions that affected their lives.

When Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) began organizing

efforts in Woodlawn, they had been creating democratic community organizations for

nearly thirty years. Though he originally studied archeology at the University of

Chicago, the realities of the Great Depression encouraged him to take a degree in

sociology instead. After winning a graduate fellowship to study criminology, he spent

much of his time doing fieldwork. He studied the Italian street gangs on the West Side

and became friendly with many of his subjects. However, his career in criminology

ended after working as a sociologist at the state prison in Joliet. In the mid-1930s, he

then returned to working with juvenile delinquents at sociologist Clifford Shaw's

Chicago Areas Project, where he began to consider the importance of citizen participation

in community improvement. Shaw argued that juvenile delinquency was cause by the

"social milieu," not mental deviancies or psychological reasons as others at the time

believed. Alinsky worked with Shaw developing community organizations that would

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[178] Ibid., 115–116.
[179] Ibid., 123.

not only address the problems of delinquency, but other community issues as well. His

work with the Chicago Areas Project led him to the Back of the Yards in Chicago where

he would further explore his ideas about citizen participation. From this time forward,

Alinsky devoted his life to putting democratic decision-making power into the hands of

ordinary people. He believed that when people had control over the decisions that

affected their lives they would build faith in themselves, envision a better future, and

develop a responsibility for their community. "The radical," according to Alinsky, "has

the job of organizing people so that they will have the power and opportunity to best meet

each unforeseeable future crisis as they move ahead to realize those values of equality,

justice, [and] freedom…"[180] In this way, achieving democracy was both therapeutic for

the people and built more stable communities. To instruct people on how to attain

democracy at a community level, he drew from experience working in the Back of the

Yards neighborhood of Chicago in the 1930s. Here he had famously organized

packinghouse workers of feuding nationalities into a unified group. After this success, he

created the IAF to build community organizations, or People's Organizations as he called

them, in cities across the country. While Alinsky certainly valued democratic decision-

making placed in the hands of the people, during the organizational phase, he and his

paid organizers exercised considerable control over the group. The goal was to help

people attain power, but IAF and its organizers utilized a limited democracy to guide

community organizations into that position of power.

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[180] Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, xiv.

<u>Alinsky's Democratic Community Organizations</u>

Alinsky's commitment to democracy is evident in his distinction between radicals

and liberals. He wrote *Reveille for Radicals* (1946) to define the role of the radical and to

describe the steps for forming People's Organizations. For Alinsky, a radical believed in

the power of ordinary people organized toward a common purpose to change political

institutions that had heretofore been unresponsive. Alinsky cited Thomas Jefferson's

observation that "men by their constitution are naturally divided into two parties: 1.

Those who fear and distrust the people, and wish to draw all powers from them into the

hands of the higher classes. 2. Those who identify themselves with the people, have

confidence in them, cherish and consider them as the most honest and safe, although not

the most wise depository of the public interests."[181] Radicals, like democrats of

Jefferson's time, admired people. Much like the New Left's later call for participatory

democracy in the Port Huron Statement, Alinsky "wants the creation of a kind of society

where all of man's potentialities could be realized; a world where man could live in

dignity, security, happiness, and peace—a world based on a morality of mankind."[182] To

this end, radicals work to create a more democratic society. For Jefferson this meant a

system of government, for Alinsky, the creation of People's or Community

Organizations.

These organizations would save American democracy from urbanization and

industrialization. Alinsky derided urban America's sense of anomie.[183] Too many

people felt that though they were citizens of a democracy, they did not have the capacity

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[181] Jefferson as quoted in Ibid., 8.
[182] Ibid., 15.
[183] Ibid., 44.

to join together and influence decisions. While industrialized society brought advancements, it also created "destructive forces [such as] unemployment, decay, disease, and crime. From the havoc wrought by these forces issue distrust, bigotry, disorganization, and demoralization."[184] These challenges needed to be addressed for democracy to survive.

Like the great 19th century visitor to America, Alexis de Tocqueville, Alinsky believed democracy was best found in local organizations operating in civil society. Run by the people, these groups had the community's best interests in mind. "Vital to the functioning of democracy," community organizations gave people a stake in the future, responsibility, and dignity, thereby fulfilling their democratic purpose.[185] Participation in a local organization was at the very root of creating a democracy. Once people become actively involved and interested, they become informed and develop a faith in themselves and the future. Alinsky heeded Tocqueville's warning that if citizens lost interest in participation, self-government would disappear, arguing that unless Americans were encouraged to greater involvement, "democracy will die at its roots—the withering disease of apathy in the roots of democracy will eventually cause its death."[186] But it was more than preserving democracy for democracy's sake; citizens feel an obligation to each other in a democracy. He wrote, "We know we must face the issue of mankind's obligations as well as its rights. We must recognize that one of the best ways to insure that men will assume obligations to their fellow men and to society is to make them feel

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[184] Ibid., 45.
[185] Ibid., 47, 50.
[186] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: D. Appleton, 1904), 810–813; Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, 184.

that they are definitely a part of society and that society means enough to them so that they actually feel obligated or have obligations."[187]

According to Alinsky, "only through the achievement and constructive use of power can people better themselves."[188] Power was the lifeblood of an active citizenry. Though his critics associated power with corruption, Alinsky went to great lengths to stress the necessity of thinking in terms of power. Without power, there would be no laws or government. Even the notion of pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps utilized power. In "From Citizen Apathy to Participation," Alinsky argued, "The only reason people have ever banded together, past, present or future, is so that through organization they can create a power instrument with which to implement or realize their desires or needs, or their program."[189] In a later essay, he assessed the immorality of power, asserting that "morality in the use of power lies not in the power concept or instrument itself, but in the hands of and in the mind of the user."[190]

Another controversial component of Alinsky's theory was his use of conflict to attain power. Organizations that sought power used conflict and controversy to achieve democracy. "The radical," Alinsky wrote, "recognizes that constant dissention and conflict is and has been the fire under the broiler of democracy."[191] A democratic society responds to popular pressures, therefore the organization must engage in pressure tactics, which often involve controversy.[192] The People's Organization he outlined in *Reveille*

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[187] Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, 40.
[188] Ibid., 22.
[189] Alinsky, "From Citizen Apathy to Participation," 7.
[190] Saul D. Alinsky, "The Morality of Power," June 28, 1961, 2, Box 19, Folder 291, IAF Collection, UIC.
[191] Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, 18.
[192] "Principles of Community Organization Set Forth by the Industrial Areas Foundation," 1965, 1, Series 2A:32, SDS Papers.

for Radicals was a conflict group by the very fact of its existence. Any new power

organization immediately threatened the existing power structure. In addition, the issues

pursued by People's Organizations were, in their very nature, controversial. "Important

issues involve, of necessity, controversy;" Alinsky explains, "controversy means the use

of power at least to the point of confrontation and negotiations to a settlement if possible,

without open controversy."[193] The role of the organization was to confront or conflict

with the status quo and change it. Alinsky's organizations waged a war against injustice

in which there could be no compromise; "A war is not an intellectual debate, and in the

war against social evils there are no rules of fair play."[194] In short, a People's

Organization helped people attain power through conflict and controversy. With power,

the community achieved democracy giving the community a future, responsibility, and

dignity.

To build a People's Organization, the organizer should seek out indigenous

leaders. According to Alinsky, "The only way that you can reach people is through their

own representation or their own leaders."[195] Built upon the loyalties of member groups, a

People's Organization was an organization of neighborhood organizations to "deal with

those major issues which no one single agency is—or can be—big enough or strong

enough to cope with."[196] Though these organizations had differing goals and

memberships, according to Alinsky, they discovered that they share much. Problems that

once seemed so individual and insurmountable became approachable when groups

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[193] Alinsky, "The Morality of Power," 6.
[194] Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, 133.
[195] Ibid., 64.
[196] Ibid., 87.

realized that by pooling their resources they had a chance of creating change. Indeed, the organization of organizations would smooth away differences when "leaders of groups that have seemingly conflicting interest get to know each other as human being by working together on joint projects of mutual concern."[197] And this cooperation fostered self-respect from having resolved their problems on their own.

Just as the people made up the organization, the people determined the organization's program. Self-interest motivated people to join the People's Organization and self-interest guided the community into a common direction.[198] The programs were necessarily broad as to involve as many groups as possible. At the same time, the organization stressed the connection between seemingly disconnected issues to maintain broad appeal.[199] Because the problems were those experienced by local people and they were the ones acting to solve these problems, they became educated and confident.[200] Once informed, they saw the connections between the problems the community faced, further enhancing the unity of the organization. They discovered that the problems they thought were only their own, were in fact shared problems and "their" opinions were common opinions. In this way, the program developed alongside the organization.

The mover and shaker behind the People's Organizations was the paid organizer. The organizer's sole purpose was to create a democratic organization run by the people. Although the organizer was the catalyst, the people jump-started the organization

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[197] Ibid., 156.
[198] "Principles of Community Organization," 1.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, 173.

process.[201] In order for this to be successful, the organizer must have complete faith in

the ability and dignity of people to act freely and in their own interest. Feelings of

superiority on the part of the organizer could not be concealed and would ultimately

alienate the people he was trying to mobilize.[202] In fact, according the Alinsky, "If you

respect the dignity of the individual with whom you are working then their desires, not

yours; their values, not yours; their ways of working and fighting, not yours; their choice

of leadership, not yours; their programs, not yours is what is important and to be

accepted."[203]

The organizer must be flexible and surrender preconceived ideas about

organizing. Alinsky cautioned, "Since it is imperative that the effective community

organizer be familiar with and comfortable in this array of seeming disorder, passion and

irrationality of the world in which he is working—it becomes essential that he divest

himself of those rigid, unrealistic, orderly views which he so patiently assimilated in

some formal institutions of alleged learning."[204] The organizer was also an agitator

trying to change the character of a given community. He "serv[ed] as an abrasive agent

to rub raw the resentments of the people of the community; to fan the latent hostilities of

many of the people to a point of overt expression; to search out controversial issues,

rather than to avoid them…; to stir up dissatisfaction and discontent; to provide a channel

into which they can angrily pour their frustrations of the past…"[205]

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[201] Emphasis in original. Ibid., 74.
[202] Ibid., 100.
[203] Alinsky, "From Citizen Apathy to Participation," 8.
[204] Ibid., 1.
[205] Ibid., 3.

Race and Community

Alinsky's People's Organizations were meant to work in any community that

lacked power. After organizing the Back of the Yards in the 1930s, Alinsky turned his

attention to strengthening Hispanic communities in Chicago and California, but changes

in the postwar city encouraged him to focus on African American ghettos and issues of

race. After World War II, northern metropolitan areas experienced tremendous migration

of southern blacks.[206] These new city immigrants found themselves living in

overcrowded traditional black areas. At the same time, urban whites, enjoying the

benefits of the economic boom, began moving to newly built suburbs. African

Americans, desperately needing new neighborhoods to inhabit, moved to houses vacated

by whites. This set off a chain reaction. Whites still living in the area were frightened by

the idea of blacks moving in. Fearful of decreased property values and an increase in

criminal activity, they fought to keep their neighborhoods segregated. When that failed,

they sold their houses. In a short time span, blacks occupied blocks that had once housed

white working class. White flight and increased migration changed the make-up of many

neighborhoods in cities such as Chicago.[207] Concerned about preserving democracy,

activists like Alinsky worried about the fate of America's latest urban immigrant group

and segregation.

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[206] For more on the second great migration of African Americans to Chicago see Nicholas Lehman, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

[207] Historians Amanda Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), Louis Rosen, *The Southside: The Racial Transformation of an American Neighborhood* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1998), and Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996) have noted that "white flight" is an inappropriate term to describe white reaction to black migration. Whites did not flee these communities. They fought to keep their neighborhoods segregated through improvement organizations, political tactics, and intimidation.

In a speech delivered at the University of Notre Dame in 1959, Alinsky outlined his plan for a solution to white flight and over-crowded ghettos. The current system of segregation negated democratic values, but full-fledged integration was problematic because it did not happen naturally. Integration, Alinsky argued, only occurred in controlled situations, such as economic limits on housing costs. To continue the use of controls, Alinsky developed a theory based on the use of controlled integration through quotas or percentages. He explained, "The situation of the pressures and forces involved can be grasped if we think of the segregated Negro ghetto, with its extremely congested over-population, in terms of a steam boiler with a head of steam far above the danger point."[208] The newly available space in white neighborhoods becomes a relief valve. Alinsky argued that if a community could control the number of black migrants by implementing quotas, the white community would be more accepting. But Alinsky was not just concerned about percentages; he also believed that those blacks allowed or invited into the neighborhood should be "similar in background, experience, and working conditions to the families residing in particular blocks of the community."[209] Families "will be carefully screened, selected and invited into housing which opens up in those particular sectors" creating a sense of invitation instead of invasion.[210] All of this would happen through "an organization which possesses the power to implement [the white community's] desires and to give them a feeling of security that this organization of theirs can cope with and control almost any kind of problem which might face the

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[208] Saul D. Alinsky, "The Urban Immigrant," in *Roman Catholicism and the American Way of Life*, ed. Thomas Timothy McAvoy (Ayer Publishing, 1960), 150.
[209] Ibid., 155.
[210] Ibid.

community."[211] As could be expected, Alinsky's quota system met with considerable criticism. One letter to the editor accused Alinsky of "accept[ing] the theory of white supremacy and suggest[ing] the perpetuation of the patronizing attitude on the part of white[s] which Negroes so strongly hate."[212] Another wrote, "In areas of housing, employment, health and welfare, there can be no compromise. Nothing short of full first-class citizenship is satisfactory to the majority of American Negroes."[213]

With his quota program, Alinsky continued his belief in a community's ability to obtain power through organizing to make the decisions that affect their lives. By placing the control of migration of blacks in the hands of the community organization, the community has power. Alinsky and IAF attempted to test the quota theory in the Southwest Side of Chicago by assisting the creation of the Organization of the Southwest Community (OSC) in a primarily white neighborhood that bordered a black ghetto.[214] While one of Alinsky's objectives was to implement quota integration, whites in OSC showed limited interest in the prospect. The community adopted a "neutralist" policy of not allowing organized discrimination and allowing blacks a place in their community, but they would not actively seek integration.[215] "I am convinced," Alinsky later reflected, "that a white community which organizes ostensibly for this purpose once it reaches the point where it believes it has the strength to accept and control a quota will very probably assume that if it has that strength then it has the strength to have no quota

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[211] Ibid., 154.

[212] A. L. Foster, "Other People's Business," *Chicago Defender*, May 23, 1959, 4.

[213] William Jones, "The People Speak: Against Quota in Housing," *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 18, 1959, 11.

[214] For a detailed history of the OSC, see Santow, "Saul Alinsky and the Dilemmas of Race in the Post-War City."

[215] Saul D. Alinsky to Albert Gregory Cardinal Meyer, memorandum, September 15, 1960, 3, Box 27, Folder 461, IAF Collection, UIC.

or to operate on a straight keep-them-out basis."[216] In this way, the community's ability

to gain power did not meet the ends Alinsky had hoped. Alinsky believed that power

meant the ability to improve the community, not wanting the community to use that

power for ends in which he did not approve such as segregation. He had a similar

experience with the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council. Once the organization

was powerful, it used its strength to keep blacks from moving into the neighborhood.

This was an area of deep embarrassment for Alinsky. After the failure of the OSC to

embrace racial quotas, Alinsky abandoned the idea.

Integration was going to happen despite the failure of Alinsky's quota system.

According to Alinsky, the choice was between voluntary integration and government

coerced integration. He opposed government enforcement of desegregation because it

would damage the democratic system because "the citizen is forced into subservient

dependence on the government power."[217] "Unless the people and institutions that are

convinced volunteerism is the animating principle of democracy produce a workable

answer to the problem," Alinsky warned, "government force will be used."[218] While the

OSC organized itself to the point that members would treat their black neighbors

respectfully, they "lack the determination to initiate integration."[219] According to

Alinsky, it was a problem of stimulus. "A Negro organization representing immediate

Negro self-interest," Alinsky argued, "can be the occasion by which the whites see that

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[216] Saul D. Alinsky to Nicholas Von Hoffman, September 25, 1959, 1, Box 27, Folder 459, IAF Collection, UIC.
[217] Alinsky to Meyer, September 15, 1960, 2.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid., 3.

integration is not only in their own long range self-interest, but also in their interest now."[220]

In this manner, Alinsky shifted the locus of power needed to achieve integration. With racial quotas, the power was in the hands of the white community that wanted to preserve itself. After the failed attempts with the OSC and Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council, Alinsky shifted the point of power needed for integration to the black community, arguing that "The Negro population will not get any more than any other population or interest groups will ever get except what they are strong enough to get through their own strength and not through any outside gimmicks or outside groups."[221] In turning his attention to the black community, Alinsky criticized established black political leaders and old-line organizations in Chicago "who have their security and status not with their own people but with the white segregated world."[222] In addition, the Urban League and the Chicago branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) interests were too closely tied to white money to be of any use.[223] Money was power, and money from whites was not local power. In addition, he worried about the ties of some black leaders to the political machine. Since power did not come from these traditional leaders, Alinsky advised the people to get it another way: "Every sign on the road to equality reads the same—'Organize, organize

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[220] Ibid., 5.
[221] Alinsky to Von Hoffman, September 25, 1959, 1.
[222] Saul D. Alinsky, "Emancipation--Not a Proclamation," 1963, 2, Folder 443, IAF Collection, UIC.
[223] Alinsky to Meyer, September 15, 1960, 4.

and organize!' Only through your own organized power will you get that which is every man's rightful heritage, his dignity and equality."[224]

Two organizers who worked closely with Alinsky agreed that power had to come from within the black community. Nicholas Von Hoffman, Alinsky's right hand man from 1953 to 1963, described the need for reorganizing lower class black neighborhoods in his 1962 article, "Reorganization in the Casbah." Recognizing, as Alinsky did, that all communities had some sort of organization, Von Hoffman argued that reorganization was necessary to provide local leaders power to create change. Leaders in black ghettos were largely unrecognized and isolated. "They must pool their power to form an instrument for taking charge in an affirmative sense," according to Von Hoffman. "By coming together in large and wider unity they can consecrate leaders of sufficient power and backing to force recognition."[225] Local leaders have not taken this step on their own, because they do not know how, never thought of it, or do not have the resources. This is where the outside "reorganizer" becomes the catalyst for change. "Their fresh viewpoint," von Hoffman writes, "opens men's eyes to new formations, new tactics, to the road that goes toward the constitution of a new order."[226]

Arthur Brazier, Woodlawn community leader and multiple term president of TWO, concurred with Alinsky's and Von Hoffman's assessment on the need for power organizations in the black community. In his 1969 book documenting the history of TWO, Brazier stressed the need for organizations to attain power. Black Americans "must organize for their basic self-interests" and "to keep from being exploited or helped

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[224] Alinsky, "Emancipation--Not a Proclamation," 3.
[225] Nicholas Von Hoffman, "Reorganization in the Casbah," *Social Progress* LII (April 1962): 40.
[226] Ibid., 41.

in paternalistic ways by white society."[227] The ghetto possessed power in the numbers of people, but lacked resources to organize that power. "Unorganized power, however, goes nowhere," according to Brazier. In addition, organization of the black ghetto cannot come from outside the self-interests of black people. Brazier asserted, "A community with people organized from within provides the route from powerlessness to power."[228]

Organizing Woodlawn

When ministers in the Woodlawn Pastor's Alliance asked for IAF's help in organizing Woodlawn, Alinsky was ready to try his hand at organizing black neighborhoods. Located just south of the Midway, a green space that was once a central feature of the Chicago's World's Fair of 1893, Woodlawn is bordered by the University of Chicago to the north and Lake Michigan to the east. In the 1960s, Woodlawn had become a black ghetto due to southern migration and white flight. Ten years before, Woodlawn had been a working class white neighborhood. With the influx of black migrants and white flight, Woodlawn became a black ghetto in a little over two decades. By 1960, blacks made up 89% of the population, a 131% increase from 1950. Woodlawn suffered from many of the problems faced by black ghettos. Unemployment in the community was 11.5%, more than twice that of Chicago as a whole. [229] With its many hotels and taverns, it was the center of Southside Chicago's vice trade and faced significant crime problems. With few single-family residences, most people in Woodlawn lived in apartments and converted hotels. The over-crowded living conditions forced residents into the streets and alleys. And an elevated train ran over the business

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[227] Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 5.
[228] Ibid., 22.
[229] Kitagawa and Taeuber, *Local Community Fact Book*, 2.

district, casting shadows over shopping centers. According to Von Hoffman, "most of

Woodlawn" was "quite ugly."[230] In addition, the community lacked civic interest.

A group of pastors recognized Woodlawn's inability to cope with the ghetto

conditions. They believed that Woodlawn needed a strong organization to act as the

community's advocate. Ministers from Holy Cross Catholic Church, the Woodlawn

Immanuel Lutheran Church, and the First Presbyterian Church of Chicago met regularly

to discuss the deteriorating conditions in Woodlawn and possible solutions. They

attended meetings of community and civic organizations, consulted with government

officials, and spoke with residents.[231] In the words of one minister, their "joints stiff from

sitting at meetings that led only to more meetings, we got it into our heads to visit Saul

David Alinsky."[232] Not all members of the Woodlawn Pastors' Alliance, however,

agreed that Alinsky and IAF were what Woodlawn needed. A handful of pastors argued

that Alinsky's tactics were immoral; that his use of conflict and power did not mesh with

Christian principles. And they accused him of being a tool of the Catholic Church. Most

ministers in the Alliance concluded that these accusations and concerns were unfounded.

But the Lutheran Church withdrew its support, leaving the Catholic Church and

Presbyterian Church to support the new Woodlawn organization financially.[233]

Before entering a community, IAF preferred a formal invitation from the most

prominent organizations in the community. In addition, IAF required that the community

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[230] "Woodlawn Project," March 17, 1958, 1, Box 27, Folder 458, IAF Collection, UIC.

[231] "A Proposal Outlining the Woodlawn Cooperative Project," 1959, 1–3, Box 27, Folder 459, IAF Collection, UIC.

[232] Ulysses B. Blakely and Charles T. Leber, "The Great Debate in Chicago," *Presbyterian Life* (June 15, 1961): 36.

[233] Ibid.; Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 36–30.

raise $150,000, enough money to pay for three years of operating costs. This demand

had multiple benefits. One, it ensured that IAF would be committed to help the

community for three years. Two, it freed the organization from significant fundraising

during its most formative years. Three, it gave the organization independence. Funds

were raised from foundations, churches, and other donations, usually without strings

attached. In the case of Woodlawn, because the community was so poor, the

organization utilized church and foundation monies. The Catholic Archdiocese of

Chicago committed $50,000. The Schwartzhaupt Foundation contributed $69,000 and

the Presbytery of Chicago donated the rest.[234]

On January 5, 1961, after three years of talks with Alinsky and IAF, five

Woodlawn organizations met. Representatives from the Pastor's Alliance, the Woodlawn

Business Men's Association, the United Woodlawn Conference, the Block Clubs

Council, and the Knights of St. John formed the Temporary Woodlawn Organization

(TWO). They established the organization "as a means of making sure that all our

Woodlawn citizens, churches, institutions, and businesses will have an independent and

fearless instrument to carry out the will of the people of our community."[235] Members

stressed the temporary nature of the organization "so that every person, group, and

institution which is part of Woodlawn will have his say in the writing of our constitution

and the creation of our organization."[236] TWO's first order of business was to ask for

IAF's assistance formally. The newly elected president, Elder Robert J. McGee of the

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[234] Sanford D. Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1989), 388.

[235] Robert J. McGee to Saul D. Alinsky, January 6, 1961, 1, Box 28, Folder 462, IAF Collection.

[236] "Woodlawn Groups Join Forces in Move Against U.C. Spread," *Woodlawn Booster,* January 11, 1961.

Apostolic Church of Christ, wrote to Alinsky, "We are anxious to secure organizing help from the Industrial Areas Foundation because we know of the Foundation's long history of recognizing the supreme authority of the people in their community even when the people clash with large, greedy interests from outside."[237]

McGee was anxious in part because of actions taken by "the large, greedy interests" of the University of Chicago. The University of Chicago, located on the northern side of the Midway that divided Woodlawn from Hyde Park, introduced a plan to the city's Conservation Committee proposing an expansion of its campus.[238] This expansion called for the University to acquire the northern blocks of Woodlawn. In the process, the buildings on these blocks would be razed and the housing, though dilapidated, would be lost, displacing Woodlawn residents. The Woodlawn community was distressed not only because the University would essentially annex part of their neighborhood, but because of the way the University proposed the plan—without community consultation and deliberation. This issue highlighted a common problem in the ghettos—decisions forced upon them. TWO was created to change this through self-determination. The Chairman's opening statement to the Temporary Woodlawn Organization noted that the organization "was started to enforce the community of Woodlawn's right to self-determination. Self-rule is our right, and we will accept

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[237] McGee to Alinsky, January 6, 1961.
[238] Though TWO's conflict with the University of Chicago's expansion predates that of Columbia University, the latter's attempt to expand its campus into the black neighborhood of Harlem had received more attention. For more on Columbia University's expansion project and the resulting protests see: Stefan Bradley, *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

nothing less than our right."[239] The University's attempt to put forth a plan without input

from Woodlawn was another attempt by "the forces and individuals who have appointed

themselves to be our guardians" to make decisions for Woodlawn.[240]

Although he does not mention the specific words in any of his published writings

before helping TWO, self-determination was an extension of Alinsky's notion of

democracy and community vitality. Alinsky placed the people above all else in a

democracy. The people in a community knew what was wrong and right in that

community. Motivated by self-interest, they sought their rights through community

organizations. By organizing, the people could gain power and create change. But

ultimately, the people needed to be in control of the organization, its program, and its

leadership. TWO's demands for self-determination were part of the democratic system

Alinsky outlined. TWO wanted self-rule or the power to make the decisions that affected

their community, or as Alinsky put it "the human desire of people to have their self-

respect and to do things for themselves."[241] Self-determination also implied recognition

of self-worth and dignity. Alinsky believed that community organizations break down

"the feeling on the part of the people that they are social automatons with no stake in the

future, rather than human beings in possession of all the responsibility, strength, and

human dignity which constitute the heritage of free citizens of a democracy."[242] Self-

determination achieved these same ends. They would realize self-determination as

Alinsky proscribed as well. Through conflict and controversy, TWO would attain the

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[239] "Chairman's Opening Statement, TWO meeting," January 16, 1961, 1, Box 28, Folder 462, IAF
Collection, UIC.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, 176.
[242] Ibid., 50.

power it needed to reach its goal of community control. Racial equality was also part of

the equation for self-determination, but that would come later.

TWO's first attempt to assert its right to self-determination came when the new

organization asked to be recognized by the South East Chicago Commission (SECC), the

commission supporting the University of Chicago's development projects. Members of

TWO submitted this resolution to the SECC: "The principle of community self-

determination applies to Woodlawn as it does to all other communities."[243] The SECC

approved the resolution only after replacing the word self-determination with

participation. This editing insulted TWO because "free and equal men cannot exchange

the right of self-determination for the cloudy and dubious privilege of 'participation.'"[244]

Nonetheless, it steeled the resolve of TWO to demand recognition by the SECC. In fact,

one TWO member recalled, "the news that [the SECC] would permit us to participate

was greeted with a derisive snort."[245] TWO clarified the issue at their next meeting:

"Woodlawn calls upon the South East Chicago Commission to realize and live with the

fact of Woodlawn is a free and self-determining community equal in dignity and

importance to all other communities."[246] But the SECC refused to acknowledge the right

of TWO to speak for the community.[247] This denial was in part a result of the conflict

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[243] Ulysses B. Blakely and Charles T. Leber, "Summary of Events Related to the Temporary Woodlawn Organization for Community Planning and Rehabilitation," March 1961, 5, Box 28, Folder 464, IAF Collection, UIC.

[244] Emphasis in original. "Resolution on the Self-Determination and Good Reputation of Woodlawn Offered by Rev. Arthur M. Brazier," n.d., Box 28, Folder 463, IAF Collection, UIC.

[245] Charles T. Leber and Martin Farrell, "Statement and Motion Offered at the South East Commission Board Meeting," February 13, 1961, 1, Box 28, Folder 463, IAF Collection, UIC.

[246] Blakely and Leber, "Summary of Events," 6.

[247] For a more detailed account of the TWO/University of Chicago conflict see John Fish, *Black Power/White Control: the Struggle of the Woodlawn Organization in Chicago* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1973); Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy*.

between the desires of the two groups, but it was also due to the fact that TWO had a limited power base. TWO needed to build-up its membership and public image as a power organization before it could force the SECC and other institution to recognize its right to self-determination.

The organizers at IAF knew they faced challenges in Woodlawn. Nicholas Von Hoffman had been studying the make-up of the community since 1958 when the three pastors originally approached Alinsky. His initial reports spoke of a neighborhood that was not a community. A lack of viable civic and community organizations meant that the residents were not civically engaged. "The population," Von Hoffman concluded, "is indifferent to 'community problems' because there is nothing in Woodlawn that would attract loyalty."[248] IAF typically worked through existing organizations such as churches, civic groups, and business associations to create a larger organization of organizations. The area was in desperate need of new organizational techniques not only to create TWO but to form the organizations within TWO. Woodlawn, like many communities IAF worked in, was short on monetary and political resources but its source of power could come from its people. TWO needed to capitalize on this power. Von Hoffman warned, "Unless this type of project is undertaken, it can be said as a certainty that Woodlawn will continue to grow as a slum until conditions there will be favorable for total land clearance."[249] Though he knew the benefits of creating a large organization of organizations, Von Hoffman worried about the ability to create an effective organization in Woodlawn. At times, he felt the whole project was "unworkable" because of the

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[248] "Woodlawn Project," 1.
[249] Ibid., 2.

atmosphere created by the few existing groups in Woodlawn. He reported his concerns

to Alinsky: "We have a lot of small jealous, fundamentally impotent groups who waste

what little energy they have squabbling with each other."[250] Despite Von Hoffman's

initial worries, he continued to beat the pavement and organize. Alinsky never

considered pulling out Woodlawn. He was "not interested in preserving the reputation of

the Industrial Areas Foundation as always succeeding and therefore will not take a

project because it may fail or boomerang back in our faces."[251] Fortunately, Von

Hoffman eventually discovered Woodlawn was not short on leaders. The IAF studies

"revealed an impressive number of bold, intelligent leaders who know where they would

like to lead."[252] Small block clubs that were largely ineffective and isolated limited these

leaders. "Nevertheless," Alinsky concluded, "the area seems ready and more than ready

for organization if the correct method can be found."[253]

Alinsky, though he outlined suggested methods for organizing in both *Reveille for
Radicals* and *Rules for Radicals*, stressed that one must work from the situation as it is.
In other words, organizers must assess the unique conditions of each community and
formulate a plan from there. When asked by journalist Georgie Ann Geyer how one
begins organizing in Woodlawn, Von Hoffman replied, "I found myself at the corner of
63rd and Kimbark and I looked around."[254] Though his response was casual, Von
Hoffman had some apprehensions whenever he began a new project noting that strangers

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[250] Nicholas Von Hoffman to Saul D. Alinsky, "Woodlawn," memorandum, October 14, 1958, 2, Box 27,
Folder 458, IAF Collection, UIC.
[251] Alinsky to Von Hoffman, September 25, 1959, 2.
[252] Saul D. Alinsky, "Memorandum to: Dr. Donald Zimmerman," February 9, 1961, 12, Box 28, Folder
463, IAF Collection, UIC.
[253] Ibid., 13.
[254] Georgie Anne Geyer, "Woodlawn: A Community in Revolt," *Chicago Scene*, June 7, 1962, 13.

were always intimidating. In his weekly report to Alinsky, he reminded himself,

"Eventually, those gatherings of mysterious people will not seem so foreign when and if

we discover how this job is to be done."[255]

In addition to facing strangers, Von Hoffman had other reasons for concern

prompted by an issue Alinsky had neglected in his writings on organizing. He was

fundamentally different from those he was trying to organize. Von Hoffman was white

and Woodlawn was 89% black. Though not a college graduate, he represented middle-

class values which he exploited by wearing a blue pinstriped suit and red vest to "give the

impression of prosperity in a great gray, glum part of a big-city slum."[256] It soon became

clear to IAF and community leaders that the Woodlawn organization would not have any

kind of white base.[257] In fact, Von Hoffman was conscious that the color of his skin

would have an effect on organizing. He was careful to uncover what exactly a white

person could do to help and what he should not do. In his observations of Woodlawn

organizations, he found that many were led by one or two white people, and not very

well. But the dynamics of this relationship between the white figures and the black

members stood out to Von Hoffman. Often, when a black person made a point, "there

seems to be an almost irrepressible tendency to see eyes [of other black members] flicker

over towards the white person more or less to say 'Is this right, is this guy talking through

his hat?'"[258] Von Hoffman reasoned that blacks who looked to the white individual

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[255] Nicholas Von Hoffman, "Report on Woodlawn," October 11, 1960, 1, Box 64, Folder 800, IAF Collection, UIC.

[256] Von Hoffman, *Radical*, 11.

[257] Von Hoffman, "Report on Woodlawn," 4.

[258] Nicholas Von Hoffman, "Report on Woodlawn," November 1960, 2, Box 37, Folder 602, IAF Collection, UIC.

resented that fact and then transferred their resentment to the white individual. "For the period of time any white man like myself is in this kind of organizational situation," he cautioned, "we've got to assume that his position is going to be very equivocal, that he will command a particular position of liking and respect but by the same token this will engender some real animosities which, although they may be smothered, can never, in my opinion, be discounted or ignored."[259] Alinsky understood these concerns. He knew that having a white group sponsor a black organization would create suspicion. He also knew that the organizing methods IAF used elsewhere would not apply to Woodlawn. New methods needed to be found.[260]

Shortly before the Temporary Woodlawn Organization formed, Alinsky knew he had to hire a black organizer for Woodlawn. Through the recommendation of Catholic clergy close to IAF, Robert Squires came to work with Von Hoffman in Woodlawn. An African American fresh out of the Army, Squires had been working on the West Side organizing in public housing projects. He immediately began working in Woodlawn by walking the streets and talking with anyone he met. Squires too recognized the importance of race in organizing the community. In his conversations, he detected the race consciousness of community members. At a time when black consciousness was gaining support in northern urban areas and the message of Malcolm X was building a following but before black power, they expressed skepticism of any organization with whites in it. Though this disturbed him, Squires wrote Alinsky: "I have no doubt in my mind that to be able to sit and talk with these people and explain to them the needs and

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[259] Ibid.
[260] Alinsky, "Memorandum to: Dr. Donald Zimmerman," 22.

the purpose of this organization that they will eventually understand."[261] Alternatively, the people Squires spoke with were also "doubtful of any racist group" by which he meant they were suspicious of any group espousing black supremacy.[262]

The Role of the Staff Organizer

Despite the issues of race, organizing Woodlawn initially followed Alinsky's proscribed methods. As a staff organizer, it was Von Hoffman's first duty to familiarize himself with all aspects of the community. He needed to uncover the flow of power and discover local leaders. Ministers, politicians, and organization presidents might be obvious leaders, but a good organizer also looked for the non-traditional community leader.[263] The natural, all-purpose, indigenous leader did not exist, according to Von Hoffman.[264] Choosing leaders based on casual observation was risky. In addition, leaders of small groups might simply be that, and when they take on leadership roles in a large organization, they become overwhelmed. "At the beginning of organiz[ing], you are the leader—natural or otherwise—because at least theoretically you know more about what you are doing—building an organization—than anyone else around," Von Hoffman advised.[265] And the first leadership was usually those first available. Von Hoffman stressed that leadership changed as the organization changed. "The character of leadership, to put it in other words, is determined by the character of the organization that trains it and which it leads. The making of an organization and the making of leadership

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[261] Robert Squires, "Report on Woodlawn," March 2, 1961, 3, Box 64, Folder 800, IAF Collection, UIC.
[262] Ibid., 4.
[263] "Where Do We Get Our Staff...," 1959, 8, Box 27, Folder 459, IAF Collection, UIC.
[264] Nicholas Von Hoffman, "Finding and Making Leaders" (Students for a Democratic Society, n.d.), 1.
[265] Ibid., 2.

are inseparable."[266] All-purpose leaders were rare; the best organizations had collective

leadership where community leaders specialized in their skilled areas. For example, a

functional organization needs motivation leaders, fundraising leaders, program leaders,

big-picture leaders, etc.[267]

While Von Hoffman sought out local leaders, IAF had an established

organizational structure it followed in Woodlawn, with Alinsky at the top as executive

director of IAF. He made final decisions concerning tactics and plans. Alinsky's man on

the ground was Von Hoffman. As project director, Von Hoffman was responsible for the

initial community surveys and recruitment. Once he gathered enough support, a

temporary organization was formed—the Temporary Woodlawn Organization. TWO

elected a president and an executive committee who made policy decisions. IAF then

hired staff organizers to be "'handymen' for the organization."[268] The staff reported to

Von Hoffman. Their weekly reports documented their efforts to recruit delegates from

other local organizations by attending block club meetings, helping create and implement

programs, making connections with local leaders, and creating new block clubs. Von

Hoffman commented on and criticized the staff's actions in an attempt to build a better

organization and create better organizers. At this point, he exercised considerable control

over their actions and the direction of the organization.

The staff helped the organization run on a day-to-day basis and managed its inner

workings. The staff not only recruited members and implemented programs; they made

sure the organization ran smoothly. This included assisting in the running of committee

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[266] Ibid., 6–7.
[267] Ibid., 11.
[268] "Where Do We Get Our Staff...," 9–10.

meetings. Many of the people elected to the executive committee had little experience in running a large organization. The IAF staff was present at meetings to facilitate the process and help the chairmen learn how to chair a meeting effectively. Failure to have control over a meeting led to chaos and an impotent organization. One staffer, Charles Williams, reported on a meeting where many of the clergy members of the committee wandered in and out of the meeting, causing significant disruptions. In addition, the substitute chairman was weak. According to the report, "He seemed frightened and unsure of himself although we had given him an agenda."[269] The result was "a lot of confusion during the meeting."[270] Williams suggested talking with the board and sending out a memoranda "explaining the functions of the chairman, simply how to chair a meeting" because "unless our chairman and presidents can be educated into their role their role in this kind of an organization we're going to have serious difficulties."[271]

Von Hoffman and his staff also went about building the organization by recruiting member organizations for TWO. As Alinsky described in *Reveille for Radicals*, the organizer must work to balance the desires of the individual members and the larger group. Creating new organizations and recruiting them to TWO was a calculated effort on the part of the staff. One organizer used the language of self-determination to recruit members and smooth over divisions. When he received questions about the involvement of whites in TWO, he explained "that these people live in the community or they have business in the community and that it is impossible to have any kind of community without involving every element of the community within it…." He told them that TWO

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[269] Charles J. Williams, "Report on Woodlawn," May 1, 1961, 1, Box 36, Folder 593, IAF Collection, UIC.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Ibid., 6.

was self-determination. He said that Woodlawn should have the right to decide what

happens in their community in the same way that white communities have control.[272]

When Squires brought people into the organization he always asked himself, "What can

they do for the TWO and what can the TWO do for them[?]"[273] Organizations that joined

TWO learned that they had to be team members. If they forgot this, Squires wrote,

"They will also have to be reminded if ever they step out of line that they can be smashed

or should I say in better democratic terms that they might be over-ruled."[274] Alinsky

argued that self-interest motivated people to organize and seek power. Alinsky's books

simplified the process of organizing by ignoring the possible problems an activist might

encounter. Although usually pragmatic and realistic about human relations, the Alinsky

method idealized self-interest assuming it would include a sense of working for the

greater good. In the application of Alinsky's method in Woodlawn, Squires and Von

Hoffman debated the merits of self-interest in its real world application. Squires noticed

that some of the TWO officers had "personal prestige problems." He believed that the

organization should be run in such a way that "no one man gets too big for his

breeches."[275] Later he worried that the desire for self-recognition was dangerous and that

member organizations were more concerned about their own group than TWO.[276] Von

Hoffman countered, "[The desire for prestige] can also be the basis for a healthy

competition, which does not hurt the organization but helps it, by offering people an

opportunity to get prestige and to get glory, people who never had an opportunity

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[272] Edgar Jamison, "Report on Woodlawn," May 9, 1961, 5–6, Box 36, Folder 590, IAF Collection, UIC.
[273] Squires, "Report on Woodlawn," 2.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Robert Squires, "Report on Woodlawn," April 11, 1961, 5, Box 35, Folder 583, IAF Collection, UIC.

before."[277] Alinsky believed that as citizens become involved, they had a greater stake in the organization and the community. Recognition fostered participation and an individual's sense of responsibility to the community.

Organizers often had to create block organizations where none had existed and link them to TWO. Staff organizers began by meeting with small groups of people. From there, the organizer would discuss community issues and introduce the idea of forming a club. Oftentimes, these people had never been involved in civic activities and getting them established in a self-sufficient organization was at times difficult—more difficult than Alinsky describes. It also illustrated the power of the organizer, without whom no organization of self-determination would exist, creating a seeming contradiction where outside organizers, organize for a community's self-determination. Charles Williams described one block club he tried to organize: "They are a plain hard-working people who find it difficult to come to a meeting or discipline themselves during a meeting without resorting to beer or running next door to see a girlfriend."[278] While the group worked well enough when Williams attended meetings, when he was absent the group had trouble following through on plans.[279] Richard Harmon also reported challenges in organizing some blocks. For example, one block he tried repeatedly "to pull groups together…, [but] we have a bunch of isolated individuals who like TWO but getting them together is murder."[280] The goal of building these groups was not only to

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[277] Nicholas Von Hoffman to Robert Squires, memorandum, April 19, 1961, 4, Box 35, Folder 583, IAF Collection, UIC.

[278] Charles J. Williams, "Report on Woodlawn," July 26, 1961, 1, Box 37, Folder 602, IAF Collection, UIC.

[279] Ibid., 2.

[280] Richard Harmon, "Report on Woodlawn," December 28, 1961, 6, Box 37, Folder 598, IAF Collection, UIC.

empower people on a small scale, but also to add to the organization of organizations that was TWO.[281] Organizers regularly reported the status of the block clubs they were responsible for and where or not they were ready "to come in."[282]

Although Alinsky argued in *Reveille for Radicals* that diverse groups would join together in common interest in a People's Organization, attempts by the staff to use a pragmatic, limited democracy where the organizer has more influence than the community did not always work. Alinsky believed that through the organization process differing groups would realize they shared more than they disagreed and differences would disappear.[283] In Woodlawn, however, organizers discovered that this was not always the case. On occasion groups who at one time supported TWO found that their visions for Woodlawn diverged significantly. One such organization was the Future Outlook League (FOL). Embracing a black nationalist mood and foreshadowing black power and groups like Operation Breadbasket, this organization promoted black businesses, black employment, and black products. Robert Squires expressed skepticism of the FOL's loyalty to TWO in March 1961. He felt that the group might be more devoted to its own goals than to that of TWO's.[284] In fact, Squires was quite right about FOL. In October of 1961, FOL withdrew from TWO. The League cited TWO's failure to carry out its campaign against unfair business practices and a difference in goals. Echoing the debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Dubois, FOL wanted to focus on not just consumer rights, but fair hiring and treatment of black employees in

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[281] Charles J. Williams, "Report on Woodlawn," July 20, 1961, 1, Box 37, Folder 607, IAF Collection, UIC.

[282] Harmon, "Report on Woodlawn," 5.

[283] Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, 155–158.

[284] Squires, "Report on Woodlawn," 1–2.

local businesses. Specifically, the organization pointed to the futility of voter registration drives when time would be better spent on "working honestly for the economic good of our city."[285]

Von Hoffman often put the organizers on track after they got derailed, further illustrating the control organizers had over the internal participation of a group's members. The reports and corresponding memoranda allowed Von Hoffman to teach his staff IAF organizing tactics. Von Hoffman pointed out flaws, such as when an organizer got too cocky. He chastised Edgar Jamison for "big-shoting" around. "Our job is not to make the policy," Von Hoffman reminded Jamison, "It is to help the people in Woodlawn get what they want."[286] He also cautioned Squires against letting "ourselves get puffed up and believe that we and we alone know what is right and what is truth."[287] When an organizer blamed poor meeting attendance on apathy, Von Hoffman pointed out the flawed thinking: "Apathy is frequently used as an excuse for the failure to do good organizational work."[288] People want to talk about what interests them and are apathetic when the topic is irrelevant. When apathy occurs, according to Von Hoffman, it is because the organizer has not been listening to the people.[289] In another instance, he counseled an organizer on how to make a community leader. "One of the most important jobs that an organizer has is to be a teacher," Von Hoffman wrote. It is the organizer's job to teach a community person how to run a meeting, how to organize a committee, and

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[285] "Future Outlet League Withdraws from TWO," *Woodlawn Booster*, October 11, 1961.
[286] Nicholas Von Hoffman to Edgar Jamison, memorandum, May 22, 1961, 2, Box 37, Folder 602, IAF Collection, UIC.
[287] Von Hoffman to Squires, April 19, 1961, 3.
[288] Nicholas Von Hoffman to Edgar Jamison, memorandum, April 20, 1961, 3, Box 36, Folder 590, IAF Collection, UIC.
[289] Ibid., 4.

how to follow through on a decision.[290] Follow through was important not just for the

community member, but also for the staff to understand. Leaving a job incomplete

means "we will never get a wholly built organization that is capable of carrying things

out to their completion."[291]

   These reports were helpful to organizers as well because it gave them a venue to

express doubts and concerns, especially those concerning race. In one report, a staffer

expressed concern that he and other black organizers not appear to be a white man's

flunky. Von Hoffman, ever conscious of his whiteness, noted that that was a good point;

"That is why I do not go to a number of meetings that I would like to go to, and why I try

to keep quiet at the meetings I do go to and save my criticisms for private places."[292]

While Von Hoffman, as head of the TWO organizing effort, could refrain from public

appearances, Richard Harmon, another white organizer, could not. He sought advice on

how to earn the trust of his black recruits. "Part of the problem," Harmon writes, "is that

as a white person in a Negro situation I feel pressure to state in some way who I am."[293]

When he was the only white person at new meetings, he felt like he needed to make a

statement that showed he was on their side. He felt he bungled the situation and realized,

"It takes a very keen sense to size up a situation immediately and one cannot go into it

with a rigid approach."[294]

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[290] Nicholas Von Hoffman to Edgar Jamison, memorandum, April 26, 1961, 4, Box 36, Folder 590, IAF Collection, UIC.

[291] Nicholas Von Hoffman to Robert Squires, memorandum, May 2, 1961, 5, Box 35, Folder 583, IAF Collection, UIC.

[292] Von Hoffman to Jamison, April 20, 1961, 4.

[293] Richard Harmon, "Report on Woodlawn," June 17, 1961, 1, Box 37, Folder 598, IAF Collection, UIC.

[294] Ibid., 3.

During the "temporary" stage of TWO, IAF's organizers held a tight rein on organizing and programming decisions. Though the threat of the University of Chicago expanding in to Woodlawn prompted the organizing drive and formation of the temporary organization, Von Hoffman and his fellow organizers sought other issues around which to organize. Although Brazier pointed out in his history of TWO, "A fundamental principle of TWO from its founding has been that the people of Woodlawn themselves, not some outside agency, would determine what their problems were."[295] In actuality, though the people of Woodlawn pointed to the problems, it was the IAF organizers that determined which problem was pursued and to what extent. Initially TWO did not have a cohesive ideology except that it wanted change. Terms like self-determination had been circulating, but what this meant was unclear. It was Von Hoffman and his fellow organizers' job to build power within the organization so that TWO could achieve the change it desired and define self-determination. Through the calculated decisions on tactics and issues, the IAF staff built up the power and prestige of TWO through conflict tactics.

As Brazier later wrote, choosing issues was an important part of building a successful organization. The biggest or most important issue was not always the one to pursue. "The issue must be one that the organization can win," Brazier wrote, "[and] an issue that will solidify the organization and demonstrate its power in a small but significant way."[296] Initially some staff suggested that "the issues that the staff consider

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[295] Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 38.
[296] Ibid., 31–32.

hot are the best to bring out large crowds of people."[297] But Von Hoffman pointed out

the error of such thinking: "Anytime any shocking thing happens it is easy to get a lot of

people to a meeting. They come to scream and protest. BUT THEY ARE NOT

ORGANIZED AND THEY ARE NOT IN AN ORGANIZATION; THEY ARE

MERELY A MOB."[298] Additionally, big issues such as civil rights and integration, while

important, are not the issues that build a sustainable organization. "It is the little issues

that bring people into an organization, and keep them in the organization, cement them in

until they are solid enough to begin to turn their attention to some of the larger issues,"

Von Hoffman wrote to one staff organizer.[299] The proof of a strong organization was one

that can consistently draw groups of committed people. These are people who

understand the issues and are committed to solving them.[300]

A Pragmatic Democracy

Combating the overreach of the University of Chicago was the issue that

jumpstarted the people of Woodlawn to form the Temporary Woodlawn Organization.

But was it an issue that could sustain an organization? As a wealthy, prestigious

university, bordering a black ghetto, the University of Chicago represented a formidable

ally or enemy. The benefits of being white and wealthy made the University the

dominant force in an era where universities received considerable funding as part of the

military industrial complex of the Cold War. However, the times were changing with the

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[297] Squires, "Report on Woodlawn," 5.

[298] This analysis was contrary to that of movement sociologists Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward who argued that it was mass defiance, not organizing that made gains. See Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) Quotation of Von Hoffman, emphasis in original. Von Hoffman to Squires, April 19, 1961, 5.

[299] Nicholas Von Hoffman to Edgar Jamison, memorandum, May 4, 1961, 4, Box 36, Folder 590, IAF Collection, UIC.

[300] Von Hoffman to Squires, April 19, 1961, 5.

increasing focus on civil rights in the south and urban renewal in the north, creating a

moment when the people in Woodlawn had their best chance of preventing the

University's plan for expansion. But change would not come fast enough to make the

fight with the University easily winnable. Moreover, fighting with the University over

the South Campus plan was one of the big issues Von Hoffman warned about. The

Temporary Woodlawn Organization needed an issue that would result in immediate gains

and was winnable. A central part of Alinsky's organizing theory was to listen to the

needs of the community. And that was exactly what Von Hoffman did in Woodlawn.

However, choosing an issue must go beyond hearing the community's complaints. Von

Hoffman and IAF controlled the direction TWO went in its formative stage. The

program Von Hoffman identified that fit the criteria of being a real need and an

immediately achievable goal was to target the unfair business practices of some

Woodlawn businesses.

Called the Square Deal Campaign, TWO's first serious community operation

addressed credit scams and over-charging by local merchants. Some businesses practiced

a credit purchasing system that would trap buyers into 200% to 300% interest.[301] Often

the buyer did not understand that the contract allowed the creditor to garnish wages and

included high interest rates. Or the merchant would misrepresent the product selling used

items as new. In addition, some businesses used rigged scales or cash registers to

overcharge a patron. This unfair system hurt not just the people of Woodlawn but also

the legitimate businesses in the area. This problem presented a program that would

appeal to most Woodlawn residents, namely business owners and community members.

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[301] Blakely and Leber, "Summary of Events," 2.

It was a program that would balance the desires of individual groups with the needs of the community. In addition, it was a targeted issue that could produce immediate results. This would help recruitment in TWO and contribute to its power as a community organization.[302] TWO established a Code of Business Ethics to provide guidelines on credit, pricing, and advertising. The group created a Board of Arbitration to enforce the code. To build publicity for the Square Deal Campaign, TWO held a parade in the business district along 63rd Street. The parade and campaign successfully demonstrated TWO's desire for self-determination. Father Mario Dittam, a member of TWO, remarked after the march, "I think we can now see what self-determination means in action. It means we who have the problem also know and can devise the best ways of eliminating the problem."[303] The publicity of the campaign forced most businesses into agreeing to the code of ethics. While the Square Deal Campaign was successful, Von Hoffman and Alinsky knew pragmatically the group could only pursue the issue so far. The program was useful in recruiting members and giving the organization strength, however, to continue to pressure business owners would give TWO an anti-business reputation. TWO needed the support of businesses in Woodlawn to have power.[304] Von Hoffman noted that this was an important type of compromise:

> …The right balance of network, continuity and money is engendered by an organizational program containing a balance or mix of goals or would-be pay-offs (which organizationally is all that a goal is) for the various groupings you need to recruit. […] Hence, it has been said that organizing of this nature is, at least in part, building up a community wide set of interlocking log-rolling agreements,

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[302] Ibid., 1–3; Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 39.

[303] TWO, "TWO Launches Square Deal Campaign, Will Eliminate Dishonest Business Practices, Board of Arbitration to be Set up," February 24, 1961, 3, Box 28, Folder 469, IAF Collection, UIC.

[304] Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy*, 423; Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 48–49.

"You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, but if we don't combine, nobody's back'll get scratched."

Purists may find such a procedure intolerable. For example you don't put pressure on the white small store owner past a certain point—even if he can hire an extra Negro clerk. The reason is you need his money which you will get if he fears you, but not if he hates you. You will also get his money, I hasten to add, if the organization's program includes objectives that are worth something to him. Purists will find many, many of the things the individuals and groups which you are courting want, to be picayune. Yet these "picayune" wants are the stuff of which organizations are built. They are the things that must of necessity most occupy people and which move people to action as great abstractions seldom do.[305]

Though Von Hoffman and Alinsky understood the need for such compromises,

organizations within TWO such as the Future Outlook League did not. The control IAF

organizers had over TWO set the organization on the path to understand these

organizational goals and forced groups like the FOL to seek other avenues of action.

Similarly, this type of control over issues meant that on occasion, community

members wanted to pursue a line of action with which the IAF organizers did not agree.

This was the case with Dorris Baker and the boycott at the Cornell School. The organizer

assigned to the Paul Cornell Parents for Better Education was Chicago native, Sol Ice.

Parents formed the organization to address issues of school segregation including the

double shift school schedule overcrowded black schools utilized.[306] In the process of

planning an action to bring kindergarten children to the Board of Education's public

hearing, parents discussed a possible school boycott in conjunction with the hearing. The

group asked Ice whether a boycott would be successful and if other schools would join in

[305] Von Hoffman, "Finding and Making Leaders," 10.
[306] The black neighborhoods on Chicago had notoriously overcrowded schools. Rather than send kids to school in nearby white neighborhoods, the Chicago School Board instituted double shifts in crowded schools. Dionne Danns, *Something Better for Our Children: Black Organizing in Chicago Public Schools, 1963-1971* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Alan Anderson and George Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986).

support. Ice encouraged the boycott and might have indicated that other schools would

be supportive.[307] The parent group decided to go forward with the boycott. Baker, a

parent of two children attending Cornell and a teacher in another district, was active in

recruiting for the boycott and the Board of Education protest. She stood outside the

Cornell school for several mornings handing out flyers and holding a sign "No School

Today."[308] The Board of Education ultimately fired Baker for conduct unbecoming a

teacher for encouraging the boycott through fliers and signs. In addition, other schools

did not join the boycott. Baker and the Cornell parents' group looked to Ice and TWO

for support in a second boycott demonstrating solidarity with Baker. Von Hoffman

opposed the boycott from the beginning. He told Ice, "The boycott was a silly idea and it

did not work and it would not work."[309] He wanted Ice to present an alternative plan to

the group instead of the second boycott. This alternative plan would put more pressure

on the Board of Education, but the group rejected the plan. TWO did not support the

boycott and did not support Baker in her attempt to get her job back. Under IAF's

control, TWO only sought actions in which the staff organizers believed they could win

and earn power for the organization despite demands from the community. The boycott

at Cornell was not, according to Von Hoffman, a winning situation.

Throughout 1961-1962 Von Hoffman lead TWO on a power building campaign.

The organization led a massive voter registration drive to demonstrate political power.

Inspired by visiting Freedom Riders, TWO filled forty-six buses with residents and

[307] Sol Ice, "Report on Woodlawn," October 23, 1961, 1, Box 36, Folder 589, IAF Collection, UIC.
[308] Ibid., 1–2.
[309] Nicholas Von Hoffman to Sol Ice, memorandum, October 26, 1961, 2, Box 36, Folder 589, IAF Collection, UIC.

brought them to City Hall. This massive registration drive demonstrated TWO's power

to city politicians, especially as a signal to Mayor Daley and his machine. The group

fought against slums by targeting absentee landlords. TWO's Housing Committee

tracked down the owners of slum buildings. When they refused to make repairs, TWO

either held a picket line in front of the landlord's suburban home or led a rent strike.

Several of these actions forced landlords to make necessary repairs; again demonstrating

TWO's power. Another major concern for Woodlawn residents was school segregation.

TWO used various methods to highlight the problems of de facto segregation. They

instituted a Death Watch at school board meetings. A group of parents would dress in

black capes and stand at the back of the meeting to mourn the loss of educational

opportunity for black children. TWO also supported a Truth Squad made up of several

mothers who visited schools in white neighborhoods to document the number of empty

classrooms—classrooms that could be used for children in the overcrowded schools in

Woodlawn. These programs were meant "to rub raw the resentments of the people of the

community; to fan the latent hostilities of many of the people to a point of overt

expression" as Alinsky proscribed. And they did just that.

While the programs listed above garnered TWO support and power through

controversy, they were not programs that could sustain the organization. For sure, self-

determination was the underlying theme in voter registration, fighting slums, and ending

school segregation. But these programs had limited results. The registration drive

worked only once—it was not a sustainable program. Fighting slums through absentee

landlords was difficult and brought limited benefits. Landlords might not have the

financial ability to make necessary repairs, and working building by building would not

ultimately solve the problem of affordable housing in Woodlawn. Finally, TWO made a

valiant effort to fight school segregation, but the Chicago School Board was too

entrenched in its system of de facto segregation and machine politics to change. TWO

made exhaustive attempts to take the school board to court and publicly highlight the

inequality in materials and education to little ends. Despite these programs, TWO still

needed to build a more enduring organization.

In 1962, the Temporary Woodlawn Organization held a convention to make itself

into a permanent organization. Delegates at the convention ratified a constitution for the

newly renamed The Woodlawn Organization (TWO). In addition to formalizing the

structure of the organization, the delegates at the convention heard a speech by Mayor

Richard Daley. The mayor's presence at the convention gave TWO legitimacy as a

power organization in the machine controlled city. The convention elected Reverend

Arthur Brazier as its president. Brazier went on to be an important leader and

spokesperson for TWO, leading it through many militant actions. This convention set

TWO on the path to self-determination in community decisions and in the organization

itself.

At the convention, delegates established the structure of TWO. The steering

committee acted as executive of the organization. Made up of the president, vice-

presidents, elected officers, and chairmen of the standing committees, this committee was

in charge of organizational duties. Several standing committees worked on community

issues: housing, schools, community maintenance, consumer practices, social welfare,

civil rights, and fundraising. Member organizations could voice their concerns and make proposals at the monthly delegates meeting. And TWO would hold an annual convention where delegates would create new standing committees, amend the constitution, elect officers, and pass resolutions to guide the organization in the next year.[310] A staff organizer was assigned to each committee. This role was "extremely important," in Von Hoffman's estimation, "particularly in the committee's early phases of existence, for insuring continuity and seeing to it that a committee becomes a true committee."[311] In the spring of 1962, Von Hoffman began discussing the time when IAF would no longer be employing organizers. Instead, TWO would employ the organizers. Since the staff organizers would be paid by TWO they must report to TWO. He instituted a system of weekly staff reports to be presented to the steering committee. "The leaders of the organization," according to Von Hoffman, "must have a clear understanding of what the staff is doing, what the staff thinks, and what the various divisions of staff responsibility are as they change from week to week."[312]

In addition to making the staff more responsible to the steering committee, Von Hoffman worked on making the organization more self-sufficient financially. "The only way TWO can be sure that it can have its own policies and programs without the interference or dictation from others," wrote Von Hoffman "is to raise all its own

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[310] For a more thorough description of TWO's formal structure and the duties of each committee see *Black Self-Determination*, 33–36.

[311] Nicholas Von Hoffman to Staff, memorandum, July 16, 1962, 2, Box 36, Folder 593, IAF Collection, UIC.

[312] Nicholas Von Hoffman to All Staff Members, memorandum, April 5, 1962, 2, Box 36, Folder 593, IAF Collection, UIC.

money."[313] He proposed a Dollar for Equality drive to raise money for TWO that would

collect a dollar from every member of TWO organizations. Not only would this program

allow the group self-determination, it was a policy of IAF to help its organization become

financially independent of the Foundation and other groups.

But the organization seemed to be waning, as was Von Hoffman's energy. In

1962, Von Hoffman told Alinsky he would be retiring from organizing. Having

promised Alinsky he would work with IAF for ten years, he was "going to do my own

number." Von Hoffman had other interests besides organizing the powerless and he

wanted to pursue those interests, including writing. In addition, he was exhausted having

worked nearly every day for two years in Woodlawn. After convincing Alinsky he was

serious about leaving, Von Hoffman began writing for the *Chicago Daily News*.[314]

Alinsky was forced to look for a replacement while TWO struggled with organizational

and staff issues. In December, Richard Harmon submitted a report outlining his

frustrations concerning the organization. He noted that although the issues came from the

people, the program, plan of action, motivation, and follow through should come from

the staff. But that was failing to happen: "The primary responsibility for the failure of the

organization rests with the staff and the fault as I see it is that the staff just doesn't spend

enough time on the street with the people—listening to the people and being specific on

the detail of their suggestions to the people."[315] In addition, the steering committee was

growing ineffective and confused. Again, Harmon placed the blame on the staff: "If we

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[313] Nicholas Von Hoffman to Steering Committee Staff, "'Dollar for Equality' Drive," June 1, 1962, 1, Folder 454, Box 27, IAF Collection, UIC.

[314] Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy*, 422–424.

[315] Dick Harmon to Nicholas Von Hoffman, memorandum, December 27, 1962, 1, Box 35, Folder 583, IAF Collection, UIC.

gripe about the inactivity of the Steering Committee, and the refusal of the Steering Committee to sit down to specific tasks, it is our own fault."[316] Some of the failure seemed to revolve around Robert Squires, Von Hoffman's first staff hire in Woodlawn. After Squires complained about criticism from TWO members, Von Hoffman reminded him that the members of TWO have the right to question the actions of any staff organizer. "From time to time staff members do develop a cocksure, swell-headed attitude of superiority," he explained. "It is then the right, indeed the obligation, of the membership to kick it the hell out of the staff members who have such an attitude."[317] Harmon also pointed to Squires as a source of discord. "Squires is just not putting in a full day's work," he complained in a letter to Von Hoffman. This was frustrating because Harmon was putting a lot of time and energy into the organization and it went nowhere because Squires did not hold up his end. "Unless the staff pulls together and develops efficiency as a group of men, then all effort is ridiculous and I am not going to waste my time at it," he warned.[318] Ed Chambers, Von Hoffman's replacement, was in agreement with these assessments of Squires. He reported to Alinsky, "I am trying to instill in them the idea that they are employees of the Steering Committee of TWO. This will not be easily accomplished. Part of the arrogant charges are absolutely true, particularly in the case of Squires."[319] The effect poor organizers had on the organization further illustrates their importance in the controlling the democracy that made up Alinsky organizations.

[316] Ibid., 2.

[317] Nicholas Von Hoffman to Robert Squires, memorandum, December 26, 1962, 1–2, Box 35, Folder 583, IAF Collection, UIC.

[318] Harmon to Von Hoffman, December 27, 1962, 1–2.

[319] Ed Chambers to Saul D. Alinsky, February 7, 1963, 4, Box 40, Folder 619, IAF Collection, UIC.

Ed Chambers, the man who replaced Von Hoffman and saw TWO through its

consolidation stage, came from IAF's Organization of the Southwest Community (OSC)

in Chicago. He had been working on the Southwest Side for four years and three of those

were as staff director. Before working with IAF in Chicago, Chambers had spent time

with Dorothy Day, the radical Roman Catholic who focused on social justice and

organizing in New York City after a stint in seminary.[320] By the time he arrived in

Woodlawn, he clearly had experience as an organizer and director. Joining TWO in

January of 1963, he inherited a disorganized group with low morale, so much so that Rev.

Brazier considered quitting.[321] Though the convention held the previous March had over

one hundred groups in attendance, Chambers guessed only forty-five were still active.

The local leaders had become disillusioned, feeling that IAF was not accomplishing

anything. Chambers believed the root of the problem was that the leadership did not feel

they had control over the organization or the programs. Releasing some control of the

organization's democracy to remedy the situation, Chambers "beefed up the Steering

Committee and [began] lying before it the types of decisions that used to be made either

by the staff, Nick [Von Hoffman], or one or two individuals in the organization."[322] The

staff "have added to much of the confusion and much of the chaos" and are "the most

serious problem in TWO."[323] They think of themselves as IAF employees first and TWO

employees second, if at all. His first priority was "to impress upon them that if they

cannot follow out the policy of the Steering Committee as interpreted by the staff

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[320] Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy*, 326.
[321] Ibid., 438.
[322] Chambers to Alinsky, February 7, 1963, 1.
[323] Ibid., 4.

director, then they are going to be fired."[324] He set up regular staff meetings and required

detailed daily schedules from each staff organizer. He also tried to focus their attention

on organization building. The staff had become too interested in dealing with every sob

story they heard rather than thinking about the problems organizationally.[325] Chambers

eventually fired Squires and hired Squire Lance, a black reporter, to replace him and to

begin to turn the TWO staff around.

Four months after Chambers joined the project, the situation began to improve.

The first delegates meeting after the 1963 annual convention yielded a good turnout and

active participation of members. Chambers remarked that "there must have been

somewhere between 25 and 30 people that hit the floor, discussing, arguing, and debating

the issues." This was a significant change from his first months with TWO when only

two or three people were active. Delegates were no longer afraid to voice their

disapproval and have it resolved in group discussion.[326] One staff organizer agreed that it

was one of the best meetings thus far: "One of the highlights to me of the meeting was

the participation from the floor."[327]

Despite reminding his staff that they work for TWO, Chambers influenced the

decisions of TWO president Brazier. Now that the delegate meetings were revived,

Brazier felt pressure to do something. He and Chambers discussed possible actions.

Brazier wanted to make some kind of demonstration against City Hall. About what

exactly, he was less sure—take a stand against a black Alderman who was part of the

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[324] Ibid.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ed Chambers to Saul D. Alinsky, June 11, 1963, 2, Box 40, Folder 619, IAF Collection, UIC.
[327] Dave Radford to Ed Chambers, memorandum, June 10, 1963, 1, Box 35, Folder 583, IAF Collection, UIC.

political machine, or go against the mayor. In the Alinsky pragmatic style of organizing, Chambers pointed out that the mayor was valuable to TWO and offending him was not something that should be done lightly. In addition, Brazier believed having a mass demonstration downtown justified itself. Chambers explained that Brazier "fails to try to put it on the right kind of hook so that it makes sense to the white community—that it doesn't look like a bunch of Negroes flexing their muscles."[328] But Brazier was beginning to get his confidence and in the case of dealing with the University of Chicago, he began to assert himself, much to Chambers' frustration. "My suggestions he will barely listen to," Chambers reported to Alinsky. "He gave a ranting speech in the office about 'I'm not going to be a puppet any more. I can think as well as anybody else.'"[329] Chambers admitted to pushing Brazier to a certain point then backing away saying, "we will do what you want—you are the leader."[330] Chambers also pressured Brazier about fundraising noting, "This is the one area that everyone wants to dodge, and then when they start bitching about the lack of financial self-determination, then they blame the white men for not raising the money for them."[331] In fact, Brazier's past participation in the actual actions of TWO had been limited. "He really never got deeply immersed in TWO or ever led a picket line until this year, that is until I came into it" according to Chambers.[332] Turning more control over to TWO revitalized the organization but made Chamber's job more difficult. Nonetheless, he continued to guide and advise the group, sometimes using strong encouragement to do so.

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[328] Chambers to Alinsky, June 11, 1963, 2.
[329] Ibid., 3.
[330] Ibid.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Ed Chambers to Saul D. Alinsky, August 26, 1963, 4, Box 40, Folder 619, IAF Collection, UIC.

Chambers continued to act as a guide and pressure man when TWO elected a new president, Lynward Stevenson, in 1964. Pastor at Bethlehem Covenant Presbyterian Church and an active member of the Woodlawn Pastors Alliance, Stevenson would become TWO's most vocal president. But he needed time to grow into the position. After Stevenson on short notice took part in a picket and meeting with Daley orchestrated by another organization, Chambers "really chewed him out and told him he had done a very stupid thing." This was an action that TWO had not discussed nor agreed upon and Stevenson, as president of TWO, represented the organization in the meeting with Daley. Chambers pointed out that not only did Stevenson miss important appointments to take part in this action, he jeopardized the power TWO had been building. As with his discussions with Brazier, Chambers insisted any actions taken at city hall or with the mayor had to be thought through to determine its long-term benefit for TWO. This meeting was pointless and only illustrated the powerlessness of those meeting with the mayor. Chambers advised Alinsky to tell Stevenson, "If he can't operate tacticly (sic) and strategically he should resign."[333] This type of control was not limited to the presidency. Another staff organizer reported that he needed to give the Housing Committee more attention. In particular he needed control the committee chairman: "I will have to work with Mrs. Hubbard to see that she does not—and to get her to understand—that she must not run around doing whatever she wants to do with this committee." Radford was going to stress to Hubbard the importance of the committee formulating and approving a plan, then presenting it to the Steering Committee for final approval. This became a significant concern after the Housing Committee picketed a

[333] Ed Chambers to Saul D. Alinsky, May 28, 1964, 1, Box 40, Folder 619, IAF Collection, UIC.

bank after being advised that it was illegal to do so.[334] Having committees work too independently of the organization presented problems in itself, but more importantly, TWO should not engage in illegal activity.

<u>Black Self-Determination</u>

TWO became more confident in what it could accomplish with Chambers's help and some much-needed victories in urban renewal. The organization began to stress its desire for self-determination and began to connect it to their concept of racial identity. For two years, TWO had been fighting with the University of Chicago over urban renewal plans that included expanding the campus into Woodlawn and destroying affordable, albeit decrepit, housing. While TWO did not oppose the South Campus expansion, they did object to the fact that the University created and submitted the plan for city approval without consulting Woodlawn citizens. TWO wanted to add a provision that required alternate affordable housing to be built before the old was torn down to make way for the campus expansion. The success came in a meeting with Mayor Daley in July 1963. The mayor promised to appoint an administrator to the Woodlawn conservation board who was agreeable to TWO. In addition, the majority of people on the conservation committee would be picked from candidates suggested by TWO. According to Daley, "The people of Woodlawn will be part and parcel of any urban renewal program."[335] Another TWO victory was also two years in the making. After extensive lobbying, the Chicago Housing Authority announced it would convert the Hayes Hotel into housing for the elderly. The old hotel was a center for vice and a

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[334] Radford to Chambers, June 10, 1963, 3.

[335] Georgie Anne Geyer, "Chicago, UC and Woodlawn Sign Pact in Renewal Row," *Chicago Daily News*, July 17, 1963.

general eyesore. After renovations, it held one hundred much-needed units for older

Woodlawn residents.[336]

These victories gave Woodlawners a sense of pride and confidence. By achieving

power and democracy, they had faith in the future, a sense of responsibility, and dignity

as Alinsky predicted in his argument for People's Organizations. This is evident in their

continued focus on absentee landlords. "Our purpose here," explained Robert Fant, a

TWO member, "is to make it a showcase of what organized community action can

accomplish. Now that we have won the basic victory on urban renewal, and can be

confident that the city is not going to take our homes, we can invest with confidence, and

put our energy into making sure the absentee owners bring their buildings up to

standard."[337] TWO also started its own weekly newspaper, named at different times the

Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization, *The Woodlawn Observer*, and *The Observer*.

This allowed TWO to share information about its programs and to report on issues that

the other neighborhood paper, *The Woodlawn Booster*, ignored. With "self-

determination" incorporated in its masthead, the TWO paper demonstrated the power of

the organization to the community. Probably the most obvious demonstration of TWO's

strength was when Lynward Stevenson, then chair of the school committee, chastised

Curtis Melnick, a superintendant of a Woodlawn district, at a delegates meeting. Melnick

had been invited to speak about the condition of Woodlawn schools at the meeting.

Stevenson, however, told the crowd, "This man is arrogant and this attitude is what has

kept Chicago schools segregated, inferior, and devoid of progress since Ben Willis

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[336] Chambers to Alinsky, August 26, 1963, 2.
[337] "TWO, Block Club Fight Landlords," *Woodlawn Booster*, September 18, 1963, 10.

became Superintendent. We have no more time for arrogance." Stevenson then

dismissed Melnick from the meeting.[338]

Through the newspaper and other means, the members of TWO began to

articulate a clearer idea of what they meant by self-determination. With the southern

civil rights movement gaining more attention, and national events like the March on

Washington and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 acquiring a higher profile, a wider

discussion of the relationships between race and power in Woodlawn started to take off.

Though the southern movement emphasized integration, TWO's interests lay in self-

determination. Having successfully defended their right to self-determination in the fight

against the University of Chicago and in the Square Deal Campaign, TWO was more

interested in building power in the community than integrating. TWO wanted to

empower blacks to seek their rights. In an interview for the *Chicago Courier*, Brazier

stated that there are "signs that indicate Chicago will remain segregated for years to come

if we don't have militant action. The Negro cannot look for the white man to hand him

equality on a platter."[339] Similarly, TWO leader Charles Henderson said, "Whites cannot

speak for us. We must have our own voice in the power structure."[340] Ollie Clark, who

had been involved in TWO from the beginning, echoed the feeling that TWO could not

have white leaders. She argued that it was about "building up our own people, from the

bottom up."[341] Even Father Martin Farrell, a white priest who joined three other

ministers in asking IAF to help Woodlawn, pointed out that "Negroes have the power

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[338] "Supt. Melnick Blasted by Rev. Stevenson," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, March 24, 1964, 1.

[339] L. F. Palmer, "Box Score on 'Rights' Groups," *Chicago Courier*, February 16, 1963.

[340] "Portrait of a Leader; Charles Henderson," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, June 3, 1964.

[341] "Portrait of a Leader; Ollie Clark," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, June 16, 1964, 3.

here. And they are producing excellent leaders…"[342] TWO had clearly become an

organization in which people had confidence and one that gave a voice to blacks.

Throughout 1965 and 1966, TWO continued to develop its theory of self-

determination. A central component of the idea was community control. Although many

blacks were swept up in the national fight for civil rights, Stevenson reported to the

organization that "to win we must organize the 'down home' issues close to the

community."[343] Local leaders needed to address local issues such as schools and urban

renewal. TWO asserted its self-determination through voting and not letting City Hall

determine the future of Woodlawn as seen in the very fact that TWO elected its own

leaders. [344] TWO, its leaders hoped, would be "the example to America and Chicago that

democracy CAN work, and that poor people CAN take part in the decisions of their city

and their community."[345] TWO asserted that it had the right to determine the future of

Woodlawn. Residents of Woodlawn agreed. When the *Woodlawn Observer* asked

community members what they thought self-determination meant, responses focused on

"the right to determine their future in this society through law and order," and "hav[ing] a

say in what they think they need."[346] One interviewee defined it as "man's drive and

effort to put himself forward to overcome whatever stands in his way."[347]

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[342] "Portrait of a Leader; Fr. Martin Ferrell," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, February 24, 1965, 3.

[343] Rev. Lynward Stevenson, "The President's Message," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, December 21, 1964, 8.

[344] "Brazier: Revolution in Ballot Box," *Woodlawn Observer*, May 19, 1966.

[345] Rev. Lynward Stevenson, "Rev. Stevenson's Convention Address; The State of the Community," *Woodlawn Observer*, April 28, 1966.

[346] "Quotes of the Week: Woodlawn Men and Women Speak up on the Hot Issues," *Woodlawn Observer*, August 4, 1966.

[347] Ibid.

Echoing Alinsky, TWO used its message of self-determination to fight segregation. The organization knew it needed power, because segregationists "have built their power up over many years."[348] The power TWO demonstrated in its yearly convention was a force "City Hall and our segregationist opponents must recognize and deal with."[349] Through self-determination, TWO would break out of the "cage designed to keep us from equal access to the fruits of Chicago."[350] After "three hundred years of empty 'consensus' where we were talked to death and obtained nothing," TWO would determine its own future.[351]

At the same time that TWO was defining its message of self-determination, the IAF organizers continued to exercise control of the organization. According to the Alinsky organizing model, IAF should leave the community after three years. At this point, the community organization should have the strength to continue on its own without the help of the foundation. As critics of Alinsky often pointed out, three years was a relatively arbitrary timeline. Leaving before the organization was ready to stand on its own, could have disastrous effects. In the case of TWO, however, Alinsky realized that IAF would have to stay beyond three years. In fact, organizers in TWO continued to send reports to Alinsky until 1966, five years after the Temporary Woodlawn Organization invited IAF into the community.

Though Chambers continued to work with TWO, IAF recognized that the organization would be better off with a black staff director. In late 1964, Chambers

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[348] Rev. Lynward Stevenson, "Xmas Message," *TWO News*, December 22, 1965.
[349] "TWO Convention Time: Plans Now in Works," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, February 24, 1965.
[350] "The Year in Review: Unlocking the Cage," *TWO News*, December 29, 1965.
[351] Stevenson, "The President's Message," 8.

turned the title over to Squire Lance.[352] At the same time, however, Chambers continued

to advise organizers in TWO. Throughout 1965, Chambers checked on TWO's progress

and sent occasional reports to Alinsky about staff development. He criticized Lance's

hire of Leon Finney as Assistant Staff Director. Finney, a community member recently

discharged from the military, was new to organizing, and in Chambers' opinion had yet

to prove himself.[353] He also questioned the value another staff organizer Lance hired.

According to Chambers the staffer had a couple strikes against him including looking

white enough to pass and having a white wife. Chambers had enough concerns about

Lance's leadership and organizing skills that he asked Lance to keep in closer contact—

sending operational updates every two weeks. Chambers did not limit his influence to

staff; he also had talks with Rev. Brazier, once again president of TWO. Chambers

"leaned pretty heavy on him" for dropping the ball on TWO's urban renewal program.

Not only did he chastise Brazier for failing to pursue it, he also exercised influence over

program direction. Chambers wrote to Alinsky emphasizing the need for a solid urban

renewal program because "this will be the first visible, symbolic thing that we can point

to showing what a self-determining organization can do."[354] But Chambers was not the

only one involved in the direction of TWO. Lance called on Alinsky to talk to Brazier

about program direction and exert his influence on the organization's president.[355]

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[352] Ed Chambers to Saul D. Alinsky, September 21, 1964, 3, Box 40, Folder 619, IAF Collection, UIC.
[353] Ed Chambers did not know at the time that Finney would be TWO's longest running leader, working and leading the organization in 2011.
[354] Ed Chambers to Saul D. Alinsky, October 19, 1965, 1–4, Box 40, Folder 619, IAF Collection, UIC.
[355] Squire Lance to Saul D. Alinsky, memorandum, December 13, 1965, Box 64, Folder 798, IAF Collection, UIC.

After Chambers backed away from day to day activities, TWO staff organizers continued to report to Alinsky about conflicts between staff and leadership. Finney, who had become staff director in 1966, complained about Brazier's return to the presidency that spring. According to Finney, Brazier wanted unanimous support in the election or no opposition. Finney saw this as a symbol of Brazier's "tremendous ego" and "if he does become president again and he is elected unanimously and he gets full backing with no opposition from the organization, he is really going to be a bitch to get along with because he is going to have an open mandate."[356] The relationship between Brazier and Finney was tense. Finney complained the Brazier did not foster leadership development and at times acted dictatorial calling him a "military type leader where there is no real democracy at all."[357] Richard Harmon commented, "There are elements of servants in waiting thrown into the relationship, however, generally he asks us for our advice and takes it."[358] The relationship got to the point that Alinsky had to have a meeting with them to mediate. Harmon located the source of tension in Finney's need to have significant control over the organization—in a sense he thought he should be staff director and president. In other words, Finney wanted too much control in the limited democracy of the organization. Brazier's strength, however, forced Finney to rethink his position. Harmon argued this was a good thing, because with a weak president "we would have wound up with an atrophied president and a monumental staff director."[359] He does not mention that this would create an undemocratic organization run by an

[356] Leon Finney to Saul D. Alinsky, February 23, 1966, 4–5, Box 64, Folder 799, IAF Collection, UIC.
[357] Leon Finney to Saul D. Alinsky, May 31, 1966, 2, Box 64, Folder 798, IAF Collection, UIC.
[358] Richard Harmon to Saul D. Alinsky, May 22, 1966, 2, Box 64, Folder 799, IAF Collection, UIC.
[359] Richard Harmon to Saul D. Alinsky, May 29, 1966, 1, Box 64, Folder 798, IAF Collection, UIC.

unelected director/president. The relationship started to improve after the meeting with

Alinsky. Finney wrote to Alinsky, "There are day to day challenges that I'm even going

to have to rely on Art Brazier."[360]

Alinsky and Chambers maintained a close relationship with TWO's staff and

leadership. And the staff director recognized "that I've got a hell of a lot to learn because

there are new challenges every day that I'm not quite ready to cope with—that I need

advice on."[361] Finney not only complained to Alinsky about his relationship with

Brazier, he also asked for program advice and suggestions on training staff. [362] As IAF

prepared to leave Woodlawn in fall of 1966, the staff worked to build up the organization

to survive the absence of Alinsky's counsel. Chambers made a visit and "tried to reorient

[Finney] again to working on developing new groups" in "this period of consolidation

and service." He cautioned the staff and Brazier against becoming too bureaucratic;

"Their very bigness and the number of employees they have running around there—it is a

real temptation for these guys to simply be running another social agency on 63rd Street."

In addition, he told Brazier to push the staff to submit weekly reports. This was an

important point because as of September 1, 1966, TWO would be paying Finney's salary

making him directly responsible to Brazier as president.[363] Harmon commented that the

most serious problem facing TWO was "the development of new primary leadership"

because "there is an intolerable vacuum under Brazier." If new leadership and groups are

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[360] Finney to Alinsky, May 31, 1966, 4.
[361] Ibid., 3–4.
[362] Leon Finney to Saul D. Alinsky, July 6, 1966, 2, Box 64, Folder 799, IAF Collection, UIC.
[363] Ed Chambers to Saul D. Alinsky, August 6, 1966, 1, 3, 5., Box 40, Folder 618, IAF Collection, UIC.

not developed, the organization will become top heavy with one leader.[364] Harmon also

worried about TWO's ability to grow into new programs and ideas. He was afraid that

TWO would turn into the Back of the Yards, stagnant and isolated.[365]

The staff reports to Alinsky end with 1966. TWO was now on its own

organizationally and financially. At this time TWO's language of self-determination and

connection to racial issues became more militant, which became easier once Alinsky and

Chambers were no longer advising the organization. TWO pointed to self-determination

and "the re-affirmation of the Democratic process" as the difference between Woodlawn

and Watts where riots had occurred the year before.[366] Self-determination meant

Woodlawn had control over Woodlawn. Through TWO, community members "freed

themselves from the strangle-hold that resulted from a 'colonization'-cycle."[367] When

the organization re-elected Brazier president in 1967, the community paper announced

that the vote demonstrated the community's "belief that the black people of Woodlawn

are devoted to the premise of choosing and supporting a black man at the helm of their

ship of state."[368] The paper rallied citizens around the banner of black self-determination

after a failed vote in the state legislature, reminding its readers that the community shows

self-determination through demonstrations, letters to government officials, and the

organization's programs.[369] They tied this message to racial equality, "The outer

community must learn that the 'If you're black step back' syndrome does not work

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[364] Dick Harmon to Leon Finney, September 23, 1966, 3, Box 64, Folder 799, IAF Collection, UIC.
[365] Ibid.
[366] "Editorial; The Roof, the Steeple and the People," *Woodlawn Observer*, May 4, 1967.
[367] "Mandate: 'Stand Together'," *Woodlawn Observer*, May 11, 1967.
[368] Ibid.
[369] "Editorial; The Fires that Kindle Community Spirit," *Woodlawn Observer*, June 14, 1967.

anymore."[370] The rhetoric also included black control of the community and economy. *The Woodlawn Observer,* embracing the ideas the Future Outlook League made six years earlier, demanded that merchants either hire black workers and "work diligently in the Negro communities and involve [a] proportion of their profits in wholesome black community works, or padlock their premises!"[371] The paper also encouraged black businesspeople to get into businesses other than traditional "soul" businesses. "We need to have a broad spectrum of black owned and black operated businesses to fit the growing needs of an electrically alive black people—dedicated to saving the broad breath of Negro life, and making it our own, from church to grocery store."[372]

In 1968 Rev. Brazier called for a mini-convention, he titled Solidarity Day to revitalize TWO and set it on a course to address the race issues of the day, including black power. Despite TWO's move toward militant language, the mission statement of Solidarity Day reflected the democratic theory Saul Alinsky originally introduced to Woodlawn—one that looked to the people to lead. It also incorporated the new racial identity of the late 1960s and community control. "Trust the people; trust their fiber and their vision to make this beloved community the true 'Street of Dreams;' trust their ability to face the gut issues of the day and face them—unafraid…greater than any single voice, man, or faction is the very spirit of SOUL-POWER manifested in the people themselves and their collective strength in organized effort, through THE WOODLAWN ORGANIZATION, as the people fight for 'Self-Determination.'"[373]

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[370] Ibid.
[371] "Editorial..," *The Observer*, July 24, 1968.
[372] Ibid.
[373] "Brazier Details Thrust of 'Solidarity Day'," *The Observer*, August 14, 1968, 1.

TWO defined its notion of democracy in terms of self-determination and racial equality. The message developed over time with the help of Alinsky and the IAF staff. While the staff had significant control over the organization making it more of a limited democracy, TWO further developed its identity and pursued it after IAF left Woodlawn. Self-determination drove Woodlawn's involvement in the War on Poverty, its relationship with the Daley political machine, and its dialogue with the racial concept of black power. Each of these will be discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 3: CCCO-SCLC: THE DEMOCRATIC DREAM OF INTEGRATION

Mobile learning units arrived at the grossly overcrowded schools in the black neighborhoods of Chicago in the spring of 1962. Meant to ease the population strain and end the notoriously unpopular double shift classrooms, these mobile classrooms instead represented the obstructionist policies of the Chicago Superintendent of Schools, Benjamin Willis. Since World War II, Chicago's population had grown dramatically, straining the public school system. Schools across the city resorted to double shifts until new schools could be built. The population growth in conjunction with white flight left ghetto schools particularly crowded. Schools in white neighborhoods had empty classrooms after the school construction boom, but the black neighborhood schools remained on the double shift. Rather than move the boundaries of the neighborhood school districts to allow black students to attend schools in white communities, Willis used mobile classrooms to end the double shifts and overcrowding. However, the mobile units' appearance only at the black neighborhood schools confirmed the parents' belief that Chicago would not integrate its schools without a fight. Concerned parents and citizens held demonstrations protesting the inadequacy of the mobile units, which they dubbed "Willis Wagons," knowing that space existed in the predominantly white neighborhood schools.

Since his tenure began in 1953, Willis avoided the issue of segregated schools insisting that Chicago's system of neighborhood schools prevented de jure segregation. He refused to consider the possibility of de facto segregation in Chicago Public Schools. In fact, he argued that according to the law he could not know the racial make-up of

Chicago's schools and therefore could not prove that schools in white neighborhoods

were less crowded than those in black neighborhoods. Admired by the white community

for his professionalism and for fostering the growth of the Chicago school system, he

became an adversary to the black community. The Willis Wagons made the policy of

segregation obvious. The well-known black newspaper, the *Chicago Daily Defender*,

seethed at the sight of the mobile classrooms saying Willis used them to crush the

ambitions of those seeking a fair and equal education. Moreover, the *Defender* called on

its readers to "stand up and demand their rights." But "individual organizations cannot

do it alone; this struggle calls for a united front to get the desired results."[374] The

Coordinating Council of Community Organizations, founded months earlier, responded

to this call to unify the school desegregation campaign.

Chicago civil rights groups began to address the widespread problem of

segregated schools in the early 1960s. Although Chicago did not have laws demanding

black and white children attend separate schools, housing patterns and the efforts of

realtors to perpetuate these patterns ensured segregated neighborhood schools. Parents in

black communities were concerned not only with the segregated schools but also the lack

of funds and overcrowding black schools experienced that their white counterparts did

not.[375] As seen in Chapter 2, the Woodlawn Organization (TWO) started the movement

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[374] "The Willis Wagons," *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 29, 1962, 11.

[375] Six years after the first Willis Wagon appeared a better-known struggle over black neighborhood schools occurred in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville neighborhood in New York City. The black community, in an experimental program, grained control of the local school. Their attempts to determine curriculum and staffing met with resistance from the white teachers at the school and their union. The strikes that resulted from this conflict illustrated the differing values of the two communities. White teachers blamed the black community and families for student failures whereas the black community blamed white teachers and the schools for not trying to reach black students. While the CCCO did not advocate community control of schools at this point, they did argue for greater representation on the school board and recognition of the

to combat unequal schools in Chicago. When other organizations joined the fight,

community leaders soon realized they needed a citywide organization to coordinate the

effort. The Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO) was born out of

this effort. As an organization of organizations, the CCCO sought to manage the

resources of various civil rights and community organizations across Chicago. The

council's work on school integration made it a prime candidate for alliance when Martin

Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) moved

their nonviolent direct action movement to Northern cities. Though an alliance with

SCLC would take the CCCO's attention from schools to open housing, integration by

demanding democracy was always the goal. Its many member organizations with varied

styles and missions meant that the CCCO had to practice a style of coalition democracy

that became a mainstay of its partnership with SCLC.

The Coordinating Council of Community Organizations and School Segregation

The Coordinating Council of Community Organizations sought to make Chicago

more democratic by ensuring equal opportunity of all of its citizens. The group started

informally in 1962 to provide a united front to the Chicago school board and the mayor's

office.[376] Made up of civil rights groups such as the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Chicago Urban League, an affiliate of

the National Urban League, as well as community organizations like TWO, the CCCO

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disadvantages black students faced in crowded, underfunded schools. Like the Ocean Hill-Brownsville case, blacks and white had different perceptions of the problems and the solutions they required. For more on the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school crisis see Jerald E. Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (Yale University Press, 2004).

[376] "Notes of Class on Aug. 2, 1967," August 2, 1967, 1, Box 20, Folder 3, Alvin Pitcher Papers, University of Chicago [Hereafter cited as Pitcher Papers, U of C]; Anderson and Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line*, 99.

provided research and support for community groups fighting school segregation.[377] The

CCCO did not have founding documents outlining its philosophy of democracy or

organization. Instead, it was an amalgamation of goals and philosophies of member

organizations, which meant considerable diversity in opinion and program support.

Furthering civil rights in Chicago was the only binding force. As an organization of

organizations, the CCCO worked as a formal democracy with a convener and executive

committee made up of delegates from member organizations. Membership in CCCO

received a boost from the National Conference on Religion and Race held in Chicago in

1963 and organized by the National Council of Churches of Christ in America, the

Synagogue Council of America, and the National Catholic Welfare Conference. After

the conference, church groups such as the Presbyterian Interracial Council and the

Catholic Interracial Council joined CCCO.[378] With these additions, the group convened

more regularly and met with the mayor concerning school board appointments. CCCO

gained some momentum when the state legislature passed the Armstrong Act, which

would force the Chicago school board to record and publish racial head counts of its

schools. No longer would the school board be able to claim ignorance of the problem of

segregation in Chicago schools.[379] In addition, actions in the southern movement

inspired the Chicago campaign for civil rights.

By 1963, the CCCO had committed itself to nonviolent direct action.[380]

Influenced by the success of the southern civil rights movement, the CCCO organized a

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[377] "Notes of Class on Aug. 2, 1967," 1.
[378] Anderson and Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line*, 106.
[379] Ibid., 107.
[380] "Notes of Class on Aug. 2, 1967," 1.

conference on direct action in July. James Forman of the Student Non-Violent

Coordinating Committee (SNCC) gave the keynote address. Member of CCCO and the

president of TWO, Rev. Arthur Brazier told the *Chicago Daily Defender* that civil rights

activists needed this conference to translate "principles into action and action into

results."[381] H.B. Law, CCCO member and president of the Urban League, said the

conference would "promote orderly nonviolent change in a time of crisis" and "win

lasting gains not at some distant future time, but now, in our own time."[382] Although the

CCCO subscribed to nonviolent direct action in an attempt to replicate Southern

successes, the organization could not duplicate the results, forcing it to debate the extent

to which the group was willing to use the method.

It did not take long for the CCCO to put these direct action skills to use. At the

end of July 1963, CCCO began "a massive wave of sit-ins, picketing and selective buying

campaigns." The group targeted a shopping center and Motorola showrooms for their

discriminatory hiring practices. But Brazier told the *Chicago Daily Defender*, "This is

just the beginning." He promised that the CCCO would engage in "direct action until we

achieve a just settlement" to end discriminatory practices in hospitals, schools, and

construction sites. CCCO members connected the use of nonviolent direct action to

democracy and freedom. Edwin C. Berry, executive director of the Urban League, urged

advocates of civil rights to join CCCO "to demonstrate that democracy can work here—

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[381] "Rights Advocates Plan Session on 'Direct Action'," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 17, 1963, sec. A, 6.
[382] Ibid.

and now." Brazier told the paper, "Negroes must take power through direct, nonviolent action if they are to win their freedom."[383]

The CCCO then returned their attention to integrating the school system. At the end of August 1963, the Chicago Board of Education reached a settlement with parents who had sued over the segregated school system. The Board agreed to study the inequalities of the system and institute a transfer plan that allowed the highest achieving students to transfer to one of the twenty-four schools with honors programs. When parents in these honors schools found out about the transfer plan, they protested, claiming their schools were over-crowded. Superintendent Benjamin Willis, seeing the reaction of these parents, removed fifteen schools from the list.[384] Since these schools were white schools, members of the CCCO and others cried racism. The Board of Education ordered Willis to reinstate the schools, and Willis refused.[385] Rather than submit to the board and face a court order to reinstate the schools, Willis resigned.[386] The *Chicago Daily Defender* and civil rights groups celebrated the resignation, but their merriment lasted only days. On October 7, the Board of Education voted to reject Willis's resignation and to form a committee to persuade him to stay.[387]

Boycotts or Negotiations

Civil rights groups immediately responded to the school board's refusal to accept Willis's resignation. The CCCO consolidated its power and acted as the voice in

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[383] "Massive Sit-In Wave Here to Hit Job Bias," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 23, 1963, 1.

[384] "Willis Favors Bogan Parents over Negroes," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 16, 1963, 1.

[385] "Willis Forces School Bd. to Back Down on Transfers," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 30, 1963, 1.

[386] Chuck Stone, "Negroes Win Big Victory; Willis Quits!," *Chicago Defender*, October 5, 1963, 1–2.

[387] Ted Coleman, "Brow-Beaten Board Bows to Ben's Bigotry," *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 8, 1963, sec. A, 3.

opposition to Willis and his policies. When the board's decision became public, the CCCO quickly called for an emergency meeting with the understanding that this was the moment to test direct action in Chicago.[388] At this meeting, the CCCO Executive Board called for a school boycott on October 22. "The demonstration will show the Board of Education the policies of de facto segregation will not be tolerated by Chicago parents after Willis leaves," according to Lawrence Landry, official spokesman for the CCCO. In addition to proposing direct action, the CCCO sent a five-point statement to the Board of Education encouraging the board to accept Willis's resignation.[389] The boycott, titled "Freedom Day," also included a Freedom March to city hall with comedian Dick Gregory and James Forman, national chairman of SNCC, giving speeches. Freedom schools occupied the boycotting students by teaching them lessons in African American history. The boycott was more successful than planners had anticipated. Expecting 30,000 students to stay home on October 22, boycott leaders were surprised when the number was 224,770 or 47% of all students.[390] This rate of absenteeism cost the school board $470,000 in state funds, which are distributed based on attendance.[391] "We've got a wonderful spirit going here," declared one CCCO leader to the *Defender*. "The people expect us not [to] let them down."[392] The people were clearly interested in action. But would the city be interested in change?

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[388] Ted Coleman, "Board on Knees to Beg Willis; He Ignores Them," *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 9, 1963, 1.

[389] "17 Rights Groups Back Oct. 22 School Strike," *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 10, 1963, 4.

[390] Madalene Chafin, "2nd Boycott Weighed if Willis Stays," *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 24, 1963, 3; "224,770, or 45 Pct. of All Pupils, Miss Classes," *Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 1963, 1.

[391] "224,770, or 45 Pct. of All Pupils, Miss Classes," 2.

[392] Chafin, "2nd Boycott Weighed if Willis Stays," 3.

The CCCO struggled to determine what kind of mandate such a turnout gave it.

Would it continue with more direct action or try negotiations? No one wanted to let the

momentum they gained from the successful boycott to slip away. The CCCO met on

October 26 for seven hours of discussion on these very issues. Two groups began to

emerge during the discussion. One more conservative or cautious wing favored

negotiations over direct action. Perhaps influenced by Alinsky's pragmatism, Rev.

Brazier, president of TWO and an admitted skeptic of the October 22 boycott, led the

argument for negotiations before considering another boycott. Representing black,

middle-class interests, Charles A. Davis, owner of a public relations firm and convener of

the CCCO, supported him. The most vocal of the activist wing was Lawrence Landry,

boycott organizer and head of Chicago Area Friends of SNCC, who introduced a

resolution to name dates for future direct action. The delegates quickly voted down

Landry's resolution. Though he was not alone in his support for more action, delegates

from CORE and the Negro American Labor Council agreed with him, the majority of the

seventeen organizations in CCCO voted to negotiate with the school board. In

recognition of Landry's success in organizing the boycott and his commitment to direct

action, the committee named him chair of the negotiating committee.[393]

If the conservative wing thought negotiations would be less controversial than a

boycott, they were wrong. The meeting arranged with the school board turned out to be a

secret meeting with the chair of the school board, Clair Roddewig, not the entire board.

This arrangement further illustrated the organizational difficulties CCCO faced in these

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[393] Madalene Chafin, "CCCO Willing to Meet with School Board," *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 28, 1963, 3.

early actions. Although the executive committee had appointed Landry chair of the

negotiating committee, Davis seemed to be calling the shots and sending contradictory

messages. It was Davis who orchestrated the meeting with Roddewig rather than Landry.

At one point Landry announced a meeting with Roddewig only to see Davis deny.[394] The

confusion surrounding details of the meeting led the *Defender* to ask, "Is the

Coordinating Council of Community Organizations about to play footsies with the

Chicago school board?" That the location of the meeting and the discussion topics were

kept secret created an aura of suspicion. The *Defender* went on to question why

delegates from only four of the seventeen organizations were going and why they would

be speaking with Roddewig and not the entire board.[395] One delegate to the CCCO told

the Defender "I just don't understand the secrecy." Another echoed these concerns, "If

today's meeting turns out to be a negotiating session, it is not in keeping with the plans

set by the group."[396]   Davis clearly represented the negotiation wing of CCCO not the

direct action faction.

After mishandling the first negotiating session with the school board, the CCCO

held a meeting to define negotiation procedures. The group clarified Landry as "the sole

spokesman for CCCO in its dealings with the Board." Delegates also created a

negotiating committee made up of representatives from each member organization as

well as creating a strategy committee to plan the content of such meetings. The CCCO

took the opportunity to express its disapproval of Convener Davis's handling of the

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[394] Ted Coleman, "CCCO-School Bd. Parley Near," *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 30, 1963, 4.
[395] Ernestine Cofield, "Davis, Roddewig 'Play It Cute' and Keep Meeting a Mystery," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 2, 1963, 1.
[396] Lloyd General, "'Willis Not Negotiable': CORE," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 2, 1963, 1.

meeting with Roddewig. However, delegates voted unanimously to commend him on his work as convener.[397] Despite this vote of confidence, Davis tendered his resignation as convener of the CCCO.[398] The organization ultimately decided to continue its emphasis on negotiation and delay direct action until it exhausted its options. Arthur Brazier, president of TWO, became convener.

People outside the organization criticized the decision to negotiate. Chuck Stone, editor of the *Chicago Daily Defender,* wrote a column on the debate between direct action and negotiation. A former Tuskegee Airman and noted African American newspaper editor, he served as editor at Harlem's *New York Age* and Washington D.C.'s *Afro-American* before coming to the *Defender* in 1963. *Newsweek* went so far as to label him "the angry man of the Negro press."[399] Stone argued that there were "two inherent fallacies in the argument for a return to negotiations:" that blacks in Chicago had ever been in a position to negotiate and that negotiation was preferable to direct action because direct action was somehow distasteful. "The reason Chicago has a racial crisis in its schools is because there has never been any negotiation between Negroes and the Board of Education or Dr. Willis," according the Stone. Blacks had never been in a position of power, so negotiation had always been impossible. "'Direct action' or peaceful non-violent demonstrations," Stone asserted, "are precisely those tools which give Negroes the strength with which to negotiate." Successful direct action led to strength. Stone

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[397] Madalene Chafin, "CCCO Selects Landry as Group's Spokesman," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 4, 1963, sec. A, 3.

[398] "Davis: Resignation Must Stick," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 4, 1963, sec. A, 3.

[399] "Chuck Stone," *Contemporary Black Biography* (Detroit: Gale, 1995), Gale Biography in Context. Online.

believed Charles Davis did not understand this: "His cautious, timid handling of the first conference with Roddewig proved it."[400]

With Landry leading negotiations, even the conservative route became more militant than in Davis's hands. "While we are popularly called negotiators," Landry told the *Chicago Tribune*, "it should be made clear that we do not consider our civil rights items for the bargaining table. We shall not compromise any of our 13 demands on the board, including the removal of Benjamin C. Willis as school superintendent."[401] Landry represented the activists in CCCO and, according to the Defender, "the New Breed of Negro leadership." A young man of 28, Landry graduated from the University of Chicago with bachelor's and master's degrees in sociology. As chairman of the Chicago Area Friends of SNCC and spokesman for CCCO, he emphasized direct action if negotiations did not work. "I'm afraid," Landry warned, "unless the negotiations are good we'll have to go back in the streets." He suggested regular boycotts of State Street businesses and joining with other Northern cities in a joint school boycott. When asked about his goals as a leader, Landry responded: "If I had to say it simply, it would be to change the Negro chances from a much less than equal chance to survive to a better than equal chance. I believe in discrimination in favor of Negroes. That's the only way we will be able to compensate for 400 years of unequal opportunity."[402] Though the *Defender* featured Landry as a key leader, his leadership and that of the militant wing of CCCO would not to last.

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[400] Chuck Stone, "A Stone's Throw, Direct Action vs. Negotiation: Why the Negro Revolution," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 11, 1963, 4.

[401] "Rights Groups to Pick 20 for School Parley," *Chicago Tribune*, November 4, 1963, 4.

[402] Lillian S. Calhoun, "Chicago's Lawrence Landry is Typical of 'New Breed' in U.S. Negro Revolt," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 5, 1963, sec. A, 6.

Despite the seeming attention CCCO attained due to the success of the boycott, it had difficulty translating that momentum into power to influence the school board, possibly due to the school board's inertia or the difficulty in fighting de facto segregation. The board continued to support Willis and ignore the complaints of CCCO in negotiation secessions. In November, the Board of Education voted to support Willis's limited transfer plan.[403] To encourage the board to listen to CCCO demands and to gather more power, the organization voted to support resumption of direct action techniques thus moving the organization in a more militant direction. It also discussed a "contingency resolution" in case negotiations did not go well. The council voted 18-3 to call for a mass meeting and a Christmas boycott of State Street stores if talks with the Board of Education were unsuccessful. Leading the opposition to the resolution was Charles Davis representing a middle class position of restraint.[404] A final meeting with the Board of Education and Willis the first week of December was filled with shouting and ended in disappointment. The board refused to adopt a policy statement on integration. In addition, one member accused SNCC of threatening his life.[405] The final blow to the CCCO's waning power came when the board agreed to rules that would provide almost unquestionable support of Willis and his policies.[406] Moreover, the CCCO got no help from Mayor Daley who told it, "Integration is not the most important factor in choosing

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[403] Peggy Robinson, "Board Thumbs Nose at CCCO," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 14, 1963, 3.
[404] Chuck Stone, "Has Willis' Job Been Saved? CCCO Says 'Let's Negotiate'; IVI Says 'He Must Go'," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 18, 1963, 3.
[405] "Hot Threats Stop School Talks," *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 5, 1963, 3.
[406] Peggy Robinson, "New Board Rule to Give Willis a 'Blank Check'," *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 11, 1963, 2.

board members and I would not extract a commitment to integration from nominees, it would not be fair."[407]

In 1964, Al Raby became convener of CCCO when Rev. Brazier resigned to concentrate on his leadership of TWO. A schoolteacher and delegate for Teachers for Integrated Schools (TFIS), Raby sided with the militants in CCCO having voted for direct action when possible. Raby, a Chicago native, dropped out of school at a young age and became involved in union activity. After serving in the army, he earned a high school diploma and went on to become a teacher in Chicago's West Side. He helped found TFIS in response to Willis's actions.[408] Still a young man at thirty years old, Raby led CCCO through its most active period and moved the group towards more direct action. However, the conservative wing still held considerable numbers in early 1964 and direct action would not come without serious deliberation.

Debate over continued direct action in the form of a second school boycott dominated the January 11, 1964 meeting of the CCCO. Some members supported a boycott because the CCCO had "gotten nowhere on this issue by being moderate and that another meeting with the mayor would be an 'abdication.'" The militant wing likened the direct action to labor organizing through strikes and that the CCCO needed another show of strength. Landry argued, "We have a living rationale. The way they treated us is reason enough for a boycott." Those against the boycott pointed to remaining debts from the October 22 action as reason not to try again. Others argued that there was a general lack of time to pull off a successful boycott. Brazier opposed the boycott because he felt

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[407] "Fighting School Bias Is a Real Tough Job," *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 18, 1963, 40.

[408] "Al Raby | Chicago Freedom Movement," *Chicago Freedom Movement*, n.d., http://cfm40.middlebury.edu/node/34.

it helped the Board of Education by allowing the board to appear respectable. Instead, Brazier believed the CCCO should hold a massive school hearing where teachers gave public testimony of the segregation.[409] Both the NAACP and the Urban League voted as separate organizations not to support a boycott.[410] The debate continued at the next meeting as well. This time Landry made a motion to hold a one-day boycott on February 25. Again, members questioned from where the money would come. Others wondered about long-term impact: "How will a second boycott be effective in Chicago?" and "What do we do after the boycott?" Nevertheless, the committee voted to support a boycott.[411] Despite having approved the boycott, at the February 2 meeting, delegates again raised concerns about going forward. "We are not opposed to action. We are opposed to unclear goals. We don't have national goals," one delegate stated. Those supporting action countered saying, "No single tactic will be miraculously successful."[412] They voted to hold the boycott in "abeyance" until a last minute meeting with Mayor Daley and the Board of Education could be held. The CCCO and the Board failed to reach an agreement causing the organization to vote to support the boycott without further debate. Despite the uncertainty, Landry had continued to plan the boycott and it was held with CCCO's support.[413]

The boycott, known as Freedom Day II, was both a success and a failure. Although the number of absences was down from the October action to 122,350 students, the *Defender* called the boycott "an overwhelming success." Landry agreed, "It looks

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[409] "CCCO Minutes," January 11, 1964, 6–7, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[410] "Chicago Boycott 'On,' Says CCCO," *Chicago Daily Defender*, February 4, 1964, sec. A, 5.
[411] "CCCO Minutes," January 18, 1964, 9–10, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[412] "CCCO Minutes," February 2, 1964, 13–14, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[413] Lloyd General, "Boycott Battle Rages!," *Chicago Daily Defender*, February 10, 1964, sec. A, 3.

good. For the first time in the history of Chicago, people were given an opportunity to choose between slavery and freedom." Boycotting students were encouraged to participate in one of the 123 freedom schools instead of roaming the streets. Those supporting the boycott also picketed at various schools around the district.[414] But the success did not go much further. When the Board of Education voted on a motion to reinstate negotiations with CCCO and to hold a special session to study CCCO demands, the motions failed. One of the two black members of the board, Mrs. Wendell Green, effectively blocked each measure. She had never supported the actions of CCCO and made it clear she did not support the boycott. She said that if direct action continued, "they will drive the whites out of the city, and we can't operate without the good will of the whites."[415]

A Problem of Direction and Organization

After this mixed defeat and victory, the CCCO was once again divided and in disarray. The militant and conservative wings were still at odds. But the organization itself was in trouble. At a March meeting Raby stated the obvious, "We have functional problems. We need an executive committee. We need money. We need an office. We need a secretary. We need to talk about these problems. It is almost impossible to be executive of this organization and hold a job."[416] After the second boycott, CCCO once again could not capitalize on the success of its direct action campaign. It seemed at a loss of what to do next. Limited actions concerning school integration continued throughout

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[414] Peggy Robinson, "2 Big Upsets: Boycott Wins! Clay Does, Too!," *Chicago Daily Defender*, February 26, 1964, 2, 10.
[415] "Block CCCO-School Bd. Peace," *Chicago Daily Defender*, February 27, 1964, 2.
[416] "CCCO Minutes," March 21, 1964, 2, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

1964. The CCCO contributed to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s visit to Chicago in June, but did not take the lead.[417] In May, it formed a program committee to propose actions that could give the CCCO the leverage it desired.[418] "CCCO had tried direct action and sitting around the table," the committee reported. This time it looked to politics. Specifically, it wanted to defeat a candidate or win an office. Part of this action would include voter registration as well as campaigning. In addition, the committee proposed building the CCCO by "encourage[ing] neighborhood associations to join" because the organization's "greatest sources of strength lies with the grass roots interest in local problems."[419] The lack of civil rights action was not limited to the CCCO. Chuck Stone wrote another critical column on the ineffectiveness of the Chicago civil rights movement. Among other things, he blamed the NAACP and Urban League for trying to "limit, contain, and in a sense, denude the CCCO of power because of the threat to the positions of leadership they've enjoyed over the years."[420] The next month the *Defender* published an article that pursued this issue further asking, "What is wrong with the civil rights movement in Chicago? Why is there no strong day-to-day campaign on the Chicago front in the nation's civil rights battle?" One activist interviewed blamed the lack of action on the membership of the CCCO who "see to it that no militant action comes out."[421]

Events in the Southern civil rights movement aided the move towards political action in the CCCO. In the summer of 1964, SNCC and other organizations launched a

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[417] Betty Edwards, "Expect 100,000 at Rights Rally," *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 27, 1964.
[418] "CCCO Minutes," May 9, 1964, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[419] "CCCO Minutes," May 16, 1964, 1, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[420] Chuck Stone, "A Stone's Throw," *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 4, 1964, 4.
[421] Skip Bossette, "Chicago's Rights Fight Seen in Sad Shape," *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 6, 1964, 2.

massive campaign in Mississippi centered on voter registration. Freedom Summer

highlighted a problem with Mississippi politics. Once registered, blacks had no one to

vote for because the local Democratic Party represented whites only. In response, the

Freedom Summer volunteers organized the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party

(MFDP) and held its own primary. It also famously attempted to have its delegates

seated at the Democratic National Convention that year in Atlantic City. In support of

the MFDP, the CCCO created Freedom Democratic Clubs. Raby temporarily resigned

from his teaching position to lead the clubs. He believed the clubs would do more than

support the Mississippi party; they would spur political action and revitalize the Chicago

movement. "We need to reexamine the civil rights movement in this city," he reported to

the council. "We have assumed that masses of people together with evidence of

segregation would awaken the moral conscience of the people. But no appreciable

change resulted from boycotts. We have been ignorant of political significance. […]

The indifference of city leadership to boycotts indicates that there is no inherent power in

demonstrations. We need to prepare to support the MFDP in 1968 and enter the

mayoralty campaign in 1967."[422]

Despite attempts to focus the group's attention on politics, housing, and

employment, divisions within the organization continued to strain the limits of coalition

into 1965. The question of strategy and goals surfaced again at a meeting in February.

But everyone at the meeting pointed to different causes of the organizing malaise. A

CORE representative said, "We need a consensus about tactics and strategy. […] We

have been living off the gravy and have failed to do the hard organizational work."

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[422] "CCCO Minutes," August 12, 1964, 3, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

Another delegate pointed to the lack of strong black leadership in Chicago. The structure

of CCCO came into question as well. Previous initiatives came from member

organizations and the CCCO itself. And these organizations provided leadership for

these actions. One member pointed out that "it was a misconception to think of CCCO

apart from its affiliates." Although a program committee had been established in the

past, Anne Prosten, representative of Teachers for Integrated Schools, proposed "the

convener appoint a committee to plan a series of actions which would be resubmitted to

CCCO at a later date." Another member countered saying, "We should beware of

appointing a committee because we must move beyond the talking stage." Raby agreed

that the organization needed to do "something large, unified, and dramatic."[423] Although

the organization agreed to create a committee to plan strategy, the next meeting in March

was problematic. Again, troubles surfaced when the organization had difficulty

maintaining a quorum. Despite having sent out a letter to all delegates marked

"URGENT!" and concluding with "The success of our action depends on your

participation!" the meeting was poorly attended.[424] One delegate wondered if "we should

have changed the constitution before now. Now we must keep faith with the federation."

The meeting raised discussion of suspending the constitution and expressed the

frustrations of those in attendance over the need to make decisions in a timely manner.

Monroe Sharp of the Chicago Friends of SNCC pointed out the obvious, "The question of

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[423] "CCCO Minutes," 2–3.
[424] Coordinating Council of Community Organizations to All Delegates and Alternates, March 1, 1965, 1, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

constitutionality is irrelevant. CCCO is almost dead in Chicago." Another member

seconded this statement saying, "Our structure lends itself to confusion."[425]

Like the influence of the MFDP, the Southern civil rights movement once again

kick-started action in Chicago. The famous march in Selma, Alabama led to Chicago

action. King and SCLC had been leading a campaign in Selma, which included a march

to the capitol in Birmingham in March 1965. The first attempt at the march met with

extreme violence at the Edmund Pettus Bridge on what became known as "Bloody

Sunday." Eventually King was able to lead marchers to the state capitol building. The

events of Selma seemed to give the CCCO focus once again. In a letter sent to delegates,

Al Raby asked members to attend a special meeting on March 27 to address the question:

"After Selma, What?" In addition, the meeting would discuss a proposed Good Friday

demonstration to support equality in education and oppose Willis. Raby made three

prominent requests in this letter, "We will need you […] We will need your support […]

We will need your money."[426] The group further capitalized on the Selma march when

they held a gathering which a flyer named "A Freedom Rally on Chicago and Selma:

Next Steps for the Movement" and featured James Bevel and James Lawson as

speakers.[427]

Attempts at organizing a Good Friday pilgrimage on April 16 met with similar

organizational issues. Prosten commented that CCCO had sent out a mailing asking for

organizational help for the demonstration. She reported, "Not half of our affiliates took

this seriously. Tomorrow we will repeat that mailing, asking in addition to money and

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[425] CCCO meeting minutes, March 6, 1965, 1, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[426] Al Raby to Member of CCCO, March 24, 1965, 1, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[427] "A Freedom Rally on Chicago and Selma," 1965, 1, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

volunteers." Another delegate suggested, "We must stimulate each other" because she was worried about the turnout at the demonstration. Raby replied, "CCCO [is] made up of individual organizations. Success depends on coordination." Later he warned, "After [the] the second boycott, we pushed into the political process and lost our contacts with the community. Demoralization in [the] community resulted. […] We must think in terms of a movement, not demonstrations. [We] must think of actions following April 16th. Tonight we are pleading for details re[garding] Friday that are lost in organizational rush."[428] In this way, the CCCO was trying to accomplish two goals: action for change and build a community organization.

The lackluster results of the Good Friday action compelled CCCO to reevaluate its organization and methods, an action that illustrated the differences in the coalition. One issue that came up in the post-pilgrimage discussion was the difference between civil rights organizations and community organizations who were members of CCCO. Fisher of the Chantham-Avalon community organization pointed out the central problems in CCCO's structure: "There are different kinds of organizations in CCCO. Some are not primarily civil rights groups. Lack of CCCO staff and money means it plays no independent role, thus producing sporadic activity. We need either sacrifice of autonomy by member groups or a reevaluation of the CCCO role. […] Community organization can support civil rights activities but cannot lead them indefinitely." He said this was the reason for the April 12 failure. Another delegate argued, "We must strengthen constituent organizations rather than CCCO." While others pointed out the diverse goals of the groups in CCCO. Some wanted to focus on school issues where as others were

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[428] "CCCO Minutes," April 12, 1965, 3, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

interested in housing.[429] "What does it take to organize a community?" asked Fisher. He

went on to say that any program "must be tied into specifics of local issues, campaign

must be tied into issues rather than personality." After several proposals, he again

pointed out failures: "Been speaking for hour and half repeating last two year's

discussion." The people in his neighborhood stayed away from the Good Friday

demonstration because of the failures of the boycotts. "We haven't raised the level of the

community understanding to the point they will participate. Unless we do this, we are

speaking to ourselves."[430] Anne Prosten defended the CCCO saying, "We have done the

best we could." Frank Ditto of the Freedom Democratic Clubs justified smaller

demonstrations pointing out that success in the south occurred with marchers numbering

in the hundreds. Fisher continued to chastise civil rights leaders saying that leadership is

"needed and hasn't occurred." Disillusionment, in Fisher's view, had caused a dropping

off of membership. Another member recommended postponing a massive demonstration

until King and SCLC visited Chicago. Until then, he recommended "smaller creative

efforts."[431] No decisions were made at the meeting as to the overall strategy of CCCO.

Delegates put off the decisions for another day, but the strains of coalition were clear.

CCCO continued to propose the same programs to address the same problems.

When the school board announced it would renew Willis's contract for another four

years, CCCO and other organizations felt compelled to respond with mass action. The

NAACP committed itself to a boycott and invited CCCO to support the program. As

with other attempts at mass action, debate over the futility of another boycott dominated

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[429] "CCCO Minutes," April 25, 1965, 2, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[430] Ibid., 3.
[431] Ibid., 4.

the CCCO meeting. The NAACP representative told the group, "[A] boycott is necessary as part of long sustained program which includes direct action."[432] Much of the debate centered on the length of boycott. The NAACP originally proposed a five-day boycott. Some worried that that would be too long, that the first day would be successful but that with each consecutive day, more students would return to school. A five-day boycott would also be expensive and the CCCO still owed money from the Good Friday demonstrations. Others argued in favor, saying that one-day boycotts had not worked in the past and that a longer boycott would deprive the school district of more money.[433] The NAACP compromised to agree to a week of activities ending with a two-day school boycott.

As with the Freedom Day II demonstration, the next CCCO gathering prompted a debate about the merits of a one or two day boycott versus more long-term action. The reasons to oppose the boycott seemed to be gaining ground. The opposition worried that the effect a boycott would have on students would not justify the rewards. A boycott this late in the school year meant the high school student would be out for several days the week before their exams. Others pointed to the lack of organization that would lead to failure. Although the CCCO had agreed to a week of activities that would culminate in a boycott, no program had developed. Poorly worded and poorly distributed flyers failed to promote adequately the boycott and protests. Many worried that the event would fail because of this. The lack of help from national leadership was also a concern. Some argued that appearances by leaders such as King, or Farmer, would be necessary to draw

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[432] "CCCO [minutes]," May 29, 1965, 1, Box 18, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[433] Ibid., 2.

large numbers to demonstrations and boycott. In addition, a lack of focus posed

problems. Members could not decide on whether the demonstrations should target Daley

or Willis. Moreover, there was a general suspicion of the NAACP—fears that it was a

tool of the Daley machine. The NAACP had backed out of supporting the Freedom Day

II boycott in February. Would it do so again? Supporters of the boycott argued that the

group must do something. Inaction would be much worse, and with twenty-four hours of

hard work, the boycott could be a success.[434] Delegates at the meeting discussed having

a second vote on the boycott. Raby argued against such a vote, "I'm of the opinion that it

is better to fight this one through."[435] The group held a vote and reversed its position on

supporting the boycott. Raby, disappointed with the outcome, said, the "vote won't

hinder member organization from supporting individually." He also worried about the

consequences of the vote, encouraging members to "interpret [the] vote not as destroying

NAACP, not as destroying boycott."[436]

As part of a recurring problem of member organizations' relation to the whole, the

next evening CCCO met once again to discuss the boycott. This time it became a

discussion of procedure. In previous boycotts, members proposed an action and the

CCCO sponsored it. This time, the NAACP decided to have a boycott, and then

approached CCCO for support. "Here decisions made without consideration of CCCO,"

complained one delegate. "Leaflets didn't consider CCCO."[437] The CCCO delegates felt

like second tier members in the boycott, that the NAACP made decisions concerning the

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[434] "CCCO [minutes]," June 5, 1965, 2–6, Box 18, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[435] Ibid., 6.
[436] Ibid., 8.
[437] "CCCO [minutes]," June 6, 1965, 2, Box 18, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

program without consulting or considering CCCO opinion. Infighting was a common

problem in the CCCO. Fisher, delegate from the Chatham-Avalon organization,

observed, "Tonight's discussion explains why civil rights movement is split. Movement

[is] always split in Chicago. [These debates] keep us in meetings instead of action."[438]

At the end of meeting, the group decided to support the boycott once again.

Despite CCCO support, the school boycott was destined to face more hurdles.

The Board of Education was granted an injunction to prevent the school boycott. The

court forbade civil rights leaders to encourage any student in the Chicago school system

to miss school.[439] The CCCO now had to discuss whether it was willing to break the law

in order to carry out its demonstration. Would the possible rewards merit such action?

Raby saw this as an opportunity but was not willing to break the law. He suggested the

organization "go out tonight and build up support for march in streets and arrest

tomorrow. Build up latent force through confrontation tomorrow."[440] The Chicago

branches of CORE and SNCC supported violating the injunction. Ultimately, the CCCO

voted to protest the injunction and invited people to join a march from Soldier Field to

City Hall and the Board of Education.[441] More than 2,000 marchers turned out to make

the trek.[442]

Though the boycott and injunction did not bring the intended goals, they did give

CCCO considerable publicity by bringing more observers and organizations to the next

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[438] Ibid., 4.
[439] "Boycott Banned," *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 9, 1965, 3.
[440] "CCCO [minutes]," June 9, 1965, 1, Box 18, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[441] Ibid., 5.
[442] Brenetta Howell and Skip Bossette, "2,000 Pledge Daily Marches in Chicago," *Chicago Defender*, June 12, 1965, 1.

meeting. At first the discussion centered on how to accommodate these newly interested

parties. With outside groups participating in CCCO actions without joining the

organization, the CCCO had been running on an ad hoc basis without a formal executive

committee. Raby announced, "I have responsibility for a representative balanced group

with representative voice from every civil rights group and all other groups which have a

voice." Since some of the groups present were not members of CCCO and some were

inactive members, the goal of the meeting was to "come out with [a] kind of structure—

give honest expression to objections to each."[443] Possibilities included rewriting the

constitution to create a larger umbrella organization, rename the organization or dump it

altogether and start over with a new group. The real question was how the CCCO would

continue. Could it find an issue to mobilize around, could it draw people in and make a

difference? The CCCO had a real advantage over other organizations or a new

organization in that it had an established means of communicating with groups. The

disadvantages CCCO had included its past problems of disorganization and division, lack

of success in politics and in influencing school board policies. Another part of the

discussion focused on leadership. Dick Gregory, the famous comedian and civil rights

activist who had begun spending time working in the Chicago movement, and others

suggested strong leadership, "We need a Castro." Others preferred a "diffused

leadership" because it "breeds trust, mutual understanding, and love."[444] Gregory pushed

for the creation of a new organization. Others argued that CCCO was not set up to

handle a larger movement. "The CCCO has a split personality," those who supported

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[443] "Meeting of June 20, 1965," June 20, 1965, 1, Box 18, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[444] Ibid., 3.

direct action and those that did not.[445] Discussion on organization continued the next

evening. While one member suggested, "the less structure the better," Raby argued the

opposite. But he also stated, "I would be hard pressed to explain how I functioned within

the context of CCCO."[446] While some discussed whether to dissolve CCCO or not,

others explored ways to keep it going and include the new organizations. Should groups

joining give up their sovereignty to CCCO?

These meetings also addressed tactics including civil disobedience. The march

from Soldiers field to City Hall resulted in arrests. Continuing marches also led to

arrests. To some delegates the purpose of civil disobedience was unclear. Some thought

the actions were to pressure the mayor to meet with CCCO leaders, others as a

demonstration of how distasteful Willis's leadership was. CCCO also continued to face

troubles with its commitment to direct action and targets. The goals of civil disobedience

were discussed. One delegate claimed that the CCCO "backed into civil disobedience"

because it did not want the demonstration to be broken up by police. "This is an extreme

measure," he argued. Instead, the CCCO should meet with the mayor. Another member

disagreed saying civil disobedience was necessary to force the mayor to negotiate.

Again, the debates between the moderate and militant wings of CCCO surfaced. But

now, the direct action wing had more support.[447] "Purpose of marching in the streets, not

just to meet mayor but also to mobilize the community," Raby clarified. "Marching

down street shows power."[448]

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[445] Ibid., 5.
[446] "Meeting of June 21, 1965," June 21, 1965, 1, Box 18, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[447] Ibid., 2.
[448] Ibid.

An Alliance with SCLC

At the end of July 1965, SCLC began its People to People Northern City Tour to determine where to focus its attention. Beginning with Chicago, SCLC visited five cities to "get a first hand picture and understanding of some of the problems faced in the Northern city," and "assist local leadership in interpreting the issues of the movement to a broader base of the community."[449] After King's visit, the organization concerned itself with capitalizing on the publicity. Raby noted, "Every time we start getting a movement in Chicago, something destroys it. More often from within than without."[450] He and others were worried it would happen again.

CCCO put considerable stock in King and SCLC's ability to translate direct action into change—something CCCO could not manage on its own. Over the previous two years, the organization had made connections between the Southern civil rights movement and actions in Chicago. It was influenced broadly by the direct action of the southern movement and was inspired specifically by the MFDP and Selma March. At the same time, King and SCLC had been growing interested in a Northern campaign. With the successes of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, King was ready to focus attention on de facto segregation and other forms of racism unique to the northern environment. King was also interested in applying nonviolence to the northern campaign. After the march from Selma to Birmingham in 1965, King and SCLC began to focus their attention on new concerns. Pledging to march against poverty, joblessness, as well as segregated housing and schools, King promised, "We can

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[449] "SCLC People to People Northern City Tour Organizational Manual," 1965, 2, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[450] "CCCO and Cooperating Organizations," August 4, 1965, 8, Box 18, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

answer with creative nonviolence the call to higher ground to which the new directions of our struggle summons us. The road ahead is not altogether a smooth one. There are no broad highways that lead us easily and inevitably to quick solutions. But we must keep going."[451] And with that, King and SCLC turned their attention to the North.

King and Nonviolence

The CCCO, with the exception of supporting integration, lacked a singular intellectual tradition. Instead, it drifted between the ideologies of its member organizations. With SCLC and King interested in Chicago, an organization with a cohesive and comprehensive philosophy would join CCCO influencing the direction of the Chicago movement. Between the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1956 and his death in 1968, King explained and expanded his philosophy of nonviolence. Specifically, King used nonviolent direct action to pursue a more democratic society. While he did not expound on the meanings of democracy in his speeches and sermons, it is clear that he assumed democracy meant equality and freedom. His language concerning "the democratic ideal of freedom and equality" makes clear that he equated democracy with equality.[452] King further defined equality as "the dream of our American democracy […] a dream of equality of opportunity, of privilege and property widely distributed; a dream of a land where men will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few; a dream of a land where men do not argue that the color of a man's skin determines the

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[451] Martin Luther King Jr., "Our God is Marching On! (1965)," *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Project*, n.d., http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/our_god_is_marching_on/.
[452] King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 159.

content of his character…."[453] Through nonviolent direct action, blacks would force

America to evaluate its notions of democracy and equality and find them lacking. [454]

Getting in the way of the democratic ideal or dream was the "cancerous disease of

discrimination."[455] King fought segregation because "if democracy is to live, segregation

must die."[456] In the late 1950s, King believed that the United States was at a crossroads.

The country faced a crisis where society could go in one of two directions: "The

democratic ideal of freedom and equality will be fulfilled for all—or all human beings

will share in the resulting social and spiritual doom. In short, this crisis has the potential

for democracy's fulfillment or fascism's triumph; for social progress or retrogression."[457]

Desegregation alone, however, would not solve the problem. According to King,

integration was the superior goal because it included "the positive acceptance of

desegregation and the welcomed participation of Negroes into the total range of human

activities."[458]

King believed nonviolent direct action would lead to the democratic dream.

Combining the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, Reinhold Niebuhr, the social gospel, and the

Christian doctrine of love, King formulated both a tactic and a philosophy to combat

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[453] Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Rising Tide of Racial Consciousness (1960)," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 151.
[454] King, *Where Do We Go from Here*, 138.
[455] King, "The Rising Tide of Racial Consciousness (1960)," 151.
[456] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Facing the Challenge of a New Age (1957)," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 142.
[457] King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 159.
[458] Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Ethical Demand for Integration (1962)," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 118.

inequality.[459] Nonviolence meant avoiding violence both in action and in thought. "The

nonviolent resister not only refuses to shoot his opponent," King explained, "but he also

refuses to hate him."[460] Nonviolent resistance focused on the source of evil not the

people that perpetrated it. King argued one must try to win their opponents' friendship

and understanding. The key to its success was to "awaken a sense of moral shame" in

those that perpetrated inequality.[461] In his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail," King

explained, "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension

that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the

issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored."[462] In this way,

nonviolence employed pressure to force segregationists to act. Though nonviolent direct

action utilized force and tension, King based it on the Christian concept of *agape* or love.

He went to great lengths to distinguish *agape* from romantic or sentimental love.

According to King, *agape* is "a disinterested love. It is a love in which the individual

seeks not his own good, but the good of the neighbor."[463] At its foundation, nonviolence

believed justice would prevail in the end, "the idea that there is within human nature an

amazing potential for goodness."[464] One who subscribed to nonviolence had tremendous

faith in the future, as King explained; it is this faith that encouraged the endurance of the

struggle.[465]

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[459] For a lengthy description of the influences on his philosophy, see King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 71–86.
[460] Ibid., 83.
[461] Ibid., 82.
[462] King, *Why We Can't Wait*, 79.
[463] King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 84.
[464] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience (1961)," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 47.
[465] King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 85.

Once accepted, nonviolent action would create a beloved community that embraced integration, not just desegregation. According to King, nonviolence was "the only way to reestablish the broken community" produced by discrimination.[466] Because the action to create change did not have the disruptive properties of violence and because it centered on the notion of love, nonviolence would allow reconciliation as well as advance desegregation. [467] Nonviolent direct action would "touch the hearts and souls of men [so] that they will come together, not because the law says it, but because it is natural and right."[468] Desegregation removed the legal and social barriers, but integration allowed full equality and freedom because it demanded a unity of all persons. King recognized that one cannot legislate integration—that it was not enforceable through laws. But laws helped: "Desegregation will not change attitudes but will provide the contact and confrontation necessary by which integration was made possible and attainable."[469]

King argued that nonviolence was necessary to achieve the goal of the movement, full integration. In this instance, the ends and the means needed to be both just and moral. In fact, King believed "the idea of nonviolent resistance […] is the philosophy which says that the means must be as pure as the end, that in the long run of history, immoral destructive means cannot bring about moral and constructive ends."[470] Violence was a destructive force that damaged chances for reconciliation and integration. When

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[466] Ibid., 179.
[467] Ibid., 179–180.
[468] Ibid., 179.
[469] King, "The Ethical Demand for Integration (1962)," 123.
[470] King, "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience (1961)," 45.

the goal was to join the mainstream society, alienating that society was counterproductive.

Nonviolence offered more than just a healing process after direct action. It was also therapeutic in that it helped blacks achieve a sense of dignity and self-worth that segregation destroyed. After the Montgomery bus boycott, King noted that committing to nonviolence gave participants a "new self-respect; it call[ed] up resources of strength and courage they did not know they had."[471] In his book *Why We Can't Wait*, written after the 1963 Birmingham campaign, King acknowledged, "Nonviolence had tremendous psychological importance to the Negro. He had to win and to vindicate his dignity in order to merit and enjoy his self-esteem."[472] In a later interview with *Playboy*, King described the power of nonviolence to change the individual. After submitting to the philosophy of nonviolence, one became "somebody" and had "the courage to be free. When the Negro finds the courage to be free, he faces dogs and guns and clubs and fire hoses totally unafraid, and the white men with those dogs, guns, clubs and fire hoses see that the Negro they have traditionally called 'boy' has become a man."[473] From here, blacks could pursue a positive program for self-development.

While King and SCLC fought against all forms of discrimination including state and local laws and practices, King also pointed out that blacks needed to develop a range of positive goals to attain on their own. To this end, King argued that nonviolence combined cooperation with noncooperation. It was not enough for black Americans to

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[471] King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 179.
[472] King, *Why We Can't Wait*, 40.
[473] "Playboy Interview: Martin Luther King, Jr. (1965)," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 349.

reject collaboration with segregation; they also had to advance "the constructive forces of good" or their goals would escape them.[474] In the tradition of Booker T. Washington, King reasoned that blacks should seek to improve themselves through building credit unions and savings and loans as well as developing thrifty spending habits.[475] In the realm of voting rights, King acknowledged that blacks "face many external barriers" but "apathy among the Negroes themselves is also a factor."[476] This constructive effort must also "include a vigorous attempt to improve the Negro's personal standards."[477] The crime rate was too high; cleanliness too low; the middle class lived beyond their means; and too much money was spent on alcohol.[478] "In short," King asserted, "we must work on two fronts. On the one hand, we must continue to resist the system of segregation which is the basic cause of our lagging standards; on the other hand we must work constructively to improve the standards themselves."[479] King noted in 1960 that black Americans must take primary responsibility for making themselves equal citizens to whites. "The Negro," he wrote, "must not be victimized with the delusion of thinking that others should be more concerned than himself about his citizenship rights."[480] In order to respond effectively to accusations that blacks lagged economically and educationally because they were inferior, blacks needed a positive program of self-improvement. Again, King acknowledged, "Many of us live above our means, spend money on nonessentials and frivolities, and fail to give to serious causes, organizations,

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[474] King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 181.
[475] Ibid.
[476] Ibid., 182.
[477] Ibid.
[478] Ibid., 182–183.
[479] Ibid., 183.
[480] King, "The Rising Tide of Racial Consciousness (1960)," 148.

and educational institutions that so desperately need funds."[481] Blacks must be prepared

to take advantage of the new opportunities that arise from their nonviolent direct action.

Only then will they defeat the "demoralization caused by the legacy of slavery and

segregation."[482] This message seemed to get lost in the attention paid to the direct action

protest of nonviolence, making it easy to forget King supported a style of self-help akin

to black nationalism.

In addition to self-improvement, King knew that the way to achieve equality was

to exercise the right to vote. In fact, "The denial of this sacred right," announced King to

a crowd in front of the Lincoln Memorial, "is a tragic betrayal of the highest mandates of

your democratic traditions and it is democracy turned upside down."[483] He understood

that until blacks gained political power, politicians would exploit them. Both political

parties had failed blacks. Northern Republicans colluded with southern Democrats to

defeat civil rights legislation. Only the ballot would remove this barrier.[484] King argued,

"Give us the ballot, and we will no longer have to worry the federal government about

our basic rights."[485] Blacks would elect judges and lawmakers who would respect and

enforce racial justice. Voting offered more than political power, it gave blacks dignity as

King articulated: "So long as I do not firmly and irrevocably possess the right to vote I do

not possess myself. I cannot make up my mind—it is made up for me."[486] Although

King made these statements in 1957, by 1965 he had to continue his emphasis on voting

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[481] Ibid., 150.
[482] Ibid.
[483] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Give Us the Ballot--We will Transform the South (1957)," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 197.
[484] King, "Facing the Challenge of a New Age (1957)," 142.
[485] King, "Give Us the Ballot--We will Transform the South (1957)," 197.
[486] Ibid.

because in these seven years, little had changed concerning voting rights in the South.

Although the federal government had attempted to protect the rights of blacks, King

observed, "The Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave Negroes some part of their rightful dignity,

but without the vote it was dignity without strength."[487] Southern blacks were

intimidated by sheriffs and registrars commissioned to maintain segregation. Literacy

tests and violence kept blacks from attaining voting rights. Again, King called on the

federal government to correct this injustice in the proposed civil rights act of 1965.[488]

But he noted that by helping blacks to the ballot, they would not be selfish in their voting

activity. Blacks recognized that their future was tied to whites'. "Our vote would place

in congress true representation of the people who would legislate for the Medicare,

housing, schools and jobs required by all men of any color."[489]

Testing the Limits of Coalition

King's notions of democracy and nonviolent direct action would be tested in the

Chicago Freedom Movement. Nonviolence provided the means to attain a more

democratic society, but it failed to describe how to create a democratic organization.

King himself was a leader with an organization, but his methods did not create or build

local leadership. While he wrote that the use of nonviolent direct action would create a

beloved community, he did not describe what that community would look like or how it

would function. Nonviolent direct action helped powerless people gain power to create

change. But it did not establish organizations to sustain that power once the direct action

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[487] King, "Our God is Marching On! (1965)."

[488] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Civil Right No. 1: The Right to Vote (1965)," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 184–188.

[489] Ibid., 183.

campaigns ended. Moreover, as the lessons of Albany and Birmingham demonstrated, King and SCLC became more and more reliant on media attention to gain reforms over grassroots organization. Direct action and media attention led to negotiations, but then what happened? How did nonviolence ensure that negotiations were enforced?

The limitations of nonviolent direct action inhibited the long-term success of the Chicago Freedom Movement. In addition, the collaboration between the CCCO and the SCLC faced many challenges. The two organizations brought different tactics and goals: while the CCCO concentrated on school desegregation, SCLC saw unfair housing practices as the fundamental problem. Moreover, while SCLC was a leading national civil rights organization, CCCO was a council of many local organizations. Internal divisions within CCCO concerning how best to attack the problem of school desegregation made it difficult to present a united front, let alone coordinate policy with SCLC. And in any event, CCCO leaders feared that the local movement would become subordinate to the more prominent SCLC. Finally, the city government's hostility to any change in Chicago's racial dynamic presented a consistent and formidable obstacle. Nonetheless, both groups were committed to making the city a more democratic place through integration.

The North presented a new challenge to King and SCLC. As the 1960s wore on, it became more and more apparent that the movement of the South was not improving race relations in the north. "The civil rights revolution appeared to be draining energy from the North," King commented, "energy that flowed south to transform life there

while stagnation blanketed northern Negro communities."[490] While he overstated his

point when he wrote "The North, heretofore vital, atrophied, and the traditionally passive

South burst with dynamic vibrancy," King recognized that the South had made

significant gains.[491] Race riots in Rochester, New York, and in Watts further encouraged

King to focus on the Northern condition. Seeing the use of violence in these cities led

King to make this assessment: "[The Northern black man] has yet to use nonviolent direct

action; he has not even examined its special tactical application in his different

community."[492] In the wake of the Rochester riot, SCLC sent staff to explore the

possibility of working in the city. But that option failed to develop, instead a group of

clergy invited Alinsky and IAF to Rochester to organize the black community. In

Chicago, both IAF and SCLC would organize separate areas. King's philosophy of

nonviolence would be tested in Chicago when it squared off with the northern political

and social system. In addition, though excited about the possibilities of partnership with

SCLC, the CCCO's coalition would have to extend to include SCLC.

Structural and membership issues continued to plague the organization after

King's visit. The disorganization and lack of control of those involved in the marches led

to an unexplained large phone bill and four hundred dollars missing from the CCCO

office.[493] The organization clearly needed to reign in participants while building CCCO's

base of support. The August 4 meeting discussed how to incorporate organizations that

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[490] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Next Stop: The North (1965)," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 190.
[491] Ibid.
[492] Ibid., 194.
[493] "CCCO and Cooperating Organizations," 7.

joined in the march but were not members of CCCO. Decisions made at CCCO meetings

affected everyone who took part in the marches. Some questioned whether that was fair.

Others thought that decision-making ought to be streamlined because "there should be a

small number of people empowered to act quickly in order to be effective."[494] In any

case, it was clear CCCO would need to restructure itself in order to accommodate the

new interest. Evolution would also be necessary if SCLC decided to make Chicago its

Northern campaign target. There was a sense amongst CCCO members that they were

moving into new territory. They needed to improve their system of coalition democracy.

The organization decided to change its constitution and membership requirements. A

membership committee would read and approve of membership applications. A key

requirement of acceptance was that the applying organization had a focus on civil rights

activity. In addition to changing membership procedure, the CCCO changed its structure

to include a steering committee to aid the convener in decision-making.[495]

When SCLC chose Chicago for a long-term campaign, the structural issues

CCCO faced would become more complicated and strain its already fragile coalition.

The addition of SCLC and its commitment to nonviolent direct action would end such a

debate within the CCCO, but disagreements would continue over the targets of such

actions. On September 1, 1965, SCLC and CCCO began to finalize arrangements for a

long-term campaign in Chicago. Immediately members of CCCO questioned how such a

joint project would work. There was an underlying concern that SCLC would take over

CCCO. Raby tried to reassure delegates by pointing out that SCLC "has not taken over

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[494] Ibid.

[495] "To Delegates and Alternates of the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations," August 13, 1965, 1, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

orgs in past" but did recognize that they "have been criticized for not building up local leadership before [leaving]."[496] James Bevel of SCLC caused further concern when he criticized CCCO's past actions including its focus on Willis and claiming that the marches were "unwisely conducted."[497] Bevel had been active in civil rights since the Nashville sit-ins in 1960. As a participant in the Freedom Rides and organizer of the SCLC campaign in Selma, he brought considerable experience with him to Chicago. CCCO members had to choose between Bevel's past remarks or using his vast organizational skills to aid the Chicago movement. Members wanted assurances that Bevel would be "under discipline" and that he would not make unauthorized statements about CCCO in the future. Raby argued that Bevel had apologized and promised not to make that mistake again.[498] But concerns about Bevel lingered, as did concerns over program under this new relationship.

When Bevel met with the CCCO executive committee to discuss programming a difference in tactics immediately became apparent. Bevel spoke from experience in organizing the southern movements. He told the committee, "I am very optimistic, cause I win fights and I work." The conversation turned to the number of staff needed to mobilize Chicago. According to Bevel if an organizer spoke to one hundred people, "ten will function." But with planning, "by spring we could reach 1 million people."[499] The key was to give people information to understand the connection between education and later life. But when Raby pressed Bevel for the number and cost of paid full-time staff

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[496] "CCCO Minutes," September 2, 1965, 9, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[497] Ibid., 8.
[498] Ibid., 9.
[499] "Executive Committee [minutes]," September 6, 1965, 3, Box 18, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

necessary to create such a movement, Bevel was evasive. He suggested volunteers would

help, that they should target sixteen schools, "get all you can," and "You try to move a

maximum. How much momentum can you get? Do the best you can."[500] Raby

continued to ask, "How many?" Bevel continued to supply ambiguous answers. When

talk turned to strategy, the vagueness persisted. "In your training program," he told the

committee, "once people get info they will determine the strategy. In process of

developing people, a strategy will evolve and tell you what to do."[501] Raby was not

interested in the wait- and-see plan. "We have heard a philosophical approach with

appealing examples," he told the group. "Now we have an urgency of time. I must go

back with a concrete program and must sell them on one specific."[502] Bevel continued to

press for no immediate program while Raby pushed for an outline. The fundamental

difference was that Bevel believed "you need a philosophical agreement" first, then a

program. Whereas, Raby argued, "to convince people, I need to have a program."[503]

Others at the meeting, however, found Bevel's approach appealing. Eventually Raby

came around to acknowledging that Bevel's "concept on mobilization is very enticing."

But he kept some skepticism, "I've got to see it."[504]

By December, CCCO and SCLC were hammering out the details of their joint

project in Chicago. And the differences in programming objectives persisted. SCLC

staff aided community organizations and held planning and strategy meetings in January.

King planned on spending two to three days a week in Chicago. CCCO members pushed

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[500] Ibid., 4–5.
[501] Ibid., 6.
[502] Ibid.
[503] Ibid., 7.
[504] Ibid., 8.

for more details because they "still don't have [an] action program to unite SCLC and CCCO." Andrew Young, SCLC leader, said this would happen in January. Young, like Bevel, argued against a strict program citing previous experience, "[We] had a plan of action for Alabama, but didn't work out that way. [It's] the nature of a movement to drift."[505] Raby still struggled with this concept, "Every organization needs meaningful activities around which to mobilize." At this point, the target of action began to shift from Willis to broader issues. Bevel advised them not to go to school budget hearings but to spend time recruiting members.[506]

Movement to End Slums

A relationship with SCLC would not only force CCCO to change its strategy, it would change its goals as well. A report issued by SCLC on the Chicago project that month identified its goal as ending slums, not school integration as CCCO had spent much of the previous four years seeking. King announced the plan at a CCCO delegates meeting in January 1966. The delegates "overwhelmingly approved" of the new attack on slums. King told the crowd that their fight against Willis and school desegregation was noble, but "the problems of Chicago demand something new."[507] This shift in focus would require extensive education and training, not only for the community but for the organizations involved in CCCO. SCLC and CCCO had spent two months studying slums and determining their root causes.[508] King announced he would live in a slum

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[505] "CCCO Minutes," December 11, 1965, 7–10, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[506] Ibid., 19–21.
[507] "The Chicago Drive Begins," *CCCO Newsletter*, January 1966, 1, 4.
[508] "SCLC in Chicago," *CCCO Newsletter*, January 1966, 3.

during his stay in Chicago, and in February he and Al Raby toured ghetto housing to talk with residents about the movement to end slums.[509]

SCLC preferred slums to other issues based on its experiences in the southern movement. From previous campaigns, the organization had uncovered two principles in organizing: "the crystallization of the issues" and "the concentration of action."[510] The first step simplifies the problems the community faces. For example, in Birmingham where the discrimination was complex, SCLC targeted segregation. For the second step of action, SCLC chose lunch counters because "it was a target wherein one might achieve some measure of change yet which sufficiently involved the lines of economic and social power to a point beyond itself—to the larger problem."[511] After spending time in Chicago, SCLC determined that the core problem was "simply a matter of economic exploitation" and was "crystallized in the SLUM."[512] Within the ghetto landlords, real estate boards, banks and mortgage companies, the school system, building trade unions, the welfare system, tax structure, the courts, federal housing agencies, and the city of Chicago perpetrated the economic exploitation of African Americans.[513] By attacking the slum, activists could address many issues at once. The connection between the southern organizing method and that in Chicago ended with the crystallization of issues. For the concentration of action, organizers in Chicago would have to take a different tact. While focusing on one issue was the option used in the southern campaigns, in Chicago SCLC

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[509] Betty Washington, "King and Raby Tour the Slums, Meet the Folks," *Chicago Defender*, February 19, 1966, 1.
[510] "A Proposal by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for the Development of a Nonviolent Action Movement for the Greater Chicago Area," January 1966, 3, Box 20, Folder 2, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[511] Ibid., 4.
[512] Emphasis in original. Ibid., 5.
[513] "SCLC-Chicago Project," December 9, 1965, 1, Box 150, Folder 23, SCLC.

advocated "concentrat[ing] all of our forces and move in concert with a nonviolent army on each and every issue." The reasoning behind this move stemmed from "the probability of a ready accommodation [by Mayor Daley] to many of the issues in some token manner, merely to curtail the massing of forces and public opinion around those issues."[514] The action program consisted of three phases. The first emphasized organization and education through mass meetings, rallies, and workshops to make community members aware of the issues. In the second phase, scheduled to begin in March, "community response and live issues should have evolved to the point where some consensus has been reached around specific targets." Demonstrations would then be organized to clarify and highlight these targets. By the first of May, the movement should be on the last phase: massive action. SCLC purposely left the form this mass action would take vague because it would grow out of the demonstrations in phase two.[515]

SCLC planned a two-pronged attack to end slums. A community union to end slums in a specific location would gather the efforts of community organizations including block clubs, churches, and individuals. Headed by Bevel and modeled on the union idea, the Union to End Slums would educate people on the problems they faced in order to build a nonviolent movement. Tenant unions designed to improve slum housing and Operation Breadbasket designed to change hiring practices through boycotts were

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[514] "A Proposal by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for the Development of a Nonviolent Action Movement for the Greater Chicago Area," 8.
[515] Ibid., 11.

part of this level of organizing.[516] The second prong was the coalition with the CCCO to use existing organizations to attack problems with housing, education, employment, and welfare.

The Chicago Freedom Movement

More than adjusting to a new issue, slums not schools, the CCCO had to adjust to its relationship with SCLC. The cooperation between the two organizations was strained at times. They persistently attempted to negotiate a relationship that would capitalize on SCLC power and resources while respecting the autonomy and local priority of CCCO. The two organizations circulated draft proposals, proposals, and explanations of proposals before they set upon a relationship that met all of their needs. The formal structure of the CCCO changed to accommodate the addition of SCLC. First, while CCCO continued to exist, the cooperative effort would be called the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM).[517] Two chairmen or co-chairmen ran the operation—one from CCCO, Raby, and one from SCLC, King. The co-chairmen made "immediate tactical decisions" and acted as the sole official spokesmen for the group but most looked to King as the leader.[518] The Steering Committee, later referred to as the Agenda Committee, initiated programs and action proposals, approved membership applications, and supervised the CCCO committees. In addition, the reorganization created an Action Committee "to advise the Steering Committee on specific programs." The delegates of

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[516] Tenant unions and Operation Breadbasket are not the focus of this study. Tenant unions and Operation Breadbasket did not represent the joint efforts of CCCO and SCLC. Small community and neighborhood groups worked with SCLC to create tenant unions and Operation Breadbasket was the work of Jesse Jackson with the support of SCLC. CCCO member organizations participated in tenant unions and Operation Breadbasket, but CCCO did not have organizational responsibility for either.

[517] "Proposed Structure for Chicago Freedom Movement," 1966, 1, Box 47, Folder 1, SCLC Papers, SCLC.

[518] "Memorandum of Understanding Policy and Decision-Making in the Chicago Freedom Movement," 1966, 1, Box 20, Folder 3, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

member organizations made up the Freedom Assembly whose duties including electing

leadership, membership of Steering Committee, and "shares policy power with the

Steering Committee."[519]

When examining two draft proposals for action, "Mobilization Plans" from the

CCCO and "Proposed Plan of Organization and Action for the Chicago Freedom

Movement" from SCLC, the differing priorities of each group were apparent. Each

circulating in March 1966, the proposals outlined structure and action plans. The CCCO

document emphasized an issue-based mobilization that began with educating the

community on "the inadequacy of present programs especially in jobs, housing, [and]

education." From there community organizations would support each other in pursuing

coordinated action. "Mobilization Plan" stressed the fortification of existing

organizations. When discussing the addition of new organizers, the plan argued, "These

new organizers should be associated with CCCO and the community organizations in

order to strengthen the existing city organizations."[520] SCLC, while agreeing that

education would lead to action, differed with the CCCO on structure. "The vehicle of

organization," according to the proposal, "will be the Union to End Slums."[521]

Community organizations and other local clubs would be encouraged to join the Union to

End Slums as well. Furthermore, "The action of each group […] will be carried on

within the context of the Union to End Slums and the Union will be the power base from

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[519] "Explanation of Proposal," 1966, 1–2, Box 26, Folder 3, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[520] "Mobilization Plans, Preliminary Draft," March 1966, 1, Box 20, Folder 2, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[521] "Proposed Plan of Organization and Action for the Chicago Freedom Movement," March 8, 1966, 3, Box 150, Folder 17, SCLC Papers, SCLC.

which each problem shall be approached."[522] The CCCO plan did not support this emphasis, "The value of the appeal to the concept of a citywide union to end slums is offset by the reaction of those who see it as a displacement of CCCO."[523] CCCO clearly worried about the long-term effect SCLC would have on the movement in Chicago. Their plan ended with this warning:

> Furthermore, it is essential for the health of the Chicago Civil Rights Movement and its continual functioning for the sake of justice that CCCO not be dwarfed by SCLC in the public mind. This requires activities in which CCCO takes the lead and SCLC plays a supportive role. […] This is not for the sake of CCCO but for the sake of developing CCCO's ability to coordinate its members' activities.

Though SCLC's emphasis on the Union to End Slums would be dropped, the concern continued to plague the Chicago Freedom Movement.

The first dramatic action of the Chicago Freedom Movement was the Freedom Festival on March 12, 1966. Nearly 13,000 people packed the International Amphitheatre for a tribute to the civil rights movement. Emceed by Sidney Poitier and featuring performances by Harry Belafonte, Dick Gregory, and Mahalia Jackson, the program's main event was a speech from Martin Luther King, Jr.[524] His speech rallied supporters to nonviolent direct action and connected their concerns to the issue of slums. "The slum," King told the audience, "is little more than a domestic colony which leaves its inhabitants dominated politically, exploited economically, segregated, and humiliated

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[522] Ibid., 9.
[523] "Mobilization Plans, Preliminary Draft," 2.
[524] Arnold Rosenzweig, "Big Freedom Festival? It Was a Smash!," *Chicago Daily Defender*, March 14, 1966, 3.

at every turn." The Movement to End Slums had come to Chicago, according to King, to give blacks dignity and power.[525]

Here King touched on a topic made clear in his writings and speeches; nonviolence leads to dignity and power. SCLC-CCCO writings on the slum campaign consistently reiterated this belief. An early document noted that "People so long disrespected [in slums] have come to disrespect themselves; regaining self-respect is the first step."[526] In slums, decision-making power was often outside the hands of the residents. Powerlessness kept blacks in this subservient position. This campaign meant to help residents "set up their own instruments of authority, to create their own vehicles of nonviolent direct pressure."[527] Moving beyond organization and education was important. The program hinged on direct confrontation between the power of the existing social order and the newly acquired power of the ghetto.[528] Direct action would "dramatize the problems and call forth a solution."[529] Moreover, the movement committed itself to nonviolence as a way of life. It provided a technique for "confronting our fellowman with truth and therefore to radically alter the character of human relationships."[530] The CCCO-SCLC coalition used nonviolent action to clarify the reasons for conflict and never to intensify the conflict. The official program of the Chicago Freedom Movement reaffirmed this commitment: "The methodology of non-violence keeps attention focused on the real issues of injustice and discrimination rather

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[525] "Report--Freedom Festival," *CCCO Newsletter*, March 1966, 3.

[526] "SCLC-Chicago Project," 3.

[527] "Introduction to the Demands of the Freedom Movement: Racism, Ghettoes and Slums," 1966, 2, Box 27, Folder 1, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

[528] "Proposed Plan of Organization and Action for the Chicago Freedom Movement," 1.

[529] "Outline for Discussion of Proposed Freedom March," March 24, 1966, 1, Box 47, Folder 6, SCLC Papers, SCLC.

[530] "The movement affirms...," June 25, 1966, 1, Box 28, Folder 7, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

than on false issues which arise when conflict becomes violent."[531] Furthermore, nonviolence allowed "men to assert with simple dignity and humanity that they are men and human and that they will no longer be oppressed or oppressors."[532]

Campaign for Open Housing

While the CFM advocated attacking slumism everywhere and in everything, one means of attack came to the forefront—open housing. In February of 1966 and at the request of CCCO and SCLC, Bill Moyer of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) produced a report on black housing. Moyer blamed housing discrimination on the real estate industry saying it was "the single, most powerful force controlling the policies for buying, selling, and renting real estate property."[533] The Chicago Real Estate Board followed a policy of racial discrimination that expanded black neighborhoods on a block-by-block basis but would not allow blacks to live anywhere else in the city.[534] These neighborhoods became increasingly crowded. He argued that blacks paid "a color tax for housing in Chicago because the supply of housing for Negroes is kept low and the Negro demand kept excessively high."[535] Speculators bought houses and rental buildings at low prices from whites leaving border neighborhoods, then sold or rented those same building to blacks for up to 79% above the white price. Renters in black neighborhoods paid more rent for less space and worse conditions than whites in other parts of town. This condition was particularly hurtful to blacks because they earned less income, so a

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[531] "Program of the Chicago Freedom Movement," July 1966, 4, Box 27 Folder 3, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[532] Ibid.
[533] Bill Moyer, "An Analysis of the System of Housing Negroes in Chicago," February 18, 1966, 1, Box 42, Folder 4, SCLC Papers, SCLC; Pierre Devise, *Chicago's Widening Color Gap* (Chicago, IL: Interuniversity Social Research Committee, 1967), 83–89.
[534] Moyer, "An Analysis of the System of Housing Negroes in Chicago," 2.
[535] Ibid., 4.

larger percentage of their salary went to housing that was less than their white counterpart.[536] Chicago was a closed city in that blacks were not allowed to live in certain parts, and the Chicago Freedom Movement focused its attentions on open occupancy as part of its attack on slums after persuasion from the AFSC.

The American Friends Service Committee committed itself to pursuing open occupancy. To convince the rest of the Chicago Freedom Movement to join it, it connected fair housing with nonviolent philosophy and the Southern movement in a prospectus for an open occupancy project. After fighting for open housing in Chicago over the previous ten-years, the prospectus looked for the alliance with SCLC to revitalize the movement. The use of nonviolent philosophy and method was successful in the South, and it hoped for the same in the North. By utilizing nonviolence, it would "use the force of truth itself to challenge the practice of discrimination by realtors."[537] The AFSC connected the crusade for fair housing with the southern movement by comparing Governor Wallace standing in the schoolhouse door to prevent blacks' access to higher education to Chicago realtors who stood "in the doorway of thousands of homes being offered for sale or rent."[538] The prospectus described meeting fatigue and a general boredom with programs that seemed to go nowhere. Utilizing nonviolent direct action would give the people in the movement the action they desired and the means to achieve their goals. By targeting real estate offices, the open housing campaign would "reduce a social problem to its basic truth so that the public can understand it and respond to correct

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[536] Ibid., 6–10.
[537] "Open Communities: A Prospectus for a Non-Violent Project to Achieve Open Occupancy throughout the Chicago Area," March 1966, 1, Box 25, Folder 7, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[538] Ibid., 2.

the evil."[539] The authors likened the attack on discriminatory real estate office to that of

sit-ins at segregated lunch counters in the South. Each highlighted the truth of unequal

service in public businesses. Like the steady stream of black patrons sitting at lunch

counters, the open housing campaign sent black families to real estate offices in a white

neighborhood seeking service. "The main effort," according the campaign architects,

"must be to ask for equal treatment and service so insistently and continually that the

public finally becomes clearly aware that a basic right is being denied."[540] In addition to

testing the real estate offices by home seekers, the plan called for large numbers of people

to gather in support and to bring media attention. Some with the Chicago Freedom

Movement were clearly looking for a "concentration of action" that SCLC believed

would not work in the city.

According to the SCLC plan of action, the Freedom Festival in March would be

followed by mass action in May. The exact program would develop naturally from the

March mobilization. However, the CFM had no plan for May. By June, the movement

was desperate for a direct action campaign to force change in the city. The CFM began

to discuss focusing attention on open housing as part of the July Freedom March.

Because the Freedom Festival in March received criticism for not having a direction,

Raby wanted to pursue demonstrations at the Real Estate Board meetings to give

participants a specific target. Bevel was on board with this move because it fit with his

concern with slumism. Others questioned prioritizing housing by arguing, "[The]

majority of people there are interested in making a living. In order to do so, he needs a

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[539] Ibid., 3.
[540] Ibid., 4.

job, then a home."[541] Andy Young pointed out that open housing would easily connect to other issues by changing the target to open city instead of housing. And "Open City! is a good battle cry." The Agenda Committee voted to "declare that Chicago is an Open City on July 10th."[542]

Once committing itself to the open housing campaign, the Chicago Freedom Movement set about creating strategy by establishing a special committee to do so. The Action or Strategy Committee established criteria for targeting neighborhoods. The neighborhood must be closed to blacks, with housing for middle and working class incomes. The committee members sensed that this could be the issue finally to give the civil rights movement some teeth. The CCCO had experienced great success with boycotts but had been unable to translate that success into power to create actual change. In the same vein, the Chicago Freedom Movement had been trying small and varied actions without significant change or publicity. The open city campaign could very well be its path to power. Not only did the committee need to organize a successful strategy, they needed to convince the majority of the Chicago Freedom Movement that open housing would also touch on their pet issues such as welfare, urban renewal, education, and employment. "We need to help other groups fighting specific community problems to understand that until Negroes are respected as men," the committee wrote, "they will never be able to win fights with the city's Urban Renewal Department."[543] The

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[541] "Chicago Freedom Movement Steering Committee Meeting," June 29, 1966, 2, Box 26, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[542] Ibid., 4.
[543] "Strategy Committee Meeting," July 2, 1966, 2, Box 25, Folder 6, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

committee also knew that in order to implement the plan effectively, they needed to communicate the strategy to the participants in the July Freedom March.

Throughout June, the Chicago Freedom Movement worked on a document that would outline the demands and tactics of the movement, which included gaining power through nonviolence. In July it produced "Program of the Chicago Freedom Movement" to be released at the Freedom Rally. The twelve-page document described the problems of ghettoes and slums and the slow change in the city. The program pointed out the failures of previous attempts to go through "channels of white authority." Chicago blacks have learned that change comes too slowly, if at all. In the current atmosphere of national change, "Negroes no longer have the patience to abide by the old, unsuccessful gradualism of the respectable defenders of status-quo."[544] While powerlessness had kept blacks from solving problems on their own, the Chicago Freedom Movement would build a power base to direct pressure on racist institutions. "Chicago will become an open city," according to the program, "only when Negroes develop power in proportion to their numbers."[545] The desire for power was also evident in the goals of equal opportunity and results; the opening of housing, employment and education; and "to provide power for the powerless."[546] The CFM would achieve power through a nonviolent movement. The program reiterates King's description of nonviolence's basis in human dignity and worth. That through direct action, injustice will be exposed and

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[544] "Program of the Chicago Freedom Movement," 2.
[545] Ibid., 3.
[546] Ibid., 4.

thrust into the spotlight. The result will be a "genuine human community" where "all citizens are given an opportunity to participate to the fullest limits of their capacity."[547]

At the Freedom Rally on July 10, King addressed the crowd outlining the demands of the Chicago Freedom Movement and reiterating the commitment to nonviolence. "Our power does not reside in Molotov cocktails, rifles, knives, and bricks. The ultimate weakness of a riot is that it can be halted by superior force," he told the crowd of nearly 30,000. "We have neither the techniques, the numbers, nor the weapons to win a violent campaign."[548] He then led the audience on a march to city hall where he symbolically nailed the demands of the movement to the door.

Just two days after King's speech, a riot broke out in the Westside neighborhood of Chicago. Police closing an open fire hydrant on a hot day was the impetus for the violence, but the underlying issue was ghetto segregation, including lack of a public swimming pool and a history of police brutality. Between 300 and 400 residents took part in throwing bricks and bottles at police. Overall, twenty-three were arrested, and ten were injured. King stayed out of sight during the riot. His advisors convinced him it would be for the best. Instead of being in the midst of the rioters, King gathered 700 young people to the Shiloah Baptist Church where he spoke to them about the benefits of nonviolence. But he made many statements about the riot, putting the blame on Daley: "I want to make it quite clear that you bet I condemn any violence, but it is the refusal of a person in power to deal with conditions on the Westside that caused this outbreak."[549] Al

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[547] Ibid., 5–6.
[548] "Thousands Go to Soldiers' Field Rights Rally," *Chicago Tribune*, July 11, 1966, 2.
[549] Betty Washington and Donald Mosby, "300 Police Put Down Raging Westside Riot," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 14, 1966, 4.

Raby agreed when he reflected on the riot a month later at a CCCO conference saying,

"A riot, however brutal and senseless, is but a surface eruption of a diseased body. […]

Dire poverty, segregation, inadequate education, slum and ghetto housing, the absence of

job opportunities, a suppressive welfare system, total emasculation and denial of

humanity of most Negro citizens are the long-cited reasons leading to the final frustration

of people who could find their only ventilation through this meaningless, self-inflicted

violence."[550] At the next CCCO meeting, King lamented the riots because they caused

more harm than good. He advised the organization to go forward with the Open City

program. At the same time, they could not ignore those who rioted. The Chicago

Freedom Movement needed to demonstrate the "tactical value and efficiency of non-

violence as a strategy. We must get concessions and victories massive enough to show

the despairing that changes can come."[551]

CCCO-SCLC formed an Action Committee to organize the Open City program.

This committee's duties included nonviolent direct action training and developing action

centers.[552] The committee organized mass meetings to rally support around the open

housing campaign and nonviolence. They wanted to make the distinction between

nonviolent demonstrations and riots.[553] Their workshops stressed the use of nonviolence

as a tactical weapon and as a life philosophy. In addition, they reminded participants,

"Non-violent demonstrators never find it necessary to respond to jeering and hecklers."[554]

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[550] Albert Raby, "Keynote Speech by Albert A. Raby--CCCO Conference," August 28, 1965, 6, Box 19, Folder 8, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[551] "CCCO Meeting," July 23, 1966, 3, Box 18, Folder 7, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[552] "Action Committee Organization," 1966, 1, Box 25, Folder 7, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[553] "Action Committee Minutes," July 26, 1966, 1, Box 25, Folder 6, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[554] "Suggested Agenda for Workshops," July 1966, 1–2, Box 25, Folder 7, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

At demonstrations they passed out flyers describing "the essence of a non-violent demonstration" to help participants stay on message.[555] It was important that the Chicago Freedom Movement spent so much time getting out the message of nonviolent direct action to participants. When the movement picked up its testing of open neighborhoods, the reaction of these white communities grew increasingly violent.

Soon the Action Committee had hammered out a detailed plan for attacking closed housing in Chicago. The basic format for action included multiple steps and followed the general strategy of nonviolent direct action where demonstrators make apparent the inequality of housing patterns and give realtors the opportunity to correct their discriminatory practices. The program began with individuals testing realtor offices to discover which discriminate. Those refusing to show blacks equal listings were then targeted for mass visits of anywhere up to 200 persons. The next step would bring large integrated groups to the closed communities' public parks. Then the groups would worship in churches in the community and hold outdoor prayer vigils on Sunday afternoons. Finally, the Chicago Freedom Movement would offer education programs for whites "in an effort to gain indigenous support for making housing opportunity available to Negroes."[556]

After the Freedom Rally, the Open City campaign targeted Gage Park, Belmont, and Cragon. The movement chose these areas because they offered housing well within the price range of working class blacks without the crowding and poor conditions of ghetto housing. In addition, the realtors in these areas either refused to serve blacks or

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[555] "The Essence of a Non-Violent Demonstration," 1966, 1, Box 25, Folder 7, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[556] "Open City-Background Memo and Action Report," July 25, 1966, 2, Box 19, Folder 6, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

claimed they had no openings.[557] From there, the movement decided, "The strategy

needed to be expanded from shop-ins, vigils, church visits, and picnics to non-violent

demonstrations." Organizers wanted to further dramatize the injustice in housing and

"bring creative pressures to bear to help develop a just society." SCLC-CCCO organized

mass marches in these neighborhoods. The change in tactics brought bottles, rocks,

burned cars, and cherry bombs from the white residents. King described it as "the worst

hate I have ever seen." Despite the numbers of injured marchers, the *CCCO Newsletter*

reported, "The leadership has determined to continue until this hate and injustice is cured

and the only way to do this is to expose it to the light of day."[558] This violence tested the

commitment of the marchers to nonviolence. The *Newsletter* published an editorial

describing the application of nonviolent philosophy. "That Chicago housing policies

intentionally discriminate," explained the editorial, "has been demonstrated by the

violence that has been directed toward the Marchers." The *Newsletter* reminded readers,

"But bricks, bottles, and epithets are boomerangs. They injure indiscriminately those

who discriminate."[559]

King's philosophy of nonviolence included gaining dignity, attaining power, and

avoiding violence, but it also had an element of self-help and an ethics of responsibility.

This was apparent in the Chicago Freedom Movement as well. In the "Program of the

Chicago Freedom Movement" in addition to listing demands of the city and institutions,

the movement included a section called "Demands of Ourselves." These demands

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[557] Robert C. Mueller, "A Statement on Chicago Freedom Marches," August 16, 1966, 3, Box 1, Folder 27, Coordinating Council of Community Organizations Papers, Martin Luther King Center. [Hereafter cited as CCCO Papers, MLK Center]
[558] "Open Housing Demonstrators Greeted by Mobs," *CCCO Newsletter*, Summer 1966, 3.
[559] "Why We March," *CCCO Newsletter*, Summer 1966, 2.

included financial support, loyalty to boycotts, selective banking, and participation in the

Freedom Movement.[560] This last demand was the one to which the organizers directed

most of their attention. The *CCCO Newsletter* regularly asked for volunteers. It pointed

out that the success for the March and Rally was dependent on the work of volunteers.[561]

One article warned, "The mobs which have attacked peaceful demonstrators are

encouraged by your absence and silence."[562] A special election edition of the *Newsletter*

put responsibility for political rights in the hands of the voter: "The Freedom Movement

is concerned with winning more rights for everyone, but if your labors are going to be

successful we must use the rights we have now."[563]

More importantly, the open housing marches applied pressure to force the city to

deal with its race problems. Processions into white neighborhoods were not easily

ignored like marches to city hall, rallies in Soldiers Field, and school boycotts. SCLC

had been in Chicago for more than six months with few concrete results. Attempts to

address slum housing turned out to be complicated and not the media-drawing event King

and Bevel expected. SCLC had convinced the CCCO to put school segregation on the

back burner to focus on slums and ghettoism, but they were not seeing any better results.

The open housing marches, however, were the hot button issues the movement needed to

gain support from the black community, attract media attention, and force the city into

negotiations. The open housing marches "open[ed] the cancerous wounds of white hate

and bigotry, and reveal[ed] the latent frustrations of a systematically discriminating and

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[560] "Program of the Chicago Freedom Movement," 12.
[561] "We're on the Move," *CCCO Newsletter*, June 1966, Special Election Issue edition, 4.
[562] "Where Are You?," *CCCO Newsletter*, Summer 1966, 1.
[563] "Rights and Responsibility," *CCCO Newsletter*, June 1966, Special Election Issue edition, 3.

closed city."[564] At the end of July, the open housing marches finally had the effect SCLC and CCCO wanted—media attention grabbing violence that forced negotiations.

On July 30 and 31, the Chicago Freedom Movement finally found the city's pressure point. A hostile, bottle-throwing crowd surrounded marchers in Gage Park on Saturday, July 30. March organizers decided the conditions were too dangerous to continue and sent for cars to pick up demonstrators. The next day, around 500 people walked from Marquette Park to the Methodist Church in Chicago Lawn for a prayer vigil. They too met a violent crowd throwing bottles and bricks, preventing the marchers from reaching the church. After enduring a volley of rocks and other missiles, the marchers returned to their cars at the park only to find that the cars had been attacked as well. Angry Gage Park residents burned, turned over, smashed, or pushed into the park's lagoon cars belonging to marchers identified by "End the Slums" stickers or out of town license plates.[565] That evening television news programs showed the cars and the black smoke emanating from them leading marchers to question: "If the television crews could be there, why couldn't the police have been there?"[566]

The violence spurred the police to offer better protection at the open housing marches the following weekend. For this demonstration, King would be present. He missed the previous weekend's activities because he was participating in the James Meredith March against Fear in Mississippi. Though the number of police had increased, the violence did not stop. As King exited his car, he was struck in the head with a rock.

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[564] "The Essence of a Non-Violent Demonstration," 1.

[565] Kay Holper, "A Sunday Afternoon Walk in Marquette Park," August 1966, 2, Box 1, Folder 27, CCCO Papers, MLK Center.

[566] Karen Koko, "Chicago's Race March--A Walk on the Wild Side," *National Catholic Reporter*, August 10, 1966, 1.

The marchers once again faced racist chants and dodged bottles and rocks.[567] The

Chicago Freedom Movement had finally struck a nerve. Archbishop John Cody, a vocal

proponent of the civil rights movement in Chicago, supported open housing but called on

leaders to halt the marches out of concern for the safety of the marchers, "It would seem

that the leaders of the civil rights movement are themselves confronted by a serious moral

obligation, namely, that they prayerfully reconsider the methods now being employed to

achieve their altogether just and laudable purposes."[568] Raby and the Chicago Freedom

Movement rejected Cody's plea, "In the absence of any effective program by public and

private leaders against this segregation, to ask us to stop marching is to ask that we

surrender and acquiesce in this form of human degradation."[569] The issue became moot

on Tuesday, August 9th when the Chicago Commission on Human Rights called for a

meeting with the Mayor, civil rights leaders, the Chicago Real Estate Board, and citizens

to discuss the housing issue and develop a solution.[570]

Disappointment with the Summit Agreement

Now that a meeting or summit had been called, CCCO and SCLC would have

their chance to capitalize on the momentum of the marches in a way that the school

boycotts could not. However, several questions remained: Would the Chicago Freedom

Movement achieve the goals it nailed to city hall's door or would it compromise? And

who would determine the terms of the agreement? Among other interested parties, three

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[567] Kathleen Connolly, "The Chicago Open-Housing Conference," in *Chicago 1966: Open Housing Marches, Summit Negotiations, and Operation Breadbasket*, ed. David J. Garrow (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1989), 65.

[568] John P. Cody, "Statement Issued by His Excellency, The Most Rev. John P. Cody," August 10, 1966, 1, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

[569] Albert Raby, "Statement by Albert Raby in Response to Archbishop Cody's Appeal," August 10, 1966, 1, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

[570] Connolly, "The Chicago Open-Housing Conference," 67.

key groups attended the summit meetings, city officials, civil rights leaders, and

representative from the Chicago Real Estate Board. Representatives from the Chicago

Freedom Movement brought nine demands with them. These demands pointed to the

ineffectiveness of the city in implementing and encouraging fair housing practices

including a more forceful enactment of the cities fair housing ordinance and

repercussions for real estate brokers who denied equal service to all home seekers. The

city agencies responded positively. For example, the Chicago Housing Authority

committed itself to reversing its policy of building high-rise public housing in crowded

ghettoes. And the Chicago mortgage bankers agreed to enforce its non-discriminatory

lending policy.[571]

However, the Chicago Real Estate Board showed little interest in adjusting its

practices. Insisting that realtors were simply agents who represent the desires of home

sellers, the board argued that realtors were not to blame and they could not change the

opinions of their clients.[572] King disagreed with this assessment using the example of

southern restaurant owners who said they did not serve blacks because their customers

did not want to eat with blacks. All of this changed with the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Bevel agreed saying, "The key problem, the core problem is that realtors refuse to serve

Negroes in their offices. And that must change. That is insulting and it is humiliating.

And the burden is to change service to Negroes. If the city were opened, then everyone

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[571] Ibid., 74–76.

[572] John McKnight, "The Summit Negotiations: Chicago, August 17, 1966-August 26, 1966," in *Chicago 1966: Open Housing Marches, Summit Negotiations, and Operation Breadbasket*, ed. David J. Garrow (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1989), 51.

would stop discriminating against Negroes."[573] When it seemed that the meeting would

adjourn due to stalled negotiations, Mayor Daley surprised everyone by telling the Real

Estate Board to call their members and come up with a compromise. The meeting

recessed for several hours to allow the realtors to meet. When the meeting reconvened,

the realtors presented a statement that offered minute change in policy: while the Chicago

Real Estate Board would not support a state fair housing law, they would not oppose such

a law. This was not enough, Bevel wanted to know if blacks would be served in real

estate offices. King argued that laws fell short citing the court decision that made school

segregation illegal yet few southern schools were integrated. He wanted action.[574] The

debate then became whether the realtors had made a reasonable concession; Daley

thought so. One Movement representative described their concern succinctly, "We've

got to see that we're in changing times and we can't go out after these negotiations and

tell the guy on the street that what we got was an agreement from the Chicago Real Estate

Board that they philosophically agree with open occupancy. The people want to hear

what we're going to do for them now."[575] City officials and the realtors were more

concerned with the possibility of continued marches. The mayor wanted a moratorium

on marches in exchange for action on the movement's demands. Raby, furious, replied,

"If I come before the Mayor of Chicago some day, I hope I can come before the Mayor of

Chicago with what is just and that he will implement it because it is right rather than

trading it politically for a moratorium. […] We want a real program; a moratorium on

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[573] Ibid., 119.
[574] Ibid., 127.
[575] Ibid., 131.

discrimination will bring a moratorium on marches."[576] The meeting adjourned without

settling the matter. Instead, a smaller subcommittee would meet to hammer out the

specific programs to create an open city. This proposal would then be presented to the

committee of the whole.

While the subcommittee met, the Chicago Freedom Movement planned more

marches to encourage negotiations. "We have to keep on marching," King told a rally

after the summit. "The Chicago Freedom Movement will not stop until Negroes can

move anywhere they want in the City of Chicago."[577] The next day, Mayor Daley

obtained an injunction limiting further demonstrations to 500 marchers, once a day,

within daylight hours, and with twenty-four hour notice. Daley publicly argued that

demonstrations took the police away from crime prevention duties. Despite frustration

with Daley's interference, the leaders of the Chicago Freedom Movement chose to follow

the injunction. But they would not stop marching. The CFM led marches throughout

Chicago. Movement people began to discuss an option that would force negotiations

more than previous marches. A march in the white suburb of Cicero would bring the

drama the movement needed to push negotiations. The site of a 1951 riot when a black

couple tried to move into an apartment, Cicero was a symbol of housing discrimination

and closed communities. One movement participant later described what Cicero meant,

"You don't go into the viaduct, honey, because if you do you may not get back. Cicero

was on the other side of the viaduct. And you didn't walk through Cicero alone. You

didn't let your car break down in Cicero and get out to change a tire. You just didn't go

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[576] Ibid., 132–133.
[577] Connolly, "The Chicago Open-Housing Conference," 80.

to Cicero if you were black."[578] Though Cicero was an important symbol, it presented a significant concern for violence. Not within the jurisdiction of the Chicago police, the much smaller police force would have difficulty protecting marchers. Meanwhile, the subcommittee spent sixty hours hammering out an agreement.

The committee reconvened on Friday, August 26 at the Palmer House Hotel. The subcommittee report was read, but the issues of a march in Cicero and the injunction were foremost in people's minds. After much debate, the summit attendees agreed to suspend a march in Cicero and hold separate negotiations on the injunction. The group unanimously agreed to support the subcommittee's report. However, this did not mean that the Chicago Freedom Movement had a consensus. From the discussion at the last summit meeting, it was clear that Raby wanted timelines and results, as did Bevel. The summit agreement outlined proposals and commitments of city agencies, religious organizations, and realtors to hold to the fair housing ordinance. But the agreement did not offer specific programs, money allocations, or deadlines. "Will we be able to have one percent Negro occupancy in every community in the city of Chicago by 1970?" Raby asked. "Will there be a concrete date when the city and the Chicago Real Estate Board can guarantee us that the communities are opened to all?"[579] Yet the CFM representatives at the summit meeting agreed to the provisions. They then had to convince the rest of the organization that they negotiated the best deal possible.

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[578] Clory Bryant quoted in Henry Hampton, Steve Fayer, and Sarah Flynn, eds., *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s Through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 318.
[579] McKnight, "The Summit Negotiations: Chicago, August 17, 1966-August 26, 1966," 137.

A year later, Al Raby reflected on the summit agreement, "Here the movement made a serious mistake: we negotiated…made an agreement then tried to sell it. Instead, we should have told the city that we had to take it to our people."[580] This was a common interpretation of the summit agreement's aftermath and was indicative of problems within the SCLC-CCCO alliance. Discussion at the September 16th CCCO meeting brought many problems that had been percolating to the surface. King opened the meeting with a statement attempting to smooth over the tension. He recognized that "It would have been better if we could have discussed all the points in the agreement with all of you delegates, but it was an error of the head, not of the heart." Nonetheless, it was a victory of which to be proud. King advised the group, "Our power has been in our unity. We have come this far by a Power we have found in our unity. I close with a plea—let us have our over-arching concern to remain united on the big problems ahead—economic, political."[581] However, this statement did not prevent delegates from airing their grievances.

The debate centered on decision-making power and democratic organization and was emblematic of CCCO's struggles with coalition. One delegate asked for all of the meeting minutes since July 23, knowing very well no CCCO meeting was held during the crucial open housing marches and summit meetings. Another delegate argued for democracy, "we have [a] right to give advice and counsel to the leadership."[582] King reiterated that he made a mistake in not bringing the negotiations to the organization, but he "believe[d] in participatory democracy" and wanted unity.[583] In spite of this

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[580] "Notes of Class on Aug. 2, 1967," 3.
[581] "CCCO Meeting [minutes]," September 16, 1966, 1, Box 18, Folder 7, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[582] "Agenda Committee," August 18, 1966, 2, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[583] "CCCO Meeting [minutes]," 2.

assurance, questions concerning CCCO and SCLC's relationship and commitment to democratic organization continued. Some argued that with the forging of the Chicago Freedom Movement, the delegates of CCCO lost power. "From what source do these groups and the leadership of CCCO get authority to make decisions and suspend meetings?" asked one delegate.[584] "We never revoked our participation nor our constitution," remarked another. "We need democratic participation."[585] Worried about the future a representative noted, "We must carry on after SCLC leaves. We need clearly-defined structures." Others supported the current relationship with SCLC and the organization of the CFM. A delegate pointed out the value of a relationship with SCLC and the "worldwide power and charisma of Martin Luther King" who is "worth ten CCCOs" at the negotiation table. Another noted that the CCCO "had a perfect record of attendance and defeat." But with SCLC's help "We then had real, not paper power."[586]

There was also a sense that the negotiations did not fulfill the demands of the Chicago Freedom Movement. A delegate that was part of the negotiating team at the summit meetings acknowledged that the demands they brought to the table were insufficient. They "realized that isolated commitments would not be enough. We began to see the need to lock them in to a continuing program of concerted action."[587] Other members of the CFM felt that representation at the summit meeting did not reflect its constituency: "We felt that those people who lived in Chicago public housing, who were emotionally involved and concerned enough to care, for whom Chicago housing was a

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[584] Ibid., 9.
[585] Ibid.
[586] Ibid., 9–10.
[587] Ibid., 5.

way of life, should have been involved to say what the problems were."[588] SNCC

circulated a flyer asking, "Who speaks for the black man in Chicago?" and calling the

summit agreement a "sell out."[589] CORE disagreed with the summit outcome and

decided to hold a march in Cicero without King and the Chicago Freedom Movement's

support.

　　　　Despite having functioned for nearly a year, the Chicago Freedom Movement

suffered from organizational problems. Although the CFM had the nominal leadership of

Martin Luther King, in actuality, King was frequently away from Chicago due to other

commitments such as the James Meredith March. Al Raby, convener of CCCO, could

not be called the leader of the movement either. As head of CCCO, he had some power

over those organizations, but not the CFM, which contained groups not part of CCCO.

Most power seemed to lie in the Agenda and Action committees. Like the divisions

between direct action and caution in CCCO before SCLC's arrival, the Agenda and

Action Committees differed on tactics. The CFM created the agenda committee to set the

agenda or strategy of the movement. It was a largely informal committee made up of the

main civil rights organizations in Chicago such as the Urban League, Catholic Interracial

Council, and American Friends Service Committee, as well as community organizations

like TWO and the West Side Organization and labor groups. The Action Committee

represented the activist side of the CFM and was in charge of orchestrating activities such

as the open housing marches. However, when it came time to negotiate in the summit

meetings, the Agenda committee members dominated the CFM representation.

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[588] Clory Bryant interview in Hampton, Fayer, and Flynn, *Voices of Freedom*, 316.

[589] SNCC, "Who Speaks for the Black Man in Chicago?," August 31, 1966, 1, Box 15, Folder 5, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

After the Summit Agreement, the organizational problems continued. CFM was loosely organized. Despite the agenda and action committees, the fact remained that many organizations with many agendas made up the CFM. Committees working on these varied goals often worked independently of each other. To remedy the confusion and add cohesion to the movement, the CFM opted to create another committee, the staff coordinating committee "to bring project heads together in order to coordinate activities of the Chicago Freedom Movement." This committee's "function would be to know what the different actions in the city were and what decisions needed to be made concerning the action."[590] Concerned with follow through on the summit agreement as well as urban renewal and tenant unions, the staff committee made sure each project had appropriate attention and staffing.[591] There was a sense that the people on the agenda committee were not the ones working on the projects; therefore, the agenda committee could not (or would not) make decisions. For example, when Bill Moyer, charged with checking on summit agreement progress, noted that realtors continued to discriminate and brought it to the agenda committee's attention, they "did nothing." But the staff committee discussed methods for pressuring realtors into compliance.[592]

Post-Summit Agreement

The CCCO held a retreat at the end of October to fix the organizational structure and plan for the future. "The reason for the retreat," according to a delegate, "was a

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[590] "Chicago Freedom Movement Staff Coordinating Committee," September 14, 1966, 3, Box 27, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

[591] Alvin Pitcher, "The Chicago Freedom Movement: What Is It?," in *Chicago 1966: Open Housing Marches, Summit Negotiations, and Operation Breadbasket*, ed. David J. Garrow (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1989), 159–160.

[592] "Staff Coordinating Committee," October 14, 1966, 1, Box 27, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

strong feeling that we have structural and functional difficulties—that we need to see what CCCO is and ought to be."[593] A discussion paper circulated outlining the troubles CCCO faced, calling for "an organizational self study that would explore structural strengths and deficiencies of the organization."[594] But two other themes surfaced including CCCO's relationship with member organizations and the role of whites in the organization. Black power had crept into the Chicago movement during the open housing marches. Some in CCCO felt that the influence of whites and middle class blacks kept the organization from militant and therefore successful action. One delegate wondered, "where white, middle-class Negroes, etc., belong in [the] organization" and argued the group need to "deal with implications in 'white supremacy.'"[595]

The conflict between the member organizations commitment to CCCO both reflected the tension between middle-class conservative organizations and militant community groups and the desire to move CCCO in a political direction. In the past, political groups had been barred from CCCO because their activity might damage that tax-exempt status of the Urban League and the NAACP. But with the frustrations of the summit agreement, some members of CCCO wanted the organization to work on achieving political power. This debate also drew from the activities of these "non-political" groups and their loyalty to CCCO decisions. When the CCCO voted to oppose a bond issue, the Urban League and NAACP working outside of the CCCO, supported the bond effort thereby undermining the CCCO. The underlying question, as one

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[593] "CCCO: Delegates Meeting," October 13, 1966, 3, Box 18, Folder 7, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[594] Ed Riddick, "Race, Conflict and the Movement: An Assessment," October 21, 1966, 8, Box 1, Folder 27, CCCO Papers, MLK Center.
[595] "CCCO Minutes," October 23, 1966, 2, Box 18, Folder 7, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

delegate put it, was the CCCO an umbrella organization or a direct action organization?[596] The statement of purpose written at the retreat reaffirmed the sanctity of individual organizations to independent action. "The structure of the Council," according to the statement, "or any subsequent by-laws or actions of the Council shall not impinge upon the autonomy of component organizations. The rights of these organizations to independent action even upon matters that have come before the Council, shall be respected."[597] The cautious use of direct action was also evident in the commitment to "orderly and responsible exercise of democratic means of redress," in particular "communication, negotiation, political education, and conciliation." Direct action would only be used "with sobriety and restraint."[598] This echoed the old debate surrounding the school boycotts and the divisions between the conservative and militant wings of the CCCO.

After the summit agreement, the CCCO tried to redress some of its organizational mistakes. Some felt the alliance with SCLC was hasty; that the Chicago Freedom Movement usurped the CCCO's power. After the August agreement, CCCO delegates who had felt neglected or sidelined pushed to amend the constitution to assure their presence and power within the organization. The October retreat was part of this restructuring effort. Rewriting the constitution finalized the move.

The power of the Chicago Freedom Movement climaxed with the summit agreement. Though many within the movement questioned the usefulness of the

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[596] Ibid., 2–3.
[597] "The Coordinating Counctil of Community Organizations Purpose," October 21, 1966, 1, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[598] Ibid.

agreement, a month after its signing even supporters realized many of the promises were empty. As part of the agreement, the city created an official committee to oversee its implementation, the Metropolitan Chicago Leadership Council. The CFM wary of any promises made by city officials created its own follow-up committee to the summit agreement. At the CCCO retreat, the follow-up committee reported, "There has not been much evidence that the agencies in the summit agreement have altered their programs to foster or to participate in open housing."[599] As the new year began, CCCO wrote a summary of past actions and suggestions for 1967. A crucial component of the proposal included insuring the enforcement of the open housing agreement as well as attempts to find a new focus of CCCO's attention. Despite attempts to hold city agencies accountable, in March Raby and others released a statement saying, "There has been no change made […] We want the normal segregationist procedures altered, we want the concerned agencies to enforce the law…"[600]

King had taken the month of December off to write his book *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* and slowly disengaged himself from Chicago. Meanwhile, SCLC maintained a limited staff in the city, but King visited infrequently. He tried to explain the failures of the Chicago Freedom Movement in a speech he gave around the one-year anniversary of SCLC's move to Chicago: "We who know from limited experiences and from the voices of others the nature of Northern urban problems, found ourselves confronted by the hard realities of a social system in many ways more

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[599] Chicago Freedom Movement Follow-up Committee and Bill Moyer to Chicago Freedom Movement Marchers, "Report of Follow-up Committee of Summit Agreement," October 23, 1966, 2, Box 26, Folder 1, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[600] Albert Raby et al., "Chicago Freedom Movement Statement," March 28, 1967, 6, Box 1, Folder 17, CCCO Papers, MLK Center.

resistant to change than the rural south. While we were under no illusions about Chicago, in all frankness we found the job greater than even we imagined."[601] In March 1967, King warned the city that without progress on the summit agreement, Chicago would erupt in demonstrations on a greater level and threatened to lead marches in Cicero. But he too felt the futility of the summit agreement, "the public agencies have reneged on the agreement and have, in fact, given credence to the apostles of social disorder who proclaimed the housing agreement a sham and a batch of false promises."[602] Moreover, though he remained committed to integration and the elimination of poverty, King felt compelled to join the anti-war movement, which necessarily drew his attention away from Chicago. Tellingly, his reason for visiting Chicago that March was to make an important speech at a peace rally, not orchestrate CFM actions. In its one major post-summit action, SCLC spearheaded a voter registration drive in Chicago that neither had immediate impact nor drew the attention open housing marches did.[603]

Many in the movement felt that the Chicago Freedom Movement had somehow missed an opportunity to develop programs in addition to open housing. A Chicago activist at a staff meeting illustrated this sense saying, "The Movement took on Open Housing this summer and more or less let other projects lag behind. Yet, we really don't have Open Housing yet. We need a destination—where we are going."[604] CCCO members were not the only ones to recognize this omission. SCLC staffer Stoney Brooks

[601] Martin Luther King, "One Year Later in Chicago," 1966, 8, Box 28, Folder 31, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers (microfilm), MLK Center. [Hereafter cited as SCLC Papers]
[602] Richard T. Cooper, "Dr. King: City Faces 'Massive' Protests; Vows Cicero March," *Chicago Sun-Times*, March 25, 1967.
[603] Hosea Williams, "Department of Voter Registration and Political Education Proposal and Budget," December 7, 1966, 1, Box 171, Folder 18, SCLC Papers.
[604] "Staff Coordinating Committee," September 21, 1966, 2, Box 27, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

lamented the inattention paid to community unions, namely the Union to End Slums. In the annual report to SCLC on the Chicago Project, he wrote, "No concrete attempt was made to relate the masses of people mobilized and the issues lifted, to the 'union concept' nor the reinforcement of existing community organizations."[605] He wanted to pursue community organizing as SCLC's next move in Chicago, suggesting, "Hopefully, we have been educated by our blunders."[606] Despite these calls for focus on community organizing efforts, by July of 1967 tactics of SCLC and CCCO had not changed. "Efforts toward effective mobilization around specific crises have led, too often, to neglect of our organizational and community action programs," wrote a CCCO delegate to Al Raby. "Where progress in community organization has occurred, it has occurred in spite of, rather than because of, an integrated CCCO program."[607] SCLC had entered the Chicago movement with a plan toward community organizing—the Union to End Slums. But the CFM was dazzled by the prospects of big acts of non-violent direct action, as the CCCO had been with the school boycotts. The effect of implementing such attention-seeking displays was the neglect of community organizing. The network and leadership that would remain after the crowds dispersed, King left town, and negotiations failed.

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[605] Stoney Cooks, "Annual Report Chicago Project," March 1967, 5, Box 26, Folder 9, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

[606] Stoney Cooks, "Proposal to Executive Staff, SCLC," March 9, 1967, 2, Box 26, Folder 9, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

[607] R. Hostetter to Al Raby, memorandum, July 14, 1967, 2, Box 2, Folder 5, CCCO Papers, MLK Center.

CHAPTER 4: CONFLICTING DEMOCRACIES: THE MACHINE, THE WAR ON

POVERTY, AND BLACK POWER

By the time he was elected mayor of Chicago in 1955, Richard J. Daley had

worked his way through the Democratic Machine with patience and loyalty. His

devotion to the order of the machine and its tradition based in obedience and hierarchy

informed his understanding of democracy and the manner in which he ran city

government. Next to pride in his working class, ethnic background, Daley believed in the

power of the Democratic Party – as a machine of patronage and favor, as much as

anything else. Supporters and opponents alike recall that Daley understood the language

of loyalty and political control.[608] In Chicago, one gained power by demonstrating the

number of votes one could control. All movers and shakers in the machine, like Daley,

began by knocking door-to-door at the precinct level, proving themselves by the number

of votes they brought in. From there, one's position in the machine rose with the number

of votes one controlled, from precinct captain to ward committeeman to alderman. This

was how Daley understood politics and democracy—power through votes. If people

could not gather votes or demonstrate that they controlled a certain number of votes,

Daley could easily ignore complaints or offer superficial solutions knowing he would be

able to maintain power.

And Daley wielded considerable power in the Second City. In 1953, after

working his way up the machine's ladder, he became chairman of the Cook County

Democratic Party. This gave him control of fifty ward bosses in the city and another

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[608] See interviews with former Mayor Jacob Arvey, James Taylor, former Mayor Jane Byrne, Timothy P. Sheehan, and Adlai Stevenson III in Rakove, *We Don't Want Nobody Nobody Sent*.

thirty in the suburbs as well as nominations for public office and thousands of patronage

jobs. He consolidated power when he was elected mayor two years later and maintained

his chairmanship of the party at that time an unprecedented move. In addition to the

substantial power he brandished in Chicago, his leadership of the Democratic Party in

Chicago and its many districts meant he acted as kingmaker in state and national

elections including John F. Kennedy's nomination and election as well as Hubert

Humphrey's nomination in 1968. Because of his power as a Democratic operative, Daley

had direct communication with and influence over Lyndon Johnson in the White

House.[609]

Daley's understanding of democracy influenced the manner in which he ran the

city. Similarly, JOIN, TWO, and CCCO-SCLC had their own definitions of democracy.

Each determined the way they organized themselves and how they sought reforms that

would create a more democratic society. These varying styles of democracy conflicted

not only with Daley's political machine but with the implementation of War on Poverty

programs and the ideology of black power. These conflicts compelled JOIN, TWO, and

CCCO-SCLC to put their notions of democracy to the test. Whether they achieved their

goals depended in part on their understanding and implementation of democracy.

The Daley Machine

Daley's control over the city and his notion of democracy posed challenges to

community organizing groups attempting to inject more participatory democracy into

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[609] For more on Daley and the political machine in Chicago see Royko, *BOSS: Richard J. Daley of Chicago*; Rakove, *We Don't Want Nobody Nobody Sent*; Biles, *Richard J. Daley: Politics, Race, and the Governing of Chicago*; Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor, *American Pharaoh: Mayor Richard J. Daley - His Battle for Chicago and the Nation*.

Chicago and American society. Their concept of democracy conflicted with Daley's understanding, forcing JOIN, TWO, and CCCO-SCLC to choose between fighting the machine or reconciling their plans and programs with Daley's political style while preserving their commitment to creating a more democratic Chicago.

From the very beginning of its organization, JOIN Community Union attempted to decipher the workings of the political machine with an eye towards undermining the machine's power. Activists in JOIN believed they needed to challenge the power of the machine with an independent political organization along the lines of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. However, Rennie Davis noted, "We have little understanding of where the machine is weak (if anywhere); where there is likely to be issues and conflict which it can't cover up; how it is tied into the underworld; and so on."[610] Moreover, organizing around an anti-machine message was difficult, if not impossible. Not only did many of the people JOIN worked with not know about the machine, they did not care. Worries about jobs and welfare were foremost in their minds. In addition, organizers faced a real problem if they tried to remove Daley. One organizer recognized, "We would be crushed if we tried that."[611] By 1966, frustrations with city politics lead JOIN to issue an open letter to Mayor Daley and police Superintendent O.W. Wilson reading:

> We are making certain demands on both of you because you represent the whole city government. We know that the city of Chicago is, in fact, controlled by the 'Daley machine' and that is why we are bringing all of our demands to you instead of the welfare office, the board of education, the war on poverty, or to the urban renewal departments separately. […] We are demanding action from the

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[610] Rennie Davis to Robb Burlage and Dorothy Burlage, March 8, 1965, 1–2, Series 2B:38, SDS Papers.
[611] Bernstein to McEldowney, April 9, 1965, 3.

'Daley machine' because we are tired of begging a political machine that does not represent us.[612]

Fundamentally, the existence of an organization such as the Cook County Democratic Party contradicted the very notion of participatory democracy. The precinct captains and ward bosses rewarded votes with patronage but not participation in the democratic system. The political machine, despite voters' support, made decisions that were in the best interests of the machine, not the people. Moreover, voters often felt or were coerced into supporting the machine. In this way, machine politics prevented citizens from making the decisions that affected their lives. Yet, activists in JOIN occasionally benefitted from the machine organization. A precinct captain visited JOIN offices during the 1964 election eventually offering one worker a job as voting judge. He visited the office on several occasions and developed "warm personal relations with the staff" and "in his truly delightful manner, he passes on much valuable information about the area."[613] For the most part, JOIN sought to combat the undemocratic nature of the Daley machine. Through pamphlets and discussion groups, they attempted to educate community members on how the machine worked. Explaining the problems with a machine- style system was sometimes difficult considering poor people could get jobs and favors if they worked with the machine. JOIN explained that this relationship did not give poor people power. Instead, it kept them in a position of subservience. "As long as the poor are kept weak," a JOIN booklet explained, "they will have to pay the price of a government run for someone else. And all they will get in return is an occasional loan

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[612] JOIN Community Union, "Statement to Mayor Daley and Superintendent O.W. Wilson," September 10, 1966, 1, Box 6, Folder 9, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.
[613] "Chicago Report," *ERAP Newsletter*, November 26, 1964, 3.

and a pat on the back from a friendly precinct captain."[614] Though they opposed it

intellectually and connected the machine to larger problems in Chicago, in action, JOIN

could do little to combat the machine.

The Woodlawn Organization had a more pragmatic approach to the machine;

namely, they were willing to use the machine when it was beneficial and fight the

machine when it was not. Alinsky in particular understood that Daley responded to

political power. He knew that the organization must have political power or votes before

Daley would take them seriously. But this would be a difficult achievement. For

decades, the Democratic Party in Chicago easily won the black districts in Chicago

without sharing the patronage of the machine. In short, Daley had the votes of

Woodlawn without appeasing their demands, so he had little need to act on TWO's

complaints. The black aldermen, with a few exceptions, offered little help to TWO.

Known as the "silent six," the machine selected these politicians because they lacked

political experience or skill yet maintained a high community standing. According to

political scientist William Grimshaw, the "civic notables" chosen by Daley owed him

their complete allegiance. These social elites would not have earned their political

positions on their own. In addition, because Daley handpicked them, they owed little to

the ward and precinct organizations.[615] In other words, they were in Daley's pocket.

Daley used this, among other means, to keep the black vote while denying the black

wards political power.

[614] JOIN Education Staff, "The Political Machine," n.d., 12, Box 16, Folder 9, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[615] Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1931-1991*, 107–112.

In the early stages of the organization when Alinsky had the greatest influence, he counseled TWO members on approaching Daley concerning the University of Chicago's urban renewal plan. He advised that although TWO was in its infancy and did not "have an army behind him," it was crucial to point out that the discontent caused by the urban renewal plan created the potential for organization. Alinsky knew Daley thought in terms of power, urging a meeting with the mayor "that would not be tough, not be threatening but would be firm, clear and informative as far as Mr. Daley was concerned and enough implied muscle so that it gets back to the proper quarters and creates some concern."[616] But Alinsky also understood Daley thought of himself as a man of the people, concerned with the plight of the working class. Playing on this, Alinsky suggested that TWO emphasize to Daley that if he sided with the university he would not "emerge out of all of this as the poor man's friend." Alinsky added that not many politicians who "have gone very far in the political conquer [*sic*] as being the University's friend."[617]

Gaining a voting base would earn Daley's attention and it would also combat the central problem of black politics in Chicago. Although blacks could freely vote and the city had numerous black elected officials, these politicians did not address the concerns of their constituents. Longtime president of TWO, Arthur Brazier, wrote about this problem in his book on TWO. "Many blacks have not taken advantage of their voting power by electing officials who would represent their aims and their aspirations," he explained. "Black people in Chicago have too long depended on their precinct captain to

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[616] Saul D. Alinsky to Nicholas Von Hoffman, dictabelt, August 1, 1960, 3, Box 27, Folder 460, IAF Collection, UIC.

[617] Ibid., 4.

tell them how to vote and for whom to vote."[618] This could only change through political organizing. TWO made a dramatic display of potential political strength to illustrate to Daley that this organization would not be machine loyalists. Inspired by a visit from several Freedom Riders in August 1961, TWO sponsored a massive voter registration drive. Forty-seven busses loaded with up to 2,500 Woodlawn residents drove in procession to city hall to register to vote.[619] In this manner, TWO encroached on machine territory. Gathering people to register was the job of a precinct captain. That TWO could do the same thing, meant Daley and the machine would have to consider TWO as a political force.

The Woodlawn Organization won a major concession from Mayor Daley in its early years. One of the central organizing issues for TWO was the University of Chicago's plan to annex part of Woodlawn as part of an urban renewal plan that the city supported. In the process of expanding the university, low-income housing would be lost. But TWO's greater concern was that the people living in Woodlawn were not consulted in drawing up the plans and would not have a say in approving them. TWO managed to stop the initial expansion plan and gain assurances that it would be consulted in future plans. However, by 1963 the plans had stalled. TWO pressed Daley to keep his promises of TWO's involvement. They organized a massive demonstration at city hall. At this time, three years before King and the Chicago Freedom Movement and two years before the first citywide school boycott, a demonstration at city hall was not

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[618] Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 16–17.

[619] "TWO Continues Vote Registration Drive," *Chicago Defender*, September 23, 1961, 8; Ernestine Cofield, "Political Power Shown By Mass Bus Ride to City Hall," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 30, 1962.

commonplace and had a distinct effect on Daley who did not like any display of trouble in his city. Alinsky also had a hand in the negotiation with Daley; he encouraged the mayor to play the role of mediator between the University and TWO, a role Daley enjoyed.[620] TWO's show of strength in the demonstration as well as Alinsky's pragmatic discussion with Daley helped TWO win the urban renewal dispute. As the *Defender* described, "The truce marks the first time that a citizens' group gained the opportunity to fully participate in an urban renewal program in the City of Chicago."[621]

Although in its early years, TWO, with Alinsky's guidance, used veiled threats to attain concessions from Daley, by the mid-1960s the tone of the organization had decidedly changed. One-time president of TWO, Lynward Stevenson was vocal and increasingly threatening in his criticism of Daley. When Mayor Daley reappointed Mrs. Wendell Green, one of two black members of the Board of Education and a machine loyalist, Stevenson called Daley a clear segregationist. He described the act as "a deliberate insult; it spits on us." Stevenson recognized that "ordinary demonstrations no longer work." Instead, TWO needed to reach Daley and the machine where it would have an impact—voting. "Mass organization is the only thing the whites will respect. Daley and the alliance of segregationist power behind him do not care about the morality or justice of the issues. […] The only thing they care about is numbers."[622] Several months later, after meeting with Mayor Daley concerning delays in an urban renewal plan in Woodlawn, Stevenson became more aggressive telling the mayor, "it is a very dangerous time to play games with Negroes. We have been given promises too long,

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[620] Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy*, 443.
[621] "TWO Wins Demands in Urban Renewal Dispute," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 17, 1963, A2.
[622] "Stevenson Blasts Daley's Green," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, May 5, 1964, 1.

without any results. And unless this immediately changes in Chicago, specifically on the

public commitment for TWO's renewal program, there is no telling what might happen.

Responsible, militant organization cannot maintain community discipline if government

is deaf to the people."

TWO's leadership was not alone in attacking the machine. Members of TWO

spoke out against the machine in a series of leader profiles published in the *Newsletter of*

The Woodlawn Organization. These community members clearly understood that the

machine inhibited their ability to exercise self-determination and democracy. Charles

Henderson told the *Newsletter* that the group's greatest enemy was "the worst side of the

machine, and its products [School Superintendant] Willis and [school board member]

Green."[623] Members understood that through "permanent, grassroots organizations," the

residents of Woodlawn gained political power to create change and "a balance of political

power."[624] TWO members also recognized the effects of the machine on black political

power. One member told the organization's newsletter, "Many whites say it is time

Negroes pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps, did something for themselves. I

agree with that. But the power structure has refused to permit the progressive Negro

doing just that. So the people have to build a vehicle for doing the job themselves. That

is what TWO is."[625]

Keeping with TWO's general pragmatic nature, it was willing to go along with

Daley and the machine when it was politically expedient to do so. For example, in 1966

Daley proposed a bond issue that would provide money for community improvements

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[623] "Portrait of a Leader; Charles Henderson," 2.

[624] "Portrait of a Leader; Worday Blair," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, July 29, 1964, 3.

[625] "Portrait of a Leader, James Grammer," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, August 12, 1964, 3.

such as streetlights, land clearance, low interest loans for building code compliance,

sewage improvement, and street repair among other urban renewal projects. Civil rights

groups throughout the city, including CCCO, opposed the bond issue because it was a

Daley program and because it "lacked planning."[626] TWO, however, saw an opportunity.

Brazier met with Daley and informally came to a quid pro quo agreement. In return for

supporting the bond issue, TWO would gain concessions and support in its low-income

housing project at Cottage Grove.[627] At the same time, TWO knew the bond issue would

ultimately help Woodlawn. Brazier told the delegates meeting, "We need lights in our

alleys to make our women safe. We need spot clearance. And we simply cannot vote

against the money and then go back and demand that the city clean up slums." He also

reassured the delegates that TWO would have input into how the money would be

used.[628]

But TWO made clear they would not go along with just any Daley proposal. In

fact, TWO organizer Leon Finney reported to Alinsky, "Our power relationship with

Daley subsequent to our supporting the Bond Issue needed to be redefined. […] I think

Daley should understand that TWO is able to get what it needs without him or as opposed

to forcing him to get what it wants."[629] Moreover, TWO actively supported a non-

machine candidate in the Democratic primary of the 2nd Congressional District. Alinsky

had dreams of running Brazier for congress against the machine candidate, but when that

fell through, he pushed TWO to support Abner Mikva against the incumbent and machine

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[626] Leon Finney to Saul D. Alinsky, May 23, 1966, 3–4, Box 64, Folder 799, IAF Collection, UIC; "TWO's Independent Stand," *Woodlawn Observer,* June 9, 1966, 4.

[627] Finney to Alinsky, May 23, 1966, 4; Harmon to Alinsky, May 22, 1966, 2.

[628] "TWO Reaffirms Bond Issues Stand," *Woodlawn Observer*, June 9, 1966, 8.

[629] Finney to Alinsky, July 6, 1966, 2.

loyalist Barrett O'Hara.[630] Part of that support included massive voter registration drives.

At one rally, Brazier told the audience, "There is a revolution—not only in Chicago—but

everywhere. And the plundered poor's patience had run out. The poor are choosing their

own leaders today, and we are no longer letting city hall—whether it's Republican,

Democrat, or independent—choose our leaders for us."[631] Former president of TWO,

Lynward Stevenson echoed Brazier and connected it to the Mikva campaign, announcing

at a campaign rally, "A vote for Mikva is a vote against the machine dominated politics

in Chicago. A victory for Mikva in the Woodlawn precincts will be a major step in the

direction of self-determination for the Woodlawn community."[632] In addition to the voter

registration rallies, The Woodlawn Organization supplied the Mikva campaign with two

workers to gather support in Woodlawn. TWO members knocked door-to-door,

convinced block clubs to endorse Mikva, and covered the neighborhood in signs.[633] *The*

Woodlawn Observer ran articles describing the candidate's political positions on issues

important to Woodlawners as well as warning readers about possible fraud tactics used

by the machine in the primary.[634] Despite their attempts to fight the machine, Mikva and

TWO lost the election. Fitting with its pragmatic style of democracy and its desire for

self-determination, TWO demonstrated the ability to use the machine style politics when

it was in their best interests and fight when it was not.

 The CCCO and SCLC did not have the balanced approach of TWO when dealing

with the machine. Instead, Daley and his machine politics frustrated CCCO and SCLC

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[630] Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy*, 514.
[631] "Brazier: Revolution in Ballot Box," 1.
[632] "Saturday Out-Door Rally to Climax 2nd Dist. Race," *Woodlawn Observer*, June 9, 1966, 1.
[633] Finney to Alinsky, May 23, 1966, 3.
[634] "Vote Fraud Tricks--What to Watch for," *Woodlawn Observer*, June 9, 1966, 1.

efforts to integrate Chicago's neighborhoods and schools. Daley consistently refused to admit Chicago had the problems CCCO claimed. The school board was above partisan politics and there were no ghettos in Chicago according to Daley. His control over the "silent six" aldermen as well as the take-over of the Chicago NAACP in 1957 limited an indigenous civil rights organization or leadership from developing into a power organization.[635] Although the Chicago chapter had elected an independent executive director by 1961, the NAACP suffered from its former connection to the machine and other civil rights organizations treated them with suspicion. Such actions demonstrated the extent to which Daley and the Cook County Democratic Party would go to maintain power and quiet dissent in black communities. Furthermore, the CCCO and SCLC were never able to amass enough political leverage to persuade Daley to address their demands.

In the fight to desegregate schools, CCCO tried to bring Daley into the ring. However, Daley consistently refused to engage in debate saying the Chicago Board of Education and its policies lay outside the realm of politics. He claimed it was an independent organization not subject to his control. Of course, civil rights activist knew this to be false. Raby illustrated Daley's duty in a telegram, "With all due respect for the principle of keeping politics out of the school system, a mayor is as responsible for the educational welfare of his city as he is for any other aspect of civic life. This is particularly true when the mayor appoints the members of the board of education."[636] Telegrams, marches to city hall, lists of demands presented to the mayor, and school

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[635] Cohen and Taylor, *American Pharaoh*, 207.
[636] Albert Brooks and Albert Raby to Richard Daley, telegram, June 7, 1965, 1, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

boycotts would not persuade Daley. He had little to gain, politically, by making a statement in favor or against school integration. If he publicly supported Willis's policies of segregation, he would alienate a growing number of black voters the machine depended upon for its citywide success. If he advocated integrationist policies, he risked losing the support of his traditional white ethnic base. Rather than disrupt the delicate balance, he stayed out of the discussion as much as possible. This tactic irritated and frustrated the efforts of CCCO members who desperately wanted change.

Members of the CCCO expressed their dissatisfaction with the machine system in areas other than education. The issue of uneven representation appeared periodically throughout CCCO's history. The program committee in 1964 looked to political activism as its next route after direct action. To "win an office or defeat a specific candidate" would give CCCO the political power it would need to gain ground with the political machine.[637] At times, the CCCO seemed to sense that boycotts and marches were not the best tactics to use in Chicago. In 1964, Raby noted, "The indifference of city leadership to boycotts indicates that there is no inherent power in demonstrations." He encouraged the organization to move towards political activism, in this case supporting the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. When discussing the possibility of a school boycott in June 1965, one CCCO delegate illustrated he understood Daley's motivation in supporting Willis by saying, "Daley took [a] calculated risk to appease whites because Negroes [are] in his pocket. […] Change in schools [is] not a matter of philosophy of education but political power."[638] The lack of political representation was a central point

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[637] "CCCO Minutes," 1.
[638] "CCCO [minutes]," 2.

in the 1965 CCCO Conference. President Al Raby made it part of his keynote speech.

Lamenting the lack of actual representation of blacks in city politics, he told the

delegates, "Under the controlled-vote political system in force, the Negro is denied his

proper voice in city and state legislative bodies."[639] In a report to the conference on

housing, members admitted, "We share the blame for the relative ease with which the

Chicago power structure has frozen race into bricks and concrete." The only way to

desegregate neighborhoods and therefore schools was to "change our city government

from top to bottom."[640] Nonetheless, CCCO devoted more and more of its attention to

direct action campaigns and less on political organization. This became more apparent

with the arrival of SCLC in Chicago.

The Chicago Freedom Movement did little to cultivate political power in a

manner that would mean anything to the Daley machine. Designed to be a nonpartisan

organization, SCLC shied away from political activism.[641] King did not support the

concept of all-black political parties like the MFDP founded by SNCC. For King and

SCLC the best way to choose a candidate was not his color of skin or political party but

"his integrity."[642] In an early meeting of the CFM, the delegates discussed inviting the

six black aldermen to a function. SCLC second in command, Andrew Young, made his

position clear when he said there was a "diff[erence] between reform politics and [a] non-

violent movement."[643] Independent Alderman Leon Despres recalled in his memoir that

he attempted to explain to the SCLC that demonstrations would have little effect on

[639] Raby, "Keynote Speech by Albert A. Raby--CCCO Conference," 10.
[640] "Report to CCCO Conference," August 28, 1965, 2, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[641] Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America*, 40–42.
[642] King, *Where Do We Go from Here*, 49.
[643] "CCCO [minutes]," October 2, 1965, 3, Box 18, Folder 4, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

Daley. Instead, the mayor would respond better to political organizing that would threaten his machine's control. But, his advice fell on deaf ears.[644] While it supported voter registration and encouraged blacks to exercise their right to vote carefully, SCLC and King did not advocate fighting the political machine by supporting independent candidates or a third party. In May 1966, SCLC-CCCO launched a major voter registration campaign. In the public announcement of the campaign, Raby stressed the non-partisan nature of the drive saying the emphasis would be on issues.[645] While this fell in line with SCLC's usual stand on politics, at times it conflicted with the goals of some CCCO members. The *CCCO Newsletter*'s Special Election Edition encouraged participation in the 1966 primaries and listed the names of candidates from both parties. "The CCCO, as a non-partisan organization, does not endorse candidates," the newsletter told readers. Yet, it also reminded readers, "A responsible vote is a vote for independent candidates who are pledged to support measures that will bring changes in the policies of city and state governments." In Chicago, "independent" was code for non-machine, to ask readers to vote for such candidates was a not- so- subtle way of campaigning against the machine.

Daley's response to civil rights complaints frustrated members of SCLC and CCCO. When the Chicago Freedom Movement attempted to highlight a problem, Daley jumped to show that he was already working on the problem. When King arrived in Chicago, he focused on the problem of slums. Daley claimed he was as interested in eliminating slums as King and promised to accomplish this goal in two years. Whenever

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[644] Despres and Heise, *Challenging the Daley Machine*, 96–97.
[645] Betty Washington, "Raby Launches Vote Drive to Register City Negroes," *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 11, 1966, 3.

representatives of the Chicago Freedom Movement met with the mayor, he spent a

significant portion of the meeting outlining all of the programs he has initiated. Despite

Daley's motions, members of the CFM remained skeptical. "If words were deeds,

Chicago would be better off than it really is," commented the *CCCO Newsletter* after one

such meeting with Daley.[646] The mayor made sure to treat King with complete respect

publicly, but he made statements that attempted to co-opt and therefore defuse

accusations from the CFM. In one such instance Daley commented, "There were some

statements about Chicago attributed to Dr. King with which I would differ; however, if

we are to make genuine progress in the field of human rights and opportunity it will not

be by continually emphasizing differences—but by working together in the vast area

where there is agreement."[647] Prepared for Daley's tactics, King expected "ready

accommodation…in some token manner" to co-opt the message and momentum of the

CFM. He promised that Chicago Freedom Movement would address this probability by

attacking all problems with vigor.[648]

The open housing campaign was created to force Daley to recognize the problems

of race and ghetto living. Other demonstrations such as nailing demands to the door at

city hall and cleaning up slum buildings failed to press Daley into negotiating with the

Chicago Freedom Movement. But even the issue of open housing did not convince

Daley that Chicago needed reforming. True, Daley went to the negotiating table after the

open-housing marches. But he did it to get the CFM to stop marching not because he had

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[646] "We've Been There Before," *CCCO Newsletter*, March 1966, 4.

[647] Richard Daley, "The Following is a Statement Issued by Mayor Richard Daley...," July 30, 1966, 1, Box 19, Folder 7, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

[648] "The Chicago Drive Begins," 1.

been persuaded they were correct. He faced criticism from white homeowners who thought he was doing too little to protect their neighborhoods and too much to protect the marchers.[649] From the other side, he faced criticism from black Chicagoans who wanted him to support open housing measures. The tipping point came when King threatened to march in Cicero. Although outside Chicago city limits and the reach of the machine, Daley worried about the violence marchers would surely encounter in Cicero and the publicity it would undoubtedly produce. Despite failed negotiations in the past, King was optimistic. He believed, "Daley is not [a] bigot. Daley is about my son's age in understanding race problems. [But he] is sincere."[650] During negotiations, Daley's first concern was stopping future marches. One observer of the negotiations later said, "It never seemed to me that Daley was trying to figure out how to deal with the broader race and housing problems in Chicago. It was about stopping the marches, which were tearing at the heart of the Democratic Party."[651] This became clear after the acceptance of the summit agreement. Daley might have enforced some of the letter of the agreement but he had no intention of following through on the spirit of the agreement. Most changes that resulted from the agreement were cosmetic, and Daley continued to protect the white neighborhoods from open housing.

After the failed summit agreement, CCCO-SCLC showed an increasing interest in electoral politics. SCLC brought Hosea Williams to lead a "massive, crash voter registration campaign" in Chicago.[652] Throughout the fall, rather than a discussion of

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[649] Biles, *Richard J. Daley*, 128–129.
[650] "Agenda Committee," 2.
[651] John McNight quoted in Cohen and Taylor, *American Pharaoh*, 402.
[652] "Agenda Committee Fall 1966 Meetings," Fall 1966, 13, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

tactics, of how to register voters, the steering committee debated taking a political

position. Before Williams arrived in Chicago, the delegates' central concern was the

non-partisan position of the CFM. Some believed a non-partisan position would lead to

real competition with the Democratic machine, even if that meant sending votes to the

Republican Party. King argued for remaining non-partisan because it is "dangerous if

Democrats believe [the] Negro vote is in [their] breast pocket."[653] Another concern for

the movement was the non-political missions of some member organizations. Raby

believed that despite this the group "still ought to set up political aims of [the]

movement."[654] Others pointed out the difficulty of keeping voter registration and an

election non-partisan. Arthur Brazier argued that the CCCO had "weak political power,"

such that "elected officials don't recognize us" and do not "listen to what we are

saying."[655] Once Williams started organizing the registration drive, discussion again

turned to whether to support particular candidates. Specifically, should the CFM support

black candidates over whites. This tactic would be non-partisan in that it would not

support a specific party but would not be non-political in that it would encourage voters

to vote for independent and Freedom Movement candidates. Members of the Chicago

Freedom Movements had high hopes for this registration push. Some saw it as a way to

attack the machine. Most tellingly, some hoped it would "break up [the] coalition

between black politicians and bigots" in Daley's organization and lead to "unity of Negro

politicians."[656] They also believed their new political power in the form of newly

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[653] Ibid., 8–9.
[654] Ibid., 11.
[655] Ibid.
[656] Ibid., 17.

registered voters would pressure the Daley government into implementing the summit agreement. They could demand "tangible results" before the mayoral election. Although some within CCCO pushed for a more active political agenda including supporting candidates, Raby and the rest of CCCO-SCLC maintained that the organization should remain non-political except to "raise issues."[657] Despite knowing that the Daley machine was the roadblock to reform, the CFM continued its anti-partisan stance. In 1967, SCLC's annual report on the Chicago Project evaluated the effects of open-housing marches and other programs used in the previous 18 months. The report identified the Daley machine's interference in political relationships as one hindrance to change. The report acknowledged, "The present state of a lack of consciousness of power hinders the black community from effectively bringing to an abrupt halt the exploitation of their total geographical, economical, political and socio-cultural existence."[658] The program suggestions for 1967 mimicked those of the previous year, and none sought to exploit black political power through voting and supporting independent candidates. In this way, CCCO-SCLC both failed to speak Daley's political language and to fight him on political grounds.

The War on Poverty

Conflict with the Daley machine was probably the most explicit in the administration of War on Poverty programs in Chicago. Seeded in the Kennedy administration and cultivated under Johnson, the War on Poverty sought to address the persistence of poverty in an affluent age. Inspired by the writing of John Kenneth

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[657] "Agenda Committee minutes," n.d., 1, Box 26, Folder 3, Pitcher Papers, U of C.
[658] Cooks, "Annual Report Chicago Project," 2.

Galbraith (*The Affluent Society*, 1958) and Michael Harrington (*The Other America*,

1962), John Kennedy was struck by the persistence of poverty in a prosperous society.

He and others of the time were also influenced by poverty studies that pointed to a

"culture of poverty" and "cycles of poverty."[659] Kennedy called on the best and the

brightest to review the size and characteristics of poverty in America. His assassination

in November 1963, however, came before his advisors could develop a cohesive plan.

When asked if anti-poverty program planning should continue, the newly sworn in

President Johnson said, this "is my kind of undertaking. I'm interested. I'm sympathetic.

Go ahead. Give it the highest priority."[660] With the go-ahead from Johnson, the work on

a broad plan intensified. The Council of Economic Advisers reported that one-fifth of the

nation's families or more than 30 million people were poor. The study pointed to

discrimination, a lack of education, and "broken families" as well as old age as sources of

poverty in America.[661] Johnson's advisers used the report's findings to create a

comprehensive anti-poverty program. At the State of the Union Address on January 8,

1964, President Johnson told the nation:

> Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope—some because of
> their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both.
> Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity.
> This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty
> in America. I urge this Congress and all Americans to join with me in that
> effort.[662]

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[659] Oscar Lewis is credited with coining the term "culture of poverty." For his study on poverty see Oscar
Lewis, *Five Families; Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1959).
[660] Johnson as quoted in Bernstein, *Guns or Butter*, 95.
[661] *Economic Report of the President: 1964* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1964), 57–59
http://fraser.stlouisfed.org/publications/erp/issue/1208/.
[662] *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64,* Volume I,
(Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965), 112-118.

As part of this "war on poverty," Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act in
1964, which created the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), headed by Sargent
Shriver, to coordinate a multi-pronged attack on poverty including job training,
community action projects, rural development, as well as other initiatives. While most of
the plan continued the New Deal programs with a Job Corps modeled on the Civilian
Conservation Corps, the community action portion of the plan was innovative. The idea
of organizing community resources to combat community issues grew from two sources.
One was part of the federal government's attack on juvenile delinquency, Mobilization
for Youth (MBY) in New York City. MBY utilized a community-centered approach,
organizing community members themselves, because according to the founders, juvenile
delinquency was a community problem. The Ford Foundation sponsored the other
influential program. Called the Gray Areas Project, it coordinated the efforts of all
community agencies involved in urban poverty and urban renewal such as local
governments, schools, and social agencies. In this way, the project could address the
community's problems from all sides. The method of using community action in
addition to government programs found its way into War on Poverty programs. The
desire to involve the community in fighting poverty also dovetailed with popular
discussion on participatory democracy. Allowing people the ability to make the
decisions that affect their lives is reflected in the key phrase in the Economic Opportunity
Act calling for the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor.[663] Largely untested,
community action became the most controversial portion of the act though it passed

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[663] S. M. Miller and Pamela Roby, "Poverty: Changing Social Stratification," in *On Understanding Poverty; Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, ed. Daniel P Moynihan (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 71.

Congress without much notice. This provision, however, gave community groups a sense of empowerment and scared city mayors who wanted to maintain complete control over social services. Even the "man who discovered poverty," Michael Harrington, warned that community action programs might lead to protests against the very governments supplying the money.[664] "Maximum feasible participation" became a point of contention in Chicago and demonstrated the conflicting views of democracy in the Windy City.

Mayor Daley began planning for War on Poverty funds before the Economic Opportunity Bill passed Congress. He created the Chicago Committee on Urban Opportunity (CCUO) to act as the community action agency in the city. Daley knew the importance of this program not only for the city's development but also for its contributions to the power of the Democratic Party. Moreover, the President had asked him to get the ball rolling before the legislation was finalized. In a phone conversation with the mayor on January 20, 1964, Johnson made clear the importance he placed on Chicago telling Daley, "We've got to have some real demonstration in Chicago on this anti-poverty program." He told Daley to "get your planning and development people busy right now."[665] In any case, Daley saw the tremendous potential in the program, so much so that he appointed himself chairman of the CCUO. For the executive director he chose Deton Brooks, an African American machine loyalist. Placing Brooks in such a position of power assured that Daley would have a supporter at the head of the program and he would appeal to his black constituents who throughout the 1960s began

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[664] Maurice Isserman, *The Other American : The Life of Michael Harrington* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2001), 214.

[665] Michael R. Beschloss, *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes 1963-1964* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 168.

demanding more of the mayor. The CCUO proposed dividing the city into twenty-four

target poverty areas. Each area would have an Urban Progress Center (UPC) to

administer programs such as job referrals, legal aid, health services, and other CCUO

projects. Each UPC had its own advisory council to supervise operations. These

advisory councils were meant to be the place where "maximum feasible participation"

took place. However, the directors of local UPCs appointed the council and it hardly

represented the poor. That did not matter much, however, because the UPC directors

rarely implemented suggestions of the advisory council. In fact, the Daley political

machine tightly controlled implementation of the CCUO projects. Applicants for jobs

with the CCUO, like other patronage jobs, needed recommendations from machine

regulars.[666] Daley wanted to maintain control not only because it built his base of power,

but also because he was wary of allowing grassroots organizers a position where they

could disrupt his system. In fact, Daley could not understand the complaints concerning

the lack of participation of the poor. In his stumbling style of speaking, Daley told

President Johnson in a phone conversation,

> What difference does it make who gets credit as long as we get jobs and get the
> people out of slums and plight, and get education. But many of these people
> throughout the country are not concerned with the solution. They're concerned
> with the agitation of the problem. And this is all over the country, and they've
> seen an opportunity to snatch at a popular issue but one that you and I know
> doesn't bear the right of logic, and that is: only the poor get control of these
> programs. Well, that's ridiculous!
> Because you have to have--it'd be the same thing as saying that your operation
> that only the soldier could control the army. That you are not entitled to generals,

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[666] Rice, "In the Trenches of the War on Poverty," 144–150.

to scientists, to the great experts, to the fine educated and dedicated—[(Daley is interrupted by Johnson)][667]

The divergent views of the role of the poor in the poverty programs would be the main source of contention between community organizing groups and Chicago's War on Poverty.

Intellectually, the activists in JOIN understood and supported the participation of the poor in anti-poverty programs. It fit with their commitment to participatory democracy, which allowed people to make the decisions that affected their lives. JOIN staffers firmly believed the poor should be in charge. In fact, Richard Rothstein wrote, "Democracy, the organization of the poor to develop their own programs, is the basic ingredient for a successful attack on poverty."[668] JOIN's use of participatory democracy to combat poverty was twofold. On the one hand, participatory democracy served a therapeutic purpose by ending the cycle of dependency and instilling a sense of self-determination in the poor. At the same time, JOIN was convinced that the poor were in the best position to direct anti-poverty programs because, as the target of these programs, they knew what was wrong with the current system. However, they quickly realized that in Daley's Chicago, the poor would have no say in the administering of federal funds and the numerous patronage positions, the very oil that greased the Democratic machine.

JOIN criticized the implementation of the War on Poverty in Chicago, calling it "Johnson's local, anti-democratic skirmish with the poor."[669] They argued that the anti-

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[667] Lyndon Johnson and Richard Daley, telephone transcript (LBJ Ranch, December 24, 1965), WH6512-04-9329, Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, http://whitehousetapes.net/transcript/johnson/wh6512-04-9329.
[668] Rothstein, "Yale Political," 3.
[669] "JOIN Progress Report," 2.

poverty programs were counterproductive because they "increase[d] people's dependency and despair and inability to act in their own behalf." The student activists believed that for the War on Poverty to be effective the programs needed to develop "organizations of the poor which enable people to act in their own interest and to affect the decision-making and bureaucratic process."[670] JOIN wrote to the local Urban Progress Center UPC complaining of the misplaced attention on the same government bureaucracy. Though the UPC was meant to coordinate existing aid programs and create new ones, it did not consult with the people of the community. The centers claimed to be democratic, but JOIN could see that the War on Poverty would be more of the same. "To increase the scope of such paternalistic government activity," JOIN warned, "will serve a much more subtle function than to 'war' on poverty. It will further encourage feelings of dependency and inferiority among the poor and will serve to rigidify the poverty class." JOIN was worried about more than just the feelings of the poor. They believed that these programs would fail unless the poor had a part in the decisions that affected their lives. JOIN argued "that successful poverty programs must be democratic, they must mobilize movements of poor people who will act in their own behalf."[671]

More than just an issue of allowing the poor to participate because they deserved that dignity, JOIN believed that the poor knew best how to address the problems they faced. Casey Hayden offered this analysis about failures of welfare programs: "The way the thinking seems to run is that the poor person who is supposed to be 'helped' can't

[670] Students for a Democratic Society (U.S.), "A Proposal to improve relations...," 1964, 1, Series 2B:16, SDS Papers.
[671] JOIN-A Community Union, "Statement on Urban Progress Centers," February 12, 1965, 4, Box 6, Folder 8, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.

really manage his own life very well, much less anything else, and isn't capable of democratic decision-making. He has to be 'lifted' to 'our level' at which point he is 'ready' for 'democracy.'"[672] But JOIN believed the poor did have capacity to make successful decisions. Todd Gitlin further articulated this message in his article "Coal-Operatin' in Uptown." JOIN believed "with passion that poor people are capable of making decisions, that they understand the main lines of their problems more realistically than do middle class, nine-to-five professionals."[673] When JOIN began to fight the Urban Progress Center, they pointedly stated, "Only poor people know poverty well enough to be able to fight it."[674] They proved this by surveying the community to discover which services the poor themselves believed they needed. The men of the community would rather have a state minimum wage and women preferred a childcare center than an Urban Progress Center according to the survey results.[675] From this, JOIN concluded that the current services did not meet the needs of the poor. The organization's newsletter published numerous articles outlining the inadequacies and inconsistencies of the welfare system. The underlying message of each account was clear: the professionals implementing the programs had no real concept of the mechanics of being poor. The poor, having the personal experience, knew which parts of the service worked and which parts needed reform. For example, articles titled "No Service for Poor People" and "Welfare is Rotten" illustrated the inadequacies of services that depended on proper paper work despite emergency situations. Welfare checks arrived weeks late and sick

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[672] Hayden, "Raising the Question of Who Decides," 44.
[673] Gitlin, "JOIN: Coal-Operatin' in Uptown," 3.
[674] JOIN-A Community Union, "Statement on Urban Progress Centers," 1.
[675] Ibid., 2.

children were denied hospital admittance because of improper paper work.[676] In addition,

excluding the poor from the decision-making process would lead to failure of the

program because "successful poverty programs must be democratic, they must mobilize

movements of poor people who will act on their own behalf."[677]

JOIN complained about the general exclusion of the community in implementing

the poverty programs in Chicago by targeting Daley and the machine. The Montrose

Urban Progress Center that serviced Uptown opened without notifying the community

and its advisory board did not include a single poor member. The organization accused

the city of "ignor[ing] the spirit of this Act" and "adopt[ing] a democratic rhetoric

without any attempt to allow a single decision to be made by the poor whom the program

affects."[678] JOIN demanded that poor people be included in the Advisory Council to the

Urban Progress Centers. This would be the only way the poor could have influence over

the programs that were directed at them.[679] They wrote to Senator Everett Dirksen, the

Republican senator from Illinois and therefore outside the Daley machine, complaining of

the lack of representation and included statements from JOIN members. Dirksen

forwarded these concerns to the Office of Economic Opportunity. In his reply, Sargent

Shriver assured Dirksen that his office would investigate the allegations.[680] Eventually

the Advisory Committee agreed to JOIN's request that the poor should be represented but

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[676] Bill Schmidt, "No Service for Poor People," *JOIN Community Union (newsletter)*, April 3, 1966, 3;
John Howard, "Welfare is Rotten," *JOIN Community Union (newsletter)*, April 23, 1966, 3.
[677] JOIN-A Community Union, "JOIN Challenges Chicago's War on Poverty," February 11, 1965, 4, Series
4B:185, SDS Papers.
[678] Ibid., 1, 4.
[679] JOIN Community Union Organizing Committee to Montrose Urban Progress Center Advisory
Committee, "A Proposal to Establish an Advisory Council of Neighborhood Poor," n.d., 1–3, Series 2B:50,
SDS Papers.
[680] Sargent Shriver to Everett McKinley Dirksen, July 19, 1965, 1, Series 2B:39, SDS Papers.

only to replace original members as they resigned.[681] In addition to demanding

representation through petitions and letters, JOIN members engaged in sensational acts of

direct action. JOIN participated in a demonstration with TWO against Shriver and Daley

when the former visited Chicago.[682] Later they organized a rent strike in one dilapidated

building, shot several rats in the building, and presented the carcasses to the director of

the UPC to illustrate the inadequacies of current housing programs.[683] And when the

UPC did not meet their needs, JOIN attempted to organize their own programs including

a childcare center, a community park in a vacant lot, and a job referral program.

Of the two goals JOIN sought in using participatory democracy to fight poverty,

the one that gave the poor power to control poverty programs was the most problematic.

JOIN never addressed the question: what would actually happen if the poor did have

control over community services? Yes, those on public aid and working low wage jobs

could easily locate inadequacies and injustices of the current system, but did they really

have the means or ability to create viable solutions? And, when the issue of involving the

poor in decision-making processes was brought up at the Urban Progress Center's

Advisory Council meeting, at least one member opposed the possibility as the blind

leading the blind. When JOIN reported on this concern, they dismissed it asking, "When

will we be heard in a program of, by, and for the people?"[684] In some cases, poor

decision-making put them in the position of poverty in the first place. Not only did JOIN

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[681] "JOIN's Plans for the Urban Progress Center Accepted--Sort of," *JOIN Community Union (newsletter)*, February 7, 1966, 4.
[682] "JOIN Progress Report," 2.
[683] Richard Rothstein to Larry Gordon, March 9, 1965, 2, Series 2B:38, SDS Papers.
[684] "Chicago Report," *ERAP Newsletter*, March 4, 1965.

never entertain serious discussion of this matter, they never achieved the goal of attaining participatory democracy for the poor in Chicago.

Like the participatory nature of democracy in JOIN, self-determination was the defining characteristic of TWO's vision of democracy and encouraged the active decision making of the people affected by the programs. TWO also saw potential in the "maximum feasible participation" clause because it followed their notion of self-determination, that the people of Woodlawn should have a say it what happens in their community. But keeping with its Alinsky-style pragmatism, TWO both fought the machine's control of the War on Poverty programs and sought to get the most out of the programs going so far as to bypass the CCUO and appeal directly to the OEO.

Believing poverty was not just a shortage of money it was also a lack of power made poverty a crucial issue for TWO. They hoped that in working with the "maximum feasible participation" clause, the War on Poverty would help on both fronts. In August of 1964, President Lynward Stevenson called for an Anti-Poverty Conference. The meeting would "provide a setting in which the community speaks out on how it feels about the grinding forces of unemployment, slum schools, welfare ceilings, and slum housing." It would also be an opportunity for TWO to create program proposals to submit to the CCUO.[685] Buoyed by the fact that they forced the city to adopt their own urban renewal plan and negotiated a job-training program with the Department of Labor, TWO believed it would have similar success with the War on Poverty programs.[686] In an open letter to Sargent Shriver, Stevenson made clear that TWO was not looking for a

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[685] "Poverty Convention Plans Progress," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, September 9, 1964, 1.
[686] "Poverty In Woodlawn," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, October 21, 1964, 3.

handout. "We are prepared to back our slogan of self-determination with deed," he wrote the head of the OEO. "We have too much pride and dignity to expect something for nothing."[687] TWO promised to contribute 25% matching funds to any poverty program funded by the OEO. TWO's proposals for job-training programs, day-care centers, and medical facilities sat for nine months waiting for Deton Brooks's approval. Tired of the delay, Stevenson and Brazier went to the Washington office of the OEO where they were told the proposals were simply waiting on Brooks. The root of the delay was Daley's desire to control anti-poverty money especially in the face of an independent and critical organization such as TWO. In addition, Brooks was offended TWO went over his head to Washington. "If Brazier and Stevenson had come here in the first place instead of going directly to Washington," Brooks told the *Chicago Daily News*, "maybe we would have straightened something out."[688] At this point, TWO and Stevenson went on the attack, becoming vocal critics of the machine's undemocratic control of the Chicago War on Poverty. The exchange demonstrated that the War on Poverty in Chicago was more about politics than it was about the poor. TWO wanted not just the economic benefits of the War on Poverty they wanted political power too.

The lack of political power became more and more apparent as the months passed. Stevenson, after a series of meetings with Brooks concerning TWO's proposals, announced in frustration, "The so-called war on poverty in Chicago is in great danger of

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[687] Rev. Lynward Stevenson, "Open Letter to Sargent Shriver, Administrator, Economic Opportunity Act," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, October 21, 1964, 1.
[688] Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 81–82.

being nothing more than a political patronage plum."[689] Alinsky shared this feeling

calling the War on Poverty "political pornography." He believed city halls used the anti-

poverty programs to stifle independent organizations such as TWO. Arguing that poverty

is about power and money, he wrote, "Therefore an antipoverty program must recognize

that its program has to do something about not only economic poverty but also political

poverty."[690] In April 1965, Stevenson made his criticisms of the Chicago anti-poverty

programs public in his testimony before the House Committee on Education and Labor.

Congressman Adam Clayton Powell held the hearings to explore the effectiveness of the

Economic Opportunity Act. Specifically he was concerned that "giant fiestas of political

patronage have been encouraged on both the local and State levels of the war on poverty

administrative mechanisms, having been seduced by politicians who have used the

reservoir of poverty funds to feed their political hacks at the trough of mediocrity."[691]

Brooks testified before the committee as well, assuring the panel that he involved the

poor, although none held positions on advisory committees. After reading a list of

members of the CCOU and illustrating their deep connection to the Chicago political

system, Stevenson told the House Committee, "This is maximum feasible participation of

the rich. This is maximum feasible participation of precinct captains. […] Where is the

maximum feasible participation of the poor? There is not even minimum feasible

participation of the poor."[692] His argument connected TWO's demands for self-

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[689] "Chicago Poverty War a Political 'Plum'," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization* (Chicago, IL, February 24, 1965), 2.

[690] Saul D. Alinsky, "The War on Poverty--Political Pornography," *Journal of Social Issues* 11 (Summer 1965): 46–47.

[691] House Committee on Education and Labor, *Examination of the War on Poverty Program* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965), 2.

[692] Ibid., 359.

determination with the administration of anti-poverty funds and anti-machine arguments: "We will speak for ourselves. We will train ourselves. We will lift ourselves into the mainstream of America."[693]

Stevenson continued to levy charges against the machine's control of the anti-poverty programs throughout the summer. In June, calling the local Urban Progress Center a "little city hall," TWO and Stevenson connected the programs and the machine. Eventually, TWO was able to negotiate a meeting with Daley to plead their case for inclusion on the Woodlawn UPC's advisory board. Stevenson made clear; his commitment was to self-determination first and foremost, telling the crowd gathered at city hall, "Self-determination and independence in the Great Woodlawn community are at stake here." He reiterated a point he made at the congressional hearings that TWO would not bow down to the power of the machine; "If we must choose between self-determination and poverty money, then kiss the poverty money goodbye."[694] The mayor agreed to appoint TWO's list of names to the advisory committee, seemingly granting TWO a victory.

By August, Daley's true intentions were revealed. At the June meeting, Daley had told the TWO delegation that the advisory committee would have twenty-five members and that TWO's recommendations would have the majority. TWO submitted twenty-one names. Daley appointed all twenty-one but increased the number of committee members to seventy-five. In addition diluting TWO's power on the committee, the first meeting made clear that the advisory committee was not meant to

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[693] Ibid., 361.

[694] "TWO Awaits Daley, Meet on 'Little City Hall,' Mayor Makes Promises to TWO on Local Poverty Control," *TWO News*, June 30, 1965, 1.

actually advise. One TWO representative reported, "We weren't needed for the meeting. It was a waste of time because all decisions were made before we got there."[695] Stevenson again lashed out at the machine, accusing it of trying "to strangle independent groups that fight for social change." He promised that TWO would fight back, including leading a march to city hall to protest Daley's "betrayal."[696]

TWO viewed the diversionary tactics of the Daley machine as a continuation of racist policies in the city and undermining their self-determination. In asking why TWO could not represent Woodlawn in the War on Poverty, Stevenson suggested to the House Committee, "Is it that we are too stupid, that we are too poor, that we are Negroes, that we are like children who must be planned for?"[697] Daley reinforced the knowledge that the black community in Chicago was treated differently when he increased the number of appointees to the Woodlawn UPC advisory committee. After this betrayal, Stevenson expressed "doubts that Daley is capable of any sincerity and honesty when dealing with the Negro community."[698] Late in 1965, TWO and its leadership began to articulate a clearer connection between the failures of the War on Poverty and racism. Stevenson published an editorial in TWO's newspaper drawing a line between the fight against city hall and the fight blacks have been engaged in for 300 years. "It is the struggle over whether the black man in this community will be free to make his own decisions or whether he will be greased down and swallowed whole by Daley's little green ($)

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[695] "Machine Gets Poverty Control," *TWO News*, September 16, 1965, 1, 3.
[696] "Daley Betrays TWO on Poverty," *TWO News*, August 5, 1965, 1.
[697] "President Testifies before Adam Powell, Rips Chicago's 'War Against the Poor'," *Newsletter of The Woodlawn Organization*, April 14, 1965, 9.
[698] "Daley Betrays TWO on Poverty," 9.

boys."[699] In the first of two "Black Papers" published in the organization's newspaper,

TWO again made the connection with the historical treatment of blacks and the War on

Poverty. Signaling the correlation between funneling money through the machine and

dependency, the paper wrote:

> Since before the Mayflower in America, it has been more important to make money than to treat black people like humans. But in order to make that money, a certain price has to be paid, so that black people do not revolt. In all the Northern ghettos, that price is the welfare dole. The welfare dole—and most of the so-called War on Poverty programs—are just safety valves, to let off the pressure from within this black cauldron.[700]

The second Black Paper continued the theme of the lack of political power in black

communities and its reinforcement through War on Poverty programs. The city did not

use this money to build community organizations or political power in the ghettoes.

Instead, it used the funds to keep the status quo. The Black Paper likens the Chicago

Committee on Urban Opportunity to a colonial power. "The men of power in Chicago

would rather keep black people miseducated [*sic*], ill-housed, unemployed, dependent on

an impersonal bureaucracy, and thus broken in spirit that to share their power and

wealth." Foreshadowing black power's message of community control and emphasizing

its commitment to self-determination, TWO sent a strong message to Daley and Shriver:

> We are men, not beasts. We will represent ourselves, and think, feel, speak and decide for ourselves. If this city, and the country at large, is to be a genuine democracy, then we insist that we be in on the decision-making of the War on Poverty—from beginning to end. That is what citizen participation means to us. That is what we mean by self-determination.[701]

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[699] Lynward Stevenson, "The Real Issue Behind the Poverty Fight--Our 300 Year-Old Battle for Independence," *TWO News*, August 18, 1965, 3.

[700] "A TWO Black Paper, Concerning 1415-21 E. 61st Pl and the Forces That Made It a Slum," *TWO News*, November 23, 1965, 16.

[701] "TWO Black Paper Number Two: Poverty, Power and Race in Chicago," *TWO News*, December 9, 1965, 14–15.

The president's Christmas message reiterated feelings of exploitation and frustration. Stevenson told TWO members, "[Segregationists] have learned how to exploit black people, make money off of us, keep us penned up in this ghetto zoo, until they have developed this brutal system into a fine art." Because of the power city hall and the wealthy have used to keep blacks "on the bottom of Chicago," Stevenson argued, TWO needed to build a powerful organization to fight these forces long term.[702]

A year after his statement before the House Committee, Stevenson still led the charge against machine control of the War on Poverty in Chicago. Little had changed in 1966. At TWO's yearly convention, delegates voted for Urban Progress Center reform including more representation from indigenous community organizations and that the council elects the officers of the advisory committee.[703] The anti-poverty program was a central theme in Stevenson's address to the convention as well. He threatened Daley where the mayor was most vulnerable and in terms the mayor understood. In an election year, Daley would be carefully counting votes to ensure his reelection. "The Negroes of Greater Woodlawn are not going to march automatically to the polls and pull just one lever [for the Democratic Party]," Stevenson threatened. "Self-determination means we make our OWN decisions about politicians, based on what they DELIVER, not what they promise."[704] In the end, TWO did get some control over War on Poverty funds, but not by coercing the Daley machine to cooperate.

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[702] Stevenson, "Xmas Message," 1, 3.
[703] "Demand Progress Center Reform," *The Woodlawn Observer*, April 28, 1966, 1.
[704] Emphasis in original. Stevenson, "Rev. Stevenson's Convention Address; The State of the Community," 2.

In a display of self-determination, TWO did not accept the programs of the Urban

Progress Centers or continue their failed attempts to get the Chicago Committee on

Urban Opportunity to accept their proposals. Rather, TWO appealed directly to the

Office of Economic Opportunity. Though they had tried this without success in the first

year of the War on Poverty, TWO managed to gain program acceptance in 1967 much to

the chagrin of the Chicago machine. Targeted at a growing problem with gangs, the

youth manpower project proposed by TWO would train school dropouts and unemployed

youths in literacy and job skills. The increase of gang activity in Woodlawn became a

growing concern for community members. Two gangs, or youth organizations as TWO

called them, divided Woodlawn, the Blackstone Rangers and East Side Disciples. Leon

Finney, executive director of TWO, wrote Alinsky in May 1966, "We've got a

tremendous gang problem in Woodlawn…they have been going through the community

raising hell." In response, the block clubs wanted TWO to do something.[705] But what

exactly to do, no one really knew at the time. Although TWO began to build a

relationship with the Rangers by hiring an ex-Vice Lord (a Chicago gang) to work with

the Rangers, the violence remained an issue. And in July, the community lived "day to

day on the brink of a gang warfare [*sic*]." Finney worried about how to prevent this

violence, confessing to Alinsky, "what we can do to prevent a gang war—it is limited."[706]

There was some sense that a jobs program would be the best way to reach these

disaffected youth. Finney reported to Alinsky various job corps possibilities. But

considering the difficulty TWO had had with obtaining funds and programming approval

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[705] Leon Finney to Saul D. Alinsky, May 19, 1966, 6, Box 64, Folder 799, IAF Collection, UIC.
[706] Leon Finney to Saul D. Alinsky, July 25, 1966, 1–2, Box 64, Folder 799, IAF Collection, UIC.

from the CCUO, not until Jerome Bernstein, head of the Manpower Division of the OEO,

offered his support was TWO able to pursue the issue. Bernstein suggested a

demonstration program for Woodlawn involving gang members in its organization and

implementation that appealed to TWO's sense of self-determination.

That the community, in this case TWO and gangs, could solve the community's

problems was key to TWO's idea of democracy. In addition, it appealed to TWO's sense

of democracy, of involving the community in decision-making process. The possibility

of such as program immediately resonated with leaders of TWO who were interested in

diffusing the gang problem through job and literacy training.[707] It also appealed to

members of the Blackstone Rangers who felt betrayed by the local Urban Progress

Center. After picketing the UPC for not addressing the problems of gang youth, the

director suggested the Rangers draw up and submit their own program proposal. When

the gang took him up on his offer, the UPC official ignored the proposal the Ranger's

developed.[708] From this experience, the Rangers were more interested in working with

TWO on a program and bypassing the UPC.

The program TWO developed was a model of self-determination and community

control. The program offered remedial literacy and math classes, job training, and job

placement allowing gang members the chance to better themselves. Moreover, the

program included gang members in the planning and administration of the program. In

its application, TWO reiterated "its fundamental philosophy […] that the only long-range

[707] How to address the gang problem caused a division within TWO between those who wanted to use increased police coverage and public condemnation of gang activity to destroy the gangs and those who wanted a long-term program to address problems of gangs. See Fish, *Black Control/White Power*, 125-134.
[708] Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 124–125.

solution to poverty and discrimination in this country is for the people of poverty

communities to solve the problems themselves by exercising their own self-

determination."[709] More importantly, TWO defined the program as community driven,

arguing that outside agencies did not know how to solve the problems of Woodlawn. The

solution the gang problem was the same way TWO resolved all of its problems, organize

a base of power and pursue programs of their own design.

When the OEO approved the TWO Youth Manpower Project, Brazier announced,

"The eyes of the nation will be focused on Woodlawn…" At the time, he meant it to

refer to the program's bellwether status. However, as the year passed, it would mean that

the TWO Youth Manpower Project would come under increasing scrutiny. Multiple

forces attacked TWO and the gangs' attempt at self-determination. Deton Brooks was

initially receptive to TWO's plan, perhaps because he did not think it would go beyond

the proposal stage. However, once it became clear the youth manpower program was

supported by OEO officials in Washington, Brooks and Daley did what they could to

subvert the program. Although they could not stop the OEO from approving the

program, they did manage to add conditions to the OEO's support, which included the

provision that Daley would have to approve of the project director.[710] In the year the

Youth Manpower Project existed, Daley refused to accept a project director who was

acceptable to TWO. Therefore, it became a leaderless program directed by an interim

project coordinator. In addition, a newly created police taskforce aimed a gang violence

was more interested in arresting gang members than rehabilitating them through TWO's

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[709] Application quoted in Ibid., 135.
[710] Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 91–94.

project. The task force arrested gang members employed by the program, though they often were never charged with crimes or were acquitted. Nonetheless, the newspaper reports of rapists and murderers benefiting from government money stuck in the public's mind and many began to question the wisdom of hiring active gang members to run government funded programs. Some press, however, was accurate and cast a poor light on TWO's efforts. When one student shot another in a project classroom, the program became the target of criticism. Brazier tried to calm the public's worries saying, "It was understood from the beginning that a large number of those involved in the project would have police records and would get in trouble with the law. But the program is specifically designed to work with this population."[711] The project supporters also pointed to the number of gang members placed in jobs and the decrease in gang violence to illustrate the possibilities of the program.[712] The OEO, surely concerned about the bad press and receiving pressure from the Daley administration, warned TWO to strengthen its control of the program or risk losing funding. Particularly, the OEO wanted to ensure that no one convicted of a serious crime, such as rape or murder, remained on the payroll.[713]

Despite Brazier's and others' attempts to reassure the public and government officials, allegations that the Youth Manpower Project employed criminals, paid young men to drop out of school, and misappropriated project funds persisted. These charges eventually lead to a hearing by the Permanent Committee on Investigations of the Senate Committee on Governmental Operations. Chaired by John McClellan (D-Ark), the

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[711] "TWO Officials Deny Youth Program Abuse," *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 27, 1967, 2.
[712] "TWO Struggling for Respectability," *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 15, 1968, 4.
[713] "TWO Asked to Clamp Down on Program," *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 29, 1968, 6.

committee heard copious testimony by city officials and police that TWO's program

made it difficult to break up gangs.[714] The OEO decided not to renew its funding of

TWO's Youth Project claiming "the evidence now in hand demonstrates that the

experiment was not successful in its major objectives" as reason for terminating the

program.[715] Later, Brazier wrote in his book on the program, "The project was killed

because the political establishment could not tolerate an independent community

organization such as TWO receiving federal funds that were not controlled by the

Establishments itself." And in keeping with TWO's growing sense of black

consciousness, he went onto explain, "The project was killed because white society

refused to permit the indigenous leaders in the black ghetto to deal with problems of

alienated youth—a problem that white society itself by its indifference and racism has

forced on the ghetto."[716] In the end, TWO's self-determination was not enough to

overcome the power of the machine and wrestle control of poverty funds from the city.

The Coordinating Council of Community Organizations demonstrated less

interest in the War on Poverty programs than JOIN and TWO. Founded as a response to

school segregation in Chicago, the CCCO devoted most of its attention to that issue.

When King and SCLC arrived in 1965, the Chicago Freedom Movement shifted from

schools to ghettos and housing and made open housing its signature mission. But the

CCCO did not ignore the anti-poverty programs entirely. In fact, the organization

seemed to have some initial interest in the War on Poverty. At a steering committee

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[714] "Senate Panel Hearings Resume," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 9, 1968, 3.
[715] "TWO's Rev. Brazier Calls $927,341 Cutoff 'Tragic,' Blames 'Political Forces'," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 7, 1968, 3.
[716] Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 125.

meeting in November 1964, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) submitted

a motion recognizing that the Economic Opportunity Act could have two possible results.

It could "be the beginning of major change in the way of life of millions of people in

America," or "it could be a means of reinforcing the status quo by strengthening political

control of the inner-city areas." Like JOIN and TWO, the AFSC knew citizen

participation would determine which direction the anti-poverty programs would take.

The group proposed that the CCCO take action to prevent the latter from occurring by

making a public statement stressing the need for citizen participation, sending a

delegation to Daley and Brooks to ensure proper participation of the community, and

calling for a citywide conference on the Economic Opportunity Act and participation.

Despite a lengthy argument in favor of these proposals "to insure local community

determination," the committee only voted to issue a statement in support of community

participation.[717] Two months later, however, the CCCO invited Deton Brooks to speak at

a steering committee. He explained the program to delegates with special attention to

community involvement. Although Brooks assured the organization, "We do want to

involve communities," the CCCO delegates seemed skeptical of his rosy assessment.

Most of the questions from CCCO delegates focused on how the programs would work.

One thought the Urban Progress Centers would become "little city halls" and "stimulate

individual rather than community self-interest." Another pointed to poor experiences

with city government in the past such as the Chicago Board of Education. The board was

in charge of the preschool program of the CCUO. Because the community had "no

confidence in the Board of Education," they had a negative attitude toward the preschool

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[717] "CCCO Minutes," November 7, 1964, 1–2, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

program. Brooks tried to make reassurances to the committee but when pressed about the

role of indigenous leadership he danced around this issue saying, "hopefully this can be

done" but "forces must be balanced" and "communities vary." One delegate asked,

"What about representatives of city-wide indigenous leadership (meaning CCCO)?"

Brooks replied, "We must start at [the] local community level," implying that the CCCO

would not have an effective voice in influencing the policies of the CCUO.[718] This was

the last lengthy discussion of the Chicago War on Poverty in the CCCO steering

committee minutes. After this, the CCCO and the Chicago Freedom Movement made

statements about the inadequacies of the War on Poverty but did not actively lobby for

their modification. In August of 1965, Al Raby complained of the failures of the Urban

Progress Centers that left the poor out of decision-making, channeled money into existing

public and private agencies, and never really addressed the causes of poverty. Similarly,

the Program of the Chicago Freedom Movement demanded "Direct funding of Chicago

community organizations by the Office of Economic Opportunity," although there was no

indication that the CFM pursued this goal.[719]

Black Power

While these community organizations fought the undemocratic nature of the

political machine and struggled to gain "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in

the 1960s, a power ideology developed in the black community. By 1966, it would be

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[718] "CCCO Minutes," January 16, 1965, 1–3, Alan Anderson Private Papers.

[719] Discussion of the War on Poverty in relation to the Chicago Freedom Movement is noticeably absent from the two most important books on the topic confirming that this was an avenue the CFM chose not to pursue. See James R. Ralph, *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993); Anderson and Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago*.

popularly called black power and would influence the direction of community

organization, the practice of democracy, and race relations. Black power was (and is) a

nebulous term. Paraphrasing historian Penial Joseph, black power is as hard to define as

it is controversial.[720] While structuring a definitive definition is difficult, finding its roots

in black nationalism, the thinking of Malcolm X, and the Nation of Islam is less so.

Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam, by the mid-1960s had established

centers for the Black Muslims in Detroit, New York, and Chicago. Most historians agree

that black power developed before Stokely Carmichael made his famous declaration at

the James Meredith March against Fear in June 1966. Though he gave the concept a

name and popularity, others such as W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Marcus

Garvey, and most recently, Malcolm X laid the foundation. Most notably, Malcolm X's

discussions of black nationalism influenced black power's sense of self-determination

and local control. In his celebrated speech, "The Ballot or the Bullet," Malcolm X

outlined what he meant by black nationalism in politics, economics and social

philosophy. In short, it meant black control of politics, the economy, and social

institution in black communities. "You've got to control your own," he told the

audience. "Just like the white man has control over his, you need control over yours."[721]

The need for black control of politics became apparent to some during Mississippi

Freedom Summer and necessitated the founding of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic

Party in 1964. The drive for a black political party grew imperative after the MFDP

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[720] Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour*, 147.

[721] Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 38–42.

failed to gain recognition at the National Democratic Party Convention in 1964.[722]

Activists within SNCC and other organizations that were growing frustrated with the road

blocks to integration and looking for alternatives were open to the idea of black power

when Carmichael declared, "What we gonna start sayin' now is black power." Though at

the time, black power was more of a rallying cry than an ideology, he was soon pressed

to define the term. In his book on the topic, Carmichael explained black power as "a call

for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of

community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their

own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist

institutions and values of this society."[723] In 1967, Carmichael and others in SNCC

applied black power to the organization by expelling all of its white members. Malcolm

X's espousal of black control is clearly seen in Carmichael's black power. Today,

historians know that the foundations of black power spread beyond Malcolm X to the

cultural expressions of LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) and the work of Roger William's

Deacons for Defense.[724] One can even see the drift toward local control in TWO's motto

of self-determination. In fact, the notion of local control was key to Alinsky's method of

achieving community power. But while TWO would be interested in the attention to

black power, CCCO-SCLC and JOIN's responses varied from resistance to appropriation

depending upon their notions of democracy.

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[722] Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[723] Carmichael and Hamilton, *Black Power*, 44.

[724] On the origins of black power see: Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*; Joseph, *The Black Power Movement*; Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour*; Ogbar, *Black Power*.

Black power conflicted not only with JOIN's understanding of participatory democracy, it also contradicted the organization's original belief in SDS's idea of an *interracial* movement of the poor. Yet JOIN vacillated between resisting black power's rejection of integration and embracing the idea that whites and blacks should organize separately. From its beginning, JOIN organizers believed that poor whites could overcome their racist beliefs if they could relate to blacks on economic issues. In short, JOIN emphasized class not race. "We believe that poor people, whether they be black, white, Spanish or Indian," wrote JOIN activists, "have a similar relationship with the dominant society and are exploited by it."[725] In his history of ERAP, Richard Rothstein stressed the organization's desire to affect the economic outlook of civil rights organizations in order to build an interracial movement of the poor. "We clearly demonstrated that racism could be overcome by poor whites" through working with black community groups on common issues.[726] And this proved to be a theme in Todd Gitlin and Nanci Hollander's oral history of Uptown. Bobby Joe Wright admitted, "So for a long time I didn't dig colored people. […] When it really started changin' was when I got into JOIN."[727] Initially, JOIN tried to combine this class based organization with black power. In an open letter to Mayor Daley, JOIN wrote, "Today we are uniting under the banner of People's Power. […] As Southern whites begin to fight for their rights they find out that the enemy isn't the Negro, Indian, or Puerto Rican, but the man downtown who runs his life. Therefore, we see that the Negroes who say 'Black Power' want the

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[725] Mike James and Bob Lawson, "Poor White Response to Black Rebellion," in *Don't Mourn, Organize: SDS Guide to Community Organizing* (San Francisco: The Movement Press, 1968), 28.
[726] Richard Rothstein, "The Evolution of the ERAP Organizers," in *The New Left: A Collection of Essays* (Boston: Extending Horizons Books, 1969), 282.
[727] Gitlin and Hollander, *Uptown; Poor Whites in Chicago*, 423.

same things that we do when we say 'Hillbilly Power.'"[728] Continuing to stress class,

Michael James wrote an article in *New Left Notes* refuting a charge that whites have no

place in the new black power movement. "A number of us organize in terms of poor

people and rich people," he wrote. "Understanding of class, power, control, influence,

etc. in the society becomes more sophisticated as the person spends more time around

JOIN…." James argued that organizing around class was more effective, charging, "Poor

people's power is more radical than Black Power."[729] JOIN even went so far as to

explain the urban rebellions, "not as race riots, but as class wars."[730]

Because of its class-based outlook, JOIN was concerned that black power's

emphasis on race would destroy the connection between poor whites and poor blacks.

JOIN had made some inroads with a group of young, white men called the Good Fellows

by helping them see they faced the same obstacles as blacks. In particular, the Good

Fellows began to relate to blacks on the issue of police brutality, one said, "they got the

same problem; I don't care what color they are, we've gotta control those damn

police."[731] When the Good Fellows and JOIN, tried to participate in a march against

police brutality with a black organization, the cries for black power forced the Good

Fellows to leave. Bobby McGinnis, a member of the Good Fellows and JOIN, reported,

"When I got to the rally there was a boy standing in the middle of the street screaming

black power. So Todd [Gitlin] and I went upstairs to hear the speeches and people got up

and said 'the white man is the killer—kill the white man' all through the meeting. At the

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[728] JOIN Community Union, "Statement to Mayor Daley and Superintendent O.W. Wilson," 1.
[729] Mike James, "ERAP Report: JOIN," *New Left Notes*, August 24, 1966, 31.
[730] James and Lawson, "Poor White Response to Black Rebellion," 28.
[731] James, "ERAP Report: JOIN," 31.

end of the meeting Todd got up to speak and as he went up front he heard people say 'white trash' and 'fuck whitey.'"[732] Despite having successfully worked with them in the past, JOIN and the Good Fellows distanced themselves from this black organization because of its emphasis on black power and separatism. James further explained the problems black power posed to JOIN's class based organizing when he complained, "Let us just say it hurts our organizing efforts every time we hear Stokely [Carmichael] or Rap Brown talk about black power and fail to give it a class tone such as 'black people, Spanish people and poor whites are exploited by the same ogre.'"[733]

Moreover, James argued that in order for the black movement to be successful, it needed to relate to radical, poor whites. While members of JOIN agreed that whites should organize in white communities, they believed that at some point the two groups needed to ally themselves around a common class interest. "One of our tasks at this time," according to James, "is to start to lay the groundwork for a working class movement, encompassing students, and professionals as well, that can coalesce with blacks and the third world." Failure to do so "lends itself to the increased repression of the black people."[734] Believing it "provides an example to be emulated," JOIN encouraged white radicals to organize poor whites in other communities.[735] In a display of self-importance, JOIN organizers James and Bob Lawson warned that the failure to organize poor whites "may be helping to make more real the genocide of black people."

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[732] Richard Rothstein, "Coordinator's Report," May 8, 1967, 2, Box 6, Folder 2, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.

[733] James and Lawson, "Poor White Response to Black Rebellion," 30.

[734] Mike James, "Putting White Radicals to Work or Making Sure Our Friends Don't become Our Enemies," *New Left Notes*, October 9, 1967, 1.

[735] Mike James, "Getting Ready for the Firing Line," *New Left Notes*, June 26, 1967, 11.

White radicals needed to act immediately "so that black people will not be isolated and crushed, and so a radical movement can begin to develop in America."[736] Although JOIN made the case for a class centered approach to organizing, black power's separatism and concentration on black community interests continued to draw support from ghetto dwellers. To a people who faced regular discrimination based on the color of their skin, organizing according the class interest just did not have the draw of black power.

Having practiced many of its tenets since the group's inception, the Woodlawn Organization easily incorporated the slogan of black power. An editorial in the *Woodlawn Observer* noted the similarity in message in pointing out "that Stokely Carmichael's latest definition of the term uses 'self-determination,' which has been TWO's central work for six years."[737] This explanation of black power from Carmichael's book could easily be used by TWO: "The goal of black self-determination and black identity—Black Power—is full participation in the decisions making processes affecting the lives of black people, and recognition of the virtues of themselves as black people."[738] In 1963, Alinsky told the black community the importance of organized power was to "get that which is every man's rightful heritage, his dignity, and equality."[739] Moreover, members of TWO spoke of the need for black leadership and black control, pre-dating black power's popularity. "Whites cannot speak for us," Charles Henderson told the *TWO Newsletter* in 1964. "We must have our own voice in

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[736] James and Lawson, "Poor White Response to Black Rebellion," 30.
[737] "Compare Kennedy & Malcolm X," *Woodlawn Observer*, September 22, 1966, 10.
[738] Carmichael and Hamilton, *Black Power*, 47.
[739] Alinsky, "Emancipation--Not a Proclamation," 3.

the power structure."[740] Another community leader argued that because "the power structure" has prevented blacks from helping themselves, "the people have to build a vehicle for doing the job themselves. That is what TWO is."[741]

But after organizing around self-determination for half a decade, TWO knew that for this new ideology to be successful, black power must move beyond slogans to building organizations and results "without which there can be no power."[742] Alinsky and his IAF staff organizers built a sense of responsibility and knowledge within TWO that organizing and action were more important than words, promises, and slogans. He expressed support and apprehension of black power in his 1969 afterword to *Reveille for Radicals*. While he recognized the "desperate" need for power in the black community, Alinsky was "gravely concerned that those who talk black power will do no more than talk, will not engage in the arduous, tedious job of organization."[743] TWO members echoed these worries announcing in an editorial that the discussion must move beyond "these slogans and grapple with real meanings." They conceded that without grass roots organizing, black people will never have power and will "never control their own destinies."[744] Arthur Brazier's 1969 book on TWO confirmed this position, "Without organization there is no power, only talk."[745]

Though TWO found commonalities in its mission and black power, the organization only adopted those aspects of black power that fit with their concept of self-

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[740] "Portrait of a Leader; Charles Henderson," 2.
[741] "Portrait of a Leader, James Grammer," 3.
[742] "Compare Kennedy & Malcolm X," 10.
[743] Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, 213.
[744] "Editorial; The Riots: Two Loud, Clear Messages," *Woodlawn Observer*, July 21, 1966, 1.
[745] Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 18.

determination and democracy. A crucial component of self-determination was local control, also found in black power. Members of TWO supported black power in that it confirmed their previous activity. It, however, gave them a new vocabulary and a platform from which to share their organizing ideas. Though they had been organizing around many of the same ideas as black power, TWO's principle of self-determination had not found the popularity of black power. By contributing to the public debates over the meanings and actions of black power, TWO both shared and reconfirmed its commitment to self-determination as a means to achieving democracy. One message added to the discussion was that power does not mean violence. This was a condition Alinsky spent two decades trying to clarify. TWO explained in numerous editorials: Power gives people control over their own destinies. And groups throughout history have organized for power. Now, it just happened to be blacks organizing. This has caused some to "react hysterically to black power" and forget that "social change is forced by organized interest groups."[746] Brazier, a true student of Alinsky, explained, "The price of acquiring power is conflict and confrontation; but neither need be violent."[747] Moreover, blacks call for black power and self-determination, "not as a threat of violence, but as a show of self-confidence and ability to change things."[748]

Before the demand for black power, TWO used the rhetoric of self-control and self-determination versus dependency, including describing the ghetto as engaged in a colonial style relationship much like proponents of black power would. Tired of outside

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[746] "Editorial; The Riots: Two Loud, Clear Messages," 1; "Editorial; The Times They Are a 'Changin'," *Woodlawn Observer*, August 4, 1966, 1.
[747] Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 5.
[748] Ibid., 13.

control, a 1964 newsletter article described TWO's anti-poverty programs as an "utter

disregard of the ivory towered dictums of the all wise social planners." Instead, "the

community has developed an all abiding faith in getting **their** problems solved through

their organization."[749] This language was also clear in TWO's pursuit of War on Poverty

funds. The manner in which Stevenson framed his arguments and the vocabulary of the

two Black Papers presaged the popularity of black power and black nationalism. When

TWO re-elected Brazier president in 1967, the newsletter took the opportunity to tie his

leadership to black power through the language of "colonization," noting that Woodlawn

"long ago freed themselves from the strangle-hold" of outside control.[750] Similarly,

TWO had focused on the effects of a non-community based economy with its Square

Deal Campaign and the fight against absentee landlords. In these fights, TWO used the

language of self-determination to explain its programs for fair business practices and

attentive landlords. After black power, their rhetoric included not just militancy but

black pride. In a strongly worded editorial that accused some of Woodlawn's businesses

of "drain[ing] the community of its liquid assets, and thereby rap[ing] it of its potential

for building…," the *Observer* called for "a broad spectrum of black owned and black

operated businesses to fit the needs of an electrically alive black people—dedicated to

saving the broad breath of Negro life, and making it our own, from church to grocery

store."[751] The Woodlawn Organization further connected its history to black power and

pride in its "Solidarity Day" celebration in the fall of 1968: "Greater than any single

voice, man, or faction is the very spirit of SOUL-POWER, manifested in the people

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[749] Emphasis in original. "Poverty in Woodlawn," 3.
[750] "Mandate: 'Stand Together'," 1.
[751] "Editorial..," 4.

themselves, and their collective strength in organized effort, through THE WOODLAWN

ORGANIZATION, as the people fight for 'Self-Determination.'"[752] Topics for the

convention included pride in "Blackness," the meaning of black power and its

relationship to TWO programs, TWO's history, and community unity. Finally, TWO

supported independent politics and local politicians in its fight against the Daley machine

much like black power would later demand. Only, TWO called this self-determination,

not black power. Though, once the terminology became available, TWO members

adopted black power to label "political and economic independence for the Negroes" and

the "demand to be recognized as people like other people."[753]

As a generally conservative civil rights organization made up of middle-class,

church, labor, and integrated organizations, the CCCO did not embrace black power as

The Woodlawn Organization did. It is also understandable that with its partnership with

SCLC, the Chicago Freedom Movement would continue to focus on non-violence instead

of black power. Even before its alliance with SCLC, CCCO was reluctant to involve

itself with groups that espoused black nationalism, a precursor to black power. In 1964,

the Muslim Brotherhood, a group affiliated with the Nation of Islam, applied for

membership in the CCCO. Unlike any other applicant, representatives of the Muslim

Brotherhood faced scrutiny from the CCCO. When questioned about their ties to the

Nation of Islam and whether they thought equality was possible without integration, the

Brotherhood tried to calm the fears of CCCO members. One comment in particular

might have concerned some white CCCO members, when asked whether whites were

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[752] "TWO Solidarity Day Sept. 28," *The Observer*, September 25, 1968, 1.
[753] "Quotes of the Week: Woodlawn Men and Women Speak Up on the Hot Issues," *Woodlawn Observer*, July 21, 1966, 10.

friends or foes, the Brotherhood representative replied, "If he was our friend, we wouldn't be here in the civil rights movement."[754] The discussion continued at the next meeting, one black CCCO delegate saying, "The white community no longer can determine how the Negro is to be free and that he is not concerned about public relations among the white community." Whereas a white member worried that this would push all whites out of the civil rights movement.[755] The conflicting goals and backgrounds of the groups within the CCCO made consensus difficult. The decision was postponed again until the next month's meeting where after much debate, the Muslim Brotherhood failed to achieve two-thirds support from the CCCO delegates.[756] Though over half of the delegates supported the Brotherhood, the group as a whole was not prepared to allow black nationalist ideas a direct voice in the organization.

Further illustrating its ideological distance from black power, the programs and campaigns the CCCO supported in its early years reflected its commitment to nonviolence and integration before its collaboration with SCLC. In particular, its protests against Superintendent Willis were motivated by the desire to desegregate schools in Chicago. While some organizations within CCCO demonstrated a sense of black nationalism such as TWO and CORE, groups such as the Catholic Interracial Council and the NAACP did not. The effect of these varying views, like the conflicts between direct action and negotiation factions in the school boycott debates, brought the group to the middle. Its alliance with SCLC, however, confirmed that CCCO would not openly advocate black power in its rhetoric or in its programs.

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[754] "CCCO Minutes," April 4, 1964, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[755] "CCCO Minutes," April 25, 1964, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[756] "CCCO Minutes."

Once black power became part of the public discourse, King and the Chicago

Freedom Movement were forced to defend their opposition while not alienating those

interested in black power. At the kick-off rally of the Chicago Freedom Movement at

Soldier Field on July 10, 1966, a group of young black men paraded around the field

carrying a banner reading "Black Power." They also held signs with key civil rights

phrases such as "We Shall Overcome" and "Freedom Now" with a drawing of a machine

gun.[757] Clearly captivated by Carmichael's rally cry of black power and his disavowal of

nonviolence, these youths brought the call to a demonstration to end segregation. In

addition, Floyd McKissick shared the stage with King at the rally. McKissick and CORE

had recently repudiated nonviolence and embraced black power. King felt compelled to

address the issue of black power in his speech. King called for civil rights leaders to

form a "coalition of conscience," to not let their differences divide the movement.

Fearful that black power meant separatism; King reminded the crowd that blacks and

whites were "tied in a single garment of destiny."[758] The Chicago Freedom Movement's

attention to open housing further confirmed its commitment to non-violence and its goal

of integration. Yet King and SCLC were compelled to respond to black power on many

occasions. In a letter to supporters, King criticized the "violent connotations" attached to

the words. He reaffirmed SCLC's devotion to non-violence and black/white alliance

because their method was related to their objective. King explained, "We have never

sought the moral goal of freedom and equality by immoral means." However, King

understood the frustration from which it developed writing, "The inconsistencies,

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[757] "Thousands Go to Soldiers' Field Rights Rally," 2.
[758] "Dr. King Urges Unity with Non-Violence," *The Pittsburgh Press*, July 11, 1966, 10.

resistance, and faintheartedness of those in power give desperate Negroes the feeling that a real solution is hopelessly distant." Moreover, he was sympathetic to the desire for power so that blacks "can act in their own interests as an independent social force." Despite this understanding, King refused to concede to separatism or violence. Believing the majority of blacks wanted "a community in which neither power nor dignity will be colored black or white," he reiterated his faith in integration.[759] He was equally vocal about his loyalty to nonviolence. In articles, he pointed to the success of non-violence both in attaining the goals of the movement but also in preventing violence. Furthermore, he distinguished between self-defense and aggressive violence saying that the line between the two was thin: "When violence is tolerated even as a means of self-defense there is grave danger that in the fervor of emotion the main fight will be lost over the question of self-defense." In addition, if the goal was a beloved community, one must put an end to fear and violence.[760]

Though King was the spokesman for SCLC and drew the most media attention for the Chicago Freedom Movement, he did not represent the sole opinion of CCCO in regard to black power. He explained his position at a CCCO meeting in September, telling the group he supported black power if it meant amassing political and economic power to achieve a goal. However, he opposed all connections to violence and warned that when it "falls on the ears of frustrated people," it "means violence." As he had in other venues, King stressed the need for alliances with the white community noting that

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[759] Martin Luther King to Dear Friend, July 1966, 1–2, Alan Anderson Private Papers.
[760] Martin Luther King, "Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom," *Ebony*, October 1966, 28–30.

other ethnic groups "did it by constructive alliances."[761] At the fall 1966 CCCO retreat,

Ed Riddick submitted a report that identified three informal groups vying for power in

CCCO: black power groups, black power groups with reservations, and an integrationist-

equal opportunity faction. The black power organizations, according to Riddick,

espoused militancy and questioned the role of whites in the movement. On the other

hand, the black power with reservations groups wanted to expand black leadership but

not lead to an all-black movement. The integrationists sought integration as its goal and

has concentrated on schools and housing.[762] Clearly, King's dedication to non-violence

did not speak for the entire organization.

After the disappointment of the summit agreement and the withdrawal of most of

the SCLC staff, the CCCO did find meaning in one definition of black power that suited

their needs. In the spring of 1967, CCCO's newsletter published an article under the title

"Black Power." In this column, the newsletter utilized the economic independence aspect

of black power. "Black money doesn't have to wind up in the white man's downtown

bank accounts," announced the newsletter. Instead, blacks should keep their money in

black communities by frequenting black merchants.[763] In addition, the CCCO advocated

building black political power by organizing from within in order to "exercise our full

power in a united effort for dignity and rights."[764] But, in the program suggestions for

1967, the divisions within CCCO Riddick identified still existed. The authors of the

proposal described four positions on the sources of power including support for a

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[761] "CCCO Meeting [minutes]," 1.
[762] Riddick, "Race, Conflict and the Movement: An Assessment," 1.
[763] "Black Power," *CCCO Newsletter*, 1967, 1.
[764] "Real Power," *CCCO Newsletter*, 1967, 3.

continued coalition of blacks, whites, churches and labor organization, the class centered

interpretation of uniting poor whites and poor blacks, those that wanted blacks to

"develop their economic and political power themselves," and groups that believed poor

blacks were the key to change.[765] Because the CCCO was an organization of

organizations with as many interpretations of power, nonviolence, and race, the group

would never fully embrace black power, nor would it ever fully denounce it. As with the

debates over boycotts or negotiations, the CCCO was forced to practice coalition politics,

negotiating between extremes in an attempt to both please everyone and no one.

Conclusion

The Daley machine, the War on Poverty, and black power debates influenced and

shaped how community organizations practiced democracy in Chicago. For obvious

reasons, the Daley machine's power over the city foiled attempts to create a more

democratic society. If an organization did not speak in Daley's terms, he would ignore

their complaints. TWO and Alinsky recognized this. They exercised their political

power when possible to force Daley to address their needs. Small organizations such as

JOIN would never have the influence of TWO. Too small to exercise the political muscle

necessary to combat the machine, JOIN fought on an intellectual level. They used the

machine to teach community members about democracy and to connect their local

problems with a citywide cause. While a large organization, CCCO-SCLC did not learn

to speak Daley's language of votes. Although the open housing marches eventually

forced him to a negotiating table, nothing the Chicago Freedom Movement did made him

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[765] "CCCO-1967," 1967, 3, Box 20, Folder 3, Pitcher Papers, U of C.

follow through on his promises. His only incentive was to stop the marching, not meet the demands of the marchers.

For community organizing groups in Chicago, the War on Poverty represented a confluence of two issues, the machine and poverty. Although all three organizations were interested in eliminating the sources of poverty as well as easing the suffering of the poor, the success of combining this with democracy was frustrated by the machine. Daley's control over the anti-poverty money meant that the democratic nature of "maximum feasible participation" would not happen in Chicago. Because "maximum feasible participation" dovetailed with their philosophies of participatory democracy and self-determination, respectively, JOIN and TWO saw promise in the War on Poverty only to have it crushed in the power of the Chicago machine. Only when TWO circumvented the Chicago Committee on Urban Opportunity to the OEO did any of the organizations get control of a program. And when TWO did, the machine saw to it that it would not last. Although CCCO-SCLC was interested in anti-poverty, the open housing campaign consumed them. It is doubtful, however, that they would have had any success in influencing War on Poverty programs in Chicago. Daley controlled the War on Poverty in Chicago and was not interested in letting any organization instruct him on how create programs.

Black power developed as an ideology while these organizations battled machine politics and struggled for War on Poverty programs. Each organization interpreted black power in its own way but in accord with its existing theory of democracy. JOIN, while emphasizing a class-based approach, expanded black power to a broader poor people's

power. Believing that organizing blacks and whites separately would lead to a joint

movement, JOIN supported black power. At the same time, the group worried about the

separatist or race-based interpretation of the slogan that would draw away from the

common fight poor people of both races had against poverty and representative

government. TWO's motto of self-determination, on the other hand, seemed in many

ways to be a precursor to black power. Stressing self-control of programs, plans, and

decisions that affected Woodlawn, TWO's practices fit with black power's focus on

black control. TWO's attempts to gain power independent of the political machine also

anticipated black power's call for racial solidarity. In addition, TWO adopted the

language of black power to explain its philosophy and added black pride as an extension

of its pride in community. However, the organization did not support black power's

renunciation of non-violence. Believing power did not equate to violence, TWO

accepted only the parts of black power that fit with their existing beliefs. The CCCO,

before its alliance with SCLC, observed a coalition style organization that balanced the

views of moderates and militants with the former having greater control over the former.

The moderates or conservatives would not allow black nationalist groups like the Muslim

Brotherhood into the organization. In addition, the debates over direct action versus

negotiation demonstrated the middle road the organization would take even after its

alliance with SCLC. SCLC as King's organization would never embrace black power.

Firmly committed to nonviolence, SCLC's partnership with CCCO in the Chicago

Freedom Movement would mean that neither would adopt the tenets of black power.

Nevertheless, they could not entirely alienate those within the movement who found the

ideology compelling. Floyd McKissick, representing CORE after it adopted black power,

spoke alongside King at a freedom rally. Moreover, King, in his writings, recognized the

appeal of black power but did not give up on his commitment to nonviolence. The

various groups within CCCO espoused different views on black power allowing the

moderate path to take precedence.

CONCLUSION

The three organizations under study here made valiant efforts to create a more democratic society in Chicago. While none of the organizations experienced monumental success, they each leave behind lessons in organizing and democracy. By examining the democracy of JOIN, TWO, CCCO, one can discern a method for organizing that will lead to some success. In addition, the failures of the organizations serve as warning to future organizers.

Each group's understanding of democracy determined its effectiveness in achieving its desired goals. All in all, TWO was the most successful in attaining power and the ability to make the decisions that affected its community. Its pragmatic style of democracy meant that the organization would work with the opposition forces when beneficial and resist them when it was not. In this way, democracy was not an absolute ideal, but rather it adapted to obstacles and circumstances. As seen in its support of the bond issue, TWO worked with the city when it offered benefits and fought against segregated schools when it did not. JOIN and CCCO, on the other hand, maintained an opposition stance—fighting outside forces of power wherever and whenever. JOIN activists consistently defined itself against others, arguing they knew what was best for the community as seen in their understanding of how to end poverty. Without any evidence or experience, JOIN activists believed the poor themselves know how to solve poverty. Daley made clear in his conversation with Johnson that this idea was not based in reality. This extreme stance prevented JOIN from negotiating policy for the community's benefit. Illustrating similar opposition, the CCCO opposed the bond issue

because it came from the city, a source of opposition power. This stance continued when

it allied with SCLC. The Chicago Freedom Movement's open housing marches are a

prime example of confrontation with the city. While confrontation certainly worked in

some cases, at times, choosing when to confront and when to work with outside forces

would have better results. The various factions within CCCO prevented it from

translating its direct action campaigns into concrete gains. In the end, the flexibility and

pragmatism of TWO present a course for the greatest success.

But, each organization had problems implementing democracy. Recently,

political scientists have focused attention on the democratic nature of mixed

organizations. In particular, they have looked at the role of listening in the democratic

practices of an organization. Susan Bickford writes that listening allows political actors

to "decide democratically how to act in the face of conflict, and to clarify the nature of

the conflict at hand." She points out that democracy is weakened when all voice are not

heard.[766] Similarly, listening is necessary for deliberation, a key component of the

democratic process. But, Lynn Sanders argues that in some instances, marginalized

groups are not listened to—namely women, minorities, and the poor. She suggests that a

deliberative democracy is harmful in these situations because it gives the illusion of

democracy that all points are heard equally.[767] The problem of listening is clearly seen in

the organizations under study here. The student activists in JOIN failed to listen to the

community members who wanted the students to take a backseat. It was the students'

failure to listen that led to the community to ask the students to leave. The Woodlawn

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[766] Susan Bickford, *The Dissonance of Democracy: Listening, Conflict, and Citizenship* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 3.

[767] Lynn M. Sanders, "Against Deliberation," *Political Theory* 25, no. 3 (June 1997): 347.

Organization's relationship with IAF illustrated selective listening. Although the community wanted certain programs like the school strike, IAF organizers vetoed the community to pursue what they believed where more helpful goals. While IAF and Alinsky did this for the benefit of TWO, its democratic nature was weakened by ignoring the desires of the community. Similarly, the CCCO and SCLC had trouble listening to each other. SCLC's desire to focus on slums ignored the wishes of CCCO member organizations with other agendas. The fact that the two groups did not communicate well inhibited their ability to truly exercise democracy and hurt their ability to be effective.

Other failures of democratic organizing in Chicago can be seen in what happened after the disappointing Summit Agreement. Though King's nonviolent direct action highlighted the immorality of racism to spur change, it did not build a lasting community organization. In his later writings, King began to understand that mass demonstrations were not enough. In his last book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* he admitted that demonstrations "must be supplemented by a continuing job of organization."[768] However, this was not what happened in Chicago. The mass demonstrations were largely a failure and SCLC quietly left Chicago after the summit agreement. In the wake of this disappointment, organizers committed to Chicago for the long term sought to build organizations to accomplish what marching could not. These organizers created a Union of Organizers and founded a School of Community Organization.[769] Rennie Davis and Richard Rothstein of JOIN and Al Raby of CCCO were coordinators and teachers at the school. In the face of the Chicago Freedom

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[768] King, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*, 131.
[769] Mike James, "Chicago Organizing School," *New Left Notes*, April 24, 1967, 3.

Movement's failures, they recognized the need to build more community organizations.

"Chicago's deepest problems," according to the School's pamphlet, "have found not

solution in a strategy that 'mobilizes' people around issues of conscience and, at best,

generates temporary influence rather than permanent power." Instead, the poor required

economic and political power through ghetto organizations. To create these

organizations, the poor needed trained organizers.[770] The Union of Organizers recruited

radical historian and anti-war activist, Staughton Lynd to head the school. Freshly

unemployed from Yale due to his anti-war trip to Hanoi, Lynd had experience teaching in

the movement having headed the Freedom Schools in Mississippi Freedom Summer in

1964. The School of Community Organizers sought to do what marches and King could

not, build a sustainable movement. Through a three-month intensive training program,

the School provided classes on the political machine, strategies and tactics, financing, and

urban renewal among other pertinent topics.[771] First and foremost, the School would

build poor people organizations by training those in the community. The School gave

preference blacks over whites and those who grew up in a ghetto to those who did not

because the organizers would largely be working in poor black communities.[772]

The School of Community Organization fulfilled the needs of a sustained Chicago

movement that neither JOIN nor CCCO-SCLC could. JOIN's middle class college

student activists necessarily were separate from the people they organized. In the end,

this difference forced the removal of the student activists from the organization. In the

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[770] "To Change a City!," 1967, 4–5, Box 2, Folder 5, Paul Booth Papers, WHS.

[771] Al Raby, Rennie Davis, and Curtis Hayes, "School of Community Organization," 1967, 5–6, Box 7, Folder 5, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.

[772] "To Change a City!," 20.

School, former JOIN activists would train local organizers, not become organizers themselves. In this way, they would build a movement of the people by the people. For CCCO-SCLC, the difficulties surrounded the variety of organizations within the CCCO, many of which were not community based. These organizations did not build community power; they tried to correct segregation by treating the instances of racism such as demanding the removal of Superintendent Benjamin Willis from office. The CCCO's coalition with SCLC highlighted this problem. King and SCLC did not represent a community building movement. Instead, they came to a community and drew attention to racial segregation through mass demonstrations. SCLC did not leave the community with an organization or power after it left for the next demonstration. Raby, frustrated by this reality, found an answer in the School of Community Organization. By training organizers, he would help build community power that would maintain after the marchers went home.

After SCLC left Chicago, CCCO tried to force the city to uphold the Summit Agreement and returned to its original program of school desegregation. It lobbied for open housing legislation in the state assembly with no success. When Benjamin Willis retired, the CCCO had some hope that the new superintendent would address their concerns. However, they were soon disappointed in James Redmond's plan for integration that included quota limits for blacks enrolled in white neighborhood schools. The CCCO rejected this plan as more of Chicago's racist policies. But this time, few were listening to its complaints. In fact, the CCCO itself was in organizational disarray. Many organizations had not paid dues in two years, and major offices were left

unfilled.[773] In late 1967, Al Raby announced his resignation as convener of CCCO. He

was exhausted and planned to return to school. "It is tragic," he said, "that after so many

young people have marched, and some have died, we find ourselves with the same kind

of problems as when we started, and with little hope of change."[774] His statement

reflected the general feeling in the Chicago civil rights movement at the moment.

The School of Community Organization's emphasis on training local people as

organizers demonstrated that the student activists in JOIN knew their position as

community organizers was problematic. The actions initiated by the student activists

failed to result in the mass participation they promised. The sense of failure caused

resentment among the activists and the community members and highlighted tensions

between the organizers and those being organized. Community members began to accuse

the student activists of elitism. First, the welfare committee separated from JOIN.

Already an active part of JOIN and run primarily by welfare recipients, the committee no

longer needed JOIN's support. They formed the Welfare Recipients Demand Action

(WRDA, pronounced war-day) and began to work independently. In January 1968, the

white community members of JOIN asked the activists to leave. The community

members pointed to the student activists' "unwillingness, or inability, to fade from the

scene" as the source of "tensions that in some cases resulted in open hostility."[775]

Identifying themselves as part of a larger white working class movement, the community

people of JOIN formed the National Community Union (NCU) to carry on the class-

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[773] Anderson and Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line*, 334–335.

[774] Raby as quoted in Ibid., 336.

[775] Peggy Terry and Doug Youngblood, "JOIN/NCU to End the Rumors," *New Left Notes*, February 26, 1968.

based issues the student activists in JOIN had emphasized.[776] No longer part of JOIN, the student activists turned to other interests.

Although neither JOIN nor the CCCO survived past 1968, The Woodlawn Organization did. After 1968, TWO continued on its path of embracing black power ideology. It became more involved in electoral politics in 1972 by supporting black candidates in citywide races. *The Observer* was filled with articles addressing black pride, black politics, and black business. TWO took part in the Black Political Convention held in Gary, Indiana in March 1972 where more than 4,000 African Americans met to discuss united political action. Not only did TWO seek new ways to express black power and local control, it turned to a new programing focus.

After struggling against the Daley machine in the Youth Manpower Project, TWO learned a valuable lesson, community control was nearly impossible to implement through government programs in Chicago.[777] Instead of struggling against city hall, TWO turned toward community development. In September 1970, *The Observer* announced, "TWO—From Protest to Program," and signaled this shift.[778] In addition to building its position and influence on the boards and advisory councils of local agencies, TWO continued its own programs to help the community including a health center and job training programs through private grants. Moreover, TWO's community development plan called for revenue building projects that would both aid the community

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[776] "JOIN People Form NCU; Gain SDS Support," *New Left Notes*, January 8, 1968.

[777] TWO also attempted to circumvent city agencies to work directly with federal sources in an experimental high school in conjunction with the University of Chicago and the Model Cities Program. Both were thwarted by interference and obstruction by the Daley machine. For more on these programs see Woodlawn Organization, *Woodlawn's Model Cities Plan; a Demonstration of Citizen Responsibility.* (Northbrook, IL: Whitehall Co., 1970); John Fish, *Black Power/White Control: the Struggle of the Woodlawn Organization in Chicago* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1973).

[778] "TWO--From Protest to Program," *The Observer*, September 6, 1970, 1.

and fund the organization. After 1970, TWO owned and managed a grocery store, a gas station, a theater, and a security service. The organization created the Woodlawn Community Development Corporation to manage TWO's overall community development plans. Moreover, TWO became involved in supplying affordable housing for Woodlawn's residents. Through private and federal grants, TWO built new housing as well as rehabilitated rundown and abandoned buildings.   Clearly, TWO had become a different organization than the one Alinsky had founded in 1960. No longer focused on self-determination, TWO did not build power within the community; instead it began doing things for the community. As John Fish, a participant in TWO, observed, "By 1971, TWO had moved from conflict to coexistence."[779]

This shift coincided with Rev. Arthur Brazier's resignation from TWO. His replacement, E. Duke McNeil, also illustrated the change in direction. TWO's previous presidents had been pastors known for their keen speaking skills. McNeil was a lawyer, a technical skill the new Woodlawn Organization needed for its community development programs.[780] Leon Finney, executive director of TWO while it was still under the watchful eye of Alinsky and IAF, consolidated his power as executive director of both TWO and the Development Corporation, a position he holds today. Currently, TWO holds a place in Woodlawn as an organization that advocates for the people. It spearheaded a program to end gun violence called Ceasefire and a campaign for job creation. The organization also continues its community development initiatives.[781] While its means have changed, TWO still works for the benefit of the Woodlawn

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[779] Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 294.
[780] Ibid., 297–298.
[781] For the current information on TWO see their website at http://twochicago.org/.

community. Its ability to adapt meant that TWO would be a long-lasting community

organization and prevented TWO from going the way of JOIN and CCCO.

Alinsky used to say that an effective organizer must begin where the community

is, not where he or she wants it to be. In other words, the organizer must take the

community as it stands and apply an appropriate democratic organizing technique to that

specific situation. The student activists in JOIN did not do this. They arrived in Chicago

with a notion of participatory democracy where the people decide. But, that method was

not the best suited to Uptown, nor were the students able to adequately follow their own

dictates to "let the people decide." Similarly, CCCO's relationship with SCLC illustrated

the failure of taking a method that worked in the south and applying it in the Chicago.

King and his advisors did not take Chicago as it was, including the diverse nature of the

CCCO member organization and the complexities of the political machine. The School

of Community Organizers was meant to address the failure of JOIN and CCCO-SCLC by

building community leaders and organizations. In the end, Alinsky's application of his

own advice in Woodlawn made TWO the most successful of the three organizations. He

and his organizers worked with Woodlawn as it was, not what they wanted it to be. This

allowed TWO to develop successful programs that addressed community needs and to

build community membership in the organization. It also taught the organization to adapt

to changing times and conditions. After 1968, TWO turned its attention to community

development, leading the organization into its next stage of pragmatic democracy.

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