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SUBURBS IN BLACK AND WHITE:
RACE, JOBS & POVERTY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY LONG ISLAND

By

Tim Keogh

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2016

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the
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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract**SUBURBS IN BLACK AND WHITE:
RACE, JOBS & POVERTY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY LONG ISLAND**

By
Tim Keogh

Advisor: Professor Judith Stein

“Suburbs in Black and White” examines how economic development shaped African American suburbanization on Long Island, New York from 1920 through 1980. After 1940, the fortunes of Long Island’s growing black population shifted from widespread poverty to upward social mobility, though by the 1960s, a divide emerged between the rising black middle class and black working poor, and distinctly ‘black’ suburbs emerged with problems familiar to postwar inner cities. While urban racial inequality is often framed in terms of housing segregation and the city/suburb divide, census and labor market data reveal that structural economic change across the New York metropolitan region produced the racial gap and intra-racial class divide, regardless of urban or suburban residence. Long Island’s economy experienced the national labor market ‘twist’ after World War II, as job opportunities expanded for skilled workers and contracted for the unskilled. By the 1970s, deindustrialization reached the suburbs, leading to further job loss and strained suburban tax systems. African Americans disproportionately suffered from the transition, and their economic plight shaped the outcomes of local housing segregation. Nonetheless, the ideology of suburban ‘affluence’ and the dualism of black city versus white suburb dominated public policy in the 1960s and 1970s, obscuring the shared plight of postwar African American urban and suburban residents. By viewing the postwar suburbs from the perspective of the suburban labor market, this dissertation integrates the urban fringe and its minority residents into the broader history of late twentieth century racial and class inequality.

Acknowledgements

While writing a dissertation can feel like a solitary (and sometimes lonely) endeavor, it is a collective effort, and the project was completed with help from archivists who provided necessary evidence, Graduate Center faculty who honed my arguments and writing, and friends and family who offered support and relief. I was never alone, and the pages that follow are thanks to nearly everyone I've met over the past few years.

Writing history is impossible without sources, and dozens of archivists helped me locate the research used in this book. I wish to thank the staff of the National Archives branches in College Park and New York, the Library of Congress, and the Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Columbia University for assistance with their massive repositories. The archivists of the New York State Archives were especially supportive. Not only did they award me the Larry J. Hackman Research Residency Program, but Jim Folts directed me toward several records lacking finding aids. Last, but not least, I want to thank Kristen Nyitray and Lynn Toscano of Stony Brook University's Special Collections and University Archives. They were not only attentive to my research needs, pulling out sources unknown to me and retrieving boxes for my next visit, but they were always welcoming and friendly. I looked forward to my long weekly train rides out to Stony Brook.

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Aviation Museum all made researching Long Island's local history possible. I particularly enjoyed my time with Lawrence Feliu and other fellow ex-Grummanites at the Northrup-Grumman History Center. Lawrence pulled all sorts of interesting folders out of the center's basement, and wading through corporate documents surrounded by space suits, airplane parts, and intricate models of spacecraft was a rare treat. Debra Willett also deserves a special bit of gratitude, as does the entire staff of the Long Island Studies Institute, who put up with my countless requests for microfilms, newspaper clippings, and even videocassettes, all with a smile.

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No single person has had a greater influence on this project or my broad historical outlook than my advisor, Judith Stein. I took Professor Stein's political economy graduate course on a whim, ignorant of the subject and unaware she was one of the leading practitioners in

the field. By the end of the course, I was converted, and after working with Professor Stein over the past few years, I understand why she is such an influential scholar. She never settled for generic arguments, demanded I question conventional interpretations, combed each sentence in every draft for assertions without evidence, and motivated me to probe deeper into the sources. She is intensely demanding, but her rigor is matched by exceptional encouragement, and her enthusiasm for history is infectious. If I doubted my ideas, she pushed me toward useful scholarship or into the archives, where I could confirm my thesis or develop a new argument. She is everything one could hope for in an advisor, and I am fortunate to have written my first historical monograph with her guidance.

Support outside academia kept me sane. The friendships I cultivated at the Graduate Center, including Joseph Murphy, Michael Brenes, and Vanessa Burrows, provided much needed encouragement and camaraderie throughout my graduate career. Brendan Cooper helped me work through many of my ideas, and he offered some of the most useful comments on my drafts. I hope I can repay him for the hours he devoted to my dissertation. Peter-Christian Aigner likewise read drafts, listened to drone on about my thesis for hours, and even line-edited my introduction! But most importantly, he was a key source of mental support and motivation, and we grew closer as we jointly worked toward completion, a friendship I cherish. Friends outside the Grad Center helped too; Mike and Katherine Mulligan offered their comfy couch in Northern Virginia for my numerous trips to DC archives, and Mike provided much needed burgers and video games when I could use a break. Dan Ceriano made his spare bed available when I presented in Los Angeles, and I thoroughly enjoyed his little slice of paradise along the California coast. Lastly, I must thank my family. My mom, dad, and brother put up with me living at home long after I should have, and I could always count on a meal, babysitting, or a ride

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I got married two months after submitting my dissertation proposal, so in a sense, my wife married both me and my dissertation. In all the time since, she was an ardent supporter and has made innumerable sacrifices so this project could be completed. When I doubted my conclusions, she offered encouragement. When I needed to eat, couldn't do basic arithmetic, or forgot to email myself a chapter, she was there. And when I just needed to stop thinking about the project, she reminded me of what was most important: love and family. This was all the more essential when my wife gave birth to the cutest most wonderful little baby in the whole world. Her support remained unwavering even with the added responsibilities, taking care of our daughter while I typed away on the last draft or made a quick run to the library. I dedicate this dissertation to her simply because she remained dedicated to the dissertation, and to me, since I started. The submission of this dissertation marks the beginning of our marriage untethered to the project. Marie, I love you, and it's time for a vacation.

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Introduction

In 1951, real estate developer Taca Home Builders unveiled four-room, fully heated suburban homes in Wyandanch, a hamlet thirty-five miles east of Manhattan in Suffolk County, New York. Priced at \$7,290 and eligible for mortgages insured by the Federal Housing Administration, the homes were competitive with Levittown, the quintessential postwar American suburb, only six miles away.¹ Though similar, the two communities were competing for different customers: the Levitt brothers refused to sell to non-whites, while Taca made its product available to anyone, “to give people of all races and creeds an opportunity of owning their own home.”² This was an implicit message to aspiring black homebuyers who were denied government-insured housing elsewhere on Long Island. Taca’s ‘Carver Park’ (named in honor of black scientist George Washington Carver) was one of several housing tracts in Wyandanch catering to black homeowners, attracted to the hamlet for the same reasons whites liked Levittown: single-family homes, good schools, ‘country living,’ and well-paying jobs in nearby industries.³

Wyandanch was a ‘black’ Levittown, a result of federal housing policy that restricted mortgage subsidies to racially ‘homogenous’ suburbs, creating distinct ‘black’ and ‘white’ suburban neighborhoods in the postwar period.⁴ For whites though, Levittown was merely one

¹“Complete Homes from \$4,990,” *Amsterdam News*, December 3, 1949; “Non-Racial Dwellings Opened at Wyandanch,” *New York Times*, March 11, 1951; Levitt homes generally sold for \$6,990 to \$9,500 depending on the model in the initial years after development. See Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 236.

² “Real Estate News,” *Nassau Review-Star*, June 20, 1952, 18.

³ “New Homes Built for Minorities,” *Amsterdam News*, May 5, 1956.

⁴ Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 140; John Kimble, “Insuring Inequality: The Role of the Federal Housing Administration in the Urban Ghettoization of African Americans,” *Law & Social Inquiry* 32, Issue 2 (Spring 2007): 428-429.

subdivision among hundreds of choices reserved for white homebuyers. By comparison, there were few Wyandanches for black homeowners, which was one of five Suffolk County neighborhoods that housed nearly two-thirds of the entire county's African American population.⁵ The acute demand for black suburban housing allowed builders to forgo amenities expected for white communities. Harlem transplants Mozelle and Sullivan Hart quickly learned this after they purchased an \$8,000 home in Wyandanch in 1957, complete with a failing heater, a yard lacking topsoil, and an unpaved street out front. In contrast, Levittown homeowners enjoyed fresh asphalt, new appliances, and carefully manicured lawns, all part of Levitt's careful community planning and efforts to entice buyers.⁶ This was true across Long Island's black suburban developments, which were hastily constructed, sometimes built without proper runoff, lacked playgrounds, and in a few instances, existed near environmental hazards.⁷

Despite the disadvantages, black suburbanites formed 'places of their own.'⁸ The Hart family of Wyandanch eventually fixed the heater, grew a proper suburban front lawn, and put a second floor on the house, the same improvements white Levittowners made. They remarked that buying a home in Wyandanch was "moving into paradise," the same sentiments hundreds of Levittowners aired about their postwar suburb.⁹ Their neighbors formed civic associations, fretted about taxes, joined the school board, and attended local government meetings, unremarkable activities emulated across suburbia. Wyandanch and its sister communities were

⁵ Cavaoli, Frank J. "Ethnic Population Patterns on Long Island." in *Ethnicity in Suburbia: The Long Island Experience*, Salvatore J. LaGumina, ed., (Salvatore J. LaGumina: 1980), 16.

⁶ D.J. Hill, "In a Separate Suburbia Proud but Often Powerless, Wyandanch Residents Try to Stabilize Their Community," *Newsday*, September 23, 1990.

⁷ Christopher Sellers, *Crabgrass Crucible: Suburban Nature & the Rise of Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 54, 65.

⁸ I am borrowing Andrew Wiese's phrase for black suburbs. See Wiese, 7-9.

⁹ D.J. Hill, "In a Separate Suburbia Proud but Often Powerless, Wyandanch Residents Try to Stabilize Their Community," *Newsday*, September 23, 1990.

referred to as little ‘Harlems,’ symbols of racial progress in spite of segregation and emblematic of postwar black upward mobility. Though denied entry to Levittown, African Americans nonetheless made their own equivalents by the early 1960s, diversifying ‘white’ suburbia.

If Wyandanch was the ‘black’ equivalent of Levittown, their histories diverged after 1960. During the 1960s, median family income in Wyandanch trailed twelve percent behind Levittown and fifteen percent behind other communities in Suffolk County. By 1970, Levittown’s poverty rate stood at three percent, while seventeen percent of families lived in poverty in Wyandanch’s most populous census tract, and just under a tenth of the entire county’s welfare cases resided within the black suburb’s borders.¹⁰ Though most of Wyandanch’s homes were built after 1945, over a fifth of its housing stock was deemed ‘deteriorated or dilapidated.’ Part of this was due to shoddy construction, but multiple families moved into cellars and hastily-dormered second floors in single-family homes. Overcrowding degraded the community’s residential housing stock, strained local public services, and added children to schools without a concomitant increase in property tax contributions.¹¹ While early critics warned that the Levitts were building a suburban ‘slum,’ by the 1970s Levittowners delighted in mocking these predictions as property values soared, homeowners added garages, pools, or patios to their houses, and the children of first-generation Levittowners became homeowners in Levittown.¹² In

¹⁰ Wyandanch’s largest census tract, 1225, was the only census tract within the contiguous borders of ‘Wyandanch’ in both 1960 and 1970. See Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, *US Census ’70: Volume 6: Income* (Hauppauge, New York: Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, 1972), pp. 7, 45, 77-88; Nassau County Planning Commission, *Nassau County, New York Data Book* (Mineola, New York: Nassau County Planning Commission, June 1966), X-4; Nassau County Planning Commission, *Nassau County, New York Data Book* (Carle Place, New York: Nassau County Planning Commission, June 1974), 152; U.S. Census Bureau, *1970 Census of Population and Housing: Census Tracts, Part 14: New York, NY Standard Metropolitan Area* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1972), P-684; Robert Koubek, *Wyandanch: A Case Study of Political Impotence in a Black Suburban Ghetto* (M.A. Thesis, Queens College, 1971), 29.

¹¹ New York State Urban Development Corporation, *New York State Urban Development Corporation Annual Report 1973* (New York: Urban Development Corp, 1974), 53; “Portraits of a Housing Crisis,” *Newsday*, November 12, 1972, 11.

¹² “What’s a Levittown? It’s Good Housing,” *Newsday*, July 9, 1971, 18A; “A Plan to Keep Levittown Unchanged,” *Newsday*, October 11, 1975, 7;

contrast, Wyandanch's plight undermined its symbolism of racial progress, and a homeowner admitted that "the main concern of middle class people in Wyandanch is to get the hell out of here."¹³

Wyandanch's conditions also produced distinct political battles. While all suburbanites bickered over property taxes, zoning codes, and school quality, local conflicts in Wyandanch revolved around the black poor. Black homeowners chafed under ballooning school budgets to accommodate the district's high proportion of low-income students, and they demanded the dissolution of Wyandanch's school district in 1968, so that surrounding white suburban districts should share the burden of educating the hamlet's poor population. Their effort failed, and the district implemented austerity, drawing the ire of low-income parents.¹⁴ In 1970, local clergy and anti-poverty activists contracted with Governor Nelson Rockefeller's new public housing agency, the Urban Development Corporation, to build a public housing complex in the suburb. The low-income project threatened the middle class status of the suburb, and black homeowners, uniting with whites of neighboring hamlets, defeated the project.¹⁵ Frustrations even spilled into the streets. For three nights in August 1967, youths threw Molotov cocktails into a gas station, stores, and two homes, lit cars on fire and ignited the high school's auditorium. They hurled rocks and bottles at police and firefighters sent to calm the neighborhood and isolate the flames.¹⁶

By the 1980s, Levittowners looked forward to their fortieth anniversary of Levitt's postwar achievement, while Wyandanch was unrecognizable from its early past. A growing

¹³ Quoted in Koubek, 38.

¹⁴ "NAACP Bids State Act on Wyandanch," *Newsday*, January 6, 1968, 5; Koubek, 38, 78-82.

¹⁵ "The Wyandanch Housing Fight," *Newsday*, Jul 26, 1973, 4.

¹⁶ "School, 3 Stores set Afire on LI," *Newsday*, August 2, 1967, 11; "11 Fires Plague Wyandanch," *Newsday*, August 3, 1967, 3; "Violence Strikes L.I. Village Again," *New York Times*, August 3, 1967, 18; "Dennison Vows Wyandanch Aid," *Newsday*, August 5, 1967, 5.

population of drug users and prostitutes moved into derelict houses. Homeless individuals and addicts met in the “living room” and “Pork Chop Hill,” two wooded areas near the hamlet’s main thoroughfare. In winter months, the residents of these woods kept warm with barrel fires, but periodic police raids forced them into other parts of the community. Police battled the neighborhood’s drug problems, including a high-profile arrest and conviction of a 10-year-old who sold crack on Straight Path, the hamlet’s main thoroughfare, in 1989. The major battles over schools and housing persisted, though community activism now included campaigns to condemn vacant stores and ‘crack houses,’ reduce community addiction, and decrease gun violence.¹⁷ Daria Cooper, who had lived in Wyandanch since the 1950s, remarked that “the community has not survived as intact as it was when I grew up here.”¹⁸ Ethel Ryan Bond, who returned for her high school reunion, lamented the changes as well. In the 1960s, “it was a country town...when I drive through Wyandanch now, it hurts me. It's not Wyandanch anymore.”¹⁹

Levittown was symbolic of postwar suburbia, but the same cannot be said of Wyandanch. The Pulitzer-winning journalist Les Payne described it as a hamlet “left to the sociologists, the welfare case workers, the building-resurrection men...it is in the suburbs” he remarked tartly, “but not *of* the suburbs.”²⁰ The history of Wyandanch indeed parallels that of the nation’s inner-city neighborhoods, not the leafy-green enclaves along the urban fringe. Why such a divergent trajectory? Segregation looms large as an explanation, concentrating poverty and forcing nearly

¹⁷D.J. Hill, “In a Separate Suburbia Proud but Often Powerless, Wyandanch Residents Try to Stabilize Their Community,” *Newsday* September, 23, 1990; “Wyandanch Aims to Take Back Streets from Pushers and Prostitutes,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1993; “Wyandanch Seeks U.S. Help in Fighting Crime,” *New York Times*, October 7, 1993, B7; “Family Court Judge Finds 10-Year-Old Did Sell Crack,” *New York Times*, February 2, 1989.

¹⁸ “Wyandanch Aims to Take Back Streets from Pushers and Prostitutes,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1993.

¹⁹ D.J. Hill, “In a Separate Suburbia Proud but Often Powerless, Wyandanch Residents Try to Stabilize Their Community,” *Newsday* September, 23, 1990.

²⁰ “Growing up in Black Long Island; For Elvis Guy Hartley, Wyandanch is Suburbia,” *Newsday*, June 25, 1972, 6LI.

all African Americans, save the wealthy few, into the neighborhoods with poor black residents. This occurred in suburbs and cities alike. Though middle class African Americans could exert their status economically, they were nonetheless geographically tied to the minority poor, and the trajectory of black neighborhoods were shaped by both groups.²¹ On Long Island, residential segregation mixed with the region's balkanized government system, where the tax base rested on small communities of homeowners. Public revenues were generated from local residents, leaving black suburban schools in places like Wyandanch, where the poor and middle class shared the burden of supporting schools, starved of necessary funding.

If segregation concentrated African Americans in city and suburb, it nonetheless had distinct consequences in each space. Urban minorities were relegated to cities with declining tax bases, disappearing job opportunities, and a vanishing middle class. In the suburbs, segregation deprived black residents of broader tax revenues, not proximity to suburban jobs or middle class neighbors. A Wyandanch resident could walk or drive to major industrial centers, and Long Island's largest concentration of manufacturing firms was only five miles west. The hamlet never lost its middle class constituency. Segregation explains the concentration of minority poor, not the existence of the suburban poor themselves, who, except for local housing and related school divisions, lived in a space of plentiful opportunity. Understanding Wyandanch's distinct

²¹ William Julius Wilson contends that a black middle class served as an integral 'social buffer' in socioeconomically diverse black neighborhoods, since they could support vital community institutions during prolonged bouts of unemployment and economic contraction. When the black middle class suburbanized, poverty concentration and social dislocation from norms of employment and community institutions intensified. See William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 56-57; But as other scholars have illustrated, segregation still placed middle class residents within poor neighborhoods even if middle class residents left the poorest inner city neighborhoods. See Mary Pattillo-McCoy, *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Bruce D. Haynes, *Red Lines, Black Spaces: The Politics of Race and Space in a Black Middle-Class Suburb* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Karyn R. Lacy, *Blue-Chip Black Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), chapter 1; Steven Gregory, *Black Corona Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), chapter 3.

suburban history through the lens of housing segregation has limited analytical utility, especially because it is reflective of a larger reality, that Wyandanch residents, and black Long Islanders in the aggregate, were poorer than whites. Black family incomes trailed whites on Long Island, and more importantly, while the overall poverty rate was much lower on Long Island than New York City, the black poverty rate change little between city and suburb. As of 1970, sixteen percent of Long Island's black families lived below the poverty line, only four percentage points below that of the metropolitan area (19.9 percent).²²

Why African Americans did not enjoy the same upward mobility as whites who moved to the suburbs is the subject of this study. The answer lies in the broad history of Long Island's mid-century suburbanization, which I contend was a process of both job and housing decentralization. Long Island emerged as the nation's most affluent suburb after World War II thanks to strong government intervention, in housing, via mortgage subsidies and infrastructure projects, and in the labor market, through federal support of the region's aerospace manufacturers. The two were inseparable, and both made Levittown possible. Each worked against black poor suburbanites and neighborhoods like Wyandanch. Aerospace firms were the largest employers on Long Island and enabled working class New Yorkers to become suburban homeowners, though the industry employed few African Americans. Long Island's broader economy meanwhile favored white-collar and skilled technical employment. While a burgeoning black middle class benefitted from this labor market, unskilled African Americans were at a disadvantage, lacking the rising educational standards necessary to obtain Long Island's jobs. The black poor could move to the suburbs, but the barriers to becoming a stable suburbanite were rooted in the job market. Housing segregation compounded labor market

²² *1970 Census of Population and Housing*, P-601, P-603, P-863, P-865; Long Island's overall poverty rate was 4.1%, half that of the metropolitan area (9.2%).

inequality, reflected in black suburbs like Wyandanch, where the rising middle class shared suburban blocks and schools with the poor, who were unable to utilize the suburban labor market for upward mobility.

The dominant view of suburbia, embodied in Levittown, obscured these truths. The suburbs were the spatial antithesis to the city, not only in terms of aesthetics or income, but job opportunities in the postwar period. When policymakers approached the ‘suburban’ poor during the War on Poverty, they believed the “pockets of poverty amidst plenty” could easily be absorbed into the suburban mainstream. In the wake of the riots, the suburbs likewise became the solution to the nation’s inner-city problems, and housing segregation between city and suburb was the barrier. Neither perspective accounted for the employment chasm nor the shift from industry to services that accelerated in both city and suburb in the 1960s and 1970s. As policymakers searched in vain for suburban jobs that could absorb the poor, or battled suburban homeowners to build public housing in their hamlets, the problems within black suburbs compounded. Suburban rioting, joblessness, decrepit housing, rising property taxes, and stagnant wages fit uneasily into the established spatial framework that dominated the views and policies of government officials, policymakers, activists, and suburbanites themselves. The consequence was impoverished policy tools to combat the problems in places like Wyandanch.

Fifty years since, the story of the postwar black suburbs like Wyandanch remains untold for largely the same reason. Scholars continue to narrate the postwar period as one of a spatial divide, between largely white beneficiaries of suburbanization versus the minority victims of segregation. This stems from the vast social science literature demonstrating the broad consequences of housing segregation, including its contribution to the black/white wealth divide,

racial employment and educational disparities, higher rates of crime, and various other ills.²³ Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton's oft-cited book, *American Apartheid*, synthesizes decades of this research, testing nineteen distinct indices to prove segregation "systematically undermines the social and economic well-being of blacks in the United States."²⁴ Housing, as these studies make clear, undermined the victories of the civil rights movement and continues to subvert progress toward racial equality. In addition, these scholars have contributed to a new conception of poverty, "not only in individual terms but also in terms of how it is distributed across space and across communities."²⁵ Historians for their part investigate the origins of modern housing segregation, its historical implications, and failed attempts to alter segregated housing patterns in the postwar period, linking housing segregation to the major political and social developments of the mid to late twentieth century, from civil rights and conservatism to new racial identities. While formal Jim Crow fell in the South, a "New American Dilemma" emerged, "the fusion of class segregation and racial discrimination embodied in the urban-suburban divide."²⁶

Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier* established the framework for understanding the historical origins of the urban/suburban divide. Jackson argues that New Deal policies subsidized white suburban development while containing low-income minority populations in

²³ Work on the consequences of housing segregation include John F. Kain, "Housing Segregation, Negro Employment, and Metropolitan Decentralization," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 82, no. 2 (May, 1968): 175-197; Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Michael A. Stoll, "Job Sprawl, Spatial Mismatch, and Black Employment Disadvantage," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 25, no. 4 (Fall, 2006): 827-854; Camille Z. Charles, Gniesha Dinwiddie, and Douglas S. Massey, "The Continuing Consequences of Segregation: Family Stress and College Academic Performance," *Social Science Quarterly* 85, no. 5 (December 2004): 1353-1373; John Yinger, *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost: The Continuing Costs of Housing Discrimination* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995), chapter 8; Patrick Sharkey, *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

²⁴ Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 2.

²⁵ Sharkey, 26.

²⁶ Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 2; This is compared to the "American dilemma" as Gunnar Myrdal understood it, i.e. Jim Crow.

urban public housing projects, whose “result, if not intent... was to segregate the races, to concentrate the disadvantaged in inner cities, and to reinforce the image of suburbia as a place of refuge from the problems of race, crime, and poverty.”²⁷ Policy created disparate cities and suburbs, and Jackson’s work has influenced an entire generation of scholars. Historians have since added local government authorities, real estate developers and agents, white suburban activists, political coalitions, and changing racial ideologies to Jackson’s account, all of which formed, sustained, and rationalized the racial and socioeconomic divide between cities and suburbs. They also use this framework to answer some of the most important questions of the late twentieth century. This includes the civil rights movement, which failed to break down housing segregation in the face of strong political, legal, and social opposition.²⁸ The late twentieth century political evolution of the “New” Right and neo-liberal Democrats is likewise interpreted as an outgrowth of housing segregation. Robert Self, Matthew Lassiter, and Lily Geismer all claim that middle-class white suburban homeowners, the beneficiaries of segregation, formed a ‘suburban’ political consensus that defended the spatial advantages they received from suburban living, including lower taxes, a cleaner environment, and quality schools, at the expense of those denied housing opportunities. Suburban jurisdictions produced a ‘narrow’ view of social responsibility, absolving suburbanites of the plight of inner cities as they thwarted integration and redistributive fiscal strategies, perpetuating racial inequality and the city/suburb divide.²⁹ Finally, racial ideologies were redrawn along spatial lines in the mid-

²⁷ Jackson, 219.

²⁸ Charles M. Lamb, *Housing Segregation in Suburban America Since 1960: Presidential and Judicial Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Christopher Bonastia, *Knocking on the Door: The Federal Government's Attempt to Desegregate the Suburbs* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

²⁹ All three historians analyze a suburban political consensus they argue was pivotal to metropolitan inequality in the postwar period. Robert Self argues that the structural formation of fragmented suburbs limited the social responsibility of its white beneficiaries to their “spatially bounded communities.” See Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Postwar Struggle for Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 289-290, 333; Matthew Lassiter similarly argues that the “the political culture of suburban exclusion and middle-class entitlement

twentieth century. David M.P. Freund argues that federal housing policy and local zoning law fostered a new racial ideology tied to property rather than biological notions of race. This ideology shaped white views of racial integration's effects on property values, taxes, and crime, in turn forming a powerful rationale to enforce segregation.³⁰

These historians situate the city/suburban divide at the center of postwar American culture and politics. In their telling, housing segregation provided middle-class whites a spatial privilege that they socially and politically exploited to hoard public resources within their borders and shield themselves from the poverty, unemployment, fiscal challenges, and minority concentrations within America's cities.³¹ In a period of capital flight, this spatial order is seen as the major impediment to just and incorporative social and economic policies. The most fleshed out accounts along these lines are found in Thomas Sugrue's *Origins of the Urban Crisis* and Robert Self's *American Babylon*, both of which understand deindustrialization, the limits of racial progress, and liberal/conservative political ideologies in spatial terms. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* is a split history, describing the causes and consequences of deindustrialization for

forged a resilient bipartisan consensus that ultimately exempted most affluent neighborhoods throughout the nation from any collective responsibility for the government programs that simultaneously developed the postwar metropolis and contained the inner-city ghettos." See Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 2-3; Lily Geismer looks at this lack of social responsibility among suburban liberals, who while supportive of civil rights, nonetheless subscribed to a centrist ideology that ignored the 'role' they played in structural inequality, protesting affordable housing, tax reform, and busing that "asked them to assume financial responsibility for the costs of structural inequality." See Lily D. Geismer, "Don't Blame Us: Grassroots Liberalism in Massachusetts, 1960-1990" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010), 9, 461, 477-478; In sum, these political positions thwarted efforts to redress social inequities rooted in the housing market, and therefore perpetuated racial inequality.

³⁰ David M.P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007);

³¹ For other works examining suburban development, race, and its influence in American politics, see Robert A. Beauregard, *When America Became Suburban* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: the Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Kevin Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, *The New Suburban History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: Norton, 2010); Andrew R. Highsmith, "Demolition Means Progress: Race, Class, and the Deconstruction of the American Dream in Flint, Michigan" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2009).

Detroit and its residents, while also analyzing white resistance to integration. While the former affected blacks disproportionately, it fell on all unskilled. Housing exclusion, however, put a ceiling on black social mobility, concentrated Detroit's poverty, and left the suburbs safe from the 'urban crisis' isolated in the increasingly black Detroit. White anti-integration activism also informed their racial identities and an increasingly 'illiberal' political persuasion.³² Robert Self's *American Babylon* similarly collapses the economy into a spatial narrative, linking housing segregation to the decentralization of industry outside Oakland's city limits, a process that kept taxes low, employment high, and the suburbs reserved for white homeowners, starving the minority-dominated inner city of jobs and public funding. This was the outcome of local politics as much as state policy, between anti-tax, anti-integration suburbanites and black activists demanding redistribution and reinvestment for the city of Oakland and its poor, minority residents.³³ In *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, the suburbs protect themselves from a decline concentrated within urban borders. In *American Babylon*, the postwar political economy is a spatial battle that white homeowners won after passing the Proposition 13 tax cap.

These studies rely on the sharp white/black, city/suburb divide. In contrast, the most recent historiographical shift, dubbed the 'new suburban history,' explicitly challenges these inherited constructs, asking scholars to understand suburbs, like cities, as diverse regions. In the process, historians have uncovered working class suburbs, black suburban 'pioneers,' Mexican-American *colonias*, and suburbs varied in character and function.³⁴ 'New' suburban historians

³² Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); For a critique of Sugrue's book along these lines, see Judith Stein "Opening and Closing Doors," *Labor History* 39 (February 1998): 52-57.

³³ Self, *American Babylon*.

³⁴ Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002); Aaron Cavin, "Fringe Politics: Suburban Expansion and the Mexican American Struggle for Alviso, California," in *Social Justice in Diverse Suburbs: History, Politics, and Prospects*, Christopher Niedt, ed., (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013): 105-128; Sarah Potter, "Family Ideals: The Diverse Meanings of Residential Space in Chicago during the Post-World War II Baby Boom," *Journal of Urban*

nonetheless agree that segregation was central to racial and class inequality. Andrew Wiese's national history of twentieth century black suburbanization exemplifies this. Wiese recognizes the existence of working class suburbs and regional differences in the suburban experience, but the struggles pivot around space. After 1945, the greatest threat to black working class suburbs was urban renewal, what he interprets as 'racial cleansing,' projects to erase their neighborhoods out of existence to make way for white housing developments. While the working class confront urban renewal, postwar black middle class homebuyers faced housing apartheid, in turn challenging or working around the segregated market to form 'places of their own.'³⁵ Though the 'new suburban history' has been criticized by Matthew Lassiter and Christopher Niedt for reaffirming middle-class racial homogeneity and the urban/suburban divide, even these scholars argue exclusionary suburbanization was pivotal to postwar problems.³⁶ They want historians to go beyond city versus suburb to reveal the "persistent patterns of racial and class segregation at the neighborhood level."³⁷

Collectively, these scholars have uncovered the importance of residential segregation to America's intransigent racial and class inequality. In so doing, they have overturned popular myths, including the assumption that racial housing patterns are the consequence of individual choice and the belief that 'de jure' segregation was peculiar to the South. They have also proven that segregation was (and continues to be) a structural, ideological, and political construct, not merely an expression of racism. This is a tremendous achievement, and there is still work to be

History 39, no. 1 (January 2013): 59-78; Wendy Cheng, "The Changs Next Door to the Diazes: Suburban Racial Formation in Los Angeles's San Gabriel Valley," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 1 (January 2013): 15-35; Shauna Marie Mulvihill, "A Tale of Two Suburbs, or, The Urban Fortunes of El Segundo and Hawthorne, California, 1905-1960" (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2005).

³⁵ Wiese, *Places of Their Own*.

³⁶ Matthew D. Lassiter and Christopher Niedt, "Suburban Diversity in Postwar America," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 1 (January 2013): 3-14.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 5.

done.³⁸ But whether framing inequality as a divide between city and suburb or specific neighborhoods, the premise remains the same: *space* was, and remains, the mainspring of inequality and postwar urban decline. This places the suburbs outside the problems of poverty, joblessness, and stagnant wages that plagued Americans across metropolitan regions. The spatial focus obscures the role of the suburban labor market in driving inequality and ignores the history of the postwar suburban economy and suburban poverty, developments that share commonalities with postwar American cities. Though segregation is part of Wyandanch's history, it is not the whole story.

Understanding the suburban economy demands a new approach, and "Suburbs in Black and White" draws on a framework that views suburbanization as a process involving the decentralization of jobs and people. Geographers Robert Lewis, Richard Walker, and Richard Harris contend twentieth-century suburbanization was the "simultaneous march of industry and cities outward," that housing was "joined at the hip by industry locating to the urban fringe." The process occurred in a variety of ways, producing suburbs varied in function, socioeconomic makeup, density, and race, places that defy any neat city/suburb dichotomy. While they analyze pre-World War II suburbs, their conclusions apply to the postwar era as well.³⁹ During and after World War II, defense spending in particular favored industrial jobs outward along the urban

³⁸ Ibid; Matthew D. Lassiter, "Schools and Housing in Metropolitan History: An Introduction," *Journal of Urban History* 38, no. 2 (March 2012): 195-204.

³⁹ Robert Lewis and Richard Harris criticize the 'zonal model' that obscures diversity of suburbs in academic geography in Richard Harris and Robert Lewis, "Constructing a Fault(y) Zone: Misrepresentations of American Cities and Suburbs, 1900-1950," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 4 (Dec., 1998): 622-639; Richard Walker and Robert Lewis likewise lay out their alternative model for understanding suburbanization in Richard Walker and Robert Lewis, "Beyond the Crabgrass Frontier: Industry and the Spread of North American Cities, 1850-1950," *Journal of Historical Geography* 27, no. 1 (January 2001): 3-19; Richard Harris and Robert Lewis call on historians to abandon the urban-suburban dichotomy in Richard Harris and Robert Lewis, "The Geography of North American Cities and Suburbs, 1900-1950: A New Synthesis," *Journal of Urban History* 27, no. 3 (March 2001): 262-292; See also Robert Lewis, ed., *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, 2004).

fringe, pulling residents toward the suburbs. Scholars have documented its influence on suburbanization, both in terms of infrastructure development and its direct and indirect employment effects.⁴⁰ Cold War spending, a major glue cementing labor, state, and business in the ‘Great Compression,’ made postwar suburbs like Long Island possible.

Understanding suburbs as job sites in the postwar period re-orientes the problem of racial inequality away from segregation and toward a more complex confluence of factors, which certainly includes racism, but also considers labor market change, employment policy, and “de-industrialization.” Segregation has been endemic on Long Island, dividing suburbs racially into the twenty-first century. In 2002, David Rusk concluded that Long Island was “the most segregated suburb for black residents,” and a Census Report found it to be the tenth most racially separate metropolitan region. This began after World War II, and persists despite federal, state, and county legislation to integrate Nassau and Suffolk counties.⁴¹ But black suburbs were nonetheless close to the region’s major employment centers, and residential segregation did not

⁴⁰Geoffrey Rossano, “Suburbia armed: Nassau County development and the rise of the aerospace industry, 1909-69,” 61-87, in *The Martial Metropolis: U.S. Cities in War and Peace*, Roger Lotchin, ed. (New York: Praeger, 1984); Ann Markusen, Peter Hall, Scott Campbell, and Sabina Detrick, *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Roger W. Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Ann Markusen and Joel Yudken, *Dismantling the Cold War Economy* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, & the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Margaret Pugh O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); James Sparrow, *Warfare State: Americans in the Age of Big-Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Kari Fredrickson, “The Cold War at the Grassroots: Militarization and Modernization in South Carolina,” 190-209, in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, Matthew D. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino, eds., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Michael Brenes, “For Right and Might: The Militarization of the Cold War and the Remaking of American Democracy” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2014); Geismer, “Don’t Blame Us.”

⁴¹Both David Rusk and the Census Report utilize dissimilarity index as a measure of residential segregation, which “measures the percentage of a group’s population that would have to change residence for each neighborhood to have the same percent of that group as the metropolitan area overall.” See David Rusk, “‘Little Boxes’ Must Act as One: Overcoming Urban Sprawl & Suburban Segregation,” 2002, Accessed January 26, 2010. <http://www.gamaliel.org/DavidRusk/Long%20Island%20overheads.pdf> Internet; John Iceland, Daniel H. Weinberg, and Erika Steinmetz, *Racial and Ethnic Residential Segregation in the United States 1980-2000* (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2002), 8.

exclude them from these jobs. Figuring out why they were unable to enjoy these opportunities on equal terms with whites is key to understanding the postwar racial divide in the north. In addition, the focus on segregation limits how we can account for change in black communities, because the consequences of segregation for black Long Islanders shifted over time, inextricably linked to their broader fortunes in the postwar economy. Both progress and decline occurred within these segregated communities.⁴² Lastly, the suburban economic perspective permits us to include the suburbs into a shared story with cities, because urban and suburban neighborhoods faced similar social ills as each were tied to labor markets shedding unskilled work. Therefore, the response of the federal government to unemployment and poverty are central to the suburban history. And how civil rights activists, working class homeowners, and local government officials grappled with suburban economic change is as important as traditional suburban concerns of housing, schools, or taxes. This perspective does not eliminate the role of racism, but integrates the suburban poor and blue-collar worker, black or white, into a larger postwar narrative about the national economy.

Approaching black postwar suburbs from an economic perspective addresses several historiographical fields. The few existing histories of suburban civil rights activism emphasize the fight for equal housing and schools, not struggles for employment. They favor a class-homogenous framing, a black middle class challenging white suburban homeowners and the exclusionary suburban political structure.⁴³ Even Andrew Wiese's *Places of their Own*, which

⁴² I am indebted to William Julius Wilson for this insight. Wilson contends that viewing poverty through the lens of segregation overlooks "some of the dynamic aspects of the social and demographic changes" occurring in urban areas. Instead, Wilson suggests scholars "consider the way in which other changes in society have interacted with segregation to produce the dramatic social transformation of inner-city neighborhoods, especially since 1970." This is equally true for suburbs. See William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 16.

⁴³ Stephen Grant Meyer, *As Long As They Don't Move Next Door: Segregation and Racial Conflict in America's Neighborhoods* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2000); Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own*; Martha Biondi, *To Stand and to Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,

recognizes the importance of job opportunity to working class black suburbanization prior to 1945, cuts the poor out of his narrative after World War II. Middle-class actors and their concerns dominate the story, namely housing, fair government treatment, and education.⁴⁴ On Long Island, black suburbanites were not divorced from the broader fight for jobs, and racism was just as evident among their employers. Recognizing the fight for jobs reveals the class tensions between the black middle class and poor in the suburbs. If the former demanded open housing and equal schooling, the latter struggled for remunerative jobs to survive in high-cost suburban communities.⁴⁵ This is particularly relevant to aerospace manufacturing, the primary suburban industry. Scholars examine the changing dynamics of the industry after 1945, such as the geographic swing towards the Sunbelt and the shift from conventional armaments to high-tech weaponry. The racial dynamics of the postwar defense industry also remains unexplored, as does the racial consequences of changes within aerospace in the 1950s and 1960s.⁴⁶

2003); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008); Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall, and Elizabeth Ewen. *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Lily Geismer, "Good Neighbors for Fair Housing: Suburban Liberalism and Racial Inequality in Metropolitan Boston," *Journal of Urban History* 39 no. 3 (May 2013): 454-477; Charles F. Howlett, "The Long Island Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Part One: The Struggle to Integrate Public Schools," *Long Island Historical Journal* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 145-165; Charles F. Howlett, "The Long Island Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Part Two: Schools and Housing," *Long Island Historical Journal* 9, No. 1 (Fall 1996): 25-46; Charles F. Howlett, "The Long Island Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Part Three: Militancy and Black Consciousness," *Long Island Historical Journal* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 168-208; David Kushner, *Levittown: Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb* (New York: Walker & Co, 2009) Walter Greason's *Suburban Erasure* is the exception. His work includes a more nuanced study of black suburbanites and their ties to New Jersey's suburban economy. See Walter Greason, *Suburban Erasure: How the Suburbs Ended the Civil Rights Movement in New Jersey* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013).

⁴⁴ Wiese, chapters 4-9.

⁴⁵ Historians note the class tensions inherent to postwar civil rights struggles in cities, but their focus is urban. As my dissertation illustrates, this class tension was metropolitan, inherent to labor market divides, not spatial ones. See Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Preston H. Smith, *Racial Democracy and the Black Metropolitan Housing Policy in Postwar Chicago* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

⁴⁶ Studies of the regional shift include Markusen et. al., *The Rise of the Sunbelt*; Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt*, chapter 6; Studies of the shift in spending include Donald Pattillo, *Pushing the Envelope: The American Aircraft Industry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); G.R. Simonson, *The History of the Aircraft Industry: An Anthology* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1968); The few studies of race in the industry have not linked African Americans to broader trends. See David Onkst, "The Triumph and Decline of the "Squares": Grumman Aerospace Engineers and Production Workers in the Apollo Era, 1957-1973" (PhD diss., American University,

Understanding how defense aerospace, the second largest industrial employer in the nation, affected blacks, unskilled workers, and the suburban political economy *over the long term* is central to understanding the developments of suburban racial inequality.

Any history of the postwar poor must grapple with the War on Poverty. While historians study the program's implementation and the grassroots contribution to its direction and outcome, generally the subject has been pursued in urban, rural, or national contexts.⁴⁷ The 'suburban' war on poverty is not part of the story. This is unfortunate because the suburbs epitomized the "paradox of poverty amid prosperity," and were thus, by this rationale, the place where the Johnson administration's solution of job training and economic growth was most likely to succeed. I will explore the validity of this assumption. A suburban angle likewise complicates the grassroots narrative that emphasizes tension between local War on Poverty programs, especially Community Action Programs, and local government. Community action did not always figure so heavily into local politics, nor did federal programs necessarily produce such conflict. This dissertation thus offers a new lens to understand the War on Poverty, in a region

2011), chapter 3; Stephen Raymond Patnode, "Labor's Love Lost: The Influence of Gender, Race, and Class on the Workplace in Postwar America" (PhD diss., Stony Brook University, 2008); Joseph Abel, "African Americans, Labor Unions and the Struggle for Fair Employment in the Aircraft Manufacturing Industry in Texas, 1941-1945," *The Journal of Southern History* 77, no. 3 (August 2011): 595-638.

⁴⁷ For definitive national studies of the War on Poverty, see Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990); Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); Matusow called on historians to investigate the Great Society on the local level to understand the impact of Community Action Programs and the projects these CAPs undertook. Historians have since taken up the calling. See Kent Germany, *New Orleans After the Promises: Poverty, Citizenship, and the Search for the Great Society* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007); Annelise Orleck, and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); William S. Clayson, *Freedom Is Not Enough The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Wesley G. Phelps, *A People's War on Poverty: Urban Politics and Grassroots Activists in Houston* (Athens GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2014); Guian McKee, *The Problem of Jobs Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Noel Casanave, *Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007); For an analysis of the War on Poverty in rural areas, see David Torstensson, "Beyond the City: Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty in Rural America," *Journal of Policy History* 25, no. 4 (2013): 587-613.

that largely accepted the project, even producing their own local programs that mirrored federal attempts, all in the hopes that Long Island's widespread affluence could absorb the poor who were trained to enter the private market for jobs.

The spatial framework that dominates urban histories also neglects postwar suburban poverty. As Matthew Lassiter and Christopher Niedt note in a recent historiographical critique, suburban scholarship recognizes pre-World War II suburban socioeconomic diversity and the rise of suburban poverty in recent years, but the middle-class suburban 'norm' remains the primary interpretation of the postwar period.⁴⁸ Contemporary work on suburban poverty, which has outpaced urban poverty growth since 1990 to become the most popular residence for the nation's poor, reveals suburbia's underbelly of job loss, economic decline, public service distress, and rising crime, markers historically associated with cities.⁴⁹ This has a longer history that flows from the early twentieth century to the twenty-first, and this dissertation bridges the gap between research on suburban poverty in different periods, and by doing so challenges a myth that is central to the spatial interpretation of postwar history and racial inequality.

While jobs, suburban poverty, and suburban policy remain under-studied, integration remains a perennial subject for urban historians. Scholars focus on the late 1960s and early 1970s as the pivotal moment when housing integration reached the national agenda and failed. Historians blame HUD, state agencies, homeowner opposition, lack of political will, narrowly interpreted court decisions, and weak legislation for this 'lost goal' of the civil rights

⁴⁸Lassiter and Niedt, "Suburban Diversity in Postwar America," 3–14.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Kneebone and Alan Berube, *Confronting Suburban Poverty in America* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 16-20; See also Katrin B. Anacker, *The New American Suburb: Poverty, Race and the Economic Crisis* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015); Manuel Pastor, "Maywood, Not Mayberry: Latinos and Suburbia in Los Angeles County," 129-154, in *Social Justice in Diverse Suburbs: History, Politics, and Prospects*. Edited by Christopher Niedt (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013); Bernadette Hanlon, *Once the American Dream: Inner-Ring Suburbs of the United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010); for a popular account, see Leigh Gallagher, *The End of the Suburbs: Where the American Dream is Moving* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2013).

movement.⁵⁰ Few, however, question the logic of these integration schemes, unlike contemporaries, who found much to criticize.⁵¹ As a consequence, scholars accept and implicitly support what political scientist David Imbroscio calls the ‘mobility paradigm,’ a thread of policy proposals to move people “through metropolitan space as a means of addressing urban social problems.”⁵² This approach has come under withering attack recently from geographers and social scientists, who argue that the benefits of spatial integration are an expression of liberal ideology, not empirical evidence.⁵³ This critique has emerged in the context of current efforts to integrate cities and suburbs, but one can easily apply this perspective to earlier attempts at urban and suburban integration, as this dissertation will.

Extrapolating broad conclusions from the experience of the black poor in this one postwar suburban region is admittedly problematic. After all, African Americans were only 4.7 percent of Long Island’s total residents in 1970, and the black poor were but a fraction of this population, less than 22,000 residents of 2.5 million according to the official census designation

⁵⁰ For examples of this analysis, see Lamb, *Housing Segregation in Suburban America*; Bonastia, *Knocking on the Door*; Freund, *Colored Property*; Edward G. Goetz, *Clearing the Way: Deconcentrating the Poor in Urban America* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 2003).

⁵¹ Bennett Harrison, *Urban Economic Development; Suburbanization, Minority Opportunity, and the Condition of the Central City* (Washington: Urban Institute, 1974); Herbert J. Gans, *People and Plans; Essays on Urban Problems and Solutions* (New York: Basic Books, 1968); Joseph D. Mooney, “Housing Segregation, Negro Employment and Metropolitan Decentralization: An Alternative Perspective,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 83, no. 2 (May, 1969): 299-311; Paul Offner and Daniel H. Saks, “A Note on John Kain’s “Housing Segregation, Negro Employment and Metropolitan Decentralization,”” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 85, no. 1 (February, 1971): 147-160; Stanley H. Masters, “A Note on John Kain’s “Housing Segregation, Negro Employment, and Metropolitan Decentralization,”” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 88, no. 3 (August, 1974): 505-512.

⁵² David Imbroscio, “Beyond Mobility: The Limits of Liberal Urban Policy,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 34, no. 1 (February 2012): 2

⁵³ David Imbroscio, “The End of (Urban) Liberalism,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 32, no. 1 (February 2012): 35-42; For Imbroscio’s wider critique, see David Imbroscio, *Urban America Reconsidered: Alternatives for Governance and Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); See also Herbert J. Gans, “Concentrated Poverty: A Critical Analysis,” *Challenge* 53, no. 3 (May/June 2010): 82–96; For responses to Imbroscio, see Xavier de Souza Briggs, “Maximum Feasible Misdirection,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 30, no. 2 (April 2008): 131-137; John Goering and Judith Feins, “Social Science, Housing Policy, and the Harmful Effects of Poverty,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 30, no. 2 (April 2008): 139-148; Todd Swanstrom, “Regionalism, Equality, and Democracy,” *Urban Affairs Review* 42, no. 2 (November 2006): 249-257.

of ‘poverty.’⁵⁴ One might feel we can write this group off as an anomaly, a people who slipped through the cracks of an otherwise exclusive zone of prosperity. But the fact that they existed, formed communities, and fought for full participation in postwar suburbia, including suburban jobs, warrants attention. And the larger questions of why they existed, and why their spatial proximity to jobs didn’t translate into upward mobility, provides insight into the causes of racial inequality after World War II. Black poverty has been an important question in the twentieth century, though often cast in spatial terms. By looking at the black *suburban* poor, we can see that similar forces produced urban and suburban poverty: discrimination in employment, state failure to create jobs, increasing educational requirements in the labor market, and wage inequality. In a broader sense, the black poor confronted a reality that growing numbers of suburbanites faced toward the end of the last century and now must reckon with in the new millennium: a lack of good employment. Blacks garnered disproportionate attention in suburbia because poverty was disproportionately black, a ‘paradox amidst plenty,’ but further investigation into why they existed reveals a great deal about the limitations of the postwar ‘Golden Age,’ not just in racial terms, but in the large failure to secure full employment, a goal now seemingly lost altogether.

Investigating this history requires defining both ‘Long Island,’ and the even trickier word ‘suburb,’ loaded with social and political meaning. Kenneth Jackson defined ‘suburb’ as a residential space for affluent and middle class homeowners who live “far from their workplaces.”⁵⁵ The definition has been complicated since. Kevin Kruse and Tom Sugrue see it as a “political” space, where municipal boundaries between city and suburb create two

⁵⁴ Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, *U.S. Census '70: Volume 2: Race* (Hauppauge, New York: Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, 1972), 3; 1970 Census of Population and Housing, P-863-P-865.

⁵⁵ Jackson, 6.

competing and separate entities.⁵⁶ Economies rarely have such neat boundaries, however, and this dissertation uses Robert Bruegmann’s metaphor of a solar system to explain the relationship between city, suburb, and rural settlement. All are celestial bodies, intimately connected in varying degrees through gravity, their bonds shift with time and orbit.⁵⁷ Long Island relied on New York City’s broader economy as well as federal military spending and mortgage subsidies, and dependence on each fluctuated over time. Throughout the dissertation, I shall refer to Long Island as a suburb and a ‘bi-county region’ within the New York ‘metropolitan area.’ I recognize such identifications are vague, but here ‘bi-county’ refers to Nassau and Suffolk, the two counties that make up ‘Long Island,’ distinct from New York City’s two boroughs, Queens and Brooklyn, which are also on the geographic Island. All of these counties and boroughs are part of the larger New York metropolitan area, considered to be New York City and the surrounding seventeen county ‘suburbs’ that sprawl across three states.

The dissertation is organized into six chapters that overlap chronologically. While chapter one ends in 1945, chapters two through six converge in the 1960s, a crucial turning point in Long Island’s history. The first two chapters situate black Long Islanders within the region’s changing job market, framing the story as one of jobs and housing forming simultaneously. Chapter one begins at the turn of the twentieth century, when Long Island was the main source of New York City’s perishable produce. Farms competed with developers, who eyed the Island’s expansive plains and lush harbors as a bedroom for Gotham’s middle class and elite. European immigrants and southern black migrants became the region’s pre-World War II working class,

⁵⁶ Sugrue and Kruse, 5.

⁵⁷ Robert Bruegmann, *Sprawl A Compact History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 94; Bruegmann borrows the term from geographer Peirce Lewis, and argues that it is a more useful metaphor than the standard geographic models used that neatly divide cities and suburbs in ways that never exist in reality. See Peirce Lewis, “The Galactic Metropolis,” 23-50, in *Beyond the Urban Fringe: Land Use Issues in Non-Metropolitan America*, ed. Rutherford H. Platt and George Macinko (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

and their jobs in agriculture, domestic service, and construction were primarily low-wage. Housing reflected this reality, and low-income ethnic and racial enclaves emerged in parallel to their inner-city counterparts. The Second World War completely transformed Long Island's employment landscape, as military spending turned the region's craft-oriented aviation industry into a mass employer, dragging Long Island out of the Depression as over 100,000 Long Islanders, both black and white, entered factories and benefitted from rapidly rising wages and full employment.

Chapter two picks up after 1945, explaining Long Island's explosive growth through 1965 and the fortunes of African Americans in this job climate. Military spending continued (a full-employment policy in outcome, if not intent), along with commuter incomes, supporting retail, service, and local government employment, all of which made mass homeownership possible. African Americans were not equal participants in these developments. A rising black middle class used well-paying jobs to buy homes, but a disproportionately poor black population competed for low-paying work in what remained of Long Island's domestic and farm jobs, or among its non-defense factories. Despite prosperity and growth, racism and structural changes limited social mobility for Long Island's black working class and poor, undermining the benefits of suburban residence.

Chapter three investigates the community consequences of this class divide within Long Island's black population. The rising black middle class either challenged entrenched housing segregation to integrate white neighborhoods or thrived in black 'Levittowns.' They formed the basis of a suburban civil rights movement in the process, concerned with fair housing, public service equity, and school integration. The black poor meanwhile faced dwindling housing opportunities due to rising land values, taxes, and urban renewal projects destabilizing the few

affordable enclaves. While rising incomes permitted the middle class to challenge racist housing policy and practice, poverty undermined those gains, as segregation set off developments that forced the black poor into black middle class communities. Such concentration strained local public services and set off intense political battles over the future of black hamlets, ones that put suburb against suburb, and within these communities, middle class homeowner against low-income tenant.

These local conflicts occurred during major economic transformations in the 1960s, particularly within the region's most important job sector, aerospace, the focus of the fourth chapter. Defense manufacturing accounted for twenty-two percent of Long Island's non-agricultural jobs in 1954, and military firms were consistently the region's largest employers. After World War II though, the sector employed few African Americans.⁵⁸ Firms hired along gender and racial lines, and the federal government did little to enforce black employment. Civil rights activists looking to improve black job prospects targeted the industry, and with renewed federal commitment to fair employment in the 1960s, minority hiring was possible. But the industry itself was shifting from mass-producing planes to experimental weapons and spacecraft, favoring skilled technicians over blue-collar assembly line workers. In addition, the controversy surrounding the 'military-industrial complex' pushed Defense Secretary Robert Strange McNamara to streamline defense spending, which shut down Long Island's largest employer in 1965, shifted contracts South and West, and generally produced fewer jobs by the late 1960s.

⁵⁸ Over seventy percent of all manufacturing jobs were defense related. 30% of Long Island's non-agricultural workforce were employed in manufacturing overall. See W.N. Leonard, "The Trend of Defense Contracts," in *Nassau-Suffolk Business Conditions*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (June 1954): 11, Box 1, Hofstra College Center for the Study of Business and Community Research Records, Long Island Studies Institute, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York; Harold L. Wattel, "Economic Growth and Unemployment," in *Long Island Business* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1958): 7, Box 1, Hofstra College Center for the Study of Business and Community Research Records, Long Island Studies Institute, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York.

Fair employment could guarantee minority hiring by 1970, but it was in an industry that no longer employed unskilled blue-collar workers.

Chapters five and six address the efforts of policymakers to grapple with these suburban economic challenges. Chapter five covers Long Island's War on Poverty, both the federally-funded programs and locally developed initiatives in the spirit of Johnson's domestic project between 1964 and 1970. The assumption that America's economic institutions were sound was rhetorically resonant on Long Island, which by any statistical measure of poverty or employment, enjoyed 'affluence.' Local policymakers and anti-poverty activists embraced the program's supply-side efforts, from transportation initiatives to job training. The chapter outlines how the initial enthusiasm for eradicating Long Island's minor poverty program turned into deep criticism of the War on Poverty's flawed logic and assumptions by 1968. The War on Poverty's failure made Long Island's unskilled jobs deficit apparent, a problem Nassau County government looked to solve by guaranteeing every county resident a job by 1969.

Despite the economic troubles of the late 1960s, the belief in suburban prosperity continued to inform policy, particularly when compared with the 'urban crisis' wracking America's inner cities. Chapter six deals with this emerging spatial interpretation of America's urban problems, contrasting it with the shared economic reality of job loss, the labor market chasm, and inflation in city and suburb in the 1970s. Federal, state, and county housing agencies wanted to break down segregation and build low-income suburban housing. Their goals were expansive, and they wanted to improve employment outcomes among the urban poor and assure the suburbs offer their 'fair share' of jobs and suburban tax revenues. This was premised on the belief of suburban prosperity, but the communities targeted for low-income housing, including working class and black suburbs, faced the brunt of the region's job losses combined with Long

Island's regressive property tax system that increasingly burdened their communities. Their suburban location nonetheless made them ideal for housing projects according to public agencies, which set off intense battles between suburbanites over who should take their 'fair share' of the poor, a heavy burden for suburbs with low-income populations themselves. The theory of the spatial divide, that 'suburbs' were affluent at the expense of 'cities,' confronted a more complex reality of structural changes plaguing workers in both cities and suburbs alike in the 1960s and 1970s.

Overall, black suburbs like Wyandanch were *of* the suburbs precisely because the suburbs were embedded within the nation's economy during and after World War II. This meant that major economic questions, including full employment policy, racial job discrimination, the growing job market divide, and poverty were *suburban* as well as urban questions. The fact that policymakers neglected these realities in favor of a 'spatial' interpretation that pit 'poor' city versus 'affluent' suburb produced an impoverished set of policy solutions to deal with job loss, racial inequality, and poverty. Unfortunately, this interpretation and these policy solutions remain dominant. This dissertation goes beyond this paradigm, because suburban residence was not a shelter from the broader spout of deindustrialization and declining opportunity affecting the northeast, mid-west, and older urban centers of the South and West. This was truer of black Americans than any other group. Suburban residence did not save them.

Chapter 1

The Future Detroit of the East

Hubert Goode and his family made their way from Raleigh, North Carolina to Long Island in 1917. Lorenzo B. Smull, a successful real estate developer in the Gold Coast hamlet of Port Washington, hired the Goodes as servants on his estate. Smull wired money to the Goode family to travel north, which involved three trains between Baltimore and Port Washington. Upon arrival, the family lived upstairs in the Smull estate, and Hubert's parents cooked, cleaned the house, tended the yard, and raised the Smull children. Hubert, then a young boy, had duties on the estate as well, from raking the leaves to helping around the house.¹ The Goodes were among the thousands of African American families who migrated from the South and settled in northern and western suburbs during the Great Migration. As many as one in six southern black migrants between World War I and World War II moved directly to the suburbs in search of freedom and employment opportunities, skipping urban centers entirely.² Unlike central city migrants, they pinned their hopes on a suburban labor market shaped by the immense wealth emanating from America's industrial cities to the bedrooms and farms along the urban fringe.

In Long Island's case, New York City's insatiable demand for food kept truck farmers busy, while Gotham's burgeoning population sought vacation spots on the Island's seashore, suburban housing along its railroad lines, and estate property or private recreational playgrounds. All of this required an army of workers to construct single-family homes, manage estate gardens, launder clothes, chauffeur, rear children, and pick produce. A suburban 'working class' filled

¹ Oral history transcript of interview with Hubert Goode on March 17, 1981, p. 1-7, African American Heritage Oral History Collection, Port Washington Public Library Local History Center, Port Washington, New York (hereafter cited as PWLHC).

² Wiese, 5.

these positions, a mixture of immigrants from Europe, native whites, and southern African Americans. As Long Island's service and agricultural workers, they toiled in an economy sharply divided between those who labored in the suburbs and those who resided in the suburbs but labored elsewhere. The consumption habits of the latter determined the fortunes of the suburban working class, and little mobility existed between the two. Low incomes and status within Long Island's labor market constrained working class housing choice, and poor housing conditions developed mirroring that of America's urban 'ghettos.' As African Americans came to dominate the region's working class by the 1930s, race permeated the discourse of poverty and its community consequences. Skin color, the migrant origins of southern black laborers, and their poverty coalesced to form Long Island's variant of the "negro problem."

The was the layout of early twentieth century Long Island: a working class catering to the needs of middle class homeowners, truck farmers, and the consumer needs of an industrial elite. World War II dramatically altered this reality. The aircraft industry became the dominant employer in the region, and Long Island became less dependent on the incomes of commuters from the five boroughs, instead drawn into the orbit of federal defense contract. The new industry likewise uncoupled Long Island's working class from its dependence on the wealth of landowning farmers, suburban homeowners, and estate-owners. The defense industry compressed the labor market, forging a new suburbia and a new kind of suburbanite on Long Island: the industrial, working-class suburbanite, their incomes derived from federal contracts, strong unions, and acute demand for their labor. Over the course of the war, Long Island's black workforce joined the industrial working class thanks to this unquenchable demand as well as anti-discrimination enforcement at the local, state, and federal levels. By 1945, the old economy of service and agricultural labor was replaced by an industrial landscape, which altered the

landscape of Long Island, the dynamics of its labor market and the lives of its residents, both black and white.

The ‘Gold Coast’ and the *Sub-urban Economy*

In 1898, Long Island’s contemporary form took shape when New York City annexed the Island’s urban center, Brooklyn, along with the western third of Queens County to form the borough of Queens. The remainder of eastern Queens became Nassau County on January 1, 1899, and this new county, along with Suffolk County to its east formed the re-defined Long Island.³ While Long Islanders celebrated their resistance to Gotham’s encroachment as a victory for ‘home rule’ and local government, New York’s land grab signified the growing influence of the urban center, a process that began prior to annexation and accelerated afterwards.⁴ Long Island remained politically independent from City Hall, but was nonetheless increasingly dependent on New York City’s economy. This dependence developed in four ways. Nassau and Suffolk county farmers profited from perishable food demand formerly satisfied within city limits but pushed out by residential and industrial development. Long Island’s accessible natural beauty, from its sandy beaches on its south shore to the quiet harbors and hills on its north shore, led New Yorkers to vacation, relocate permanently, and in the case of New York’s wealthiest, construct exclusive residential and recreational spaces. All of this produced new labor sectors to meet the needs of Long Island’s farmers, vacationers, homeowners, and social elite.

³ Jackson, 140-143; See Edward J. Smits, *The Creation of Nassau County* (Mineola New York: Nassau County Dept. of Public Works, 1960).

⁴ For information about resistance to annexation and the ‘home rule’ movement in early 20th century American suburban regions, see Jackson, 148-153; John C. Teaford, *Post-Suburbia: Government and Politics in the Edge Cities* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), chapter 2.

As the Midwest came to dominate grain production and upstate New York exported dairy products, Long Island's farmers exploited New York City's perishable food demand. Strawberries, cauliflower, cabbage, cucumbers, peas, Brussels sprouts, and above all, potato production increased in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Even as farm acreage declined amidst suburbanization in Nassau County (agricultural land in Nassau County dropped from over 90,000 acres in 1875 to 23,000 acres in 1930), farmers managed to double potato production from 1900-1920 to 1.8 million bushels, largely thanks to fertilizers, new machinery, and innovative growing techniques.⁵ Further east in Suffolk, potato production topped fourteen million bushels per year in the 1940s. Beyond farm produce, farmers also tapped into New York's exotic food demand, including the 'Peking Duck,' a new specialty item introduced to the region in 1873 that turned Long Island into the nation's premier duck producing region. Whether raising ducks or growing fruit, farmers could only rely on their own labor and new machinery for a portion of their production. Picking ripe strawberries, bagging potatoes, and slaughtering ducks required manual laborers, and Long Island's farmers depended on a seasonal workforce to ready their goods for market.⁶

Produce travelled west along the Long Island Railroad to feed New York's population; New Yorkers travelled east to enjoy Long Island's natural beauty. Prior to the 1880s, scant infrastructure limited access to the south shore's beaches, though after railroad companies opened Coney Island, Brighton Beach, and Manhattan Beach in Brooklyn to resort development, speculation turned eastward. Austin Corbin, who had linked New Yorkers to Coney Island through his New York and Manhattan Beach railway, bought the Long Island Railroad in 1880,

⁵ Edward J. Smits, *Nassau, Suburbia, U.S.A.: The First Seventy-Five Years of Nassau County, New York, 1899 to 1974* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Press, 1974), pp. 13-17, 174.

⁶ Ross Cromarty, "The Historical Development of the Suffolk County Farmland Preservation Program," (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 1999), pp. 142-3, 149, 151.

and transformed the railroad into a carrier of vacationers to the “greatest watering place in the world.”⁷ Corbin encouraged vacation development stretching from the Rockaways in Queens to Montauk on Long Island’s east end.⁸ The popularity of these destinations only grew with the advent of the automobile, inspiring Robert Moses to develop a series of public parks with beaches, ponds, woodlands, and golf courses, all connected via ‘parkways’ to New York City’s green-starved residents. By 1928, Moses had secured nearly ten thousand acres and designed fourteen parks on the Island.⁹ These resort destinations swelled with employment over the summer months, necessitating an army of waiters, maids, cooks, landscapers, and maintenance workers.

Long Island’s recreational attractions and infrastructure encouraged permanent settlement, and no group had a greater influence on the region’s development than the nation’s social elite, who colonized both its shores from the 1880s until the outbreak of World War II. Long Island was the perfect location to emulate European aristocratic ‘country’ living and leisure while remaining tied to the “Capitol of Capital.”¹⁰ Nearly 1,000 French chateaus, English castles, and Italian villas were constructed across the two counties, over forty percent of which were built between 1900 and 1918. By 1937, the region housed fourteen of the nation’s twenty-five wealthiest families. On the South shore, running from the eastern border of Nassau County out to Montauk, sat the estates of financier August Belmont, sugar refiner Henry Have Meyer, and railroad manager William K. Vanderbilt. On Long Island’s North Shore, over six hundred

⁷ Harry W. Havemeyer, *Along the Great South Bay: From Oakdale to Babylon, the Story of a Summer Spa, 1840-1940* (Mattituck, New York: Amereon House, 1996), 94.

⁸ Havemeyer, 91-99.

⁹ Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 157-171, 220-225, 237-238.

¹⁰ 27 percent of the nation’s millionaires lived in Gotham in 1892. See Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the Bourgeoisie, 1850-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 238, 255-259.

estates stretched from the Queens border into Suffolk County in nearly uninterrupted sequence, all at least fifty acres large. Collectively known as the ‘Gold Coast,’ powerful families such as the Morgans, Hearsts, Sages, Astors, Woolworths, Guggenheims, Fricks, Goulds, and Fords settled within the area. The elite mingled at seventy-one private clubs, participating in every conceivable social activity, from dinner parties to fox hunts. Beyond the estates themselves were thousands of acres reserved for trotting courses, horse racing tracks, golf, tennis courts, hunting grounds, polo fields, and a private highway for America’s first major automobile races.¹¹

The estates and private clubs formed an ‘estate economy,’ a collection of complex tasks to maintain the physical estate structures along with the daily and seasonal rituals of elite life. Even a modest country house required a workforce of ten to twenty employees to care for the grounds, bedrooms, food, and children, not to mention periodic employment of masons, florists, and construction workers. The largest estates employed between 250 and 400 people. Chicago department store heir Marshall Fields’ two thousand acre ‘Caumsett’ estate employed over four hundred to operate the dairy farm, stables, cottages, athletic facilities, power plant, yacht dock, and several houses. The enterprise was so large that the estate had its own business office to organize the daily work routines and approve contracts for new building projects, transportation of workers, and other duties. While most estates were not as complex as Caumsett, all relied on a stable workforce within their grounds as well as services that operated along the fringes of their property.¹²

¹¹ Dennis P. Sobin, *Dynamics of Community Change: The Case of Long Island's Declining "Gold Coast"* (Port Washington, New York: I.J. Friedman, 1968), 40; Robert B. MacKay, Robert B., Anthony K. Baker, and Carol A. Traynor, *Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects, 1860-1940* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1997), pp. 19-25, 35.

¹² Mackay, pp. 30-31, 328; Elly Shodell, *In the Service: Workers on the Grand Estates of Long Island 1890's-1940's* (Port Washington, New York: Port Washington Public Library, 1991), xiii; Sobin, 47.

Behind the ostentatious migration of the nation's wealthy was a larger influx of middle class New Yorkers spilling out of the five boroughs in search of single-family homes. Middle class housing appeared sporadically in the nineteenth century, and railroad suburbs blossomed in western Nassau County, including Lynbrook, Lawrence, Woodmere, Hewlett, Rockville Centre, Garden City, and Freeport.¹³ In the twentieth century, the population surge eastward through Queens and into Nassau County accelerated. From 1920-1930, Long Island's population nearly doubled to over 464,000, making Nassau County the fastest growing county in the nation.¹⁴ Commuters in search of residential suburbs bought up tracts near railroad lines, feeding into a speculative boom in property and housing construction, all of which benefitted a blue-collar labor force who built the homes, roads, sidewalks, and stores in these suburbs. Once built, the homeowners made use of service workers on a smaller scale, relying on a single live-in servant or visiting maids and nannies, along with laundresses, chauffeurs, gardeners, and masons.¹⁵

The Suburban Working Class

The farms, estates, resorts, and middle-class suburbs produced a labor market in the building trades, road and public works construction, domestic service, and agricultural work, constituting over half of the jobs Long Island residents held in 1930 and the majority of jobs available in the region. A diverse population filled these jobs. Whites, some descended from Long Island's early English and Dutch settlers, found opportunity within this new economy, as did the small black population of 5,000, but the massive increase in labor demand attracted

¹³ Jackson, 81-84; Smits, *Nassau, Suburbia USA*, 1.

¹⁴ Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), 29; Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, *U.S. Census '70: Volume 1: Number of Inhabitants* (Hauppauge, New York: Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, 1971), 3.

¹⁵ Baxandall and Ewen, 31-32.

Table 1.1: Foreign-born and African American Population Growth, 1910-1940

	1910	1920	1930	1940
Ireland	7,326	7,002	8,954	8,669
Poland		6,416	9,188	9,093
Italy	5,684	6,988	13,316	14,994
Germany	8,232	7,866	17,616	18,145
African-American	5,088	5,850	13,462	21,927

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Statistics for New York. Containing Statistics of Population, Agriculture, Manufactures, and Mining for the State, Counties, Cities, and Other Divisions* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1913), 230, 236; U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920 - State Compendium, New York. Statistics of Population, Occupations, Agriculture, Manufactures, and Mines and Quarries for the State, Counties, and Cities* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1923), 38, 41, 53; U.S. Census Bureau, *1930 Census of the United States: Volume III, Part 2: Montana-Wyoming, section II - New Hampshire-New York* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1932), 270, 272, 298; U.S. Census Bureau, *1940 Census of Population, Volume II: Characteristics of the Population, Part 5: New York-Oregon* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1943), 47, 52, 63-64.

foreign-born immigrants along with southern black migrants. The foreign-born migration to Long Island coincided with the general population growth from 1900-1940, as both tripled during the period. Germans, Poles, Irish, and Italian immigrants dominated the immigration influx, as Table 1.1 indicates. German immigrants tended to be middle class homeowners themselves, but Irish, Polish and Italian immigrants toiled as laborers on the estates, farms, and construction projects across Long Island.¹⁶ African Americans trailed European immigration in the first two decades of the twentieth century, though the black migration outpaced foreign born immigration after 1920, and southern African Americans became the largest non-native group on Long Island by the outbreak of World War II.

Broader developments, including the momentum of the Great Migration and declining immigration, partly account for the increasing presence of African Americans within Long Island's labor market, but local factors influenced the growing reliance on black labor as well. In

¹⁶ Perry Gangloff, "A Study of Community Organization in Glen Cove, NY," M.A. Thesis, New York School of Social Work, 1937, 68, Social Work Agency Library Collection, Social Work Library, Columbia University (hereafter cited as SWALC); Salvatore J. LaGumina, *From Steerage to Suburb: Long Island Italians* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1988).

the first two decades of the twentieth century, a racial hierarchy existed within Long Island's service economy. The wealthiest estate owners, like utility executive John E. Aldred, hired only the most experienced servants from the British Isles.¹⁷ Most were less restrictive, hiring both immigrants and blacks but dividing their workforce by color. Clarence Phillips, a former yacht club cook recalled that "gardening wasn't so great for blacks because...they had the Italians and Pollocks [*sic*] that did a lot of gardening around here...in fact, they never heard tell of no black gardeners."¹⁸ African Americans rarely lived on the estates, instead working at the periphery of the estate economy. No black workers lived on the Guggenheim estate, and as Alec Sucilsky, a Polish immigrant and Guggenheim employee recalled, the only 'colored help' was "around the horses...they didn't live on the estate."¹⁹ If black workers benefitted from the estate economy, it was through contract work. Black Port Washington resident Marjorie Biddle remembered that all of her neighbors "took in laundry...just for private people cause all these rich people had initials on their napkins and things."²⁰

This racial divide receded in the 1920s and 1930s, encouraging a black migration. Contrary to the common perception of the 'Roaring Twenties' as the height of estate society, Long Island's estate economy waned during the decade as operating costs rose, taxes increased, and opportunities to profit from the real estate boom encouraged estate owners to sell land.²¹ For those that remained, cutting costs proved necessary. Rather than import famed landscapers from

¹⁷ Sobin, 47.

¹⁸ Oral history transcript of interview with Clarence Phillips on December 19, 1980 and January 23, 1981, p. 78-79, African American Heritage Oral History Collection, PWLHC.

¹⁹ Oral history transcript of interview with Alec Sucilsky on January 13, 1984, p. 13, Gold Coast Estate Workers Oral History Collection, PWLHC.

²⁰ Oral history transcript of interview with Marjorie Biddle and Florence Longworth Biddle on January, 1981, p. 23, African American Heritage Oral History Collection, PWLHC.

²¹ Sobin, 50-51; A prime example of subdivision tendencies was the property of former publishing magnate, Frank Munsey, which upon his death was converted into several residential communities that formed the incorporated village of Munsey Park by 1930. See Philip A. Atiyeh, "A Twentieth Century History of Munsey Park," *Incorporated Village of Munsey Park*, accessed April 9, 2012, <http://www.munseypark.org/village-history>

Calabria or servants from the British Isles, estate owners increasingly turned to black labor, and shifted from live-in to live-out domestic service.²² The growth of the domestic service industry for middle class homeowners further encouraged black migration as a low-wage labor source. Amidst the Depression, a continued influx of black workers into the North further depressed wages, and black workers became the “preferred” workforce among the middle class and wealthy.²³

A structured migration system aided the growth of black labor on Long Island. Recruitment began unofficially, as one domestic worker would inform friends and families across the eastern seaboard of job opportunities. John Blount, who moved to Long Island in 1907, recalled that his second cousin negotiated with an estate worker to hire his mother and sisters.²⁴ Employment agencies eventually organized recruitment, especially as the less personal live-out domestic system became popular, where homeowners and estate owners hired servants by the day but did not provide housing accommodations. Agencies contracted with employers in search of help, and then sent money or drove directly to the South to pick up groups of service workers ready for the trip north. If new recruits could not afford to pay the agency, they worked off their debts.²⁵ These agencies were often little more than enterprising domestic servants with connections to prospective migrants down south. Freeport resident Louise Simpson remembers how there was “this particular family who was sort of like a personnel person for employment. She would go to where she came from in Carolina and bring people up.”²⁶ Former domestic Harvey Sinkar-Herring was one such person. She opened her own domestic servant recruitment

²² Shodell, pp. xiv, 11, 57.

²³ Dorothy Eklund, “Impressionistic Study of the Life and Social Needs of the Negro Community in Inwood, Long Island,” M.A. Thesis, New York School of Social Work, 1937, p. 45, SWALC.

²⁴ Oral history transcript of interview with John Morgan Blount on February 13, 1981, p. 2, African American Heritage Oral History Collection, PWLHC.

²⁵ Eklund, 43-44.

²⁶ Quoted in Baxandall and Ewen, 29.

agency, offering not only passage north, but temporary housing and training classes, charging the employers hiring fees and room and board.²⁷ A similar process emerged for recruiting cheap construction labor. Contractors in road and housing construction went south in search of ‘green’ workers to maintain a pliant, low-wage workforce.²⁸

Long Island’s farmers likewise relied on migrants from the South, tapping into a broader agricultural labor stream flowing along a 1,200-mile network from New England to Florida. Since the turn of the century, truck farmers utilized temporary laborers during harvest and planting seasons. These laborers came from a variety of sources, but as Cindy Hahamovitch finds, a structure emerged tying black southerners to a year-round harvest rhythm during the long agricultural depression of the 1920s and 1930s.²⁹ Crew leaders, often migrant laborers themselves, contracted with growers on Long Island and then recruited individual laborers from the south by the truckload.³⁰ Like domestic service agencies, the crew leader offered credit to cover transportation and food costs, and since housing was often provided on site in makeshift camps at the farm, food and other living expenses were removed from wages during the extent of the stay. Most migrants were black men, moving with their crews or joining new ones to make incomes across the eastern seaboard.³¹

²⁷ Baxandall and Ewen, 29.

²⁸ Gangloff, 21.

²⁹ Cindy Hahamovitch, “In the Valley of the Giant: The Politics of Migrant Farm Labor, 1865-1945” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 1992), 196-197, 228-229.

³⁰ “Relief Wage Held Hurting Farmers,” *New York Times*, June 3, 1937; Memorandum from J. Wood to Roy Wilkins, Herbert Hill, and Henry Moon, Mar 5, 1959, in NAACP and Labor, 1956-1965, Part 13 supplement, reel 11, slide 383, *Papers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*, microfilm (Bethesda MD: University Publications of America) (hereafter cited as *Papers of the NAACP*).

³¹ League of Women Voters of Chemung County, “Analysis of Farm Labor,” January 22, 1968, p. 2-3, Box 2, folder “Dev. Human Resources,” Edith Gordon Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Stony Brook University Libraries, Stony Brook, New York (hereafter cited as Gordon Papers); “Report of Arthur C. Bryant, Vice-Chairman of the SCHRC and Chairman of the Migrant Labor Committee” from Suffolk County Human Relations Commission to H. Lee Dennison, November 3, 1967, p. 4, Box 11, folder “Interdepartmental Social Welfare Advisory Committee, 1967,” Suffolk Community Council Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Stony Brook University Libraries, Stony Brook, New York (hereafter cited as Suffolk Community Council Collection).

Once on Long Island, African American workers joined the Italian, Polish, Irish, and other white workers in competition for service and agricultural jobs as estate owners and farmers “grazed in a savannah of cheap labor.”³² The most stable and well-paying opportunities (relative to other sectors) could be found in year-round domestic service. Women predominated, leading to a black gender imbalance in Nassau County. Women were fifty-five percent of the county’s black population in 1930, reaching almost sixty percent by 1940.³³ Young single women made the trek along with married women who left their families in search of higher pay up north, “a highly gendered process of suburbanization” as Andrew Wiese’s states.³⁴ Wages and working conditions varied depending on the local labor supply, the benevolence of the employer, and the stability of the specific job. Domestics labored around twelve hours per day, and depending on their specific duties, could work anywhere from five to seven days per week. Daily wages ranged from three to five dollars on the estates in the 1920s (\$40-65 in 2012), to just forty dollars a month during the Depression for live-out domestic service (about \$660 in 2012).³⁵

Precarity awaited those working in construction, on resorts, along the fringes of the estate economy, and in the fields. Jobs in these sectors offered seasonal or part-time employment, and workers cobbled together a living by navigating between them. The estate economy’s ever-changing tasks forced laborers to learn a variety of service skills. Thomas Longworth, living in

³² Quoted in Mackay, 33.

³³ *1930 Census of the United States*, 270; Suffolk County, which had a much smaller domestic service employment sector, had an even gender balance, reflecting the agricultural roots of the county. Andrew Wiese finds similar gender imbalances in service suburbs, usually hovering in the mid-50s for women. See Wiese, Table 2.1, p. 51.

³⁴ Social Worker Libbie Soifer discovered that a few of the young African American men she interviewed in Inwood lived only with their mother, and their father remained in the South on farms or in industries not available on Long Island. See Libbie A. Soifer, “. . . Rich Man, Poor Man, Beggar Man, Thief. . . : A Comparative Study of the Occupational Wishes of Twenty Boys, Negro and White,” MS Thesis, New York School of Social Work, 1948, appendix H, SWALC; Wiese, 50.

³⁵ Sobin, 47; New York State Temporary Commission the Urban Colored Population, “Public Hearing,” reel 1, slide 52, microfilm, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York, New York (hereafter cited as Schomburg).

Port Washington, a Gold Coast town, was a chauffeur, butler, chimneysweeper, and when needed, maintenance man.³⁶ Workers in the seasonal industries, which included resorts, housing construction, country clubs, and agricultural labor, moved between each as demand changed. Rebecca Hobson Nash, whose family travelled from Virginia to Riverhead on Long Island's east end in 1926, cut potatoes during the spring, harvested the spuds in the summer, and shifted to house work during the winter months.³⁷ And just as migrant farmers travelled up and down the east coast to work for as little as two dollars a day harvesting produce, Long Island residents likewise travelled across the Island following the booms and busts of local employment. Clarence Phillips, after working as a cook, janitor, and eventually gardener in the Gold Coast, recalled that once "gardenin' had all come to an end and there was nothin' for me to do." He then went to work making "3c a bushel for picked potatoes...workin' on a farm down in the eastern end of the Island, on Sound Avenue" in Mattituck, some seventy miles away.³⁸

This instability affected men's fortunes in particular, who had fewer stable opportunities in the suburban economy. If married, they relied on their wives for stable income that they supplemented as prospects appeared.³⁹ Ironically, the Depression offered unprecedented stability for laborers through public work relief. Public jobs programs, first administered under Governor Franklin Roosevelt's Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA) in 1931 and continued through the alphabet soup of federally administered programs, employed thousands. Statistical records, while scarce, indicate that Long Island's working class relied on public programs for their livelihoods. A 1933 survey of families receiving work relief in Nassau

³⁶ NYS Commission on the Urban Colored Population, "Public Hearing," reel 1, slide 65, microfilm, Schomburg.

³⁷ Rebecca Hobson Nash interview, August 17, 1989, in Dorothy Mealy, ed., "Meet the Seniors" Oral History Collection, call no. 301.415 ME, Suffolk County Historical Society, Riverhead, New York.

³⁸ Phillips interview, p. 110, PWLHC.

³⁹ Andrew Wiese finds this to be true across pre-World War II suburbs. See Wiese, 54-56; Social worker Dorothy Eklund, when surveying Freeport in the 1930s, remarked that "the Negro is chiefly dependent for his livelihood on his women's work." See Eklund, 41.

County reveals that nearly eighty percent of the county's relief workers were either skilled tradesmen or unskilled laborers, a third were foreign-born, and seven percent were black, greater than their proportion of the population (less than three percent). A Civil Works Administration survey in 1934 found that Italian and Polish was spoken among over forty percent of all workers in unskilled positions.⁴⁰ The programs funded long-term building projects (at least relative to the short-term work in the suburban economy), including Robert Moses' state parkway network, local public roads and schools, and a county-wide urban sewage system in Nassau.⁴¹ African Americans in particular found security in these work relief programs, and in 1933, almost thirty percent of Nassau County's black male population were employed on public relief.⁴² As African American domestic Beatrice Nixon recalled, "in Glen Cove, nearly everybody was on the WPA. That's the only work they could get." Her husband, after years of working sporadically in the estate economy, took WPA jobs "as long as the Depression lasted, until he could go out and get a job like he wanna, of his own."⁴³ Nixon stated that workers in Glen Cove thought of "their WPA work as jobs no different from private employment except that they seem safer and more lasting than private employment."⁴⁴

Long Island's unskilled laborers could move across the various sectors of the mixed service and agricultural economy, or exploit the stability of Depression-era relief, but the

⁴⁰Nassau County Emergency Work Bureau, "Report of Activities," June 1, 1932 – May 31 1933, p. 5-6, Microforms Reading Room, New York Public Library, New York, New York (hereafter cited as NYPL); Nassau County Emergency Work Bureau, "Report of Activities," June 1, 1933 – June 17, 1934, p. 18, NYPL.

⁴¹Nassau County Emergency Work Bureau, "Report of Activities," November 1931 - June 1932, p. 51, NYPL; Nassau County Emergency Relief Bureau, "Report of Activities," June 18, 1934 – June 30, 1935, p. 50, NYPL.

⁴²Nassau County Emergency Work Bureau, "Report of Activities," November 1931-June 1932, p. 11, NYPL; Nassau County Emergency Work Bureau, "Report of Activities," June 1 1932 – May 31 1933, p. 5-6, NYPL; Nassau County Emergency Work Bureau, "Report of Activities," June 1, 1933 – June 17, 1934, p. 16-18, NYPL. The 30% is an estimate based on the 1930 male population. Even taking into account the 1940 male population (a high estimate), 19% of the male black population were relief workers.

⁴³ Oral history transcript of interview with Beatrice Nixon on January 24, 1981, p. 2-3, African American Heritage Oral History Collection, PWLHC.

⁴⁴ Eklund, 53.

structure of the economy presented little vertical mobility. The skills obtained through service labor could be transferred into small businesses. Ethel Saulter remembers that her father, a migrant from Margaretsville, North Carolina, opened a taxi service for train commuters in Manhasset.⁴⁵ Others started garbage removal businesses, grocery stores, or delicatessens.⁴⁶ Such self-employed African Americans numbered less than five hundred, or four percent of the total black labor force in 1940, and even those workers were tied to the broader service economy.⁴⁷ The foundation of Long Island's wealth was imported from New York City, save the agriculture sector that required large landholdings and access to capital. Long Island's southern black population served as a source of cheap labor to clean the homes of middle class residents, tend to the gardens of the wealthy, harvest farmer's potatoes, and wait on vacationers at seaside resorts. While spared the grueling industrial work migrants in the North's urban centers endured, Long Island's black workers entered a precarious and constrained labor market of low-wage opportunity, a market they shared with immigrants and the rest of the suburban working class.

'The Negro Problem'

Long Island's low-paying and unstable labor market shaped the living conditions of the region's working class. Despite the proliferation of single-family housing across the region, less than sixty percent of Long Islanders owned homes as of 1940. Immigrant communities did form the kinds of working class suburbs that Becky Nicolaides found in Los Angeles, where

⁴⁵ Oral history transcript of interview with Ethel Saulter on January 9, 1981, p. 1-5, African American Heritage Oral History Collection, PWLHC.

⁴⁶ Lynda Rose Day, *Making a Way to Freedom: A History of African Americans on Long Island* (Interlaken, N.Y.: Empire State Books, 1997), 84-85; Oral history transcript of interview with Gerald Biddle December, 1980, p. 5, African American Heritage Oral History Collection, PWLHC.

⁴⁷ *1940 Census of Population*, 58, 61.

homeownership served as a safety net against economic insecurity.⁴⁸ For example, real estate speculator Giovanni Campagnoli encouraged Italian immigrants, many from Manhattan's Lower East Side and the 'Belmont' section of the Bronx, to purchase homes in Copiague, a small hamlet in Suffolk County. He named the streets after famous Italians, and home-owning Italians built a "singular Italian village" sandwiched between the resort community of Amityville and the middle class village of Lindenhurst.⁴⁹ Communities such as these were rare, though more common among immigrants than African Americans, as only sixteen percent of Nassau's and thirty-three percent of Suffolk's black population owned their own homes.⁵⁰ Real estate developer Louis Fife developed a black homesteader community in Gordon Heights in Suffolk County in 1927 where actors, vacationers, and local workers lived and grew produce for consumption as well as truck farming purposes. Gordon Heights was the exception, and most black residents moved into rental units in urbanized villages within reach of the estate economy, or across the unincorporated expanse of the Island in strategic locations tied to multiple sectors of the labor market.⁵¹ In Suffolk County, black residents straddled the agricultural and resort economies, like in North Amityville, a hamlet just north of the waterfront village of Amityville, where southern blacks could work on nearby potato fields as well as the hotels and restaurants dotting the Great South Bay.⁵² In Nassau County, incorporated villages like Hempstead, Glen Cove, Freeport, and Rockville Centre were hubs for domestics and laborers working in the

⁴⁸ Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁴⁹ LaGumina, *Steerage to Suburb*, 22-29, 34-38.

⁵⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Housing* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1943), 317-318, 325-326.

⁵¹ L. Fife, "Twenty-Five Years of Gordon Heights," *The Gordon Heights Archives*, accessed June 8, 2014, http://www.gordonheights.net/index_003.htm

⁵² Joel R. Simon, "Selected Topics in the History of the Amityville, New York Public Schools through 1965" (M.S. thesis, Hofstra University, 1979), p. 81, 83; Janet Perrin and Charles F. Howlett, *A Walk Through History: A Community Named Amityville* (Interlaken, N.Y.: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1993), p. 22, 28.

surrounding middle class suburban and wealthy estate economy. Early settlers set in motion family and community-based chain migrations, and in places like Freeport and Rockville Centre, the majority of black residents originated from just a few counties in North and South Carolina.⁵³ These population numbers were only what Census takers captured at the moment they surveyed the area, and in reality, the black presence was higher during peak employment season. In Hempstead and Rockville Centre, social workers estimated around a quarter of African American's were a 'floating population' of single women or family members, temporarily staying as jobs opened and then leaving.⁵⁴

Within these villages, black residents faced a constrained housing market, limited to the least desirable housing because of their low incomes, dependence on local employment, widespread use of racial covenants, and careful deployment of land-use regulation that protected middle class residences.⁵⁵ Economic segregation trumped racial segregation, as black residents shared housing with foreign-born immigrants in similar conditions. Freeport, Inwood (part of the 'Five-Towns' area in southwestern Nassau County), and Glen Cove all had mixed Italian, black, and sometimes Polish sections, though social workers in these communities noted that earlier migration among foreign-born whites and their slightly higher economic positions led to higher homeownership rates among Italian and Polish immigrants compared to black residents.⁵⁶ Work largely determined housing location, and given transportation difficulties, long hours, and family ties, Long Island's rental markets were islands all to themselves, and rent ranged widely

⁵³ Minnie O. Daniels, *A Study of Community Conditions in the Bennington Park Area of Freeport, New York*, MA Thesis, Columbia University, 1937, p. 5, SWALC; A brief glance at the 1940 Census enumeration district files for Rockville Centre reveals that in the Banks Avenue section, towns like Sunberry and Wilmington, North Carolina predominate.

⁵⁴ NYS Commission on the Urban Colored Population, "Public Hearing," p. 8-10, 38-39, 138, Schomburg.

⁵⁵ NYS Temporary Commission on the Urban Colored Population, "Public Hearing," p. 37-8, Schomburg; See Wiese, 40-43.

⁵⁶ Bennington Park's Italian population was estimated to be about 25%. See Daniels, 6; Eklund, 12; Gangloff, 5, 63.

from one village to the next. Average monthly rents in the Bennington Park section of Freeport, a domestic service settlement south of the LIRR in the village's east end, averaged between eighteen to twenty dollars per month.⁵⁷ Six miles north, monthly rents in the village of Hempstead fluctuated from twenty-seven to thirty-seven dollars, a significant proportion of a domestic worker's forty dollar average monthly wage.⁵⁸

Limited mobility within and between villages, low incomes, and a growing population produced conditions ripe for exploitation. As African Americans continued to migrate into the region in the 1930s as foreign-born immigration stagnated, property owners took advantage of their poverty and dependence on local jobs, turning every possible inhabitable structure into rent-producing property. In Inwood, former Italian homeowners in the swampy 'Frog Hollow' neighborhood rented their housing to incoming black tenants, flipping the community from Italian to black dominated.⁵⁹ In the Banks Avenue section of Rockville Centre, property owners converted former barns, morgues, cellars, and storefronts into dwelling spaces. In Oyster Bay village, twenty families shared the charred remains of a partially burnt down blacksmith's shop.⁶⁰ Vacancies in these sections remained low, and since wages from individuals or even intermittent dual earners barely covered monthly rents, multiple families holed up in rooms to make ends meet. Cots converted kitchens into makeshift bedrooms while outhouses became the restrooms for forty or more people. Tenants and property owners exploited seasonal demands for housing, taking in 'roomers' who had migrated from the south in search of short-term employment.⁶¹ All of this rapidly deteriorated already unsafe housing conditions, generating

⁵⁷ Daniels, 5-11.

⁵⁸ NYS Temporary Commission on the Urban Colored Population, "Public Hearing," p. 47-52, Schomburg.

⁵⁹ Eklund, 20; Daniels, 11.

⁶⁰ NYS Commission on the Urban Colored Population, "Public Hearing," p. 6-11, Schomburg.

⁶¹ Daniels, 10; New York State Temporary Commission on the Urban Colored Population, *Second Report to the Legislature of the State of New York* (February, 1939), 79; NYS Temporary Commission on the Urban Colored Population, "Public Hearing," p. 33, 83, Schomburg.

suburban ‘slums’ parallel to their urban counterparts. A 1934 housing survey of the Bennington Park section in Freeport revealed that of 213 dwellings, only fifty-five were connected to the village sewer system and only forty-two had gas stoves. Storefronts were converted to makeshift housing, as Figure 1.1 shows, and residents of these ‘flats’ had to draw water from a hydrant near the privy, relying on the coal kitchen stove for heat.⁶² Bennington Park’s conditions were found across the “Harlem Belts” in the incorporated villages of Nassau and western Suffolk counties, in the “Battery” section of Oyster Bay village, “the Hill” in Hempstead, “Banks Avenue” in Rockville Centre, and “Long Branch Road” in Glen Cove. In these districts, families survived without insulation or water during the winter and sewage overflowed into wells, threatening the health of those who used it.⁶³



Figure 1.1. “Bennington Park.” Backyard of 132-138 E. Sunrise Highway, in the Bennington Park section of Freeport circa 1950. Courtesy of Freeport Historical Society.

⁶² Daniels, p. 7, 9-14.

⁶³ NYS Commission on the Urban Colored Population, “Public Hearing,” p. 95-6, Schomburg.

Black housing conditions were the physical markers of Long Island's 'negro problem,' a growing concern about the region's poverty that coincided with black southerner's increased presence on the Island. Their skin color, higher levels of poverty, and migrant status became intertwined with the debate over poverty and the housing conditions poverty bred. Prior to the 1930s, local activism treated African Americans and foreign-born immigrants similarly. Long Island's wealthy elites funded settlement houses in Long Island villages to assist the destitute and offer training in the trades and 'domestic arts.' Philanthropist Margaret Sage endowed the Margaret Sage Industrial School in 1907 in the Inwood/Lawrence area of southwestern Nassau County, which served both the local Italian and black population. In Glen Cove, estate owners funded two settlement houses, the Orchard House in the heavily Italian 'orchard' section of the city, and the Lincoln House for black Glen Cove residents, both of which offered domestic training courses, athletic programs, and social activities.⁶⁴ Continued black migration amidst the Depression led to an intensifying focus on the African American poor and their status as 'migrants' in particular.

Welfare was the most contentious issue. New forms of welfare emerged to soften the blow of unemployment and poverty during the decade, and as the poorest Long Islanders, blacks and foreign-born Italian immigrants received home relief in greater proportion than their population.⁶⁵ In the hamlet of Inwood, a social work survey determined that Italians and African Americans were forty percent of all relief cases in 1937. Taxpayers decried the increasing costs and alleged 'abuse' of the system, though their vitriol was targeted toward black recipients rather

⁶⁴ John H. Snypse Jr., "What the Parents of Negro Teen Age Members Know about the Five Towns Community House, Lawrence, Long Island, New York," (MS Thesis, New York School of Social Work, Columbia University, 1949), p. 5, SWALC; Gangloff, 45-52; "Glen Cove Fair: North Shore Society at Work for Five Charities," *New York Times*, Jun 22, 1924, p. X9.

⁶⁵ This was not unique to Long Island of course, as Michael Brown found that in southern cities, black relief proportions exceeded their share of the population in the 1930s. See Michael K. Brown, *Race, Money and the American Welfare State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 78-80.

than foreign born whites. This occurred for three basic reasons. Firstly, racist assumptions about black irresponsibility pervaded discussions of welfare, although Italian immigrants were not immune to such assumptions. Second, unlike foreign-born whites, African Americans became a larger proportion of recipients over the course of the 1930s. Data from the Family Service Association of the Five Towns, a private welfare agency in southwestern Nassau County, found that their minority caseload nearly doubled in proportion over two years. Finally, this increasing proportion were southern migrants directly from the south. Of eighty-seven applicants to the Family Service Association, seventy-four were from southern states.⁶⁶

Migrants on the welfare rolls during the Depression was hardly surprising. Welfare checks filled the gaps in seasonal employment and was a better alternative to returning south where prospects were even more desperate. For a small proportion, relief was also an attractive alternative to declining wages in domestic work.⁶⁷ Such behavior, even from a small minority of African Americans, shaped the views of black poverty. Welfare investigators expressed their anger when receiving applications for relief before the applicant had found adequate housing, sharing stories of clients who were “completely satisfied once they get on relief, and often refuse to accept private employment for fear of being taken off relief.”⁶⁸ Community members adopted similar views. In Inwood, a local police officer believed that despite the jobs available, a “low type of black...far under Harlem” were moving to Nassau specifically for relief. Glen Cove’s Chamber of Commerce president believed his city had the largest welfare cost per capita in the country, a problem emanating from “the colored group” who relied on “public relief” unlike ‘homeowning’ Polish and Italian immigrants. Others in the city agreed, and a social worker

⁶⁶ Eklund, 54-55.

⁶⁷ NYS Commission on the Condition of the Colored Urban Population, *Second Report*, 21-22; Daniels, 5-6.

⁶⁸ Daniels, 40.

report found that the “white community has actually come to resent the presence of the colored population...the feeling seems to be that when employment relations ceased, responsibility ceased and it is up to the foreign and colored elements to shift for themselves rather than become a burden of the community.”⁶⁹

Welfare, though a rational response to unstable income and a bulwark against destitution among Long Island’s poor black population, was understood as the motivation for the southern migration and the cause of deplorable housing conditions. These assumptions, when combined with the financial implications of an increased relief load, resulted in new policies designed to curb the ‘abuses.’ Nassau’s Department of Public Welfare, already in the business of monitoring relief cases as of 1935, added a ‘settlement’ auxiliary branch to their department in 1938 with the sole purpose of verifying a recipient’s county residency. If a resident did not live in Nassau for at least a year prior to receiving public assistance, the Department could “return” them to their original residence. Such a policy was incredibly time-consuming, difficult, and largely ineffective (from 1938 to 1940, the branch deported sixty-six people), though it exemplified the belief that the poor were abusing the state’s benevolence and that the county’s problems originated from outside rather than within the dynamics of the region.⁷⁰ The consequences of such a policy were devastating for the few families targeted by the welfare department. In 1936, an African American widow, referred to as “Mrs. X” in the welfare department report, moved from South Carolina in search of domestic work, leaving her five children behind with her

⁶⁹ Eklund, 111-112; Gangloff, 94, 113.

⁷⁰The Nassau County Emergency Relief Bureau reorganized as Nassau County Department of Public Welfare in 1938 as mandated by the new Nassau County Charter. Nassau County Emergency Relief Bureau, “Report of Activities,” July 1, 1936 to June 30, 1937, p. 23, NYPL; The Nassau County Department of Public Welfare, *First Annual Report of the Board of Public Welfare Covering the Calendar Year 1938* (Garden City, New York, 1938), 30; The Nassau County Department of Public Welfare, *Second Annual Report of the Board of Public Welfare Covering the Calendar Year 1938* (Garden City, New York, 1939), 41-42; The Nassau County Department of Public Welfare, *Third Annual Report of the Board of Public Welfare Covering the Calendar Year 1938* (Garden City, New York, 1940), 36-38.

brother in the South. When her brother could no longer afford to care for the children and sent them north, Mrs. X quit her sleep-in domestic job to care for them. The county paid her rent for two years until 1938, when the welfare department demanded she return to South Carolina. She refused, and planned to forgo relief for a year to establish legal residence in the County. Her two sons worked irregularly over the next year, though the family fell behind on rent, gas, and electricity bills, seeking relief again in 1939. When the department determined that “neither Mrs. X. nor her two oldest sons were making a real effort to become independent of public relief,” they again ordered she return to South Carolina. After a court action, the Deputy Sheriff took Mrs. X and four of her children to South Carolina, separated from her family and Long Island’s job opportunities.⁷¹

African Americans’ ‘migrant’ status likewise informed the debates over housing conditions in Long Island’s ‘Harlem belts.’ As overcrowding further deteriorated the low-rent housing stock in Nassau’s incorporated villages, concern grew over the consequences of such an environment, especially as potential breeding grounds for disease and crime. As a housing activist warned fellow middle class residents, “the woman in that house who lives here under those conditions, engaged by you and by myself or by anyone else as a domestic, could carry typhoid fever into your own home.”⁷² Tensions emerged between those who wanted to improve village housing stock and those who feared such improvements would induce further immigration. Those in favor of eliminating the worst conditions looked to stronger housing code regulation. In Rockville Centre, the building department forced landlords to renovate or face condemnation, though condemnation pushed tenants into the remaining housing or compelled

⁷¹ *Third Annual Report of the Board of Public Welfare*, 39-41.

⁷² NYS Commission the Urban Colored Population, “Public Hearing,” p. 100-101, Schomburg.

them to find housing in other village black districts, exacerbating the conditions elsewhere.⁷³ Improving housing stock, while helpful to existing residents, was viewed as an inducement to further migration.⁷⁴ In Glen Cove, residents hoped to “discourage colored families from coming to Glen Cove by continuing the poor housing conditions.”⁷⁵ The fear that housing improvements, which increased public costs for sewage, clean water, or housing itself, would only worsen conditions by encouraging further settlement stifled any movement toward large-scale housing renovation during the 1930s, despite unprecedented efforts in cities across the country and new streams of federal funding.

The belief that housing or welfare was the primary motivator for Long Island’s black settlement and the cause of Long Island’s ‘negro problem’ misunderstood their role as the region’s source of cheap labor and the living conditions their low-incomes produced. When Perry Gangloff of the New York School of Social Work surveyed the city of Glen Cove in 1937, he found a community blaming the lack of industry, poor transportation, and the presence of foreign groups for the city’s high unemployment and income inequality, but as Gangloff recognized, Glen Cove had “lost sight of their own growth and its relation to the present situation,” that those very ‘problems’ sprouted from the city’s growth itself, an economy dependent the “existence of wealthy suburban estates.”⁷⁶ As a city tied to the Woolworth, Pratt, and Morgan estates, among others, improving housing conditions and alleviating poverty required breaking free from the structure of the estate economy, and providing living wage opportunities.

⁷³ NYS Temporary Commission the Urban Colored Population, “Public Hearing,” p. 4-20, Schomburg.

⁷⁴ NYS Temporary Commission the Urban Colored Population, “Public Hearing,” p. 70, Schomburg.

⁷⁵ Gangloff, 64.

⁷⁶ Gangloff, 18, 95.

“Death in one hand and prosperity in the other”⁷⁷

Long Island’s dependent service economy languished during the Depression. Tied to the wealth generated in New York, the fortunes of the wealthy and middle class in the city determined that of Long Island. The building boom ended after 1929, while elites constructed only eighty estates in the 1930s. At the Depression’s nadir in early 1933, nearly a fifth of Nassau County’s population applied for emergency relief.⁷⁸ New Deal projects, while supporting thousands of unemployed Long Islanders, supplemented the foundation of residential suburbia, completing the state parkway network as envisioned by Robert Moses, designing a public golf course at Bethpage State Park, and improving local public amenities.⁷⁹ All of the projects buttressed the stagnant suburban economy, but growth did not return until 1940, and the recovery was not based upon the fortunes of Gotham but rather from the region’s aircraft industry, a relatively small segment of the elite recreational economy prior to 1940 that transformed the nature of the Long Island economy by the end of the war, revolutionizing the region’s labor market, the spatial layout of the Island, and its relationship to the metropolitan region.

The origins of Long Island’s aircraft industry are closely tied to the origins of aviation itself. While North Carolina, Ohio, and even Connecticut compete over aviation birth rights, Long Island can claim most of the seminal flight accomplishments prior to 1930 thanks to the disposable wealth of the nation’s upper class flowing through the region.⁸⁰ Early aircraft was a novelty, dominated by wealthy sportsmen, adventurers, and entrepreneurs. Wealthy interest in

⁷⁷ “Tides of Change,” *Newsday*, Sep. 10, 1965, p. 6S

⁷⁸ The 1933 number is an estimate based on the applications for work relief during the spring of 1933 divided by the total eligible working population as of the year prior. The actual unemployment number was most likely higher. See Nassau County Emergency Work Bureau, “Report of Activities,” November 1931 – June 1932, p. 9, NYPL; Nassau County Emergency Work Bureau, “Report of Activities,” June 1 1932 – May 31 1933, p. 2-3, 7, NYPL.

⁷⁹ Nassau County Emergency Work Bureau, “Report of Activities,” November, 1931 TO June 1932, p. 51, NYPL; Nassau County Emergency Work Bureau, “Report of Activities,” June 18, 1934 – June 30, 1935, p. 50, NYPL.

⁸⁰ Bruce Smith, “3 States Tussle over Bragging rights for 1st Flight,” *Associated Press*, October 3, 2013, accessed June 11, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/3-states-tussle-over-bragging-rights-1st-flight>.

aviation coalesced with the ample land available in Nassau County, and early aviators carved seven airfields out of the Hempstead Plains, holding internationally recognized tournaments and supporting major breakthroughs in flight. From Long Island's airfields, Earle Ovington made the first airmail flight, Lieutenants John Macready and Oakley Kelly began the first transcontinental flight to San Diego, and Charles Lindbergh took off for Paris. The area's early dominance made it the center of America's small military aircraft efforts during World War I, and the "Lindbergh Boom" in 1927 birthed a commercial market. Sales jumped from twenty-one to seventy-one million dollars in two years, and Long Island's social elite established the Aviation Country Club in 1929, complete with tennis courts, swimming pool, and a landing field.⁸¹

Long Island's early aviation industry, while world-renowned, remained on the periphery of Long Island's economy through the 1930s, an outgrowth of the region's proximity to New York's wealth rather than a distinct industry. For one, aircraft employed few people. In 1930, Nassau County had only 4,000 manufacturing workers in any industry. Aviation was a 'craft industry' done in 'job shops' with a small number of skilled workers rather than an assembly line. These men (all men prior to World War II), designed handmade tools and parts drawn from their own expertise, and often built a 'lot' of parts for an order, moving from one component to

⁸¹ Raymond E. Spinzia and Judith A. Spinzia, *Long Island's Prominent Families in the Town of Hempstead: Their Estates and Their Country Homes* (College Station, TX: VirtualBookworm, 2010), xi-xiv; David A. Watson, "Financing Long Island's Aircraft Industry (From the Beginning to 1928)," in *The Development of the Aerospace Industry on Long Island; Financial and Related Aspects, Volume II*, eds. William K. Kaiser, Charles E. Stonier (Hempstead NY: Hofstra University Yearbook Of Business, Series 5, Volume 4, 1968), 1-36; Hugh O'Rawe Jr., "Leadership Role of the Aircraft industry on Long Island," in *The Development of the Aerospace Industry on Long Island; Financial and Related Aspects, Volume II*, eds. William K. Kaiser, Charles E. Stonier (Hempstead NY: Hofstra University Yearbook Of Business, Series 5, Volume 4, 1968), 139-192; Donald M. Pattillo, *Pushing the Envelope: The American Aircraft Industry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 10, 67; Elsbeth Freudenthal, "The Aviation Business in the 1930s," *The History of the Aircraft Industry: An Anthology*. G.R. Simonson, ed. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1968), 73; For a comprehensive history of early aviation on Long Island, see Joshua Stoff, *The Aerospace Heritage of Long Island* (Interlaken, N.Y.: Heart of the Lakes Publishers, 1989).

another. New York City supplied the craft workers, including Polish, German, and Italian immigrants with backgrounds in Old-World metal and woodworking trades.⁸² The craft-based nature of early aircraft limited both entry into the job market as well as the need for large numbers of employees, and given low demand in the 1910s and 1920s, aircraft remained a small part of Long Island's economy despite its strong geographic and popular presence.

The industry's close relationship with the US military transformed its role in the region. The Depression destroyed the nascent consumer market, and private production remained stagnant through the 1930s. The manufacturers who survived wedded themselves to military contracts. Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation, founded in 1929 by six men in a garage in Baldwin, worked closely with the Navy, moving to a 120-acre site in Bethpage by 1936.⁸³ In neighboring Farmingdale on the Nassau/Suffolk border, Russian expatriate Alexander de Seversky founded the Seversky Aircraft Corporation in 1931, developing record-breaking military aircraft like the P-35 for the Army Air Corps in his 250,000 square foot factory. While Seversky was ousted in 1938 and the company was reorganized into the Republic Aircraft Corporation, his early relationship with the Army was pivotal to the company's survival.⁸⁴ Other firms, including the Sperry Gyroscope Company of Brooklyn and Fairchild's Ranger Aircraft Engineering Corporation in Farmingdale, powered through the Depression as instrument and engine developers for military aircraft.⁸⁵ Despite such growth, their impact on the area's labor

⁸² Tom Lilley, Tom. "Conversion to Wartime Production Techniques," *The History of the Aircraft Industry: An Anthology*. G.R. Simonson, ed. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1968), 135-136; Richard Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story* (New York: Praeger, 1976), 21; Stephen Raymond Patnode, "Labor's Love Lost: The Influence of Gender, Race, and Class on the Workplace in Postwar America." (PhD diss., Stony Brook University, 2008), 19.

⁸³ Thruelsen, 17-91; Freudenthal, 93; John W. Thomas, "Financing long Island's Aircraft Industry, 1928-1938," in *The Development of the Aerospace Industry on Long Island: Financial and Related Aspects, Volume II*, eds. William K. Kaiser, Charles E. Stonier (Hempstead NY: Hofstra University Yearbook of Business, Series 5, Volume 4, 1968), 48-50.

⁸⁴ Joshua Stoff, *The Thunder Factory: An Illustrated History of the Republic Aviation Corporation* (Osceola, WI: Motorbooks International, 1990), 12-33; Thomas, 51-52; Rossano, 72-3.

⁸⁵ Thomas, 53; Lavern A. Wittlock Sr., "Fairchild's Engines," *Long Island Forum* 48, no. 3 (March 1985): 44-52;

market remained small. Grumman's employment remained below five hundred workers until 1937, never climbing above 1,000 until 1940. Republic likewise remained below 1,000 employees.⁸⁶

Global hostilities changed this. Military-related exports to Europe and Latin America grew in the late 1930s, and the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 pushed the War Department to strengthen the nation's air defense. In March 1940, FDR requested 50,000 planes a year from American manufacturers. By the end of that year, legislation was in place to streamline the contract process, assist in the development of defense facilities, and produce a government-private industry partnership popularly known as the 'military-industrial complex' in the postwar period.⁸⁷ Long Island's aircraft manufacturers benefitted from this partnership, and the region became the nation's sixth largest recipient of military contracts by 1945.⁸⁸ Republic's relationship with the Army thrived as the company produced the first single-engine single-seat pursuit aircraft, the P-47 Thunderbolt, building 15,683 P-47's during the war as the second largest producer for the Army Air Corps.⁸⁹ Grumman built thousands of F4F Wildcats, F6F Hellcats, and TBF-1 Avengers for the Navy, and the company became known as the "Iron Works" for their planes' ability to survive battles and return pilots to safety. Around these airframe producers (firms that built and assembled airplanes) emerged a network of

⁸⁶ Rossano, 65-72; Lawrence Feliu, "Impact on Long Island, Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation," (unpublished paper (binder), Northrup-Grumman History Center, Bethpage, New York), Table VI.

⁸⁷ G. R. Simonson, "The Demand for Aircraft and the Aircraft Industry, 1907-1958," *The Journal of Economic History* 20, no. 3 (Sep., 1960): 370-375; Robert Higgs, *Arms, Politics, and the Economy: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1990), xvi; Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 199-200.

⁸⁸ Lilley, 119, 131, 137; Reginald M. Cleveland and Frederick P. Graham, "Aviation Manufacturing Today in America," *The History of the Aircraft Industry: An Anthology*. G.R. Simonson, ed. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1968), 144-145; Herman O. Stekler, *The Structure and Performance of the Aerospace Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 11.

⁸⁹ Stoff, *The Thunder Factory*, 39, 67.

subcontractors making instruments, flight equipment, and engines, including Sperry, the Ranger Engines division, and Liberty Aircraft Corporation.

This high level of production, supported through military spending, revolutionized the region's economy and geographic layout. The factories transitioned from the craft-based, innovation-oriented 'job shop' to an assembly line mass production system, necessitating long, slender single-story buildings covering thousands of acres. They also necessitated thousands of trained factory workers to design, manufacture, and assemble the more than 100,000 parts required to make an airplane. These massive needs transformed Long Island into an industrial suburb, joining what Sarah Jo Peterson calls "the latest eruption in a decades-long process of suburban diversification" across the nation during World War II, as new industrial nodes sprouted along the nation's outlying urban fringe.⁹⁰ Defense-related industrialization reconfigured cities, built towns from farmland, and aided the regional growth of the South and West.⁹¹ In Long Island's case, defense-related industrialization pivoted the region away from its subservient position to New York City. Long Island's residential suburban service economy no longer dominated the labor market as industry moved to the center of its job growth and source of income, making the bi-county region a center rivaling the nation's largest manufacturing cities. Industry also provided Long Island's working class with unprecedented opportunities for jobs, housing, and services, transforming their lives.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Sarah Jo Peterson, "The Politics of Land Use and Housing in World War II Michigan: Building Bombers and Communities," (PhD diss., Yale University, 2002), 10.

⁹¹ See Robert Lotchin, *The Martial Metropolis: U.S. Cities in War and Peace* (New York: Praeger, 1984); Sarah Jo Peterson discusses the development of the Ford Company's Willow Run Bomber Plant in farmland west of Detroit and the communities that develop around them. See Sarah Jo Peterson, *Planning the Home Front: Building Bombers and Communities at Willow Run* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); For World War II's impact on the West, see Marilyn Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); For World War II's impact on the South, see Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), chapter 3.

Manpower

When aircraft demand took off in 1940, Republic, Grumman, and their subcontractors all scrambled for workers. Republic's staff climbed from a few hundred to 1,500, with an additional 8,000 in training. Grumman's jumped to over 6,000 by 1941, and the company continued hiring around 1,000 workers per month. At their peaks, Republic's employment rolls were over 24,000 and Grumman's more than 25,000 in 1943. Scientific instruments, the largest parts manufacturing sector for aircraft production, went from non-existent to employing over 10,000 by 1943. Overall, more than 100,000 people were part of defense-related aviation manufacturing on Long Island at the war's peak, about forty percent of the 1940 labor force. They built everything from stabilizers and bomb sight equipment to the planes themselves, part of the production front for the most advanced air power in the world.⁹² In other parts of the nation, filling suburban factory positions involved massive migration and coordination between housing agencies, private builders, and local government to meet the needs of these workers in these new communities.⁹³ On Long Island, the existing population provided a ready workforce, and the challenge was transforming these service and agricultural laborers into industrial workers.

Despite Long Island's proximity to the nation's largest city, defense manufacturers overwhelmingly relied on local labor. A Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) survey of Republic Aircraft employees in 1940 determined that almost eighty percent lived in Nassau and

⁹² United States Employment Service, "Labor Market Reports: New York Metropolitan Region," December 1942, p. 43, Box 6, folder 271, New York State War Council, Committee on Discrimination in Employment Minutes and Investigations Files (Series A4278), New York State Archives, Albany, New York (hereafter cited as War Council Papers); War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Development Report," June 1943, p. 46, Box 6, folder 271, War Council Papers; War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Development Report," October/November 1943, p. 47, Box 6, folder 274, War Council Papers; Rossano, 73-74; Lawrence Feliu, "Impact on Long Island, Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation," Table VI; Joshua Stoff, "Grumman Versus Republic: Success and Failure in the Aviation Industry on Long Island," *Long Island Historical Journal* 1, no.2 (Spring 1989): 114; Patnode, 48-9.

⁹³ For the best example of how this process worked, see Peterson, *Planning the Home Front*.

Suffolk counties, with the remainder commuting from Queens and Brooklyn.⁹⁴ Local workers were preferred for several reasons. Transportation from New York City, especially to the Nassau/Suffolk border, was limited and difficult, unless one had access to a car and the parkway system along the city's perimeter. When Grumman and Republic began tapping the city for workers during labor shortages in 1943, they had to coordinate with the Long Island Railroad to operate special trains to their plants.⁹⁵ Both companies also operated multiple shifts over twenty and twenty-four-hour periods during the war, and waited on irregular shipments of materials to their plants, all requiring a workforce ready for abrupt schedule changes.⁹⁶ Lastly, the state defined the limits of the local labor market. The Navy coordinated with Grumman to limit employment to "bona fide residents of Nassau and Suffolk counties" in 1941 to counter fears of subversive groups in defense plants.⁹⁷ Numerous agencies, eventually centralized under the War Manpower Commission (WMC) in April 1942, tried to stabilize the intense labor mobility occurring during the war, regulating the transfer of workers to areas of production. The WMC's local committees calculated labor supply and production demands across the nation, restricting contracts to firms with adequate labor supplies. The WMC collaborated with Long Island's aircraft companies and effectively closed off the labor market, given the fact Long Island's labor supply could meet production demands. With United States Employment Service (USES)

⁹⁴ The official number was seventy-nine percent. See RFC housing survey results in New York State Department of Labor, "Survey of the Employment Situation in Farmingdale and Bethpage, New York, December 1940," p. 13-14, Box 7, folder 297, War Council Papers.

⁹⁵ Rossano, 73.

⁹⁶ See Lorne H. Price, "Labor in the Aircraft Industry on Long Island, 1940 to Present," in *The Development of the Aerospace Industry on Long Island; Financial and Related Aspects, Volume II*, eds. William K. Kaiser, Charles E. Stonier (Hempstead NY: Hofstra University Yearbook Of Business, Series 5, Volume 4, 1968), 198; See also New York State Department of Labor, Division of Placement and Unemployment Insurance, "Survey of the Employment Situation in Farmingdale and Bethpage, New York, December 1940", p. 4, Box 7, folder 297, War Council Papers; Concerning the irregular flow of materials, see "Labor Market Report – New York Metropolitan Region – August 1942," Box 7, folder 319, War Council Papers.

⁹⁷ "Manager's Monthly Reports, June 25, 1941," p. 2, Box 7, folder 297, War Council Papers.

offices in Hempstead, Rockville Centre, and Patchogue (among others), firms exhausted local supplies of men and women, and Long Island remained relatively closed off, a labor market all to itself.⁹⁸

With only a small manufacturing employment base available on the Island (less than 3,500 registrants with the NYS department of Labor were classified as “general industrial workers”), the government and private firms established island-wide training programs to turn farmers, fishermen, housewives, domestic servants, general laborers and high school students into riveters, welders, and sheet metal workers. In 1940 and 1941, the government and aircraft firms utilized ten high schools and four aviation training centers across Nassau and western Suffolk counties. The government restructured its Works Progress Administration and National Youth Administration programs to train the unemployed for defense, preparing over 16,000 future employees in 1941 alone. Republic and Grumman augmented public programs with their own private schools. Republic established the “Faust” School in Jericho with a one million dollar grant in 1941, while Grumman trained and re-trained its employees in local high schools through night classes and apprenticeship programs on the job, a system they continued into the postwar period.⁹⁹

⁹⁸For WMC policies on Long Island, see Edward Lawson to Will Maslow, “Final Disposition Report,” October 27, 1943, Box 25, folder 2-BR-146, Case Files 1941-1946, Records on the Committee on Fair Employment Practice, Record Group 228, National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region, New York, New York (hereinafter FEPC); Edward H. Lawson, “Field Report, October 10, 1941,” Box 48, folder “Republic Aviation,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Edward Lawson, “Field Report, August 27, 1941 – Grumman Aeronautical Corporation,” Box 44, folder “Grumman Aeronautical Corporation,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; For wartime consumption limitations, see Robert Higgs, “Wartime Prosperity? A Reassessment of the U.S. Economy in the 1940s,” *The Journal of Economic History*, 52, No. 1 (Mar., 1992): 41-60; Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972), 20-22.

⁹⁹State of New York Department of Labor Division of Placement and Unemployment Insurance, “Survey of the Employment Situation in Farmingdale and Bethpage, New York, December 1940,” p. 6-10, Box 7, folder 297, War Council Papers; Thruelson, 142-3.

Long Island's service economy all but collapsed as laborers left the estates, farms, and resorts to fill the job openings and training programs in the defense industry. Estate worker John Gregory recalled that World War II ended the dependency on estate work, and "when Grumman and different factories opened up, a lot of these men went. The younger fellows were drawn into services...and the others went to Grumman and what not."¹⁰⁰ Farm laborers like Joseph Mancuso of Bethpage no longer depended on intermittent wage work that "paid practically nothing" and instead got a job at subcontractor Kirkham Engineering, where "work was steady." Adeline Fischer, whose family barely eked out a living during the Depression, recalled that war work pulled her father off welfare and seasonal agricultural labor. It was "the best time of our life because he had a steady paycheck and we had food on the table."¹⁰¹ All over Long Island, former construction workers, butchers, potato farmers, fishermen, and bakers became industrial blue-collar workers, and the "only thing they had in common was that they were Long Islanders."¹⁰² The divide inherent to Long Island's residential suburban economy dissipated as these industrial workers entered a labor market that offered competitive wages. They were the beneficiaries of what Robert Margo and Claudia Goldin call the "Great Compression," the narrowing of the wage gap between the bottom and top twenty percent, between skilled and unskilled workers, and the educated and un-educated during World War II, a process especially apparent in the former 'Gold Coast.'¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Oral history transcript of interview with John Gregory on February 18, 1987, p. 6, Gold Coast Estate Workers Oral History Collection, PWLHC.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Michelle Mancuso, "Joseph Mancuso Remembers Life in Bethpage during the Great Depression," p. 59, and Quoted in Robin Cook Jacobsen, "Life in Cutchogue and Mattituck during the Great Depression," p. 55, in Lorraine Lupinskie-Huvane and Alan Singer eds., "The Great Depression and the New Deal on Long Island: A Local History Curriculum Guide," *Hofstra University Faculty Page: Alan Singer*. Accessed May 7, 2012, http://people.hofstra.edu/alan_j_singer/294%20Course%20Pack/9.%20Depression_ND/124.pdf

¹⁰² Thruelson, 142.

¹⁰³ Claudia Goldin and Robert A. Margo, "The Great Compression: The Wage Structure in the United States at Mid-Century," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 107, No. 1 (February, 1992): 1-34.

Black workers pinned their hopes on the defense industry's transformative potential as well, though their aspirations were dashed as racial barriers barred black workers, along with white ethnics, from industrial employment at the outset of the defense buildup in 1940. Before Pearl Harbor, Grumman refused to hire any German or Italian born Americans, while Ranger Engines required citizenship papers dated before 1932. Proof of American birth proved problematic for blacks as well, since many had come from areas of the South where births went unrecorded. Republic, the largest employer in December 1940, required all of its employees to be "white, full citizens, aged less than fifty." For white ethnic workers though, the barriers quickly faded as employers and the government relaxed citizenship requirements during the war, and defense firms quickly absorbed them during labor shortages in 1941 and 1942.¹⁰⁴ Long Island's employers did not relax their restrictions on black workers, following general trends across the country that denied blacks jobs in the defense industry. Black activists challenged these racial restrictions as early as 1940, forcing state governments and the Executive Branch to pass the most significant civil rights legislation since Reconstruction.¹⁰⁵ New York City's NAACP, Urban League, black labor groups raised awareness to the problem within the state, pushing state congressmen and eventually Governor Herbert Lehman to establish the Committee on Discrimination in Employment (COD) as part of the New York State Council of Defense in March 1941.¹⁰⁶ Devoted to integrating the defense industry because "discrimination of any kind

¹⁰⁴ State of New York Department of Labor Division of Placement and Unemployment Insurance, "Survey of the Employment Situation in Farmingdale and Bethpage, New York, December 1940," p. 4, BOX 7, folder 297, War Council Papers; Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, "Moving Toward an Equitable Distribution of Negroes in War Production," – June-August 1, 1942, p. 12, Box 7, War Council Papers; For examples of white ethnic workers, see Box 12, folder "General Correspondence: Wo-Z," Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

¹⁰⁵ Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen G. N. Tuck, *Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3.

¹⁰⁶ For a detailed discussion of black activism at the outset of the war, see Carla J. Dubose-Simons, *The 'Silent Arrival': The Second Wave of the Great Migration and Its Effects on Black New York, 1940-1950* (PhD diss., Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2012), 52-64.

is un-American, indefensible, and...dangerous to our democracy at this time,” the committee coordinated with the broader defense council to gather statistics, negotiate with employers to adopt non-discriminatory practices, and concurrently launch an anti-discrimination educational campaign. Executive Order 8802, Franklin Roosevelt’s response to A. Philip Randolph’s threat of mass protest in Washington, established a similar bureau at the federal level, the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC). The FEPC accepted individual complaints of discrimination and could investigate the alleged claims, basically launching a publicity campaign in order to compel a firm to comply. FDR expanded the FEPC’s powers in 1943 under Executive Order 9346, requiring all contracts to carry a non-discrimination clause.¹⁰⁷

On one hand, these committees, at both the state and Federal level, were as “toothless,” as historians claim. The FEPC remained chronically underfunded, underpowered, and unwilling to threaten war production to integrate firms. Of some 8,000 claims nationwide, only a third were resolved in some form. As Kevin Kruse and Stephen Tuck argue, the FEPC was “thin on substance,” representing little more than a symbolic origin to any federal civil rights commitment in the twentieth century. New York’s COD also had little power to enforce anti-discrimination, and mostly launched publicity campaigns or number-gathering initiatives.¹⁰⁸ Regardless of the apparent limitations, the effectiveness of these committees ultimately rested on local cooperation, as Joseph Abel argues. The FEPC was most effective in the North and among firms with sympathetic management or in desperate need of workers. Once the FEPC was integrated into the Office of Production Management in 1942 and then the War Manpower Commission in

¹⁰⁷ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); New York State War Council, “Report – March 1941 to July 1944”, p. 3-4, in Box 6, folder 267, War Council Papers; Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 71; The Committee on Fair Employment Practice, “FEPC: How it Operates,” Box 12, folder “Statistics,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

¹⁰⁸ Polenberg, 117, 123; Kruse & Tuck, 5; New York State War Council, Committee on Discrimination in Employment, “Monthly Report, August 1942,” p. 3, Box 5, folder 257, War Council Papers.

1943, those bureau's regional offices were responsible for enforcement. Local black workers discovered that on Long Island, government officials were committed to integrating firms, especially as firms faced worker shortages, and as a result, aspiring black workers were able to join the defense industry on Long Island.¹⁰⁹

The black struggle to join Long Island's war economy began during the defense buildup in 1940. After Republic Aviation announced a fivefold plant expansion on September 9th, New York Urban League Industrial Secretary Charles Collier Jr. visited the plant to inform the company of available black aviation mechanics from the Manhattan High School of Aviation Trades. At the time, there was only one African American chauffeur among the company's 2,400 workers. Republic's public relations director, William L. Wilson, dismissed the effort to employ more black workers, stating that he could do little "because of objections from white workers in the plant if Negroes were employed" which would "interfere with efficient production on defense orders."¹¹⁰ Republic's attitude galvanized black activists across the metropolitan area, and members from New York City's Urban League, the Catholic Interracial Council, the Committee for Employment Opportunities for Negroes, and the National Conference of Christians and Jews united in an ad-hoc committee to launch a massive publicity campaign against the metropolitan area's intransigent firms.¹¹¹ By January 1941, the committee contacted President Roosevelt and Governor Lehman to raise awareness, and by the end of the month, State Lieutenant Governor Charles Poletti launched a full-scale investigation, condemning Republic, Brewster, and Grumman for their refusal to hire qualified black employees from the

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Abel, "African Americans, Labor Unions and the Struggle for Fair Employment in the Aircraft Manufacturing Industry in Texas, 1941-1945," *The Journal of Southern History* 77, no. 3 (August 2011): 598, 637.

¹¹⁰ Charles A. Collier, "Memorandum: The Employment and Training of Negro Aviation Mechanics by the Republic Aviation Corp," January 10, 1941, Box 7, folder 404, War Council Papers

¹¹¹ Charles A. Collier, "Memorandum: The Employment and Training of Negro Aviation Mechanics by the Brewster Aeronautical Corporation" January 10, 1941, Box 7, folder 404, War Council Papers; Letter from George K. Hunton to Mr. W. Wallace Kellet, November 4, 1940, Box 7, folder 404, War Council Papers.

Manhattan school.¹¹² In May, Republic agreed to train one black resident of Patchogue, Long Island, “an experiment...in this one instance” that if successful, would provide avenues for other minority employees. By August, all three companies committed to “liberal hiring policies” and promised to “give job and training opportunities to every qualified Negro in Nassau and Suffolk counties.”¹¹³

Long Island’s firms did little to fulfill their promise. When the local division of the Office of Production Management (OPM) (responsible for coordinating the nation’s economy and for the FEPC’s implementation early in the war) received a letter from William Hendricks, an experienced black electrical engineer who was refused a job at Republic, the labor division of the OPM investigated. OPM field employment assistant Edward Lawson reported that “frankly, I’m beginning to think that Republic is stalling along” after discovering the company still had only a single black employee in a laborer position. Lawson wrote to Republic public relations director William L. Wilson, and the company gave Hendricks a job in the tool and die department. By November 1, 1941, Hendricks was officially on the payroll as a toolmaker, the first black employee on the production line at Republic.¹¹⁴ While securely employed by the end of the year, the environment at Republic remained hostile to blacks, and within a year, Hendricks faced serious threats to his job. He felt “treated with an aire [sic] of suspicion because it was unusual for a black to be seen here,” and felt discriminated by “a superior who possibly was

¹¹² Letter from Stephen S. Jackson to Senator Robert F. Wagner, December 26, 1940, Box 7, folder 404, War Council Papers; Frieda S. Miller, “Re: Conference with committee representing Negro Agencies, concerning discrimination in employment,” January 21, 1941, Box 7, folder 404, War Council Papers; “Survey Says Aircraft Firms Bar Negroes,” *PM*, Feb. 2, 1941, folder “Republic – Newspaper Clippings,” Cradle of Aviation Museum, Garden City, New York (hereafter cited as CAM); Letter from Charles A Collier Jr. to Charles Poletti, May 9, 1941, Box 7, folder 404, War Council Papers

¹¹³“Bigotry in Hiring Employes almost Wiped out in State,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, Aug 25, 1941, folder “Republic – Newspaper Clippings,” CAM; “Race and Color Bias in Hiring on Decrease,” *New York Times*, Aug 23, 1941.

¹¹⁴ Letter from W.E. Hendricks to F.D. Roosevelt, Sept. 8, 1941, Box 48, folder “Republic Aviation,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; “Field Report,” September 26, 1941, Box 48, folder “Republic Aviation,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; “Field Report,” October 4, 1941, Box 48, folder “Republic Aviation,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

afraid that I might aspire for his job.” He managed a number of employees but was unable to keep them from “shooting oil from pressure cans, throwing towels knotted up at one another and tying cups of water to whirling machines.” Hendricks tried to reprimand them, but those he spoke to were quickly removed from his charge until he led only a single employee. When he asked his sectional supervisor about the situation, the supervisor replied that “no matter how qualified a colored man was, still white men did not want to take the work from him.”¹¹⁵

Hendricks returned to Edward Lawson in 1942, now working for the local office of War Manpower Commission in charge of FEPC implementation. Hendricks filed another complaint, and outright hostility ensued at work. Supervisors advised him to leave the company, fellow workers believed he was a government spy (admittedly, he had been writing letters to government officials about inefficiency at the workplace, blaming “German” elements at Republic) and pranksters removed the screws and bolts from his chair so “when I sat down, the chair fell apart and I found myself on the floor.” Despite his excellent record on the job, the company transferred him to the methods engineering department (a sector devoted to experimental manufacturing), and was so eager to remove him altogether that they willingly wrote a letter of reference for him and claimed he was “unhappy on the job.”¹¹⁶ While admittedly uneasy at work, Hendricks did not want to leave the company, asking the WMC once again for assistance. Edward Lawson tried to negotiate with the company, but Republic claimed that a hate-strike would ensue among white workers and that “the management” would not hire more blacks unless Hendricks was ousted. Lawson responded that if management could not control

¹¹⁵ Letter from W.E. Hendricks to Edward Lawson, undated, Box 48, folder “Republic Aviation,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Edward Lawson to Lieutenant Colonel Herbert J. Schwabacher, August 10, 1942, Box 33, folder 2-BR-56, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Letter from W.E. Hendricks to Edward Lawson, October 27, 1942, Box 33, folder 2-BR-56, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Letter from H.J. Schwabacher to Edward Lawson, Sept 7, 1942, Box 33, folder 2-BR-56, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

their employees, “the Army representatives of the War Manpower Commission would see to it that no serious stoppage of work occurred because of the refusal of individuals to work with a Negro.” Lawson went further: “any employee who refuses to continue normal work because of his personal prejudices will be considered disloyal to the Government and not only will be subject to immediate dismissal, but may be prevented from obtaining employment in other industrial establishments engaged in war production.”¹¹⁷ Republic conceded, giving Hendricks a senior operation sheet writer position in the methods engineering department.

It took nearly a year and outright threats to secure a job for a single, well-qualified black worker. While undoubtedly a major victory for officials assigned to prying open the industry, this did not guarantee opportunities in defense work for the masses of African Americans in the metropolitan region. In a region with few trained industrial workers, access to training programs was the key to entry into the aircraft industry, and this proved the most formidable obstacle to integrating Long Island’s defense workforce. Aside from the immense unpaid time investment for the unskilled (three-hour night classes on weekdays took nearly half a year to complete), it was in training schools where birth certificates were checked, literacy tested, and physical exams administered. Training schools were the major regulators of the workforce, and firms could stall integration while still promising to hire on a non-racial basis by simply limiting access to training programs, a widespread form of “training discrimination” as Joseph Abel argues in his study of the Texas aircraft industry.¹¹⁸

Defense firms limited access to training programs in two ways. First, to assert control over the training regimen, they refused to recognize training from unacceptable programs. The

¹¹⁷ Letter from Edward Lawson to Mrs. Anna M. Rosenberg, October 21, 1942, Box 33, folder 2-BR-56, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Letter from Edward Lawson to Mr. William L. Wilson, October 21, 1942, Box 33, folder 2-BR-56, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

¹¹⁸ Abel, 609-613.

National Youth Administration (NYA) centers on Long Island, which had converted to defense training after 1940, were celebrated for training black men and women for war work.¹¹⁹

Nonetheless, this public form of training was deemed inadequate, and NYA graduates like Sarah Tibbs, a black resident of Amityville, were denied employment at all the major companies.¹²⁰

Aside from limiting acceptable training programs, firms also used schools to screen potential employees. Migrant domestic Myrtle Lebby of Inwood was refused a position at an aviation school in Lynbrook for having recently held a job in Washington DC, and therefore did not meet local residency requirements. Arthur Lindsay of Freeport was likewise dropped from a school in Freeport after a “confidential investigation of his residence, associates, and habits” deemed him unfit to work for the company, despite stellar records at the school and good rapport with his teacher.¹²¹ The Freeport National Defense School’s 425 enrollees in June 1942 had no blacks at all, rejecting a dozen black applicants the month prior who were below the school’s requirements.¹²² African Americans rejected from these schools turned to government agencies to rectify the situation. New York State’s COD responded to complaints over the Freeport school’s anti-black stance in 1942, forcing the school to re-enroll two of the twelve rejected applicants and continuously monitoring the school through July when they accepted nineteen

¹¹⁹ Anthony J. Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933-40* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 207-208; Polenberg, 79-82; Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Development, “Moving Toward an Equitable Distribution of Negroes in War Production,” June-August 1942, p. 9, Box 7, folder 404, War Council Papers.

¹²⁰ Edward Lawson, “Lawson’s Report – Republic Aviation Corporation, Farmingdale, Long Island,” September 28, 1942, p. 2, Box 48, folder “Republic Aviation,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; John Beecher and James Fleming, “Employment Practices at Brewster, Republic, Grumman, and Otis Elevator” September 28, 1942, p. 2, Box 44, folder “Grumman Aeronautical Corporation,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Letter Miss Sarah Cotter Tibbs to FEPC, December 5, 1943, Box 25, folder “Grumman Aircraft Corp., 2-BR-407,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

¹²¹ Letter from Edward Lawson to Myrtle Lebby, August 31, 1943, Box 25, folder 2-BR-146, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; “Field Visit Report,” March 8, 1944, Box 25, folder “Grumman Aircraft Training, 2-BR-370,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Letter from Arthur Lindsay to President Roosevelt, October 30, 1943, Box 25, folder “Grumman Aircraft Training, 2-BR-370,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Letter from Edward Lawson to Paul Gilbert, Dec. 8, 1943, Box 25, folder “Grumman Aircraft Training, 2-BR-370,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

¹²² New York State War Council, Committee on Discrimination in Employment, “Monthly Report,” August 1942, p. 3-4, Box 5, folder 257, War Council Papers.

black students. In 1943, the COD launched hearings, conferences, and a full-scale investigation to guarantee equal access to the schools. By June 1943, the COD, in cooperation with the FEPC, restricted the firms' ability to select trainees at schools, requiring standardized non-racial admissions criteria for entrance that were assessed any enrollee alleged discrimination.¹²³

After nearly two years, workers and government officials managed to pry open the industry to black employment, a struggle that coalesced with the growing labor shortage after 1942. Republic's minority employment increased from two employees in October 1941 to 105 by September 1942, with over half working in skilled or semi-skilled positions. While still only one percent of the firm's entire workforce, black workers were making headway in the company. Grumman likewise improved their hiring policies, from fifteen non-white employees in October 1941 (with only five laboring on the assembly line) to fifty the next year, with twenty five in training (though this only represented a quarter of a percent of the total workforce).¹²⁴ After 1942, those numbers would grow as Long Island's labor market dried up. In December 1942, the WMC considered Suffolk County "pretty well drained of applicants," and by the next year, firms canvassed over radio, in newspapers, and door-to-door. They accepted part-time employees, cut the process of hiring aliens down to two weeks, encouraged women to apply, and even went as far as accepting trainees from New York City, although more often they relaxed

¹²³ Letter from Edward Lawson to Mr. Charles Berkley, May 8, 1943, Box 44, folder "Grumman Aeronautical Corporation," Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; New York State War Council Committee on Discrimination in Employment, "Monthly Report," August 1942, p. 4 Box 5, folder 257, New York State War Council, Committee on Discrimination in Employment Minutes and Investigations Files (Series A4278), New York State War Council Committee on Discrimination in Employment, "Report," April-May 1943, p. 6, Box 6, folder 265, War Council Papers; War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Development Report," June 1943, p. 48, Box 6, folder 271, War Council Papers; President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, "New York Regional Office Activity," April-May-June 1943, p. 4, Box 4, folder 321, Records of the War Manpower Commission, Region II, Record Group 211, National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region, New York, New York (hereafter cited as WMC).

¹²⁴ John Beecher and James Fleming, "Employment Practices at Brewster, Republic, Grumman, and Otis Elevator" September 28, 1942, p. 1-3, Box 44, folder "Grumman Aeronautical Corporation," Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

residency requirements for people moving to Long Island in order to qualify for the local schools.¹²⁵ With racial barriers broken and immense manpower needs, the FEPC and the COD became referral organizations, solving the labor shortage while also getting blacks hired. When five black women from Amityville did not receive calls for jobs after completing training, the FEPC alerted Republic of the situation, who found these women jobs as they opened. Likewise, when Mrs. Laurona Hunter was refused a position at Republic in 1943, the FEPC negotiated a non-factory position for her since the company was not hiring for the assembly line.¹²⁶

Upholding anti-discrimination took a back seat to filling jobs. After a year of fighting to keep William Hendricks employed at Republic Aviation, the FEPC supported his termination in September 1943, citing the fact that other blacks were now employed in the tool room and 280 were in the plant overall. Hendrick's previous defender, WMC officer Edward Lawson, believed Hendricks suffered from a "very pronounced persecution complex."¹²⁷

Over the course of the war, the proportion of African Americans workers in Long Island's defense industry grew. From 1942 to 1943, the black proportion jumped from just under one percent (0.9%) to 3.1 percent, or over 1,500 employees within the seven largest aircraft firms. While relatively small number, when measured against the 1940 black population, the seven largest aircraft producers employed over ten percent (10.4 percent) of all African

¹²⁵United States Employment Service, "Labor Market Reports: New York Metropolitan Region," December 1942, p. 39, Box 6, folder 271, War Council Papers; United States Employment Service, "Labor Market Development Report," June 1943, p. 46, Box 6, folder 271, War Council Papers; United States Employment Service, "Labor Market Developments Report – New York Metropolitan Region," August-September 1943, p. 46, Box 6, folder 273, War Council Papers; New York State Department of Labor, "Labor Market Report – Metropolitan Region," December 1941, p. 24, Box 6, folder 272, War Council Papers.

¹²⁶ Letter from Edward Lawson, October 22, 1942, Box 48, folder "Republic Aviation," Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; "Field Visit to Republic Aviation Corporation, Farmingdale, Long Island," June 18, 1943, p. 2, Box 48, folder "Republic Aviation," Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

¹²⁷ Edward Lawson, "Final Deposition Report," October 21, 1943, Box 33, folder 2-BR-56, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Letter from Edward Lawson to Anthony J. Grimaldi, September 1, 1943, Box 33, folder 2-BR-56, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

American adults, close to the twelve percent of all adult whites working in the industry. By 1944, that white-black difference narrowed to 9.3 percent of all adult blacks compared to ten percent of all whites as total aircraft employment dropped eighteen percent. Given the walls around Long Island's labor market, this was a significant achievement. The numbers in scientific instruments, a field closely tied to aircraft production, followed a similar trajectory. In November 1942, only 130 non-whites worked in the entire sector, or 1.6 percent of the total labor force. By November 1944, that number jumped to 4.3 percent of the workforce.¹²⁸

Racial integration and black mobility within companies varied by firm and sector, as Table 1.2 illustrates. Fairchild's Ranger Engine division in Farmingdale, the most intransigent of aircraft parts firms, severely limited the mobility of its paltry forty-one black employees. When WMC officials visited the plant, the employment manager informed them that their applications had removed any references to race or religion, though direct conversations with black employees revealed that race determined an employee's occupational status. Employee Sylvia Morris reported that she was the first black women to work on machines at the plant, and black men were relegated to the porter department. A male employee confirmed this, stating that despite his five-month training in preparation for the assembly line, he was told "that the only job for Negroes in the plant were those of porters or washers." Another male employee admitted to operating a burring machine but remained at a washer's pay-rate. Promotions were not based on qualifications or training accolades, but made in an ad-hoc manner, overwhelmingly favoring

¹²⁸ For the purpose of uniform comparison, I define 'adult' as all people ages 21 and over in the 1940 census. Data compiled from: War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Developments Report, New York Metropolitan Region (New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland Counties)," Vol. 4, no. 6, October-November 1944, p. 37, Box 7, folder 319, War Council Papers; War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Development Report," Vol. 4, no. 4, June/July 1944, p. 33, Box 7, folder 319, War Council Papers; War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Developments Report - NY metropolitan area," Vol. 4, no. 6, October/November 1944, p. 34, Box 7, folder 319, War Council Papers; War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Report," Oct/November 1943, p. 47, Box 6, folder 274, War Council Papers; *1940 Census of Population*, 47, 52.

Table 1.2: Black Employment Levels in Selected Firms, 1944

	Black Employees	Total Employees	Percent of Total Employees (%)
Grumman	900*	24,000*	3.8
Liberty Aircraft	124	2,249	5.5
Republic Aviation	375	11,417	3.3
Ranger Engines	41	2,074	2.0

* Estimate

Source: “Final Deposition Report” March 9, 1944, Box 25, folder 2-BR-369, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; “Compliance Report,” Oct. 25, 1944, Box 27, folder 2-BR-409, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; “Final Deposition Report,” January 24, 1945, Box 33, folder 2-BC-1131, FEPC; “Final Deposition Report,” March 23, 1944, Box 32, folder 2-BC-563, FEPC.

whites.¹²⁹ Ranger was the exception on Long Island, as once workers and corporate heads generally accepted blacks on the factory floor, they entered into the broad corporate ladder. Of 107 black employees at Republic in September 1943, fifty-seven percent were categorized as skilled or semi-skilled, compared to a quarter working in the non-manufacturing positions. Sperry Gyroscope Company, the most progressive of the metropolitan area’s firms, managed to employ almost two-thirds of its black workforce in its Lake Success plant in the skilled or semi-skilled categories, and only four of the 717 black employees worked in non-production positions.¹³⁰

Ultimately, prospective black employees compelled government officials to enforce anti-discrimination employment law and require the region’s defense factories to train and hire on a non-racial basis. African Americans benefitted from this early struggle as labor shortages became acute. By 1943, blacks were participants in the industry and government-driven

¹²⁹ Mildred Greenblatt, “Field Visit to United Auto Workers, CIO, Long Island Division, Farmingdale, L.I.,” June 29, 1943, Box 33, folder 2-BR-109, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Mildred Greenblatt, “Field Visit to Ranger Aircraft Engine Division of Fairchild engine and airplane Corporation, Jamaica, L.I.,” July 1, 1943, Box 33, folder 2-BR-109, Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC.

¹³⁰ Handwritten survey of Republic minority employment, September 23, 1943, Box 48, folder “Republic Aviation,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Sperry Gyroscope Company to Daniel R. Donovan, May 29, 1945, Box 35, folder “Sperry Gyroscope Co. Inc., 2-BC-1255,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Carla Dubose-Simon examines Sperry’s racially progressive hiring policies, which developed over the course of World War II. See Dubose-Simon, chapter 4.

transformation of Long Island's workforce that severed both black and white dependence on the employment patterns of farms, resorts, middle class homes, and wealthy estates. With access to better paying and more secure jobs, African Americans on Long Island could enjoy the fruits of the 'Great Compression,' as the area's working class became industrialized, entering into massive factories with others like themselves, and benefitting from the upward mobility wartime work provided.

The Future Detroit of the East

Defense industrialization created a brand new world of work and homes for thousands of black and white Long Islanders, placing the manufacturing production worker, rather than the middle class commuter or estate owner, at the center. The black and white laborers who left the farms and estates for defense factories entered a working environment distinct from the residential and agricultural suburban workplace. While most factories employed less than a hundred workers, the majority of defense laborers worked for the big three firms: Republic, Grumman, and Sperry. Here they walked into hundred acre single-story plants, labored above, below, and alongside hundreds of other workers as they assembled fighter-bombers, aircraft engines, or on a smaller scale, various scientific instruments. Sperry's Lake Success Plant exemplified this new work environment. Elmer Sperry founded the Sperry Gyroscope Company in 1910 to design and produce navigational technologies, the most prominent being the gyroscope, a device to measure orientation in ships and planes. By World War II, the company had expanded into various military technologies requiring new factories and a workforce of over 47,000 employees at peak production in 1943 and 1944. In 1941, Sperry built two factories on

Long Island along the Queens/Nassau border in Great Neck and Lake Success.¹³¹ The plant in Lake Success was built largely in what was then the “country,” requiring an automobile or access to the limited private bus transportation available. On a tour of this plant, one FEPC official commented that “the space covered stretches out beyond the limit of vision and the tour around the various departments took about two hours and even then I did not see all of them.” The scientific instruments moved along a belt as the various pieces were assembled, and cellophane covered the instrument as it travelled through the assembly line to prevent dust particles from clogging the device. Usually one worker utilized a machine, though most were capable of working two or three different kinds of machines to prevent boredom and broaden skills. Women and African Americans worked alongside white men in nearly every sector of the very hot, noisy, and dirty factory (save the electronics production department, which was air conditioned and clean), and non-whites were almost sixteen percent of the total workforce in early 1945.¹³²

The shop floor was merely one place workers of all genders and colors would mingle together. At Sperry, cafeterias fed employees, a plant hospital provided complete physical care, and at lunchtime, “negro and white workers were playing games together” including horseshoes and volleyball. This was common practice throughout Long Island’s defense firms. At Republic Aviation, dance parties were popular among both black and white laborers, while Grumman was the most well-known for its paternalistic environment for war workers. The company maintained an ‘open-door’ management policy so that employees were welcome to air any

¹³¹ Patnode, 25; “Table 3: Firms Appearing before FEPC at New York Hearings,” Box 12, folder “Statistics,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; “Manager’s Monthly Reports,” June 26, 1941, Box 7, folder 297, War Council Papers.

¹³² John A. Davis and Marjorie M. Lawson, “Survey of Employment Practices of the Sperry Gyroscope Company, Lake Success, Long Island,” May 29, 1945, Box 35, folder “Sperry Gyroscope Co., Inc., 2-BR-1256,” Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC

grievance or issue directly to the company's top managers, and they paid the fourth highest wages in the nation, not including a bonus system to increase production across the plant (which other firms in the area emulated). The company also maintained a forty-acre farm, three nurseries for employee children, and a number of sports programs for both men and women, including over one hundred softball teams. Grummanites, rather than viewing this as an empty corporate gesture, openly embraced Grumman's paternalist policies, and a kind of family culture developed between workers and the employer that continued into the postwar period.¹³³

The war transformed the lives of thousands outside the defense workforce as well. Domestics found work in the USO, servicing military personnel at Mitchel Field (and the surrounding bases, including Santini), a key supply base for US defenses in the North Atlantic and home to the Air Defense Command. While estate workers like James Baxter jokingly referred to Mitchel Field as "the white officer's country club" between the wars because wealthy military officers kept horses and played polo (requiring black service workers to care for their horses), the war broadened the activities taking place at the base, and employment opportunities abounded. Irma Brasier left her domestic service job at the Garden City Country Club in 1943, working as a USO senior hostess along with her mother for the duration of the organization's initial existence to 1947.¹³⁴ Further east, Mason General Hospital in Brentwood opened to handle

¹³³ Ibid; Mildred R. Greenblatt, "Field Visit to Republic Aviation Corporation," June 18, 1943, p. 2, Box 48, folder "Republic Aviation," Case Files 1941-1946, FEPC; Grumman's popular 'paternalist' culture is described in: Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation, and Paul S. Gilbert, *Grumman at War; Grumman Makes Planes for the Men Who Make History. Fifteenth Anniversary* (Bethpage, NY: Grumman aircraft engineering Corporation, 1945), 15; Thruelson, 55, 143-7; and in detail in David Onkst, "The Triumph and Decline of the "Squares": Grumman Aerospace Engineers and Production Workers in the Apollo Era, 1957-1973" (PhD diss., American University, 2011). Onkst argues that Grumman's culture was central to the strong anti-union sentiment at the plant from World War II through the Cold War period. See pages 94-95 in particular.

¹³⁴ Written transcript of interview with Ernest Van Purnell, resident of Lakeview LI, by Hempstead High School Students, March 12, 1981, Hempstead New York (Long Island Studies Institute, Hofstra University, Hempstead New York), 13-14; Written transcript of interview with James Baxter, resident of Garden City Park, LI by Hempstead High School Students, January 30, 1981, Hempstead New York (Long Island Studies Institute, Hofstra University, Hempstead New York), 26; Written transcript of interview with Irma Brasier, resident of Hempstead LI,

soldier's psychological issues, while Camp Upton expanded from its army training origins to include a hospital, separation center, and a host of new buildings, and both required hundreds of construction workers, office personnel, mess attendants, and general service workers.¹³⁵

Demand for food meanwhile afforded agricultural laborers an unprecedented degree of stability. With a rise in potato planting, black farmworkers had plenty of work, and the WMC opened a number of agricultural labor supply centers to house and coordinate work schedules for some 652 indigenous, southern, and foreign laborers, supplementing their intermittent agricultural employment with non-agricultural war-related work. Even with a continued influx of southern blacks, the Department of Agriculture had to import 450 Jamaican workers to harvest produce across two-hundred farms on Long Island from 1943-1945.¹³⁶

Long Islanders also encountered a new spatial layout catering to the needs of manufacturing production workers. Real estate developer Frederick Leeston-Smith, who bought up a 300-acre plot of land to build 1,200 homes adjacent to the growing Grumman plant in 1940, foresaw that the Island was "fast becoming a great center of aircraft and allied industries...the future Detroit of the east." He imagined the farmland giving way to homes for industrial workers, and secured Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgages to make the homes affordable. Bankers, retail store owners, and above all builders anticipated the building boom and "buying power of our people" unleashed by the high wages of defense work as early as

by Hempstead High School Students, November 12, 1980, Hempstead New York (Long Island Studies Institute, Hofstra University, Hempstead New York), 6.

¹³⁵ War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Developments Report – New York Metropolitan Region (New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland Counties," vol. 5, no. 1, Dec-January 1945, p. 34, Box 7, folder 319, War Council Papers.

¹³⁶ War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Development Report," June 1943, p. 52, Box 6, folder 271, War Council Papers; War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Development Report," Vol. 4, no. 4, June/July 1944, p. 24, 26, Box 7, folder 319, War Council Papers; War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Developments Report – New York Metropolitan Region (New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland Counties," February-March 1945, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 31, Box 7, folder 319, War Council Papers; "Pleased with Work of West Indians," *The Long Islander*, August 5, 1943, sec. 1, p. 4.

1940. In a region that had built much of its prosperity on housing construction prior to the Depression, a new housing boom directly related to industry would lift the two counties out of the decade-long construction slump.¹³⁷

On one hand, workers did have access to new housing opportunities as they flocked to communities immediately surrounding factories. Farmingdale, a village resting between Republic Aviation and Grumman, became completely overrun with workers trying to secure even temporary housing. A survey noted that “most of the houses are rented even before they have been vacated” and homeowners capitalized on the limited housing stock, charging exorbitant rents “even for the shabbiest dwellings.” Workers even resorted to renting “defense trailers” in lieu of actual housing. Only seventeen percent of surveyed Republic employees owned their own homes, while nearly half rented an apartment, house, or slept in room & board accommodations. Demand for housing was high, especially because “increased earnings of the workers have spurred their desire for better housing facilities.”¹³⁸ The U.S. Housing Authority appropriated one million dollars for defense housing at the outset of the war, and dozens of real estate developers capitalized on housing demand as well.¹³⁹ Aside from Leeston-Smith’s housing tracts in Bethpage, several housing developments appeared early in the war. In Farmingdale village, South Park Homes, East Park Homes, Nakomis Park, and Republic Homes all catered to defense workers with FHA mortgages, and many were “sold faster than they are

¹³⁷ “Big Bethpage Tract for Development,” *The Long Islander*, December 19, 1940, 7; “Communities React Quickly to Trade Spurt,” *County Review*, January 30, 1941, 10.

¹³⁸ New York State Department of Labor, Division of Placement and Unemployment Insurance, “Survey of the Employment Situation in Farmingdale and Bethpage, New York, December 1940”, p. 12-13, Box 7, folder 297, War Council Papers; “West Suffolk Enjoys War,” *County Review* Feb 5, 1942, 18; “Aircraft Plant Survey Reveals Home Scarcity,” *The Long Islander*, Mar , 1940, 8; United States Employment Service in cooperation with New York State Department of Labor Division of Placement and Unemployment Insurance, “Labor Market Conditions and Employment Service Program,” December 1941, Box 6, folder 270, War Council Papers; “Trailer For Sale!,” *Suffolk County News*, March 6, 1942, 5.

¹³⁹ “Tides of Change,” *Newsday*, September 10, 1965, 6S.

being built.” In the New Hyde Park/Lake Success area, one hundred and thirty homes were erected after Sperry opened its factory in 1942. Developers even built luxury homes to accommodate “executives, engineers, architects, and the better paid workers,” including Alexander Edelman’s 500 shorefront homes in Lindenhurst village along the Great South Bay, “a mecca for yachting, fishing, and duck shooting.”¹⁴⁰

Aside from these projects though, Long Island would not have the kind of boomtown development like Willow Run outside Detroit or the burgeoning defense areas of the South and West during the war. While factories blossomed across the region’s landscape, the housing boom would follow the war, not coincide with it. Housing construction from 1940-1944 declined sixty-four percent from the 1930s and was seventy-one percent lower than the immediate postwar period (1945-1950), the birth-pangs of the postwar suburban boom.¹⁴¹

Government restrictions played a pivotal role. Aside from widespread rationing of building materials, construction itself became highly regulated during the war. The National Housing Agency (NHA) limited government housing loans to properties within war areas with actual housing shortages, and the NHA found no housing problems on Long Island. Since the majority of workers lived in Nassau and Suffolk Counties anyway, the government encouraged bus services, increased use of railroads, and car-pools or temporary tenancies as alternatives to new housing.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ “To Erect Homes out of Town,” *New York Sun*, November 28, 1941; “Many New Homes in this Area,” *New York Sun*, August 22, 1941; “Rush Work on Homes for Aircraft Workers,” Untitled Newspaper, Aug 3, 1941, folder “Republic – Newspaper Clippings,” CAM; United States Employment Service of the War Manpower Commission, “Labor Market Reports: New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester Counties,” Vol. 2, no. 11, December 1942, p. 41, Box 6, folder 271, War Council Papers; “Edelman Firm Buys 1,500 Lots on Long Island,” *New York Herald Tribune*, May 4, 1941, folder “Republic – Newspaper Clippings,” CAM.

¹⁴¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Housing: 1950. Volume I, General Characteristics. Part 4, Michigan-New York* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1953), Table 20.

¹⁴² “NHA Begins Converting Old N.Y. Homes for Defense Workers in Busy Centers,” *New York Times*, January 17, 1943; War Manpower Commission, “Labor Market Development Report,” Vol. 4, no. 4, June/July 1944, p. 24, Box 7, folder 319, War Council Papers; “Labor Market Reports, New York State Metropolitan Region, Nassau and

Rather than a housing boom occurring near burgeoning factories, a factory boom happened in the ample but dispersed settlements across the bi-county region, a pattern that would expand in the postwar period as firms decentralized aspects of production to draw in pockets of workers from local neighborhoods. Grumman opened five auxiliary plants in 1942, stretching from Port Washington on the North Shore to Amityville on the South shore, allowing local employees to walk to work.¹⁴³ Jake Swirbul saw the advantages not only in bringing in new workers, but also as a means to expand manufacturing space without limiting production.¹⁴⁴ Republic and Sperry likewise opened multiple plants in Oyster Bay, Great Neck, and Lake Success. Subcontractors remained even more decentralized, operating anywhere from former airfields in Valley Stream on the Queens/Nassau border to Greenport on the North Fork of eastern Long Island. So unlike the military bases of the South or the massive industrial Willow Run Bomber plant twenty-five miles outside of Detroit, housing and factories did not emerge simultaneously or in the same magnitude on Long Island, though the transformation was no less significant. In Nassau and western Suffolk counties, industrialization came to the suburbs, transforming suburbia's purpose from agricultural, commuter, and estate economies to that of manufacturing mass-production. Industry pulled workers off farms or out of upper and middle class homes and into the more stable world of defense manufacturing as well as the multiplier effects of wartime demand.

Suffolk Counties," December 15, 1942-February 15, 1943, p. 38, Box 6, folder 271, War Council Papers; War Manpower Commission, "Labor Market Report – New York Metropolitan Region – August 1942," p. 27, Box 7, folder 319, War Council Papers.

¹⁴³ Thruelson, 139; Lawrence Feliu, "Impact on Long Island, Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation," Table VI.

¹⁴⁴ Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation, and Paul S. Gilbert, *Grumman at War*, 16.

Conclusion

Wartime's broad-based prosperity was short-lived, a result of unprecedented war needs rather than any sustained civilian demand that consumer industries could look forward to. As the material demand declined in 1944, workers were left with uncertainty. The next year, wartime spending dried up, and in regions transformed during the war, economist Paul Samuelson's warnings of a returning depression rang true: the military cancelled over 18,000 contracts, and fifty of the nation's sixty-six airframe plants ceased to produce aircraft.¹⁴⁵ Republic Aviation ordered a ten-day shutdown in 1945, and by December, employment dropped to 3,700. Sperry's workforce meanwhile shrank from 30,000 to 5,000.¹⁴⁶ Grumman took a different approach, dismissing everyone over a loudspeaker announcement, and only notifying certain employees to report for work the next week.¹⁴⁷ The emergency of war turned these small companies into giant enterprises, but peacetime could not sustain their size. Each tried converting to leaner civilian production. Republic attempted to convert its XF-12 Rainbow military transport to commercial uses, though both American and Pan-American Airlines cancelled purchases, while Republic's small-scale commercial amphibian (the RC-3 "Seabee") proved costly and undercapitalized. The company managed to sell only twenty Rainbows, and the RC-3 was a \$6.5 million dollar loss.¹⁴⁸ Republic consequently let 3,200 workers go in 1947 after increasing its workforce to 8,000. Grumman had some success, producing a number of small-scale commercial aircraft (most notably the G-73 Mallard), while also branching out into aluminum canoes and truck bodies, but

¹⁴⁵ Simonson, "The Demand for Aircraft and the Aircraft Industry, 1907-1958," 377; Cleveland and Graham, 182-186.

¹⁴⁶ Stoff, *The Thunder Factory*, 67, 81; "Sperry Golden Anniversary Book," folder "Sperry Gyroscope Corp. – Brooklyn/Lake Success," CAM.

¹⁴⁷ Patnode, 88; Thruelsen, 218-219.

¹⁴⁸ Stoff, *The Thunder Factory*, 69-79; Rossano, 75; Thomas A. Eschmann, "Financing Long Island's Aircraft Industry, 1939-1953," in *The Development of the Aerospace Industry on Long Island; Financial and Related Aspects, Volume II*, William K. Kaiser, Charles E. Stonier eds. (Hempstead NY: Hofstra University Yearbook Of Business, Series 5, Volume 4, 1968), 77.

Grumman's diversification never comprised more than five percent of their total sales, which had dropped from \$236.8 million in 1945 to \$24.2 million two years later, requiring a new round of 2,000 layoffs.¹⁴⁹

Long Island's airframe manufacturers competed for dwindling military funds, which continued to comprise nearly eighty percent of all aircraft orders nationwide in the immediate postwar period.¹⁵⁰ For the industry's employees, the mobility war work provided proved fleeting. Women were overwhelmingly let go in what Stephen Patnode refers to as a postwar transition to "neo-traditional" gender roles in the workplace, removing women from the shop-floor and restricting female jobs to low-level white collar work. As former Grummanite Catherine O'Regan remembered, "after the war was over... they removed *all* of the females from the shop... [the] next day they were all replaced by men."¹⁵¹ For Long Island's blacks, the question was not so much about 'last hired, first fired' that unionists, civil rights activists, and industrialists on the national level debated during the transition to peace, but what to do after an entire industry collapsed, a problem they shared with their white co-workers. James Baxter returned to estate work after losing his job at Grumman, securing stable employment again in 1956 as a groundskeeper for the public school system in Great Neck. Irma Brasier likewise returned to the service sector after her stint for the USO, sewing dresses from home, and doing day work or laundry.¹⁵²

Within a little over two decades, black Long Islanders had moved from the fringes of the low-wage suburban service market to participation in industrial suburbia. This was largely the

¹⁴⁹ Rossano, 75; Stekler, 15; Thruelson, 221-236; Lawrence Feliu, "Impact on Long Island, Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation," Table VI.

¹⁵⁰ Eschmann, 85.

¹⁵¹ Catherine O'Regan interviewed by Stephen Patnode on July 10, 2003 in Patnode, 92.

¹⁵² Transcript of James Baxter interview, p. 25, 32, 34; Transcript of Irma Brasier interview, p. 39, 51.

result of the exceptional economic boom of war that drove an entire national economy to devote its manpower and resources to develop thousands of planes, millions of tanks, and billions of ammunition rounds. These African Americans were part of the broader Great Migration flanked by the two World Wars, exploiting better-paying and liberating industrial work. Black migrants to Long Island did not come to the area for industrial jobs however; they were swept up into the wholesale transformation of the region, and this was thanks to local efforts as much as national trends. The state played a pivotal role, structuring the local labor market and defending their work rights. Local activists likewise pushed firms to employ all of Long Island's manpower, regardless of background or skin color. Through the combined forces of state intervention and activist interest in black employment, opportunity emerged. Ultimately, these efforts were all for temporary work in a wartime emergency, and there was little evidence that either the defense industry or equal opportunity would be sustained for existing African Americans or new black migrants after World War II. Like the nation as a whole, Long Islanders feared a return to the old prewar economy. Blacks, too, feared that the war years were aberrant and wondered about their futures as the factories closed around them.

Chapter 2

Progress and Poverty

In 1951, *National Geographic* magazine published an article of writer-photographer and explorer Howell Walker's most recent excursion. It was not to remote Australian territories or obscure Quebec farms, but instead a drive from the East River to Montauk, to observe an island where the "only monotonous thing about it is the constant change." Emerging from the newly-constructed Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, Walker made his way east, stopping to interview locals and observe Long Island in flux. The detour included Levittown, and Walker snapped photos of the new model homes, the lines of anxious homebuyers, and veterans filling out applications for low-cost loans.¹ Walker's photographs, along with the pictures and stories in *Time*, *The New York Times*, and elsewhere cemented Levittown and Long Island as the quintessential postwar suburb, emblematic of America's prosperity and social mobility after 1945.² And though the myth that surrounds Levittown attributes its popularity to the baby boom, returning veterans, and Americans' proclivities toward homeownership, Walker recognized a major factor in Levittown and Long Island's popularity: "along with the popular eastward migration goes industry. Home seekers want space for their families, business needs space for its plants. The general trend is a healthy one; transplanted factories find available labor in the grown suburbs, and residents find jobs close to home."³

Though Walker neglected the structural factors undergirding postwar suburbanization, historians have filled in the gap, showing the role of federal housing subsidies and highway

¹ Howell Walker, "Long Island Outgrows the Country," *National Geographic*, March 1951, 279-326.

² "Housing: Up from Potato Fields," *Time* 56, no. 1, July 3, 1950, 67-72; Ralph G. Martin, "Life in the New Suburbia," *New York Times Magazine*, January 15, 1950 16, 40-42.

³ Walker, 281.

construction in fostering postwar sprawl. Unlike Walker, historians still overlook the importance of jobs to postwar suburbanization, and if suburban industry is mentioned, it is in the context of tax revenues and the urban/suburban divide, not as central to suburbanization itself.⁴ On Long Island, jobs and housing grew together, both thanks to federal agencies: the FHA spent \$601 per Nassau County resident from 1934 to 1960, while defense spending per capita in Nassau County amounted to \$596 in 1960 alone.⁵ Defense dollars buttressed a robust labor market in blue-collar jobs and services, supporting an estimated 600,000 of 1.3 million Nassau County residents in 1960.⁶ Defense-related manufacturing also fostered the infrastructure and construction capacity to attract other industries, while the population boom led to new jobs in finance, retail, and various services. In all, job growth was a critical factor in Long Island's 400 percent population increase from 1945 to 1960, especially for the thousands of upwardly mobile working class Americans who took advantage of new employment opportunities to purchase homes on the Island and become members of the postwar 'middle class.'

Whether one could access these jobs determined their ability to enjoy Long Island's postwar consumer bounty; the labor market was critical to social mobility. This was as true for the region's burgeoning black population as anyone else. While housing segregation was endemic across Long Island, residential discrimination did not forbid aspiring black suburbanites from moving to the bi-county region, nor did it push pre-war black residents off Long Island. On one hand, a rising black 'middle class' procured jobs that financed homeownership, at least one car, a washer machine, and a TV. They sat in traffic on their daily commutes, fretted over taxes,

⁴ See Jackson; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; Wiese *Places of their Own*; Freund, *Colored Property* among others for examples. Robert Self views industrial decentralization as pivotal to postwar suburbanization, though the focus is on its role in relieving property taxes and the effect of this on Oakland's metropolitan area. See Self, chapter 3; one major exception to this general observation is Greg His, *Magnetic Los Angeles*.

⁵ Nassau County Planning Commission, *Selected Population and Economic Data: Nassau County* (Mineola, New York: Nassau County Planning Commission, 1965). 6; Jackson, 211

⁶ Rossano, 78.

spent weekends tending to lawns, and entertained guests in their living rooms, all like the average white suburbanite.⁷ Families like the Blackmans, who owned a 50 x 100 lot in the Nassau County hamlet of New Cassel, typified this black middle class. Carl Blackman was an engineering supervisor who drove to his defense-related instrument job in Suffolk, while his wife Lorraine taught pre-kindergarten in nearby Westbury. Together, they earned \$20,000 a year, well above the Nassau County median family income.⁸ But for every success story like the Blackmans, there was a family like the Jacksons. Bessie and her husband moved from Harlem to the very same neighborhood of New Cassel in 1966 after years of saving and job hunting. Her husband Logan got a trucking job on Long Island, and Bessie hoped to leave the workforce to care for the kids. Unfortunately, Logan contracted tuberculosis and was admitted to a sanatorium. Bessie tried to apply for welfare, but was denied because they were homeowners. She then returned to the workforce as a domestic servant, a job sectors commensurate with her skills and work experience. Each morning she rode a bus to an employment agency in downtown Hempstead and then another bus to her job site. The kids helped one another get to school, and returned home long before her.⁹

As *Newsday*, Long Island's suburban daily newspaper recognized in 1966, "there is the middle class Negro who has made it and the poor Negro who has not."¹⁰ While the Blackmans' trajectory was only possible in Long Island's robust postwar economy, the Jacksons and the thousands of others who labored in homes, on farms, or waited for work on street corners were what Peter Bacon Hales insightfully calls "ghostly images" in suburbia, "of a different time and place, a different land and landscape." Almost half of Long Island's black population in the

⁷ "Have and Have-Nots," *Newsday*, January 8, 1966, 8W.

⁸ Thomas Johnson and Harvey Aronson, "The White-Collar Blackmans," *Newsday*, January 8, 1966, 9W.

⁹ Jack Athol, "Requiem in Suburban Ghetto," *Newsday*, April 10, 1968, 31.

¹⁰ Thomas Johnson and Harvey Aronson, "The Negro on Long Island," *Newsday*, January 8, 1966, 1W.

postwar period did not obtain the kinds of jobs that enabled upward mobility in the postwar period, and instead labored in occupations resembling the pre-war world of work: inconsistent, low-wage, and lacking benefits. Though living within a region of unprecedented opportunity, they were seemingly untouched by the prosperity around them. “These negroes were not actors in the Levittown drama,” as Hales put it.¹¹

While a tiny proportion of Long Island’s population, the region’s disproportionately black poor nonetheless complicate the spatial narrative of postwar urban history, one that places housing segregation at the center of racial inequality. In the most popular metropolitan histories, the suburban economy is prosperous, but segregation limited African American access to these jobs. The postwar suburb, while racially divided, is above all class homogeneous.¹² On Long Island, the black poor lived in the suburbs, though residence within a prosperous region did not translate into upward mobility, and the central problem was the structure of the economy itself, in terms of the jobs it produced for the unskilled and the ways racism pervaded the labor market. Their existence illustrates the limits of Long Island’s postwar growth and the postwar economy, which unlike World War II, favored the educated and skilled; those lacking either or both competed at the bottom of the occupational ladder. Living amidst affluence did not assure inclusion.

¹¹ Peter Bacon Hales, “Chapter 3a: Levittown’s Palimpsest: Colored Skin,” *Outside the Gates*, accessed September 2014, <http://tigger.uic.edu/~pbhales/outside%20the%20gates/chapter%203a%20Interjection%20Levittown's%20Racial%20Nature.doc>

¹² Some examples include: Wiese; Sides; Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Self; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; See Lassiter and Niedt for a critique of suburban postwar class ‘homogeneity,’ in the suburbs.

Jobs and Housing

In 1958, social workers at Adelphi University interviewed industrial workers living on Long Island, the ‘M’ family being among the dozen of blue-collar interviewees. Mr. ‘M’, his wife and two sons were originally New York City residents with ‘limited assets,’ but when Mr. ‘M’ secured a job at Republic Aviation in 1951 during the Korean War boom, the family relocated to Long Island. They rented for two years, saving Mr. M’s high wages to purchase a \$9,600 single-family home, completing their transition into the postwar middle class. The story was typical on Long Island and significant for two reasons. First, it illustrates the importance of industry to suburbanization, including postwar suburbanization. As geographers Richard Walker and Robert Lewis argue, “residential areas...have always been joined at the hip by industry locating to the urban fringe.”¹³ Long Island’s postwar suburbanization was both an industrial and residential process occurring simultaneously, as Table 2.1 illustrates. Job growth actually outpaced the population increase from 1935-1954, and manufacturing led the charge, laying down the foundation for the postwar residential boom. The ‘M’ family story is also significant because they were a working class family who took advantage of industrial growth in the suburbs to become homeowners and members of the postwar ‘middle class,’ using geographic mobility for upward social mobility. Though not all suburban migrants moved to the urban fringe for jobs, recent research has indicated that job decentralization influenced residential suburbanization after World War II, i.e. people followed jobs to the suburbs.¹⁴ And needless to

¹³ Richard Walker and Robert Lewis, “Beyond the Crabgrass Frontier: Industry and the Spread of North American Cities, 1850-1950,” in Robert Lewis, ed., *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, 2004), 16.

¹⁴ Leah-Platt Boustan and Robert A. Margo measured the relationship between job decentralization and suburbanization by looking at the opposite case – state capitals, where job centralization is relatively constant. They find that jobs do tie people to certain residential locations, particularly in the case of state capitals. From this analysis, they draw a broader conclusion that “about one-fifth of the suburbanization of population between 1960 and 2000 can be attributed to employment decentralization.” See Leah Platt Boustan and Robert A. Margo, “Job

Table 2.1: Nassau-Suffolk Population vs. Manufacturing, Wholesale, and Retail Employment, 1935 and 1954

	1935	1954	Change (%)
Population	530,000*	1,346,414	154
Manufacturing	6,979	110,737	1,487
Wholesale	2,159	10,978	409
Retail	18,741	71,211	280
Total	24,879	192,926	592

* Estimate

Source: Source: Harold L. Wattel, "Economic Growth and Unemployment," in *Long Island Business* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1958): 7, Box 1, Hofstra College Center for the Study of Business and Community Research Records, Long Island Studies Institute, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York.

say, working class suburbanites were more likely to relocate for jobs, particularly on Long Island, where relatively high-wage industries could be used as the stepping-stone to suburban homeownership. Unlike pre-war working class migrants, working class families moving to Long Island were no longer relegated to the low-wage job opportunities of the estate and agricultural economy. Instead, the postwar working class benefitted from a decentralized landscape of industry and services for a broad population of blue-collar workers, engineers, small businessmen, and a growing army of retailers, government employees, wholesalers, and other service workers. The 'crabgrass frontier' was indeed a new space, for both jobs and homes.

At the center of Long Island's postwar industrial growth were the defense-oriented aircraft producers. World War II laid the foundation for industrial suburbia, but the Cold War sustained it. The industry's postwar uncertainty in 1945 dissipated as the Cold War precipitated a gradual military expansion that lasted into the 1980s. Long Island became part of what Ann Markusen describes as the 'gunbelt,' the defense-induced industrial shift to loosely developed areas stretching from the suburbs of Boston down the Atlantic coastline to Florida, across the

Decentralization and Residential Location," *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs* (2009, no. 1): 17-19; For critiques of their analysis, see "Comments," *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs* (2009, no. 1): 21-31.

Deep South, and up the West Coast in the postwar period.¹⁵ Cold War spending favored airpower, and Republic, Grumman and their subcontractors benefitted in two ways. During conventional ‘hot wars’ like Korea and Vietnam, airframe firms manufactured jet aircraft. In the broader arms race, Long Island’s defense-oriented firms sustained their businesses with experimental weaponry contracts during the guided missiles boom in the wake of the Soviet A-bomb detonation, and later the space boom following the launch of *Sputnik*.¹⁶ Electronics firms became prominent during the guided missiles boom, and Long Island’s electronic manufacturers, including American Bosch Arma and Sperry Gyroscope, joined Grumman and Republic in missile production.¹⁷ The ‘space’ boom of the 1960s then pumped billions of dollars into what was now the ‘aerospace’ industry, and Grumman secured the Apollo Lunar Module contract from NASA in 1962, constructing twelve modules.¹⁸

The presence of these large defense contractors influenced the physical layout and the labor market of Long Island’s postwar economy. The contracts flowing to these large firms attracted subcontractors engaged in war production to the region, accelerating a process of industrial ‘decentralization’ in the New York metropolitan area occurring since the turn of the century.¹⁹ While New York’s consumer electronics industry migrated to the Midwest, firms developing un-standardized electronics (namely military goods) stayed in the tristate area, and

¹⁵ Markusen et. al, 3. See Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) for an excellent account of the South’s defense-driven regional growth in the postwar period.

¹⁶ Ann Markusen differentiates between ‘hot war’ and ‘cold war’ booms, the former (Korea, Vietnam) necessitating conventional armaments, the latter (Sputnik, SDI) demanding experimental weaponry. Markusen, et. al, 9.

¹⁷ “American Bosch Arma Corporation,” *Careers in Astronautics*, April 1959, folder “Arma – Garden City,” CAM; “Sperry Golden Anniversary Book,” folder “Sperry Gyroscope Corp. – Brooklyn/Lake Success,” CAM.

¹⁸ Onkst, 20-24; Thruelson, 333.

¹⁹ The “New York Metropolitan Area” is defined as defined as a 22 county region across New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut; Richard Harris, “Industry and Residence: The Decentralization of New York City, 1900-1940,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 19, no. 2 (1993): 171-176.

Long Island employed almost a fifth of the nation's military electronics workers in the 1950s.²⁰ New firms accounted for some of this growth, though a 1956 survey of Long Island industry found that three quarters of bi-county firms emigrated from New York City.²¹ Electronics, along with the large aerospace producers, were the most visible industrial growth sectors in the bi-county region, making up two-thirds of all Long Island's exports from as well as eighty-eight percent of all export-oriented manufacturing.²²

Defense manufacturing, which required huge flexible factories, encouraged an industrial real estate market that attracted other industrial firms to the region, part of the broader industrial decentralization taking place nation-wide. Developers designed 'industrial parks' to accommodate this shift, single story factories built in a zoned area for industry with setback requirements and parking, usually near major transportation nodes. The 'industrial park' offered firms versatile workspaces. Managers utilized the floor-space to adapt 'assembly stations' to new products and automation techniques, and could use large plots of land for plant expansion if

²⁰ Measuring the proportion of 'military' electronics employment is difficult since the sector fits under 'scientific instruments,' which do include non-military items, though given that military electronics accounted for half of ALL electronics by value of product, 'scientific instruments' when compared to the other two categories, radio and electron tubes, was primarily a military sector in the postwar period. The New York Metropolitan area had 38.6 percent of all scientific instrument production in the nation. Long Island's proportion in this sector jumped from 37.4% in 1947 to 45.6% in 1956, and by that same year nearly equaled New York City's total electronics employment, with only 2.7% less employees. Hence, it is accurate to say that a fifth of all military electronics producers worked on Long Island in the 1950s. See James Hund, "Electronics," in Max Hall and Roy B. Helfgott, *Made in New York; Case Studies in Metropolitan Manufacturing* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 244-246, 312.

²¹ William N. Leonard and Charles E. Stonier, *The Long Island Survey, Volume I: Industry Looks at Long Island: A study of how manufacturers rate Nassau and Suffolk Counties as homes for industry*, (November 1956), pp. 18-22, Box 2, Hofstra College Center for the Study of Business and Community Research Records, LISI (hereafter cited as Business Records, LISI); The survey for Suffolk county found similar statistics: 52% of the firms came from outside of Suffolk, and 64% arrived in 1945 or later. See Leonard & Stonier, *The Long Island Industrial Survey, Volume 1*, 50-58, Box 2, Business Records, LISI.

²² Ronald H. Miller, "Trade Flows for the Manufacturing Sector of the Long Island Economy: Determining the Outputs to Local and External Markets and Imports in 1956 and 1964," (MA Thesis, City College of New York, 1967), 5, 31a-32; Eighty percent of all manufacturing jobs on Long Island as of 1964 were export-oriented, compared to only 20.4 percent that produced for local markets. Furthermore, local production only satisfied thirty percent of local market demand, requiring import levels of around seventy percent. See Miller, 41.

necessary.²³ Developer Abraham Shames is credited to have built the first industrial park in the northeast, a “community of commerce” in Westbury, Long Island in 1956. By 1965, more than sixty-eight industrial parks went up on Long Island, buttressing a twenty-two percent growth in industrial firms.²⁴ These parks attracted urban factories in search of space, as three separate surveys revealed spatial needs were the primary factor in a firm’s relocation to Long Island.²⁵ The publishing industry, which had been slowly leaving the city since 1910 when Doubleday Publishers opened their “Country Life Press” facility in Garden City, grew to include some 290 establishments with over 9,400 employees by 1964.²⁶ Plastics manufacturers, from kitchenware to Christmas decorations, also established facilities in Nassau and Suffolk. Aurora Plastics Corporation, makers of Batman, Superman, and Captain America hobby kits, moved from a 4,000 square foot plant in Brooklyn to a flexible facility in West Hempstead in 1954 where they immediately added 148,000 square feet of floor space.²⁷ Long Island even received some of the massive decentralization of the city’s apparel industry in the postwar period, taking advantage of

²³ Michael LoGrande, *A Study of New York City’s Industrial Out-Migration* (M.S. Thesis, Columbia University, 1966), 56-64.

²⁴ “Postwar Phenomenon to Industrial Boon,” *Newsday*, March 2, 1967; “New Plants Keep Sprouting in LI’s Industrial Parks,” *Long Island Daily Press*, January 18, 1965; The number of manufacturing firms increased from 1,875 in June 1956 to 2,410 as of January 18, 1965. See Leonard & Stonier, *Long Island Industry Survey, Volume 1*, 11, Box 2, Business Records, LISI.

²⁵ A City College study found that room for expansion or new factory buildings were the two main reasons for factory relocation to Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Their survey of other metropolitan counties revealed that room for expansion was not nearly as important a factor. Only Bergen and Middlesex counties in New Jersey had space considerations as important reasons, and both placed “easy access to markets” as more important. See John Griffin, *Industrial Location in the New York Area* (New York: City College Press, 1956), 77; See also Leonard & Stonier, *The Long Island Industrial Survey Volume 1*, 13, Box 2, Business Records, LISI; LoGrande, 1966), 56-64; Thomas Sugrue finds plant expansion was a critical factor in the industrial plant relocation in Detroit as well. See Sugrue, 129.

²⁶ Doubleday, Page & Company, *The Country Life Press: Garden City, New York* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1919), 10-11; *Nassau County Commerce and Industry News* 1, No. 2 (December 1966): 2, Box 64, folder “Commerce and Industry,” Eugene H. Nickerson Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries, New York, NY (hereafter cited as Nickerson Papers); Miller, 70.

²⁷ “Formula for Success: 1/87th of a Car is Big Business” and “’Twas the Season before Christmas and All Through the County...,” *Nassau County Commerce and Industry News* 2, no. 1 (October 1967): 2, 4, Box 64, folder “Commerce and Industry,” Nickerson Papers; For kitchenware producers, see LoGrande, 48.

flexible plants and a cheap female labor pool. Apparel accounted for seven percent of all manufacturing jobs in 1962.²⁸

The aviation and aerospace industry was as influential to the labor market as it was Long Island's physical industrial landscape. First, defense production, which included electronics manufacturers, metal fabricators, and chemical factories (among others), dominated manufacturing employment in the region despite industrial diversification, accounting for half of all industrial jobs in 1963.²⁹ Secondly, the aerospace industry paid high wages. Unions organized Long Island's firms after World War II and successfully negotiated wages above regional and national industrial earnings. The International Association of Machinists (IAM) won recognition among Republic Aviation's workforce in 1950, and by the end of the Korean War in 1953, Republic's workers earned the nation's highest hourly industrial wages: \$1.45 for laborers and \$2.45 for skilled workers. The International Union of Electronic and Electrical Workers (IUE) organized a number of electronics manufacturers, including Sperry and American Bosch Arma. By 1955, around eighty percent of defense workers were unionized on Long Island. Grumman remained the only non-unionized major plant, though they maintained high wages and generous benefits as a bulwark against labor organizing.³⁰ 75,000 aircraft and aerospace workers, making on average \$103.37 per week in 1956, raised the wages of electrical machinery,

²⁸ The garment district still made more women's and children's apparel than anywhere else on Earth in the 1950s. See Hall and Helfgott, 67; Pearl M. Kamer and the Nassau County Planning Commission, *Manufacturing in Suburbia: The Nassau-Suffolk Employment Experience* (Mineola, NY: Nassau County Planning Commission, 1970), 23.

²⁹ Alfred Wood, "The Impact of Military Spending upon Manufacturing in the New York SMSA," unpublished MA Thesis, Columbia University, May 1964. Cited in Arthur C. Kerrigan, "The Impact of Airframe Manufacturing on Satellite Industries," in *The Development of the Aerospace Industry on Long Island; Financial and Related Aspects, Volume II*, William K. Kaiser, Charles E. Stonier eds. (Hempstead NY: Hofstra University Yearbook of Business, Series 5, Volume 4, 1968), 247.

³⁰ For hourly rates at Republic Aviation, see Price, 201; For information on defense industry unionization on Long Island, see Patnode, 77, 138-140; "The EAA Story Part Three: 1953-1955," *SCOPE* 4, no. 4 (Sept-Oct, 1956): p. 3, 8, Box 12, Engineers Association of ARMA Records, WAG 23, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York (hereinafter cited as EAA papers); Vincent W. Gillen, "Union Activity on Long Island," *Long Island Business* 2, no. 1 (July 1955): 1, Box 1, Business Records, LISI.

fabricated metal, and other defense-related manufacturers, not to mention the effects these wages had on the service sector, which had to compete with the defense industry for workers.³¹ More broadly, federal defense spending in the region had multiplier effects on the entire Long Island economy. Several surveys determined that wages in the defense sector supported between one and a half to two persons in related retail, service, and construction.³²

Thanks to factory expansion and relocation, manufacturing employment in Nassau County grew three percent from 1950-1960, triple the national average. By the end of the decade, boosters bragged that more people worked in Long Island industry than “in the industries of eighteen of our states.”³³ And the relatively high-paying industrial jobs accounted for the region’s rising affluence despite its rapid population growth, as Nassau became the most affluent American county with 100,000 or more people in 1960, while Suffolk’s median income climbed from below the New York State average to seventh highest in the state.³⁴ This broad-based wealth contributed to the massive housing boom after World War II, when over half of the region’s homes were built, nearly ninety percent of which were single-family housing.³⁵ While federal housing subsidies were important factors in expanding homeownership, it was well-paying job opportunities that enabled millions of upwardly mobile Americans to afford monthly

³¹ William F. Clarke, “Aircraft: Long Island’s Industrial Lift,” *LI Business* 3, no. 9 (Sept. 1956): 10-11, Box 1, Business Records, LISI; Kamer, *Manufacturing in Suburbia*, 18.

³² William F. Clarke, “Aircraft: Long Island’s Industrial Lift,” *LI Business* 3, no. 9 (Sept. 1956): 10-11, Box 1, Business Records, LISI; John S. Hoyt, “Financing Long Island’s Aircraft Industry 1954-1965,” in *The Development of the Aerospace Industry on Long Island; Financial and Related Aspects, Volume II*, William K. Kaiser, Charles E. Stonier eds. (Hempstead NY: Hofstra University Yearbook of Business, Series 5, Volume 4, 1968), 135; Rossano, 78.

³³ Albert M. Levenson et al., *The Economy of Long Island, Employment and Income Trends*, p. 8, Box 3, Business Records, LISI; Quoted in Teaford, 54.

³⁴ Hoyt, 133; Nassau County’s median family income was \$8,515 in 1960, while Suffolk’s was \$6,795. Nassau had the highest white-collar workforce in New York State in 1960 (64 percent), while Suffolk had 19 percent. The bi-county region had 12 percent semi-skilled workers (state average 18%), and 3.4 percent unskilled workers (state average 4.2 percent).

³⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts. Final Report PHC (1)-104, Part 2* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1962), 213, 215.

mortgage payments and insurance. New York City commuters were still forty percent of Nassau's and fifteen percent of Suffolk's workers as of 1960.³⁶ But for Long Island's working class, Nassau and Suffolk's budding high-wage industrial sector sustained homeownership, and defense manufacturing in particular encouraged suburban migration.³⁷ Sperry conducted a survey in 1962, and while their largest facility sat on the Nassau/Queens border, only twelve percent of their employees lived in the boroughs. New Hyde Park, the neighboring suburb of Sperry's Lake Success plant, had the highest concentration of families with employees (718 families), and nearly 2,484 employee families had moved east to Suffolk County since 1949.³⁸ Republic likewise determined that of 12,681 employees in 1962, only nine percent commuted from the boroughs, while over half (6,884) of workers lived in the immediate surrounding towns of Oyster Bay, Hempstead, and Babylon.³⁹ Finally, eighty percent of Grumman's workforce hailed from Long Island during the 1960s.⁴⁰

Among Long Island's postwar suburban housing tracts, the proportion of industrial workers grew over the course of the 1950s, in step with suburban industrialization. Levittown, America's quintessential postwar suburb, exemplified this trend. Abraham Levitt and his sons William and Alfred applied assembly-line construction techniques to construct 17,447 homes on seven square miles of former potato fields and undeveloped land on the Hempstead/Oyster Bay town border.⁴¹ When the first homes entered the market in 1947, over two-thirds of the original

³⁶ Levenson, et al., 3, Box 3, Business Records, LISI; Nassau County Planning Commission, *Nassau County, New York Data Book* (Mineola, New York: June 1966), pp. XVI-13; Suffolk numbers compiled from *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960*, 152.

³⁷ William F. Clarke, "Aircraft: Long Island's Industrial Lift," *LI Business* 3, no. 9 (Sept. 1956): 11-12, Box 1, Business Records, LISI.

³⁸ "Sperry Survey Finds Employees Moving to Nassau and Suffolk," *New York Times*, September 23, 1962, 117.

³⁹ "Republic Crisis Threatens LI," *Newsday*, February 8, 1962, 1M-4M.

⁴⁰ Onkst, 25-26.

⁴¹ Baxandall & Ewen, chapter 7, 126-130; Jackson, 231-233; Teaford, 49; Barbara Mae Kelly, "'The Politics of House and Home: Implications in the Built Environment of Levittown Long Island'" (PhD diss., State University at Stony Brook, 1988), 38; For the forced saving and postwar consumer surge that resulted, see Robert Higgs,

veteran and white-collar homebuyers worked in the five boroughs. Fourteen years later, the proportion of commuters fell to thirty-six percent, as did the number of white collar workers, whose dominance dropped from over three-fourths to only half by 1961. As sociologist William S. Dobriner argued, by 1960 Levittown was “no longer so clearly middle class... [it] has drifted down from middle to working class.”⁴² With over 1,000 aircraft workers in Levittown in 1960, the quintessential postwar suburb was the realization of the American dream because of its ideal location in an emerging industrial landscape.

The jobs-housing link worked both ways, as the sheer population growth laid a foundation for a dynamic service sector, the final pillar to Long Island’s postwar prosperity. Plant relocation and expansion, along with new housing and improvements (necessary for the unfinished second floors of Long Island’s cheaply built Cape Cods), buttressed construction, which remained a relatively stable source of jobs for around nine percent of Long Island’s labor force from 1952-1965. Burgeoning suburban communities also necessitated a growing army of sanitation workers, public works employees, police officers, teachers, and other civil servants. From 1952-1965, government employment more than doubled. The retail sector, restricted to a few railroad suburb downtowns prior to 1940, exploded after the war. Urban retailers followed their customers, initiating a process of commercial decentralization similar to that of industry. Macy’s moved into a 300,000 square foot anchor store in the newly constructed Roosevelt Field shopping ‘mall’ in 1956, part of a complex that became one of the largest in the nation. Malls and their step-brother, the strip-mall, proliferated across Long Island, making the region the

“Wartime Prosperity? A Reassessment of the U.S. Economy in the 1940s” *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 52, no. 1 (March, 1992): 41-60.

⁴² Numbers gleaned from survey by sociologist William S. Dobriner in 1961. See William S. Dobriner, *Class in Suburbia* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 97-110.

fourth largest retail market in the country by 1964. In that same year, retail employment became the largest single employment sector on Long Island, exceeding manufacturing by 24,000 jobs.⁴³

Within twenty years, a transformed urban space developed on the outskirts of America's largest city. Cold War state spending and strong labor unions, along with state-subsidized housing, highways, and commercial development supported broad-based upward mobility for working class Americans. These national developments coalesced with decisions of real estate developers, manufacturers, and commercial firms, who collectively pulled workers to factories and homes in the suburbs, as Robert Self argues.⁴⁴ While commuters still relied on Manhattan and downtown Brooklyn for work, the region shed its dependence on Gotham, drawn instead into the orbit of the federal government and its stimulus to housing construction and aerospace manufacturing. Workers likewise shed their dependence on older, less equitable forms of work, entering into unionized industrial or rapidly expanding service jobs. Opportunity on Long Island was now predicated upon access to the region's mass employment opportunity.

The Old Economy

The estate economy was already stagnant by the 1930s, and Long Island's farms had been competing with residential speculation since the turn of the century. But with the explosion of housing, factories, and malls across Long Island after 1945, the estate era was officially over,

⁴³ *Nassau-Suffolk Business Conditions* 1, no. 2 (June 1954), p. 14, Box 1, Business Records, LISI; Albert Levenson, et. al, "The Economy of Long Island, employment and Income Trends," p. 37, Box 3, Business Records, LISI; Hayden, 162-172; TD Ellsworth, Dolores Benjamin, and Herman Randolph, "Impact of Long Island Centers on Shopping Habits," *Long Island Business* 5, no. 1 (January 1958), p 15-23, Box 1, Business Records, LISI ; Teaford, 55-56; "On Long Island, the Mall as History Book," *New York Times*, December 21, 1997, BU2; "Nassau-Suffolk, 4TH Largest Retail Market," *Long Island Daily Press*, August 30, 1964; Nassau County was considered the 5th largest market alone in 1967, with a combined purchasing power of \$5.4 Billion dollars. See "Nassau: The Nation's 5th Largest Retail Market," *Nassau County Commerce and Industry News* 2, no. 2 (December 1967), p. 1-2, Box 65, folder "Commerce & Industry," Nickerson Papers.

⁴⁴ Self, 96.

though both farmers and estate owners maximized Long Island's transformation from the 'social capital of the world' into a 'bedroom for the masses.'⁴⁵ The costs of maintaining estates rose precipitously, as taxes to support urban infrastructure fell heavily on large property owners. In addition, the general shift away from Long Island's elite status lowered the prestige of 100-acre manses. Some shed their estates for as little as a quarter of the original purchasing cost, while a few, including the widow of Marshall Fields III, transferred their properties to local and state government for parkland. Others did well in the subdivision boom. JP Morgan Jr. sold the family estate to developers who built some 100 homes on the site.⁴⁶ The hamlet of Great Neck, once a Gold Coast locale for industrialists, bankers, actors, and writers (including F. Scott Fitzgerald), blossomed into a thriving suburban community, and ninety-five percent of the estates were subdivided into one to two acre plots for 40,000 residents.⁴⁷

Long Island's farmers also exploited the opportunity to profit from suburbanization. Budding housing tracts and the concomitant demand for urban services raised tax rates and assessments, while a golden nematode outbreak temporarily devastated potato yields. Luckily, these farmers were sitting on rapidly appreciating property, and many (including the fifty-five farmers who sold their farms to the Levitts) let their land 'idle' for speculative purposes. Nassau County's 32,000 acres of farmland in 1945 dwindled to 5,565 acres by 1964.⁴⁸ Remaining farms in Nassau and western Suffolk now served a suburban population who wanted Halloween

⁴⁵ Self, 17-18.

⁴⁶ Sobin, 54-64, 112-117; "Caumsett," the Marshall Field's estate, was sold to Robert Moses of the Long Island Parks Commission in 1961. See "State park Unit Buys L.I. Estate," *New York Times*, Feb 4, 1961, 21; Planting Fields State Park and Wertheim National Wildlife refuge on Long Island were similarly turned over the government authorities; "Many view Home on Morgan Place: Seven-Room Model is Part of Development at Glen Cove," *New York Times*, Oct 8, 1950, R6.

⁴⁷ Judith S. Goldstein, *Inventing Great Neck Jewish Identity and the American Dream* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 3-5.

⁴⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, *United States Census of Agriculture: 1945. Volume 1, Part 7: New York Statistics for Counties* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1947), 24; U.S. Census Bureau, *1964 United States Census of Agriculture. Volume 1 [State and County Statistics]. Part 7, New York* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1966), 261.

pumpkins or fresh produce during summer. In contrast, eastern Suffolk County farmers thrived after World War II, exploiting new disease resistant crop-strains, fertilizers, equipment, and pesticides. Suffolk County became the nation's third largest potato producer in 1954 with 43,000 acres devoted to the tuber. Cauliflower was the second most popular crop, and Suffolk farmers were innovators in its mass production, growing over two million crates per year.⁴⁹ Suffolk also continued to be the nation's premier duck producer. Wartime rationing expanded the demand for ducks in the 1940s, a development that extended after the war as ducks competed with chickens and turkeys for America's favorite dinner bird. The Hollis Warner Duck farm, the largest duck producer in the world, sat on 250 acres along the mouth of the Peconic River in Riverhead, producing 500,000 ducks per year. The operation employed the latest technological advancements and organizing techniques available, including electric incubators, devoted wheat fields, and two miles of cart tracks to feed thousands of ducks. Warner's farm employed 150 workers alone, not including the freezers and transportation network necessary to reach the national market. In all, seventy Suffolk duck farms reached peak production of 7.5 million ducks in the late 1950s, thriving amidst postwar suburbanization. Where Nassau and western Suffolk County developed into an urban agglomeration of homes, factories, and retail centers, eastern Suffolk was a sparse cluster of commercial farming and small housing tracts.⁵⁰

In sum, while industrial suburbia largely engulfed Long Island's prewar metropolitan-dependent economy, elements of the old economy endured, some in new ways. As of 1952,

⁴⁹ Christopher C. Sellers, *Crabgrass Crucible: Suburban Nature and the Rise of Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 46-7; Cromarty, 149-154; Ercole Rosa, "Agriculture on Long Island," *Nassau-Suffolk Business Conditions* 1, no. 3 (July 1954), p. 7, Box 1, Business Records, LISI; Walker, 313.

⁵⁰ "Ducks by the Acre," *Popular Mechanics*, October 1947, p. 171-174, 236, 240; Suffolk County Department of Planning, "Appendix A: Long Island Duck Farm History and Ecosystem Restoration Opportunities, Suffolk County, New York," February 2009, accessed May 26, 2015, http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/portals/0/planning/envplanning/liduckhistory/main_report.pdf

16,000 Long Islanders still worked in agriculture, along with 5,000 migrants.⁵¹ Though indigenous agricultural laborers rapidly declined, farmers continued to exploit migrants. Estates only disappeared slowly; the live-in system continued in what remained of the ‘Gold Coast.’⁵² Across the rest of Long Island, domestic service adapted to postwar suburbia. Rather than large staffs working on estates, single servants complimented the new postwar household, full of labor-saving home devices and a housewife-oriented domestic culture. Household workers might work part-time and take on a multitude of tasks, from childcare to cleaning and cooking. They were less likely to reside in individual homes, instead piecing together incomes from multiple employers.⁵³ Thirty-six domestic employment agencies operated in Nassau County alone after the war, linking domestics to employers through advertising gimmicks, including free item giveaways with a contract. A network of chauffeurs and laundry services supported domestics who now had to travel across the hundreds of single-family housing tracts spread across Long Island.⁵⁴ Though all these sectors were dwarfed by opportunities in industry and services after 1945, they remained an option in the postwar labor market, one though with lower pay, no job security, and few if any benefits. As was true in the pre-war period, these jobs did not enable upward mobility.

⁵¹ Ercole Rosa, “Agriculture on Long Island,” *Nassau-Suffolk Business Conditions* 1, no. 3 (July 1954), p. 7, Box 1, Business Records, LISI.

⁵² The high income hamlets include Kensington/Russell Gardens, Woodmere, North Hills/Lake Success, Lawrence, Great Neck Estates, King’s Point, and Hewlett Harbor. In these hamlets, non-white women outnumbered men between five and fifteen to one, while the median age ranged from thirty-two and nearly thirty-nine in the estate communities. These high median ages compare to 22.9 years in Roosevelt or 25 in New Cassel, where black suburban homeowners were raising families, and gender ratios hovered around the 50% mark. See Nassau County Planning Commission, *Aspects, An Analysis of Social, economic, and housing characteristics of Nassau County, NY, part 3, age sex and color* (Mineola, NY: Nassau County Planning Commission 1962), 10-11, 14-17.

⁵³ Premilla Nadasen, *Household Workers Unite: The Untold Story of African American Women Who Built a Movement*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 71.

⁵⁴ “State Probing LI Job Agents,” *Newsday*, September 27, 1957, 5; “Buy a Negro Maid – Get Plaid Stamps Free!” *Amsterdam News*, June 16, 1962; Written transcript of interview with Henry Holley by James Levy, April 9, 2011, p. 34, Hofstra Suburban Oral History Project, LISI.

The New Suburbanites

The new landscape of jobs and homes attracted the massive population that made Long Island the nation's suburban exemplar. Prior to World War II, Long Island's population was just above 600,000. Twenty years later, the population more than doubled, filling in most of Nassau County. Suffolk's boom continued into the 1960s as Nassau's growth slowed, and by 1970, the population of Long Island reached more than 2.5 million residents, larger than all but three American cities, a three-fold increase in thirty years.⁵⁵ Where these eligible workers fit into the booming economy determined their ability to enjoy Long Island's consumer bounties. Commuters were the wealthiest residents, including professionals, managers, or other high-end service employees, and disproportionately contributed to Long Island's overall earnings. But the majority of Long Island's workers relied on the structure of a bi-county labor market, a young and distinct market with no precedent. Unlike the wartime economy, where defense firms needed unskilled laborers in a supply-restricted market, the premium for educated workers rebounded in the 1950s, and skill requirements increased throughout industrial sectors. The college premium rose in the 1950s after dipping during the war, and high school diploma requirements likewise returned.⁵⁶ Rising productivity (primarily via automation) occurred in Long Island's capital-intensive aerospace industry, where new machine investment and skill upgrading produced higher returns that were shared with workers.⁵⁷ Sectors in competition for defense workers likewise increased skill requirements and pay to attract new employees. Beyond industry, Long Island's burgeoning service sectors demanded high school and even

⁵⁵ The three larger cities: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles.

⁵⁶ Claudia Dale Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, *The Race between Education and Technology: The Evolution of U.S. Educational Wage Differentials, 1890 to 2005* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2007) Accessed August 21, 2015 <<http://papers.nber.org/papers/w12984>>.

⁵⁷ Kamer, *Manufacturing in Suburbia*, 18.

college degrees, from office and governmental work to accounting, law, and business. Essentially, Long Island exemplified what economist Charles Killingsworth called the labor market ‘twist’ – the decline in demand for low-skilled workers coinciding with long-term demand growth for well-educated and skilled employees.⁵⁸ This was not merely a ‘market’ phenomena; government spending was biased against the unskilled in the 1950s and 1960s. Federal dollars poured into research and development, and public spending generally funneled into education. R&D spending grew some 20 percent a year, and the growth of teachers trebled that of the general labor force.⁵⁹

Among Long Island new residents, whites were most prepared to exploit the region’s opportunities. Long Island’s whites were a diverse lot, either immigrants themselves or the children and grandchildren of Europeans, and most relocated from the five boroughs.⁶⁰ Italian-Americans became the single largest ethnic group in the region, representing a quarter of all Long Islanders after World War II and settling across the middle and south of the Island, from Elmont on the Nassau/Queens border out to Mastic and Shirley in Suffolk County. They, along with a substantial Polish and Irish population (about eight and seven percent of the Island’s population each, respectively), made Roman Catholicism the dominant faith in the region. Pope Pius XII formed a new diocese in 1957 specifically to serve Nassau and Suffolk Counties, which immediately became the sixth largest in the nation.⁶¹ Over 400,000 Jews also settled on Long

⁵⁸ Charles C. Killingsworth, “The Continuing Labor Market Twist: A Further Look at the Relationship Between Employment Change and Labor Force Change, and Some Unanswered Questions,” *Monthly Labor Review* 91, no. 9 (Sept. 1968): 12-17; Barry Bluestone, “Economic Inequality and the Macrostructuralist Debate,” in Charles J. Whalen, ed., *Political Economy for the 21st Century: Contemporary Views on the Trend of Economics* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 172; Gregory R. Woirol, *The Technological Unemployment and Structural Unemployment Debates* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1996), 104.

⁵⁹ Hyman Minsky, “The Role of Full Employment Policy,” in Hyman P. Minsky, *Ending Poverty: Jobs, Not Welfare* (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Levy Economics Institute, 2013), 15.

⁶⁰ From 1955-1960, over half of those who moved to a different house came from New York City. See *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960*, 16, 18.

⁶¹ Cavaoli, 15-24.

Island, both as commuters to New York City and as industrial workers. Vibrant Jewish communities emerged in Great Neck and the Five Towns area, but Jews also scattered across Nassau and western Suffolk's suburban housing tracts.⁶² Over half of these Census-designated 'white' Long Islanders completed high school as of 1960, and that number rose to nearly two-thirds by 1970. A significant minority, fifteen percent, held bachelor's and/or graduate degrees.⁶³

Though black migrants came for the same reasons as whites, they were less able to benefit from Long Island's postwar economy. In the 1940s, the black migration trailed the white exodus to the suburbs and their proportion of the population actually declined. In the 1950s, they outpaced overall population growth, and during the 1960s, their arrival doubled that of whites. While a small proportion of Long Island's overall populace, they reached almost five percent of the population by 1970, 119,019 residents in total.⁶⁴ But of these residents, only twenty-eight percent completed high school in 1960; the new migrants of the 1960s increased the proportion to forty-two percent. As the region's economy increasingly demanded educational credentials and the skills associated with those degrees, the majority of Long Island's black population lacked high school diplomas.⁶⁵ This was most attributable to the southern origin of a disproportionate number of black Long Islanders, who, as part of the tail-end of the Second

⁶² See Jay Schulman, "The Jews of Great Neck: A Heritage Affirmed," in LaGumina, ed., *Ethnicity in Suburbia*. For a discussion of Jewish suburban community development, see Judith Goldstein, *Inventing Great Neck*.

⁶³ In 1960, 52 percent of whites ages 25 or older completed high school and/or had college experience. In 1970, 64% of white adults completed high school and/or obtained college credits. See U.S. Census Bureau, Education (White Population), 1960. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1960TractDS/R11103716> (accessed April 10, 2015); U.S. Census Bureau, Educational Attainment for White Population 25 Years or Over, 1970. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1970/R11103719> (accessed April 10, 2015).

⁶⁴ 39.8% of Nassau black families made at least \$6,000, close to the 75% of the county's median income. In Suffolk, 44.4% of black families made at least 75% of the county's median income.

⁶⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Education (Non-white Population), 1960. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1960TractDS/R11103716> (accessed April 10, 2015); U.S. Census Bureau, Educational Attainment for Black Population 25 Years or Over, 1970. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1970/R11103719> (accessed April 10, 2015).

Great Migration, were three times more likely to migrate from outside the New York area and four times as likely to have relocated directly from the South, not including southern migrants with brief sojourns in New York City.⁶⁶ Arriving with educations from Jim-Crow schools placed black Long Islanders into the least skilled occupations of the region's labor market, with few credentials or skillsets for Long Island's well-paying jobs.⁶⁷

The educational gulf was expressed in the labor market divide. As Table 2.2 indicates, fifty-six percent of white suburbanites held white-collar jobs, while another sixteen percent, or over 100,000 workers, labored in skilled blue-collar jobs in 1960. In contrast, less than twelve percent of Long Island's employed African Americans were white-collar workers, while nearly a third were domestic servants, the largest employment sector for black residents, along with another ten percent in the 'laborer' category.⁶⁸ As the education gap closed during the 1960s, so did the black-white difference in the labor market. The new cohort of African Americans in the 1960s entered into the better-paying jobs on Long Island, benefitting from general trends that improved African American labor market outcomes, including access to education, the booming economy of the 1960s, and civil rights legislation.⁶⁹ They found jobs in white-collar and service positions, including commuting professionals, along with local black dentists, doctors, lawyers,

⁶⁶ *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960*, 16, 18, 196, 198; *1970 Census of Population and Housing*, P-201, P-203, P-801, P-803.

⁶⁷ James N. Gregory, "The Second Great Migration: A Historical Overview," in Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter eds., *African American Urban History since World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009): 29; Leah Platt Boustan, "Competition in the Promised Land: Black Migration and Racial Wage Convergence in the North, 1940–1970," *The Journal of Economic History* 69, no. 3 (September 2009): 773.

⁶⁸ I define "white collar" as including Professional, technical, and kindred workers, Managers, officials, and proprietors, Sales, and Clerical and kindred workers.

⁶⁹ James P. Smith and Finis R. Welch, "Black Economic Progress After Myrdal," *Journal of Economic Literature* 27, no. 2 (June 1989): 522; Bart Landry, *The New Black Middle Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 73-78; Richard B. Freeman, "Changes in the Labor Market for Black Americans, 1948- 72," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* 1(1973): 67-131.

Table 2.2: Occupation and Occupational Distribution of White and Black Employed Residents, Nassau and Suffolk Counties, 1960-1970

	Total			
	1960		1970	
	White	Non-white ¹	White	Black ¹
Employed Civilians ²	656,527	31,831	877,783	43,168
Professional and technical workers	108,429	1,356	173,217	4,034
Managers, officials, proprietors	87,277	552	110,297	1,567
Clerical and kindred workers	106,523	1,640	182,682	6,907
Sales workers	64,695	379	91,969	1,123
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred	107,277	1,929	124,110	3,571
Operatives and kindred workers	77,944	4,580	74,421	7,864
Private household workers	8,665	10,181	4,533	4,874
Service workers	47,139	4,575	89,859	9,482
Laborers and farm foremen	20,214	3,039	31,539	3,746
Not reported	25,887	3,518		
	Distribution (%)			
	1960		1970	
	White	Non-white ¹	White	Black ¹
Professional and technical workers	16.5	4.3	19.7	9.3
Managers, officials, proprietors	13.3	1.7	12.6	3.6
Clerical and kindred workers	16.2	5.2	20.8	16.0
Sales workers	9.9	1.2	10.5	2.6
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred	16.3	6.1	14.1	8.3
Operatives and kindred workers	11.9	14.4	8.5	18.2
Private household workers	1.3	32.0	0.5	11.3
Service workers	7.2	14.4	10.2	22.0
Laborers and farm foremen	3.1	9.5	3.6	8.7
Not reported	3.9	11.1		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Occupation (White Population), 1960. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1960TractDS/R11103734> (accessed April 10, 2015); U.S. Census Bureau, Occupation (Non-White Population), 1960. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1960TractDS/R11103734> (accessed April 10, 2015); *1970 Census of Population and Housing*, 863, 865.

Note: There are no labor market distributions by race for Northern states in 1950, as economic statistics by race were compiled for 'southern states only', with the exception of employment rates.

¹ The calculation for both 'white' and 'black' changed between the two censuses. In 1960, African Americans were collapsed into the 'non-white' category though they were over 94 percent of all non-white inhabitants on Long Island. Indian, Japanese, and Chinese-Americans were the remaining five percent, and could skew these numbers toward higher skill levels, particularly since the defense industry recruited Asian-American technicians and engineers. In 1970, 'whites' were not calculated exclusively, though white and 'negro' Long Islanders were 99.6 percent of Long Island's population.

² In 1960, the Census calculated all employed residents ages 14 or older, though raised the employed age to 16 in 1970.

and a small cohort of engineers. Craftsmen and operatives, who were over a quarter of Long Island's black workforce, labored in metro-area factories, including Long Island's defense-

oriented aerospace factories, machine shops, or in the transportation industry.⁷⁰ Clerical positions likewise expanded, a reflection of Long Island's burgeoning service-sector and the rise in black educational levels. Bookkeepers, secretaries, typists, bank tellers, file clerks, and telephone operators, among others, were largely female-dominated occupations that typically required a high school diploma. Government employment, generally a secure sector for African Americans, blossomed too. In Suffolk alone, the New York State government employed over 2,800 black workers, a fifth of the entire state workforce within the county.⁷¹ This included three massive state mental hospitals, Kings Park, Central Islip, and Pilgrim State, the largest mental institution in the world, servicing over 16,000 patients at its peak in the mid-1950s. African Americans made up around a third of all hospital personnel, working mostly as attendants, the most prevalent occupation in these facilities.⁷²

Despite improvements, the black/white gap still existed, a reality on Long Island as nationwide.⁷³ Education alone did not close the gap, because diplomas did not reward blacks as much as whites with equivalent preparation.⁷⁴ A Hofstra University study revealed that a black worker in Nassau County with a high school diploma earned less than a white worker who quit

⁷⁰ "Minority Labor Force Participation in Nassau County," Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 9, slides 429-430, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁷¹ New York State government employed far more African Americans as a proportion of their workforce than Long Island's county governments. For example, only 3.2% of Suffolk County's workforce was black in 1970, compared to a fifth of state employees in Suffolk County. See "Ethnic Survey of Suffolk County Government Employees," VI Summary of Findings, Box 5, folder 6, W. Burghardt Turner Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Stony Brook University Libraries, Stony Brook, New York (hereafter cited as Burghardt Turner Collection).

⁷² "Overview," Box 23, folder "History of Pilgrim," New York State Office of Mental Health Subject Files (Series B1973), New York State Archives, Albany, New York; "Hospital, Blacks Agree to Talks," July 15, 1970 and "Blacks List Demands at Hospital Meeting," July 16, 1970, Box 1, folder 7, Burghardt Turner Collection; For occupational distribution at mental hospitals, see "Central Islip State Hospital, Central Islip, New York," Box 15, folder "C.I.S.H. - Various Fact Sheets," New York State Office of Mental Health Subject Files (Series B1973), New York State Archives, Albany, New York.

⁷³ Claire C. Hodge, "The Negro Job Situation: Has it Improved?" *Monthly Labor Review* 92, no. 1 (January 1969): 20-28; Stuart H. Garfinkle, "Occupations of women and black workers, 1962-74," *Monthly Labor Review* 98, no. 11 (November, 1975): 25-35.

⁷⁴ Randall D. Weiss, "The Effect of Education on the Earnings of Blacks and Whites," *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 52 (May 1970): 154-159.

school after the eighth grade, while a college-educated African American made less on average than a white worker with no college experience. Discrimination limited the numbers of blacks in professional and managerial positions, but this should not discount the incredible progress in the postwar period. More than half of black workers moving to Long Island were indeed securing what a *Newsday* article in 1966 called the “visible measures of success: a good job, a comfortable home, a car.”⁷⁵ They were no longer the reflection of ‘pre-war’ black Long Islanders, the “marginal workers engaged in occupations which were the least secure and lowest paid.”⁷⁶ They made sixty percent more than African Americans in the rest of the country, and bought into the postwar middle class, though housing segregation defined them as a ‘black’ suburbanite distinct from that of whites, a consequence of housing policy rather than any broad cultural differences in their consumption patterns.⁷⁷

But the very same structure producing black opportunity for the credentialed limited opportunity for those without. For the unskilled, the job market was bleak; in some ways more desperate than what existed before and during World War II. Few opportunities existed outside the traditional ‘black’ sectors. While industry afforded the greatest opportunity for mass social mobility, African Americans occupied the lowest positions and worked in poorly-paying industrial sectors. Despite high black employment rates during World War II, the defense industry’s postwar racial progress proved disappointing. Few African Americans were re-hired after post-war demobilization, and the state’s commitment to racial equality receded for almost two decades after the war. The few hired were concentrated in unskilled positions, a problem as the industry shed its unskilled jobs in the late 1950s and early 1960s. As the key source of well-

⁷⁵“Have and Have-Nots,” *Newsday*, January 8, 1966, 8W-9W.

⁷⁶ Quoted in James Russell Burrell Jr., “The Negro Worker in Queens: An Employment Survey,” (MS Thesis, New York School of Social Work, Columbia University, August 1941), p. 3, SWALC.

⁷⁷ “Have and Have-Nots,” *Newsday*, January 8, 1966, 8W.

paying jobs for working class residents in the region, the small black presence and their low occupational status within the industry limited black mobility. Chapter 4 delves into race and the defense industry in detail. Outside defense, black workers encountered the same mobility problem. African Americans found jobs in Long Island's primary metal, chemical, fabricated metal, and printing industries, though they were concentrated in the low-skill positions – janitors, shipping clerks, and other laborer positions – or in jobs most threatened by automation. In addition, non-defense manufacturers paid four dollars less per week than the state and city average, mostly because they did not compete for the same workers as the defense industry. While advantageous to wives or young workers looking to supplement the breadwinner's income, such low pay made it difficult to sustain a family in high-cost Long Island.⁷⁸ And through the 1960s, automation hit these workers hardest. Herman Smothers, a 42-year-old black resident of Freeport lost his factory job to a machine in 1964, turning to odd jobs and separating from his wife and kids so they could qualify for welfare. When interviewed while drinking on a street corner with friends, he pleaded "I can't get a job. I want to work, man, and get mine. I don't want no charity."⁷⁹ A similar occupational divide existed in Long Island's service sector. 'Services' entailed a broad swath of jobs, from nurses and police officers to orderlies and busboys. While the nationwide rate of service jobs rose 40 percent between 1957 and 1963, 'personal' services was the bulk of this growth, including low-paid positions in day care, elderly care, and cleaning services.⁸⁰ To reach the region's median in these fields, two or three of these

⁷⁸ A 1955 survey found the average weekly earnings for non-defense related workers was \$67.01 in Nassau-Suffolk, compared to \$71.02 in New York City and \$72.52 across the state. See William N. Leonard, "Labor Costs on Long Island," *Nassau-Suffolk Business Conditions* 2, no. 6 (June 1955), Box 1, Business Records, LISI; Kamer, *Manufacturing in Suburbia*, 18; "Minority Labor Force Participation in Nassau County," Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 9, slides 428, *Papers of the NAACP*; David Gayer, "The Suburban Labor Market: Jobs for the Unskilled," (PhD diss., New York University, 1970), 92.

⁷⁹ Thomas Johnson and Harvey Aronson, "The Negro on Long Island," *Newsday*, Jan 8, 1966, p. 7W.

⁸⁰ Eileen Boris, Eileen, and Jennifer Klein, *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 77.

jobs were necessary. One black Nassau County resident, a former Floridian, worked two hospital jobs to make ends meet, an average of 112 hours per week at \$1.65 an hour.⁸¹

Well-paying jobs that did not require credentials or pre-existing skills, i.e. those below the skill premium threshold were in high demand, and African Americans were not the only ones fighting for these jobs: in 1960, over 20,000 white Long Islanders were still laborers. The competition often played out along racial lines. Construction was a growth field, though the building trades unions, which had a powerful influence over Long Island's residential and commercial construction, hired through personal networks of family, friends, and community members, making it difficult for outsiders to find union-protected work.⁸² Black union membership was inconsistent, though minority workers tended to concentrate in less-skilled unions. For example, of 762 painters in Nassau County's Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators, and Paperhangers local, only six were black in 1963. Conversely, the International Hood Carriers' Building & Common Laborers union local, which organized unskilled construction laborers, boasted a twenty percent black membership.⁸³ A union card did not guarantee stable employment anyway. The mason's union boasted some of the largest enrollments of African Americans, though card carrying black masons rarely secured more than 400 hours of work per year, excluding them from various union benefits including health care and paid vacation. White masons meanwhile managed between 1,200 and 1,400 hours. Black members also found that they were passed over when new jobs were available. White masons fresh off previous work

⁸¹ \$1.65 an hour was about 25 cents above New York State's and the Federal minimum wage in 1966, when this Long Islander was interviewed. See "Brotherhood of Bitterness," *Newsday*, Jan 8, 1966, p.10W.

⁸² Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 118.

⁸³ See "Local Union Questionnaire – International Hod Carriers' Building & Common Laborers Union of America," Box 42, Local Union Questionnaires, 1963 New York, President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1963, Records of Temporary Committees, Commissions, and Boards, RG 220, National Archives and Research Administration II, at College Park, MD (hereafter cited as RG 220, NARA II); See "Local Union Questionnaire – Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators, and Paperhangers 66" Box 41, Local Union Questionnaires, 1963 New York, President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1963, RG 220, NARA II.

consistently secured jobs as black workers sat idle.⁸⁴ Civil rights activists addressed these problems in the late 1960s, particularly during the buildup of New York's state university system, though progress in Affirmative Action was slow, bleeding into the 1970s.

The decentralized layout of the suburban economy compounded the effects of the family, friend, and neighborhood networks of 'job knowledge.' Despite the proliferation of single-story suburban factories, warehouses, and retail establishments across Long Island, economist David Gayer found that employers continued to rely on the old urban custom of canvassing for unskilled workers at their job sites, which included posting 'now hiring' signs outside their factories. While thousands of workers might pass signs or factories in concentrated urban areas, only those with automobiles, driving through industrial parks or retail areas, caught a glimpse of new employment opportunities in suburbs. As a result, word-of-mouth, rather than hanging signs, spread news of jobs. As his survey in the late 1960s revealed, most unskilled industrial workers found jobs through friends. So few black employees only perpetuated the low minority proportions in Long Island's factories because finding work beyond one's network of job knowledge required expenditures of time, gas, and/or bus fares, a significant sacrifice for low-income residents.⁸⁵

This left a disproportionate number of black workers in the traditional industries: domestic service, farm work, and generalized 'day labor.' Domestic service remained the largest employment sector for African Americans as late as 1960, when the industry hit peak employment of nearly 19,000. This became an increasingly black sector, as fifty-nine percent of

⁸⁴ Statement of W. Burghardt Turner to the New York Advisory Committee to the United States Civil Rights Commission, March 23, 1971, pp. 1-2, Box 2, folder 9, Burghardt Turner Collection.

⁸⁵ Gayer.

all workers were black, and it continued to be a female-dominated occupation.⁸⁶ Though domestics could earn up to thirty dollars per week (over \$225 in 2012 dollars), prospective domestics outnumbered job opportunities, lured by the ‘mirage’ of high-paying work rather than the reality. Farm labor remained another popular occupation for black Long Islanders, a largely ‘male’ sector. The number of farm laborers on Long Island’s east end ranged from an estimated 5,300 in 1957 to 3,600 in 1966, and eighty-eight percent of the workforce was African American. Migrants made up around three-quarters of all farm laborers, part of the migrant labor streams running from Florida to Maine.⁸⁷ Like their pre-war counterparts, migrant workers were tied to crew chiefs, who recruited individual laborers, brought them north, and as filmmaker Morton Silverstein put it, “allocated their work, supervised their lives, and paid them at the end of the week.”⁸⁸ Like domestic service agencies, the crew leader offered credit to cover transportation and food costs, and since housing was often provided on site in makeshift camps at the farm, food, shelter, and other living expenses were removed from wages during the extent

⁸⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, Occupation (Non-White Population), 1960. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1960TractDS/R11103734> (accessed April 10, 2015); The increasing black proportion was true nation-wide, a consequence of both declining immigration and improved opportunity for whites. See Donna Franklin, *Ensuring Inequality The Structural Transformation of the African-American Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 113; Premilla Nadasen, *Domestic Workers Unite*, 15; And despite the significant minority of ‘white’ servants, the occupation became fully associated as ‘black’ as early as the Depression. See Alana Erickson Coble, *Cleaning Up: The Transformation of Domestic Service in Twentieth Century New York City* (New York & London: Routledge, 2006).

⁸⁷ These numbers are an estimate. Determining accurate numbers of migrant farm utilization is difficult given their temporary residency status. These numbers are based on the New York State Department of Labor, who estimated the total peak migrant demand for Suffolk County. See New York State Employment Service, “Farm Labor Annual Report, 1966,” p. 21, box 511, folder “New York Clips,” Records of the Director; Records of the Office of Operations; Records of the Office of Opportunity; Records of the Community Service Administration, RG 381, National Archives and Record Administration II, College Park, MD; For local estimates, see “Final Report of the Subcommittee on Impact of Seasonal Farm Labor on the Economy of Suffolk County, Jun 6, 1968, p. 3, Box 2, Folder 84, H. Lee Dennison Papers, Suffolk County Historical Society, Riverhead, New York (hereafter cited as Dennison Papers); In 1967, it was estimated that about 88% of the migrant labor force was African American, and 21% of the remaining workers were contract laborers from Puerto Rico. Less than 1% were white. See “Testimony before the New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Migrant Labor,” November 11, 1967, p. 1-2, Box 2, folder 81, Dennison Papers.

⁸⁸ Silverstein quoted in Alan Rosenthal, *The New Documentary in Action: A Casebook in Film Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 107.

of the stay.⁸⁹ Even settled seasonal workers, called ‘ex-migrants’ despite permanent residence, were tied to the crew chief and migrant labor system, relying on these contractors for yearly work and having little in common with white Suffolk County residents around them.⁹⁰ Work was physically demanding for both migrants and ‘ex-migrants,’ sometimes reaching fifteen hours or more during a harvest season of back-breaking picking, sorting, and lifting. Pay was low: a 1964 study of seventy-one east-end migrant households with an average of 3.7 residents determined that nearly a third survived on incomes below the official \$3,000 poverty line for a family of four, while those above that threshold averaged a yearly income of \$4,723.⁹¹

Farm workers were in direct competition with new arrivals from the South, putting downward pressure on wages and working conditions. Though the Second Great Migration greatly improved economic opportunity for Southern migrants, it reduced wages of northern African Americans who had little opportunity to enter other occupations.⁹² Migration and the labor market trend toward skill premiums were not solely to blame for the outcomes; the conditions of these jobs was a direct consequence of New Deal-era policy decisions that marginalized these lines of work. These occupations were excluded from labor protections, including social security benefits, minimum wage protections, and the right to organize.⁹³ The

⁸⁹ League of Women Voters of Chemung County, “Analysis of Farm Labor,” January 22, 1968, p. 2-3, Box 2, folder “Dev. Human Resources” Folder, Gordon Papers; “Report of Arthur C. Bryant, Vice-Chairman of the SCHRC and Chairman of the Migrant Labor Committee” November 3, 1967, p. 4, Box 11, folder “Interdepartmental Social Welfare Advisory Committee, 1967” folder, box 11, Suffolk Community Council Collection.

⁹⁰ Peter Kramer, “Migrant Camp- world unto itself,” *Suffolk Sun*, October 1967; “Suffolk County Migrant Proposal,” p. 1-3, Box 2, folder 81, Dennison Papers; U.S. Congress, Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, *Who are the Migrants?* 91st Cong., 1st and 2nd sess., June 9-10, 1969.

⁹¹ Suffolk County Human Relations Commission to Suffolk County Executive and Board of Supervisors, “Recommendations,” p. 4, Box 1, folder “SCHRC Housing Committee,” Gordon Papers.

⁹² Boustan, “Competition in the Promised Land,” 756-783.

⁹³ The racial and gender-based construction of the New Deal welfare state has a voluminous history. See, Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 2013); Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005); Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Phyllis Palmer, “Outside the Law: Agricultural and Domestic Workers Under the Fair Labor Standards Act,” *Journal of Policy History* 7, no. 4 (1995): 416–40; Nadasen,

fight to protect these workers was slow and contentious; while these largely ‘black’ occupations were added to Social Security legislation in 1950 and 1954, minimum wage and unemployment protections came only in the 1970s and were difficult to enforce.

Marginalization only reinforced beliefs that these jobs were ‘menial,’ and the association with black skin led to widespread discrimination among black Long Islanders, including at the region’s employment offices where black workers sought new opportunities. Unskilled defense plant worker Dan Hester put it best when he lamented, “look for a job in Hempstead, and the first thing they ask is if you want a job as a porter.”⁹⁴ For domestics in particular, labor market structures and cultural attitudes locked them into domestic service, even when they reached out for other work available within the suburban economy. An AFSCME union investigation of a New York State Employment Service (NYSES) office in Great Neck discovered that the office kept a separate “active domestic file” with 350 active applicants. While half had high school diplomas and were deemed fit to work outside private households, they were nonetheless placed in “day worker” and “yardman” categories. The office claimed that black clients preferred day jobs over higher skilled work, allegedly forgoing unemployment insurance, social security, and other provisions for the immediate benefit of casual employment. These files tracked domestic servants’ character traits like “drinker,” “borrows money,” and “submissive” in their job applications, not work preferences or skillsets.⁹⁵ Domestics were treated as a class apart in person as well, complete with a separate employment office telephone number, a service worker assigned exclusively to them, and limited hours to call (3-5pm) for jobs with only one-day

"Citizenship Rights, Domestic Work, and the Fair Labor Standards Act," 74-94; Marilyn Power and Deborah M. Figart, "Neither Mothers Nor Breadwinners: African American Women's Exclusion from U.S. Minimum Wage Policies," *Feminist Economics* 9, no. 2 (July 2002): 37–61.

⁹⁴ Quoted in "Brotherhood of Bitterness," *Newsday*, January 8, 1966, p. 11W.

⁹⁵ Report, Local 1412 Division of Employment Minority Group Service Senior consultant to NY-NJ Region of ASCFME, AFL-CIO, November 5, 1962, NAACP and Labor, 1956-1965, Part 13 supplement, reel 12, slides 19-20, *Papers of the NAACP*.

advance notice. An AFSCME member and employee at the office exposed the discrimination behind these policies when he complained to the union, stating that a supervisor commanded he “either get those dark clouds jobs, or get them out of here,” and he was repeatedly pressured to deal with the “Mississippi car of seven, eight boogies in it...looking for day work jobs.”⁹⁶

Working outside the protections of labor laws situated these workers, despite their geographic proximity, outside postwar suburbia. Though the majority of Long Islanders enjoyed basic labor protections, federally-backed mortgages, and state support for jobs through defense spending, the only form of public security open to these workers was ADC (later AFDC), the ‘second-tier’ of economic security afforded by the New Deal and subsequent legislation.⁹⁷ A 1966 social work survey determined that African Americans were disproportionately receiving AFDC, over four times their proportion of the population, and more importantly, black mothers receiving welfare were three times as likely to be working as white mothers. In addition, these women were overwhelmingly domestics.⁹⁸ Welfare was never adequate to support a family, and black domestics, along with ex-migrants on Long Island’s east end, cobbled a living together from AFDC and other programs, like Nassau County’s Food Surplus program that provided food baskets on a monthly basis to registered applicants in the 1960s, to supplement their inconsistent and low paychecks.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Correspondence, July 31, 1962, NAACP and Labor, 1956-1965, Part 13 supplement, reel 12, slides 14-16, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁹⁷ For discussion of the two-tiered New Deal-era welfare system, see Gordon, *Pitied but not Entitled*; Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Pursuit of Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Vicky Lovell, “Constructing Social Citizenship: The Exclusion of African American Women from Unemployment Insurance in the U.S.,” *Feminist Economics* 8, no. 2 (2002): 191 – 97.

⁹⁸ Alice Brazier, William Cosenza, Gerald I. Fantel, Leah Goldberg, Fay Kauderer, Mildred Reed, and Harriet Rosenbaum, “Descriptive Study of First-Time Unmarried Mothers who Applied to the Nassau County Department of Public Welfare,” (M. Social Work, Adelphi College, 1966), 41-43, 73; For a national perspective on African Americans and ADC/AFDC, see Franklin, 114.

⁹⁹ Nassau County Department of Social Services, “Surplus Food,” Box 66, folder “Donable Foods,” Nickerson Papers.

Domestics and migrant laborers recognized the degraded status of their work and organized to improve their working conditions. Cesar Chavez's United Farm Worker's Organizing Committee planned protests in 1969, though failed to start an Island-wide strike. The National Committee on Household Employees (NCHE) organized a Nassau County branch started in 1970, fought for health insurance, clear boundaries for work responsibilities, sick leave, and vacation time, but also recognition of their skills and basic respect from their employers.¹⁰⁰ As one organized domestic, in anonymity argued "People scorn you. 'She's a domestic, she's nobody.' You're somebody. You really are the person who *is* somebody. Those houses that are sparkling – ask who cleans the house."¹⁰¹ Within a year, they had organized an estimated ten percent of the county's workforce, planning protests against domestic agencies and promises of improved employer/employee relations. In 1972, state law extended the minimum wage to household workers, and domestic organizing only escalated as domestic issues reached a national platform.¹⁰²

Organizing coincided with a decline in these sectors, in both absolute and relative terms for African Americans. By 1970, domestic service employment dropped by half. The number of farm laborers stagnated, and black workers increasingly competed with Puerto Ricans, machines, and new housing developments on Long Island's east end. Some former domestics and agricultural laborers leveraged their skills into postwar service jobs. Clarence Phillips, the Port Washington resident who worked between the domestic and agricultural fields during the 1920s

¹⁰⁰ For a detailed discussion of the National Committee on Household Employment's activities, see Premilla Nadasen, *Domestic Workers Unite*, 66-79.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Annabelle Kerins, "Maids of the Country Unite," *Newsday*, October 8, 1971, 3A.

¹⁰² Annabelle Kerins, "Maids of the Country Unite," *Newsday*, October 8, 1971, 3A; "Maids are Joining Union on Long Island," *Newsday*, January 16, 1972, A1; "They Still Call Us Girl," *New York Times*, February 15, 1976, LI16; Premilla Nadasen discusses the national efforts in detail. See Nadasen, *Domestic Workers Unite*, chapters 4, 5, 6; Premilla Nadasen, "Citizenship Rights, Domestic Work, and the Fair Labor Standards Act," *Journal of Policy History* 24, no. 1 (January 2012): 74-94.

and 1930s, eventually secured a job as a janitor in the Port Washington school district after World War II, and later moved into landscape gardening.¹⁰³ Others moved into the personal service industries, but a fifth of black workers still remained domestics or laborers, while another forty percent were employed in the other lower-rungs of service and low-wage ‘operative’ jobs. For the least skilled, a job remained a daily struggle, one that began on the street corner at 6:30am, waiting for contractors to drive by, and then bidding for daily wages among the offers, if any appeared. Work in construction and landscaping remained on the margins of the labor market generally, not even regulated by the needs of particular employers, as in the case of commercial farms or households.¹⁰⁴

Poverty and Progress

Both the gains black Long Islanders made in the postwar labor market and the limitations of postwar growth were expressed most clearly in Long Island’s income distribution. The black population boom during the 1960s narrowed the black/white earnings gap in the bi-county region, a nationwide development that was particularly pronounced on the Island. African Americans outpaced white income growth by eleven percentage points in Suffolk and nearly fourteen percentage points in Nassau in real terms during the decade. The black median reached sixty-four percent that of whites in Nassau and seventy-two percent in Suffolk, compared to sixty-four percent nationally.¹⁰⁵ As Table 2.3 indicates, Long Island’s black middle class became dominant during the decade. These gains were part in parcel with the trajectory of the labor

¹⁰³ Oral history transcript of interview with Clarence Phillips on December 19, 1980 and January 23, 1981, p. 69-72, African American Heritage Oral History Collection, PWLHC.

¹⁰⁴ “LI Powder Keg: Awaiting Jobs that May Never Come,” *Newsday*, August 16, 1966, 4.

¹⁰⁵ For national statistics on the black/white wage convergence, see Reynolds Farley, “Three Steps Forward and Two Back? Recent Changes in the Social and Economic Status of Blacks,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 8, no. 1(1985): 10, 20; Smith & Welch, 522.

market itself, because while the gains of the 1940s were due to the tight wartime labor market and the 1950s saw the black/white gap stagnate, civil rights legislation and rising black educational outcomes combined with favorable market conditions to close the divide in the 1960s.¹⁰⁶ Long Island's burgeoning black middle class was responsible for the narrowing racial gap, as those black families earning near or above the region's median family income increased at a much higher rate than white families at or above the median.

Behind the emergence of a black middle class and the gains relative to whites were black families stuck at the lower end of the income distribution. While white families generally experienced upward mobility over the course of the 1960s as incomes below \$10,000 declined across the board, only middle class black families matched them. Those below three-quarters of the median family income, half the median increased as well, and families in the lowest category (the federal poverty level) grew nearly thirty percent. Calculating whether these families lived in 'poverty' is complex given the inadequacies the official federal threshold and the subjectivity of 'relative' poverty measurements, though Long Island's widespread affluence makes relative poverty measures useful.¹⁰⁷ After all, the region's high incomes were necessary to even get around on Long Island; jobs, shopping amenities, educational facilities, and health centers were spread across the suburban highways and single-story suburban 'parks,' though buses were

¹⁰⁶ Thomas N. Maloney, "Wage Compression and Wage Inequality between Black and White Males in the United States, 1940-1960," *The Journal of Economic History*, 54, no. 2 (June, 1994): 358-381; Robert A. Margo, "Explaining the Black-White Wage Convergence, 1940-1950: The Role of the Great Compression," *NBER working paper* No. 44 (March 1993): 1-23.

¹⁰⁷ The official threshold is based on multiples of a household diet, in itself a subjective determination. For a discussion on the inadequacy of absolute poverty measurements and relative alternatives, see National Academy of Sciences, *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach* (Washington: National Academy Press, 1995), 31-39; The debate over how to measure poverty is voluminous, and I am indebted to Shawn Fremstad of the Center for Economic and Policy Research for synthesizing the debate and laying out the defense for a relative poverty measure, which he argues harkens back to Adam Smith in the *Wealth of Nations*, who argued necessities included those commodities critical to supporting life, but also "whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even the lowest order, to be without." Quoted in Shawn Fremstad, "Measuring Poverty and Economic Inclusion The Current Poverty Measure, the NAS Alternative, and the Case for a Truly New Approach," *Center for Economic and Policy Research* (Washington DC: December 2008).

privately operated and ran infrequently. In a 1968 survey, unemployment and car ownership was inversely proportional: in low-income neighborhoods where the average number of cars owned per household was below 0.75, unemployment reached twenty percent, but where car ownership exceeded one per household, unemployment dipped under fifteen percent.¹⁰⁸ In addition, consumption levels were increasing broadly; a full belly was not a sign that one escaped material deprivation. A ‘decent’ standard of living in the postwar period included modern amenities, health care, and education, on Long Island and elsewhere. Given these factors, the official ‘national’ poverty measurement did not account for geographic differences in living costs, especially problematic when measuring economic distress in Nassau, the nation’s wealthiest large county. If we define economic distress as those families making half each counties’ median income, over a third of Long Island’s black families did not meet the minimum income requirements to live securely in Long Island’s suburban hamlets, compared to thirteen percent of white families.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Tri-State Transportation Commission, *People-Transportation-Jobs: public transport services to non-CBD employment concentrations*, no. 5 (April 1971): 2, 4.

¹⁰⁹ These are rough estimates because the census did not track families making exactly half the county’s median income. In 1970, Suffolk County’s median income was \$12,084, and 29% of black families along with 12.3% of white families made 49.6% the county median or less. In Nassau, the median family income was \$14,632, and 41% of black families and 14% of white families made less than 47.8% the county median. Overall, 36% of black families and 13% of white families on Long Island made less than the median family income for their respective counties. I am indebted to Pearl M. Kamer’s work on measuring ‘economic stress’ in Long Island’s two affluent counties. County median incomes tend to reflect local living costs because wages and salaries tend to be higher in areas with high living costs, and lower in areas with lower living costs. See Leonard Gaines and Pearl M. Kamer, “The Incidence of Economic Stress in Affluent Areas: Devising More Accurate Measures,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 53, No. 2 (April, 1994): 175-185.

Table 2.3: Family Income Distribution of Long Island Residents, 1960-1970 (Constant 1969 dollars)

	1960	1970	Change (%)
White			
Less than \$3,000	23,362	23,079	-1.2
\$3,000 - \$4,999	26,079	22,481	-13.8
\$5,000 - \$6,999	57,945	32,387	-44.1
\$7,000 - \$9,999	126,730	83,288	-34.3
\$10,000 or more	237,486	438,719	84.7
Black			
Less than \$3,000	2,197	2,846	29.5
\$3,000 - \$4,999	2,564	2,523	-1.6
\$5,000 - \$6,999	2,921	2,987	2.3
\$7,000 - \$9,999	2,921	4,886	67.3
\$10,000 or more	2,624	10,416	297.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Family Income (White & Non-white Families), 1960. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1960TractDS/R11109521> (accessed August 12, 2014); U.S. Census Bureau, Family Income for White Families, 1970. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1970/R11109522> (accessed August 12, 2014); U.S. Census Bureau, Family Income for Black Families, 1970. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1970/R11109522> (accessed August 12, 2014).

Note: Nassau-Suffolk Median family income for 1960 was \$9,935 in 1969 dollars. In 1970, it reached \$13,475 in 1969 dollars. See Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, *U.S. Census '70: Volume 6: Income* (Hauppauge, New York: 1972), 7.

African Americans were not alone among Long Island's low-income families: 80,000 white families fit into this category. Like low-income black workers, skill and education requirements, tight competition for unskilled jobs, and relatively low wages in these sectors accounted for their near poverty status. The difficulties of obtaining an automobile to go to work, or keeping the car filled with gas to get to work, particularly among the poor commuters who continued to hold jobs in the city, influenced opportunity just the same. Automation and rising educational premiums also pushed unskilled whites into the lower tier of the income ladder by 1970, particularly as the defense industry shifted toward highly technical work. The only difference was their skin color, which permitted them wide choice in housing on Long Island, spreading 'white' poverty broadly, and placed them in distinct networks for job opportunities.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ "Majority on Relief are White on LI and in Westchester," *New York Times*, August 17, 1969, 1.

Nonetheless, low incomes stalked African American Long Islanders disproportionately, as it did nationwide, and just as importantly, suburban residence was less likely to induce upward mobility. If we measure poverty using the federal poverty threshold, sixteen percent of Long Island's black families lived under the poverty level in 1970. While favorable when compared to the New York metropolitan region's highest poverty rates in Brooklyn (23.2) and the Bronx (22.4), the black rate was only four percentage points below that of the metropolitan region as a whole (19.9). This is compared to the huge divide between Long Island's overall poverty rate (4.1 percent), and that of Brooklyn (13.9), the Bronx (15.5), or the New York metro area (9.2).¹¹¹ Long Island's affluence did not absorb all, a reality for black New Yorkers seeking opportunity throughout the metropolitan region's labor market.

This poverty in the postwar period is not in of itself revelatory; by the 1960s, the nation's 'poverty amidst plenty' was the dominant domestic issue that launched a flurry of domestic programs rivalling the New Deal. But its suburban dimension, though small compared to the concentrated poor migrating to urban centers or dispersed poverty in the countryside, nonetheless illustrated the limits of postwar prosperity regardless of where one lived. The paradox of poverty amidst affluence was not a contradiction of suburb versus city, but of the dynamics of the state-influenced labor market that produced both jobs for the skilled and few opportunities for the unskilled. The questions were how the state distributed spending to boost employment as much as it was how the state subsidized mortgages, how the state enforced fair employment in its subsidized industries as much as it enforced fair housing, and how the state approached employing the unskilled themselves. These questions plagued Long Island's activists, local politicians, policymakers and anyone concerned with the black poor living in what President

¹¹¹ *1970 Census of Population and Housing*, P-601, P-603, P-863, P-865.

Dwight Eisenhower believed was the space “universally and exclusively inhabited by the workmen:” the postwar suburb.¹¹²

¹¹² Quoted in Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Viking, 1997); Eisenhower was referring to Levittown, and he wanted to show Soviet First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev Levitt’s Pennsylvania project during his 1959 tour of the United States. The stop was ultimately nixed from Khrushchev’s tour itinerary.

Chapter 3

Class versus Class

While decentralized labor markets made mass suburbanization possible, the suburbs were a space for homes, in both the popular imagination and the physical layout of the postwar urban fringe. Long Islanders were attracted to the region's housing developments laid atop potato fields, demolished Gold Coast estates, and saltwater marshes. The Cape Cods, ranches, and split-levels dotting the Island, along with the possibility of a garage, basement, large backyard, expandable second floors, not to mention neighborhood schools and a plethora of shopping choices, all represented what was captured in the postwar "American Dream." State policy undergirded this explosion in affordable single-family homes and amenities, from federal mortgage guarantees and highway development, to pro-development tax policies and the expansion of consumer credit.¹ As the previous chapter demonstrates, whites dominated the purchase of these homes, though African Americans moved to the suburbs as well. FHA policy, municipal zoning and land-use laws, a web of local governmental boundaries, and the realtors, developers, and homeowners operating within this public framework determined where they could buy houses. As a generation of scholars have shown, state-sponsored segregation and 'de facto' racist private actions constrained black housing choices after World War II in both cities and suburbs. But it did not cut African Americans out of the market entirely.

The labor market divide shaped the process and outcome of postwar African American suburbanization, because segregated housing barriers produced distinct but overlapping housing

¹ For the state's role in postwar consumer credit, see Louis Hyman, *Debtor Nation: The History of America in Red Ink* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

markets for the African American middle class and the black poor. For the middle class, racist housing barriers, tied to schools and local government services, served as the most formidable obstacle to racial equality on postwar Long Island. As historian Andrew Wiese argues, black suburbanites settled within the cracks of the segregated housing market, near older black working-class settlements or in undeveloped spaces not yet claimed as ‘white’ suburbia. A few confronted segregation directly, serving as ‘pioneers’ for others to follow.² In the process they established thriving neighborhoods, using their economic power to become home-owning postwar suburbanites. Here black progress was made within the segregated housing market, and in a few cases, against it. The middle class looked to end remaining inequities through a suburban-oriented civil rights movement, influenced by national protests and national organizations, though addressing local issues: housing, equal educational opportunity, and fair access to government services.

The black poor faced the same racial constraints, though low-incomes limited their housing choices further in a residential market designed for affluence. The FHA had minimum income thresholds, zoning and building codes imposed costly standards on residential units island-wide, their neighborhoods were marked for slum clearance and homeowners strongly opposed affordable housing. But these barriers did not cut the black poor out of the market entirely either. Pre-war communities remained at the fringe of postwar suburbia, and realtors found ways to turn postwar single-family homes into affordable housing in modestly priced postwar neighborhoods, black middle class hamlets, and tenuously integrated blocks. In the shadows of the single-family subdivision lived those lacking the means to participate in the consumer bounty of suburban prosperity.

² Wiese, chapter 5.

While the arrival of the black middle class and their agitation for racial equality had a distinct suburban bent, the existence of the black poor, their dire housing conditions, and their settlement within middle class neighborhoods produced dynamics familiar to American cities. Black homeowners demanded open housing and integrated schools, challenged downzoning proposals, and celebrated their upward mobility. The black poor faced slum clearance and urban renewal, and after relocating to middle class neighborhoods, stiff homeowner opposition and efforts to push them out. Housing segregation concentrated the poor into Long Island's black or integrated suburban hamlets, pitting the middle class against the minority poor over schools, taxes, illegal tenancies, and welfare, and the black middle class against local government for their implicit support of poverty concentrations. By the late 1960s, tensions reached a boiling point, spilling into urban violence. Though Long Island was on the winning side of what Robert Self calls the "overdevelopment of suburbs and the underdevelopment of cities" after World War II, the region was not immune to the challenges a growing African American poor posed in a segregated residential landscape.³ This was a consequence of suburban segregation, but also the structure of the labor market that left disproportionate number of black families with little income to support homeownership and financially contribute to local taxes.

The conflicts that cut across both racial and class lines on Long Island reveals the complex history of postwar suburbia, going beyond the city/suburb dichotomy to the dividing lines between individual hamlets and within suburban neighborhoods.⁴ At the heart of these conflicts were class tensions, because while African American homeowners challenged the racial homogeneity of postwar suburbia, they reified class homogeneity, seeking their place within the stratified housing market. In contrast, the black poor challenged middle class exclusivity and the

³ Self, 1.

⁴ Lassiter and Niedt, 9.

public foundations built upon it. Historians ignore these class tensions, especially within African American suburbs. Andrew Wiese's national study of twentieth century African American suburbanization portrays the relationship between working and middle class as harmonious and successive, because pre-war black enclaves were spaces for postwar suburban developments catering to black buyers. This was true on Long Island as it was nationwide, though the black poor did not disappear, and the relationship between the two was contentious, as pre-war housing 'blighted' new black suburbs and segregation permitted speculators to introduce the black poor to middle class neighborhoods. The tensions between middle class and poor played out in school board elections, civic association meetings, and on the streets.⁵

The Contours of Housing

Long Island's postwar housing market was formed through an interconnected web of national and local housing policy. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veterans Administration (VA) mortgage programs were the most important factors in housing development after World War II. Initiated as a depression-era solution to the high foreclosure rate and unemployment in housing construction, the FHA revolutionized homeownership in the twentieth century. The mortgage insurance program lowered the barrier to home-buying by reducing down payments and extending the repayment period to thirty-years. The government also shouldered the risk of default, and as a result formed strict, enforceable, and standardized criteria for publicly-subsidized mortgages. Benchmarks included the structure of individual homes, minimum lot size, distance from street and other buildings, and width of the house itself.

⁵Wiese, 116, 159-163. Wiese does discuss middle class desires for 'separation' from the black poor, but not actual intra-community tensions; Lizabeth Cohen discusses inequality within suburbia. See Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), chapter 5; See also Pattillo, *Black Picket Fences*.

Insured homes also had to be in residentially desirable areas, measured subjectively in terms of a neighborhood's economic stability and protection from 'adverse influences.' Racial prejudice along with class biases against multi-family housing and diverse neighborhoods became quantifiable calculations for mortgage insurance risk. Simply put, the FHA favored homogeneity, in race, income, and land use. Homogeneity did not mean white exclusivity, and the FHA did insure black mortgages within its 'homogenous' framework. Class barriers however, were rigid.⁶

With over a third of Nassau County homes guaranteed by FHA mortgages as of 1960, not to mention the VA loans closely associated with FHA standards across the Island, the region's developers were sensitive to government standards.⁷ Builders planned subdivisions using FHA criteria for design, construction, and cost. The Levitt brothers constructed 'Levittown' with FHA-sanctioned house-to-lot ratios, Cape-Cod home designs, and curvilinear streets.⁸ Developers also included restrictive covenants on their properties, an FHA-approved measure to safeguard property values, which often contained a clause against selling or leasing property to non-whites. Racial covenants were ubiquitous on Long Island, covering forty-seven percent of large subdivisions in Nassau County as of 1947.⁹ Though *Shelley v. Kraemer* declared covenants unconstitutional in 1948, the practice was already entrenched on Long Island, part of the spatial landscape and the strategies of developers, realtors, and homeowners themselves. When

⁶ Jackson, chapter 11; Freund, chapter 4; Adam Gordon, "The Creation of Homeownership: How New Deal Changes in Banking Regulation Simultaneously Made Homeownership Accessible to Whites and out of Reach for Blacks," *The Yale Law Journal* 115, No. 1 (Oct., 2005): 186-226.

⁷ Calculation based on all housing units constructed since 1939 divided by cumulative number of home mortgages, 1934-1960. The total comes to 36 percent, though does not include housing built between 1934 and 1940. If we include homes built between 1930 and 1939, the proportion drops to 31%. Regardless, the direct influence of the FHA is clear. See Jackson, 211; *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960*, 213.

⁸ Kelly, 3n3, 89, 101.

⁹ John P. Dean, "Only Caucasian: A Study of Race Covenants," *The Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics* 23, no. 4 (November 1947): 428-432. The author defined large housing developments as those with 20 parcels or more in a single development.

confronted with the injustice of covenants and racial segregation, Levittown developer William Levitt famously quipped that “we can solve a housing problem, or we can try to solve a racial problem...but we cannot combine the two,” basically stating racial integration threatened to undermine homebuilding.¹⁰ Since FHA underwriters weighed race among their factors of judging mortgage risk, Levitt’s statement followed the logic of state officials.

Local government policy was likewise responsive to FHA standards and the developers reliant on these mortgage guarantees. On Long Island, this often meant relaxing building codes. Most zoning codes in Nassau and Western Suffolk County were adopted prior to World War II for the pre-war middle class and elite Gold Coast residents, with standards well above FHA requirements. In the wake of Long Island’s industrialization, demand for modest homes skyrocketed, though minimum lot-sizes and high construction standards priced many out of the market. The housing crisis immediately following the war gave federally-backed developers the justification to demand zoning law changes.¹¹ Levitt’s basement-less house design required revised codes, and in 1947, the Town of Hempstead repealed the basement code, permitting Levitt and others to construct cheaper single-family dwellings. With the proliferation of Levitt-style developments in the 1950s, zoning authorities pulled back, increasing lot sizes to raise property values. The Town of Oyster Bay erected one acre minimums for future land by the 1960s to prevent new Levittowns.¹² Zoning battles reflected the tension between expanding housing opportunity to the wider swath of Long Island’s new residents and protecting

¹⁰ Quoted in Jackson, 241.

¹¹ *Newsday*, the daily newspaper that grew alongside Long Island’s suburbanization, publicly campaigned hard for zoning code reform. See “Low-Cost Houses, Answer to Shortage, Banned by Old Code,” *Newsday*, April 29, 1946, 2 for an example.

¹² Kelly, 58-59; For examples of zoning battles being waged at Town Halls, see “Small Houses or Not? Oyster Bay to Decide,” *Newsday*, May 16, 1950, 18; “Civics Angered by Zoning Threaten to Form Village,” *Newsday*, January 23, 1958, 19; “On LI Home Building is Big Business,” *Newsday*, May 22, 1954, M23; Robert Coldwell Wood, *1400 Governments; The Political Economy of the New York Metropolitan Region* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 96.

municipalities from ‘incompatible’ use of property, i.e. any land-use that threatened property values and therefore tax revenue.¹³ On Long Island, FHA-subsidies and the developers dependent on the mortgage guarantees opened land to working class New Yorkers, while zoning agencies served to check affordable housing growth, though in effect zoning maintained the pattern established in the postwar boom since planning measures were largely enforced after the heaviest waves of migration in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁴ The barrier was lowered, though only for those climbing into the postwar middle class.

The FHA guidelines also included requirements for urban amenities and public services in order to qualify for mortgage insurance, and this largely coincided with the demands of suburbanites themselves.¹⁵ Paved roads, garbage removal, police protection, and schools, among other public needs, were satisfied within the fragmented governmental system inherited from the pre-war period, largely because the existing structure was adapted to the new environment.¹⁶ Long Island’s two counties provided general services like welfare, police (in Nassau and western Suffolk after 1960), and justice, while Towns (which in the case of the Town of Hempstead had over 834,000 residents, larger than most US cities) or incorporated villages furnished brick and mortar services, including road maintenance, sanitation, land-use policy, and sometimes police protection. Beyond this were ‘special districts’ created to provide water, fire, or sewage amenities to areas incongruous with town or village borders. School districts, determined by New York State, expanded to meet the needs of the region’s exploding student population, and these rarely matched other political boundaries. In all, two counties, two cities, thirteen towns,

¹³ Freund, 226-227.

¹⁴ Wood, 100.

¹⁵ Andrew R. Highsmith, “Demolition Means Progress: Race, Class, and the Deconstruction of the American Dream in Flint, Michigan” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2009), 18-19, 136-140.

¹⁶ Wood, 96.

ninety-two villages, 135 school districts, 126 fire districts, and 477 special districts, 870 different governmental units in total, had taxing authority on Long Island by 1970.¹⁷ The average Nassau County home in an unincorporated area paid taxes to sixteen different districts.¹⁸ This system has more or less remained, and as of 2010, Nassau and Suffolk were the most balkanized suburban counties in the United States.¹⁹

These factors in sum produced Long Island's particular housing market. It was a racially and class segmented market, since the FHA and developers considered skin color a calculable risk when determining the inhabitants of a neighborhood while zoning authorities carefully excluded unwanted socioeconomic groups to secure property values and 'community character.' The FHA's stance on race changed in the wake of *Shelley*, though the administration blamed the 'market' for segregation and funded separate federally-protected homes for African Americans in the 1950s. Such housing never met the demand, constituting only two percent of FHA loans and three percent of VA loans, but Andrew Wiese calculates that this nonetheless accounted for up to 40 percent of the new African American housing during the 1950s.²⁰ The FHA was both a boon and detriment to African Americans.²¹ A number of FHA-approved 'minority housing' suburban developments were built on Long Island in the 1950s, and after John F. Kennedy ended discriminatory federally-insured loans, developers constructed housing tracts for the black

¹⁷ "An Island of Superlatives," *Newsday*, Apr 29, 1973, 8F.

¹⁸ State of NY, County of Nassau Public Employee Relations Board, *Impasse between Nassau County and Nassau County Patrolmen's Benevolent Association*, March 19, 1976, 3. Accessed June 25, 2015 <http://www.perb.ny.gov/pdf/ia1974-98/NassauCountyMini-Perb.pdf>

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, *2002 Census of Governments* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau, 2002), Table 16. Suffolk and Nassau counties rank 5th (237) and 6th (202) in the highest number of total governments after Cook County, IL (539), Harris County, TX (487), Los Angeles County (347), and Allegheny County, PA (273). All of these counties have a central city within their boundaries, while Nassau and Suffolk's central city (Manhattan) is outside their jurisdiction. The Census Bureau defines a government as possessing "existence as an organized entity, governmental character, and substantial autonomy."

²⁰ Wiese, 140; Kimble, "Insuring Inequality," 428-429.

²¹ See Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White*.

market across Long Island.²² These developments had to be constructed within the layout of Long Island's zoning, school, and public service boundaries, all divided by race.

The market was also simultaneously more expensive *and* more affordable than its pre-war counterpart. Rapid residential development raised land values, and though housing standards were relaxed, they applied to a much broader swath of properties and were more likely to be enforced if FHA mortgage guarantees were involved. Meanwhile, Nassau and Suffolk's fragmented government resulted in a massive public sector that imposed high taxes, particularly because property taxes funded sixty percent of county governments and nearly one hundred percent of local governmental units. Despite postwar industrialization and commercial development, suburbanites still owned the majority of all property value; residential homeowners were the primary funders of local government on Long Island, with the exception of the few taxing districts with substantial commercial and/or industrial property.²³ On the other hand, federal mortgage subsidies greatly lowered the barrier to homeownership, with down payments between ten percent and zero for veterans. Mass production also reduced construction costs. Obtaining a job in the metropolitan area's robust labor market gave borrowers the current income threshold and the prospect of future earnings capacity that the FHA required when extending mortgage insurance. At its core, the housing market rested on the foundation of postwar prosperity, and the FHA's success was not possible without it.²⁴

²² Adam Gordon, "The Creation of Homeownership," 217-218.

²³ A Nassau County sales tax, along with fees and fines (also paid by homeowners), made up for the remainder of revenue for both Counties (state/Federal aid excepted). The Bi-County Temporary State Commission for Tax Relief on Long Island, *Working Paper #2, Suffolk County Operations: Revenues and Expenditures, 1960-1990* (October, 1991), 1; The Bi-County Temporary State Commission for Tax Relief on Long Island, *Working Paper #5, Nassau County Operations: Revenues and Expenditures, 1960-1990* (December 1991), 1, 15; The Bi-County Temporary State Commission for Tax Relief on Long Island, *Working Paper #4, Taxation: Sales, Income, Property – Analysis and Alternatives* (December 1991), V.

²⁴ The FHA measured the ability of a mortgagor to bear the cost of homeownership by their *effective* income, an estimate of their earning capacity for the first third of the mortgage duration. See U.S. Housing and Home Finance Agency, *Annual Report 1955* (US GPO: Washington, 1956), 179.

This was the web of regulation that Long Islanders navigated. White migrants' near-full participation in the labor market and FHA-approved skin color gave them wide choice in housing. The black middle class had the income but not the skin color, limiting them to segregated options. But above all, Long Island's housing market was class exclusive, and the poor confronted an inhospitable housing environment as every available parcel was absorbed into the FHA approved and highly regulated housing market. But where there was housing needs, there were those willing to meet demand. The regulatory framework was not impenetrable, and the needs of all three populations were met both within the zoned and properly coded communities as well as outside them, in the cracks of Long Island's housing market.

Another “Young Harlem”

For black suburbanites who benefitted from the postwar labor market, housing segregation, both in policy and practice, made it difficult, though not impossible, to purchase suburban housing. The constraints of the late 1940s and early 1950s were the most formidable, written into law and violently enforced. Restrictive racial covenants, legal until 1947 and practiced afterwards, explicitly denied blacks housing. Levittown was the most infamous covenant-protected development on Long Island, and when African American military veteran and Harlem resident Eugene Burnett toured Levitt models, the agent refused to provide Burnett an application, stating “the builders have not at this time decided to sell to Negroes.” Burnett was devastated; “I'll never forget the ride back to East Harlem," he remembered.²⁵

²⁵ “At 45, Levittown's Legacy Is Unclear,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1992; Jackson, chapter 11; For a discussion of private racial covenants in suburban real estate, see Robert Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares Suburbia, 1870-1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005),

White homeowners who imbibed the logic of racial segregation meanwhile proved to be the most visible barrier to black homeownership, even resorting to violence as a means to protect racial homogeneity of neighborhoods.²⁶ One of the more famous examples occurred in 1953, when Clarence Wilson, a non-white beauty products manufacturer from Brooklyn, attempted to purchase a home in Deauville Gardens, a white working class suburban development in Copiague in western Suffolk County. The house caught fire twice before his move-in date. With help from the local NAACP, Wilson declared he would rebuild the \$16,000 ranch home: “I’m going to finish this house and live in it” declared Mr. Wilson, “I am not afraid. I regard these two attempts to burn down my house as enemy attacks...and I’m not running away. The future for me and my family...and for others like us...depends on what I do now.” Despite assurances from the press and public authorities that this was an isolated incident perpetrated by a few extremists, the Deauville Gardens community made it clear that residents like Clarence Wilson were not welcome in their neighborhood. When the NAACP met with the Deauville Gardens Civic Association to discuss the incident, most of the questions from the audience asked why *Wilson* was causing trouble.²⁷ Wilson hired a detective after receiving dozens of threatening letters from the Ku Klux Klan, and the detective’s survey determined that about three-quarters of Wilson’s white neighbors did not want the Wilson family in Deauville Gardens. By January 1954, Wilson decided to sell the \$16,000 home at a loss because he feared for his family. The

²⁶ Freund, 250; Wiese, 100. For a discussion of white homeowner activism in the postwar period, see Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, chapters 8, 9.

²⁷ “2nd Blaze Strikes Home of Negro in White Area, NAACP Aroused,” *Newsday*, November 23, 1953; “‘I’m Not Afraid,’ Negro Says ‘We’ll Catch Firebug, Cops Vow’,” *Long Island Press*, November 24, 1953; “Take Protection in own hands over LI Burnings,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 28, 1953; “Civics Tables Motion to Condemn 2 Fires,” *Newsday*, November 28, 1953; “Civic Group Denies Part in Race Fires, Ducks Condemnation Vote,” *Newsday*, November 29, 1953.

transaction was arranged through the Deauville Gardens Civic Association and sold to a white buyer.²⁸

Outright violence, though a visceral reminder to black homebuyers of the risks of moving into suburbia, was the exception. Instead, black homebuyers more often encountered tacit opposition at the real estate office, the middlemen between segregated policy and anti-discrimination law.²⁹ When engineer Irving Winters went house hunting near his employer in Suffolk County, realtors repeatedly told him nothing “suitable” was available. The one broker willing to show him ‘homes’ merely drove to empty lots. Winters then tried another realtor, but was once again rebuffed. In a fit of anger Irving let out “caustic words” and the realty office relented, sending them to a builder in nearby St. James. The Winters liked the house, though the builder led Mr. Winters into the basement, and in tears, confided that selling the home to a black couple would destroy his small business dependent on local customers and bank loans. Though angry, Mr. Winters decided not to press the builder, deciding to go it alone and deal with owners directly. The Winters found a home, and with a lawyer in tow, closed on the mortgage. Despite the concerns of realtors, the Winters felt welcomed into the community once they moved in.³⁰ While realtors, builders, and banks were operating within the hard rules (or in this case legacy)

²⁸ “Families Welcome, Neighbors Say,” *Long Island Press*, November 24, 1953; “Civics Tables Motion to Condemn 2 Fires,” *Newsday*, November 28, 1953; “Copiague Negro Moves, Cites Klan Threats,” *Newsday*, January 23, 1954; “Arson, KKK Threats Make Negro Sell Home,” *Daily Worker*, January 25, 1954; Letter to Mr. Gloster Current, Residential Segregation, 1914-1965, Part 5, supplement 1, reel 9, slides 539, *Papers of the NAACP*; “House Burned Twice, Negro will Sell Out,” *Newsday*, January 21, 1954.

²⁹ New York State passed the Metcalf-Baker Law of 1955, which banned discrimination by developers with subdivisions of 10 or more units. The Metcalf-Baker Law of 1961 expanded this to bar discrimination in sales, rentals, mortgages, and advertising of all property in New York State. See Stephen Grant Meyer, *As Long As They Don't Move Next Door: Segregation and Racial Conflict in American Neighborhoods* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 160-161; Also see “Metcalf-Baker Implementation Memo #1,” April 14, 1961, *Metropolitan Council on Housing*. Accessed June 28, 2015, http://metcouncilonhousing.org/our_history/early_organizing/metcalf_baker

³⁰ “The Negro in Suburbia: House Hunting, or A Run-Around?” *The Long Island Advance*, March 25, 1965, 1, 5.

of the FHA's racial regulations, white homeowners were not tied to such stipulations and could respond in a variety of ways. In this case at least, white neighbors were not the obstacle.

The dance with realtors was an all-too-common reality for prospective black buyers, and moving directly into white neighborhoods required uncommon fortitude. Consequently, most African American housing needs were met within the segregated housing market. As Andrew Wiese argues, pre-war black enclaves, redlined from mortgage approval for white suburbia, provided the space for FHA-approved black suburban developments.³¹ This is how the majority of black buyers found homes on Long Island in the 1950s, in the spaces demarcated as 'safe' for black housing. North Amityville, in the far southwest of Suffolk County, was an unincorporated hamlet with a small community of mixed Native American and slave descendants dating back to the eighteenth century. Migrant laborers also worked North Amityville's farms in the early twentieth century, some of whom settled along what was referred to as 'tobacco road.'³² This small community enabled the Ronek Construction Company to exploit the "pressing housing problem of minority groups," and they built single-family FHA-insured housing competitive in price with Levittown but available "to all qualified buyers without regard to race, creed or color," a direct advertisement to those aware of segregated housing policy.³³ When the Ronek Company unveiled the model units in 1950, over 8,000 potential buyers, almost all black, inspected the homes, "necessitating a special police detail to direct the flow of automobiles along the route to the development."³⁴

The turnout reflected the acute housing demand among African American middle class homebuyers, and unsurprisingly, the Ronek Company was not alone in using existing black

³¹ Wiese, 116-117.

³² Simon, "Selected Topics in the History of the Amityville," 81, 83, 87-88; Perrin & Howlett, 22, 28.

³³ "Planning \$7,000,000 Non-Bias Housing Project," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 28, 1950.

³⁴ "Ronek Houses Draw Crowds," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 4, 1950.

enclaves to construct FHA-insured single-family developments catering to black homebuyers. Just three miles northeast, Taca Home Builders Inc. bought land in an un-suburbanized area in Wyandanch, home to working-class German, Irish, and African Americans prior to World War II. They designed ‘Carver Park’ in 1951, and other developers followed, securing FHA funding to build developments like Powell Estates, which offered ‘spacious’ cape cods for qualified buyers. As their advertising stated “if you can earn \$60 a week, you can afford to buy this beautiful home.”³⁵ The housing tracts constructed in North Amityville and Wyandanch, part of the larger Town of Babylon, contributed to the town’s skyrocketing black homeownership that rose from only nine minority owner-occupied homes in 1950 to 1,885 in 1960.³⁶

To the west of Babylon, builders and realtors carved out black neighborhoods in the housing boom of Nassau County. In Hempstead, pre-war black enclaves enabled black homebuyers to purchase single-family housing along its outskirts, which grew to house over a quarter of Nassau County’s middle-class African Americans by 1960. A similar process occurred in Freeport, as pre-war domestic settlement encouraged postwar middle class housing construction.³⁷ Just to the north in the unincorporated hamlet of Roosevelt, prewar black housing enabled postwar developers and realtors to design black subdivisions, heavily marketed through metro-area newspapers. By 1960, African Americans grew to nearly a fifth of the hamlet’s population.³⁸ And north of Roosevelt, a tiny black nineteenth century subdivision served as the

³⁵ “Complete Homes from \$4990,” *New York Amsterdam News*, December 3, 1949; “Non-Racial Dwellings Opened at Wyandanch,” *New York Times*, March 11, 1951; Classifieds, *New York Amsterdam News*, December 1, 1956, 31; “New Homes Built for Minorities,” *New York Amsterdam News*, May 5, 1956, 35.

³⁶ *Census of Housing: 1950*, 32-54; *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960*, 287.

³⁷ 26.6 percent of all Nassau County’s black families making at least eighty percent of the county family median income (\$8,515 in 1960) resided in Hempstead village in 1960.

³⁸ Classified Advertisement, *Amsterdam News*, November 24, 1951; Sheldon Parrish, *One Square Mile: The History of Roosevelt, NY from an Autobiographical Perspective* (Xlibris Corp, 2009), 23-25; Baxandall & Ewen, 182-183.

foundation for postwar black housing in New Cassel.³⁹ Here modest homes were built to house local factory workers in the hamlet's machinery and instrument plants.⁴⁰ Unlike the middle class in Hempstead or Roosevelt, these prospective homeowners had "less financial means than "middle class" may imply... [and] strapped themselves to buy their homes, often necessitating full-time employment of wives and mothers in order to meet expenses." Nonetheless, they qualified for FHA approved homes.⁴¹ By 1960, 2,693 African Americans lived in the hamlet along with 4,833 whites.⁴²

While subdivisions in Nassau County operated within the contours of segregation, all were built near or within majority white hamlets. Though tensions existed, the middle-class background of these residents tempered white fears. In Roosevelt, social researchers found that whites accepted black residents largely because "their occupational status was higher than most other white residents in their block," and included doctors, teachers, and psychologists.⁴³ The hamlet of Lakeview, where black housing subdivisions were built as early as 1950 but whose black population expanded rapidly from 1959 to 1961, managed to integrate largely because "the blacks moving in were generally considered to be of the "better class" with high income, good manners and took care of their property, even an improvement over the residents they replaced" an Adelphi University sociological study noted.⁴⁴ This is not to say that African American

³⁹ Oral history reports indicate that some land in New Cassel was subdivided to African Americans from Harlem in the late nineteenth century. See Interview with Sheila Lesnick and Marvin Baldwin, September 24, 1980, Box "New Cassel," Historical Society of the Westburys, Westbury, New York.

⁴⁰ After World War II, the black population was estimated to be around 5%. Helen Randolph, Claire Collier, and Morton Inger, *The Black Suburbanite and His Schools: An Interim Report on the Study of the Impact of Black Suburbanization on the School System* (New York: Center for Urban Education, 1970), 43-47; Kamer, *Manufacturing in Suburbia*, 64-67; Nassau County Planning Commission, *Nassau County Data Book* 1966, p. 11-10 to 11-16.

⁴¹ Randolph et. al., 47.

⁴² *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960*, 33.

⁴³ Randolph et al, 12-13.

⁴⁴ "Heydorn, Agency for Barco Homes," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 24, 1950, 38; Gertrude E. Sussman, "Residential Choice in an Interracial Community" (MA Thesis, Adelphi College 1963), 58-60.

incomes alone alleviated white anxieties; black homeowners often had to go above and beyond to ‘prove’ their class status and alter the association of black skin with poverty. As one black homeowner admitted, he had to work ‘like hell’ to make improvements on his home “so that way the people around here will know we don’t keep chickens in the living room.”⁴⁵ Nonetheless, housing costs and mortgage criteria ensured that these homeowners were from the same class makeup as their white counterparts, fitting into the surrounding community in every way save the prejudices whites held for their skin color.

Of course, these weren’t the only places the African American middle class settled; from the ‘Nostrand Gardens’ subdivision in Uniondale in Nassau County and the western Suffolk hamlets like Huntington Station, Deer Park, and Brentwood, out to Coram in eastern Suffolk, black Long Islanders were purchasing homes across Long Island’s budding subdivisions.⁴⁶ But North Amityville, Wyandanch, Hempstead, Roosevelt, New Cassel, Lakeview, and Freeport contained over a third of Long Island’s total black population in 1960. Most importantly, they were the centers of postwar black middle class life, nestled within the broad swath of postwar suburban housing tracts, just as their residents were tied to the bounties of the postwar labor market (See Figure 3.1). This was distinct from the prewar domestic and agricultural laborer neighborhoods, save Hempstead and Freeport, tied to what remained of the pre-war economy.

⁴⁵ “Life’s Nitty Gritty,” *Newsday*, January 8, 1966, 14W.

⁴⁶ Cavaoli, 16-17.

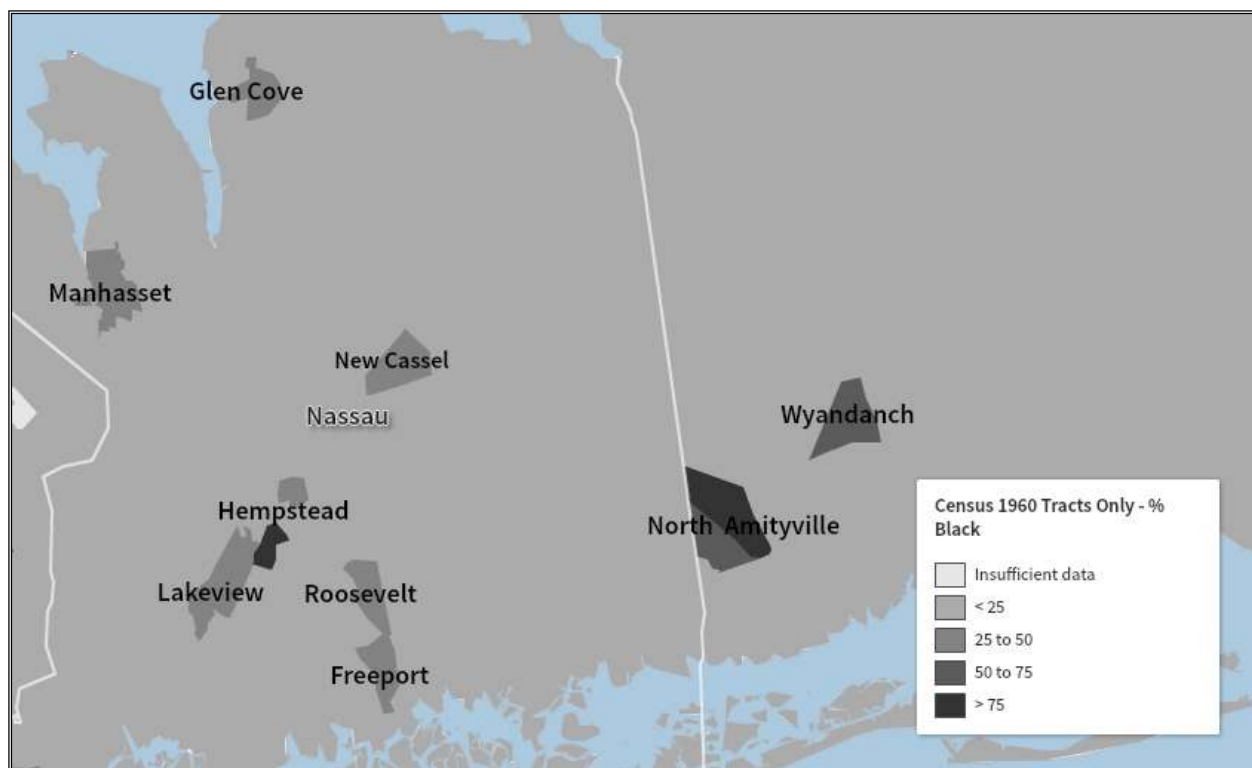


Figure 3.1. Long Island’s largest black suburbs as of 1960. Data and map generation from Social Explorer.

These hamlets became thriving black communities, the centers of black middle class culture in the two decades after World War II. North Amityville, the largest postwar black hamlet in 1960, featured prominent black businesses, like James Calloway’s ‘Delly’ founded in 1954, which proved so popular that Calloway expanded the business into a full-fledged IGA Foodliner supermarket in 1966.⁴⁷ With real estate firms, law offices, general stores, barber shops, and community clubs, North Amityville residents took great pride in their community. IGA employee Sam Edwards proclaimed it a “new era... [for] Negroes in business,” where blacks would “overcome and reach immeasurable heights, taking our place in the economic mainstream of American life.”⁴⁸ Barber Joe Daniels declared that North Amityville was a

⁴⁷ “Banton Real Estate Thrives in Amityville,” *New York Amsterdam News*, December 26, 1964; “Future Bright for Calloway ‘Delly,’” *New York Amsterdam News*, December 26, 1964; “Amityville Couple Opens Modern Shopping Center,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 23, 1966.

⁴⁸ “Amityville Couple Opens Modern Shopping Center,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 23, 1966; Chuck Smith, “Nassau-Suffolk News Beat,” *New York Amsterdam News*, May 29, 1965.

“Harlem young, vibrant and undismayed... a very nice place to live for the average working man.”⁴⁹ While North Amityville was the most celebrated, there were several “Harlems” emerging across Long Island. Lakeview and Roosevelt served as quiet leafy-green sanctuaries. Hempstead was a bustling downtown with easy commuting to New York City. All were connected through an expanding black press, primarily the *New York Amsterdam News*, one of the nation’s leading black newspapers. The paper, sensing the migration to the suburbs, added reporters to cover Long Island stories (Chuck Smith’s “Nassau-Suffolk News-Beat”) as well as local gossip, “high society,” achievements, and real estate in sections like the “Babylon Bailiwick” and “Out our Way.”⁵⁰ One could pick up the weekly paper and catch up with the activities of their neighbors, from summer vacation plans and holiday festivities, to new births, promotions, and scholarly achievements.⁵¹

Long Island’s flourishing black communities developed within the contours of state-sponsored segregation, which initially barred those labeled ‘black’ in the late 1940s, but later provided an exclusive ‘black’ housing market in the 1950s. By the 1960s, the FHA was prohibited from segregating mortgages and New York State passed anti-discrimination housing laws, further encouraging black suburban development. Local zoning, real estate practices, and neighborhood politics still shaped a segregated market, but middle class African Americans had opportunity to become homeowners. Despite segregation, racial progress was possible.

⁴⁹ “Amityville Another Harlem?” *New York Amsterdam News*, December 26, 1964.

⁵⁰ Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 175; See Chuck Smith, “Nassau-Suffolk News-Beat,” March 13, 1965, “On the Town,” *New York Amsterdam News*, February 18, 1961, “Babylon Bailiwick,” *New York Amsterdam News*, February 13, 1965, “Around Amityville,” *New York Amsterdam News*, May 27, 1965, for examples of local activity reports.

⁵¹ For three examples, see “Out our Way,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 9, 1961, 20; “Out our Way,” *New York Amsterdam News*, May 26, 1962, 26; “Out our Way,” *New York Amsterdam News*, June 8, 1963, 30.

Postwar Housing and the Poor

Though the black middle class could not live wherever they chose, their income allowed them to participate in the postwar housing market. In contrast, the entire structure of FHA's mortgage-insurance standards and associated zoning codes wrote the poor out of the housing market altogether. Proliferating residential subdivisions, industrial parks, and strip malls placed a premium on land, and FHA mortgage-insurance, zoning laws, and developers favored single-family home construction, which made up eighty-four percent of all units in Nassau and ninety-four percent of all housing stock in Suffolk.⁵² Apartments built after 1945 were primarily in the 'luxury' category, attracting the same kinds of residents as single-family homes. In addition, the cost of housing construction uniformly rose as building code enforcement touched every inch of Long Island's landscape west of the two forks. This was a housing landscape built on the affluence of the postwar labor market, with few options for those untouched by postwar prosperity. In this environment, pre-war domestic and migrant laborer enclaves served as safe spaces for postwar poor communities, predating land-use laws and written off by federally-backed developers.

The black poor continued to concentrate in the largest pre-war hamlets with housing stock below postwar market rates. These districts also remained the most convenient housing to the domestic and migrant farm economy, including Inwood, Rockville Centre, and Freeport on Long Island's South Shore, Manhasset and Glen Cove on the North Shore, and Riverhead out east. In general, the black poor further concentrated in these enclaves without attendant increases in housing supply, intensifying dilapidated conditions and high prices present since the 1930s. The degree of severity depended on the immediate surroundings and low-wage labor

⁵² Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board and Raymond & May Associates, *Better Homes for Better Communities* (Hauppauge NY: Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, 1968), 17.

demand. In the North Shore domestic enclaves of Manhasset, Roslyn, and Port Washington, a proliferation of upper-middle-class subdivisions replaced the estates, concentrating the black poor into the same pre-war districts. In these three neighborhoods, lived over 1,000 people. Seventy percent of units did not have central heating, sixty-five percent lacked hot water, and over half of households were without indoor toilets or baths. Demand nonetheless made tool sheds, garages, and even chicken coops profitable.⁵³ In the larger and more urbanized city of Glen Cove, builders constructed mid-century tenements that slipped under city and state building codes, with coal stoves, faulty wiring, and bathrooms shared by an entire floor. This was the newest of what became a four-building slum owned by Morris Idelevitz in 1953, which included older buildings and a former incinerator. Three fires had broken out in the late 1940s and early 1950s, killing a child.⁵⁴

In Nassau's South Shore domestic enclaves, a similar pattern emerged despite Levitt-style mass suburbanization. In the affluent commuter village of Rockville Centre, the Banks Avenue area remained the sole affordable residential district, housing over two-hundred black and three dozen white families who worked as cooks and house-cleaners along with a large contingent of day-laborers.⁵⁵ In Inwood at the extreme southwest of Nassau County, postwar economic development led to a more diverse population in the 1,200-unit domestic neighborhood. Manufacturing, construction, transportation, and utility workers joined the area's

⁵³ New York State Division of Housing, *Survey of Housing Conditions*, in Selected Branch Files, 1940-1955, Part 26, Series B, reel 4, slide 640, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁵⁴ "Report on Glen Cove Housing Situation," p. 2, Group II, Box A 313, folder 7, Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Library of Congress, Washington DC (hereafter cited as NAACP Records, LoC); "Glen Cove Moves to Rehabilitate 2d Idelevitz Slum," *Newsday*, December 9, 1955, 7.

⁵⁵ "Rockville Centre: Racial 'Stalemate'," *Newsday*, June 20, 1966; "Confused About Urban Renewal? Read This," February 1965, Box 12, folder "Rockville Centre, New York, 1965-1966," Senator Jacob K. Javits Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Stony Brook University Libraries, Stony Brook, New York (hereafter cited as Javits Papers); "Causes of Racial Tension in an Urban Renewal Program – An Investigation into the History of the Rockville Centre, New York, Project" February, 1966, p. 5, Box 67, folder "Human Rights," Nickerson Papers; Nassau County Planning Commission, *Nassau County, New York Data Book 1966*, p. VIII-1.

domestics, and housing conditions did not deteriorate as rapidly: only a quarter of units lacked a bathroom, heating facilities, and/or running water. African Americans were concentrated in the most substandard dwellings though, including rooming houses, where entire tenant families squeezed into two-room rentals and shared bathrooms with half a dozen other families.⁵⁶ While Hempstead and Freeport became middle class havens during the 1960s, they too remained sources of low-income housing in small corners of each neighborhood.⁵⁷

Unlike in Nassau, where intensive residential development aggravated dilapidated conditions, cheaper land and relaxed building standards in Suffolk enabled developers to exploit acute housing demand among the poor. In western Suffolk, the same forces at work in Nassau operated, where former domestic enclaves deteriorated as demand became acute.⁵⁸ On Long Island's expansive east end, housing options expanded for the black poor. Migrant farm laborers were already housed in barrack-style 'bullpens,' or in former chicken coops, tool sheds, and pig sties, sharing bathrooms and eating facilities with an entire camp.⁵⁹ A growing population of 'ex-migrants' and eastward migrating black poor were ripe for new forms of housing exploitation, and the lack of building codes in Suffolk's three eastern towns gave landowners freedom to provide housing in any capacity they saw fit. On the Hollis Warner Duck Farm in Riverhead, the Warner family constructed a suburban subdivision for the poor. An award-winning *Newsday* article depicted the three available models: a three bedroom and two-bedroom 500 square foot model with gas-stove, refrigerator, kerosene gas heater, and hand pump, or an

⁵⁶ New York State Division of Housing Bureau of Research and Statistics, *Housing Survey North Lawrence – Inwood Area of the Town of Hempstead, Nassau County* (Albany: State of New York, Division of Housing, Bureau of Research and Statistics, 1957), 3-4.

⁵⁷ Brian Ross, "Civil Rights Activity and Racial Conflict on Long Island" (unpublished manuscript, October 31, 2011), 99-100.

⁵⁸ New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal Research Bureau, *Survey of Housing Need and Demand, Town of Islip, New York* (Albany: State of New York Division of Housing and Community Renewal Research Bureau, April 1963), 3, 6, 12-20.

⁵⁹ "Part 15: Migrant Labor Camps," p. 6, Box 2, folder 72, Dennison Papers.

eighty-one square-foot single-room model with refrigerator only. None had bathrooms; the Warners erected a row of outhouses behind the units. While most inhabitants were local migrant or ex-migrant laborers, tenants included those displaced from other areas of Long Island. A resident named Mary and her family were forced to move from their Greenport rental after it was sold, making their way to the Warner Farm. She found work both on local farms and periodically commuted to Roslyn, sixty miles away. Another resident living in a former duck-brooding house was a long-distance commuter to his landscaping job in the Gold Coast hamlet of Brookville, over an hour west.⁶⁰ Unsurprisingly, Riverhead's minority poor rented out over ninety-nine percent of the Town's shoddy housing, much of it comparatively new.⁶¹

All low-income housing shared one common problem: high prices. Rents in Nassau County averaged between \$130 and \$138 for a four-person family in the early 1960s.⁶² For those families with incomes of \$5,000 a year, \$130 a month represented over a third of their wages. Families below this threshold could be 'shelter-poor,' i.e. unable to meet their non-shelter needs (food, clothing, medical care) due to such high housing costs.⁶³ Though Suffolk's rents were cheaper, the average black family in hamlets like Bay Shore spent nearly a third of

⁶⁰ "Slums on LI: The Dark Side of Suburbia: Long Island's Ugly Ducklings," *Newsday*, September 16, 1957, 1.

⁶¹ Despite the fact that 97% of the houses built in Riverhead's worst district were substandard, "most of the units were comparatively new, having been constructed since 1950" in a 1960 study. See New York State Bureau of Urban Renewal and Community Services, *Town of Riverhead (Suffolk County) Survey and Analysis* (Albany: State of New York Bureau of Urban Renewal and Community Services, March 1960), 17- 20.

⁶² "Monthly Cost of Housing by Size of Household," p. 4, Box 67, folder "Housing," Nickerson Papers; "Current Rentals Paid by the Department of Public Welfare for the Housing of its Clients – Nassau County," Box 8, folder 321, League of Women Voters of Nassau County Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Stony Brook University Libraries, Stony Brook, New York (hereafter cited as LWV of Nassau Papers).

⁶³ 'Shelter poverty' as Michael Stone defines it, is when high housing costs make families unable to meet their non-shelter needs "at even a minimum level of adequacy." I used the Bureau of Labor Statistics "lower budget" for 1967 to determine non-shelter costs. In 1967, a four-person family at the 'lower' budget threshold spent \$3,683 on food, transportation, clothing, personal care, medical care, and taxes in the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan area. Rental costs of \$1,236 a year or less would be the minimum threshold to reach the 'lower' budget. Rent in Nassau worked out to over \$1,500 a year. See United States, and Jean C. Brackett, *Three Standards of Living for an Urban Family of Four Persons, Spring 1967* (Washington: U.S. GPO 1969), 16; Michael E. Stone, *Shelter Poverty: New Ideas on Housing Affordability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 32, 324-330.

their income on rent, while Riverhead residents paid low prices for vermin-infested housing in rural isolation.⁶⁴ The fact that the poor paid high prices for decrepit housing was nothing new; what differed was the wide swath of Long Island's population spending a fifth of their rising incomes to build equity.⁶⁵ Those obtaining secure jobs built assets through property ownership, and the lack of affordable housing only exacerbated the precarious job situations of the poor in postwar Long Island.

Suburban Civil Rights

These two divergent black housing experiences, though a small facet of Long Island's postwar suburbanization, were at the center of the region's housing politics in the 1950s and early 1960s. For the black middle class, housing and school segregation, along with equal political representation, were the final frontiers of racial inequality in suburbia.⁶⁶ Local homeowners and activists took to the courts, realty offices, school boards, town halls, and streets to wage their war against racism. Their fights made front-page news, particularly as they coalesced with the civil rights movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Activists, including some of the same groups and individuals involved in middle class issues, were also deeply concerned with the postwar black poor, whose challenges required public intervention in the housing market. The two struggles, like the divergent housing experiences, followed different tracks, appealing to distinct constituencies, organizing disparate communities, and on a

⁶⁴ NYS Division of Housing, *Survey of Housing Need and Demand, Town of Islip*, 6, 20.

⁶⁵ U.S. Housing and Home Finance Agency, *9th Annual Report* (Washington: U.S. GPO, 1956), 190.

⁶⁶ I am indebted to William Julius Wilson for this insight, who argues that the ascendance of the black middle class in the postwar period shifted civil rights activity away from economics and toward the 'sociopolitical order,' i.e. the enjoyment of public goods, largely because the black middle class enjoyed the fruits of economic prosperity. Of course, as this chapter will illustrate, this was the view of middle class activists, not the poor and working class. See William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), chapter 5.

fundamental level, fighting different problems. Nonetheless, the belief that segregation was at the core of these problems crossed the lines between the two movements, particularly because the NAACP, the most powerful civil rights organization on Long Island, assumed that both challenges stemmed from the same root cause: the inability of African Americans to move freely through the housing market.⁶⁷

The middle class postwar suburban struggle for equality was rooted in the concerns and organizations of black homeowners, who melded their demands as property owners with broader civil rights activity. Homeowner activists worked through institutions as diverse as the ubiquitous suburban ‘civic association’ to explicitly civil-rights oriented organizations like NAACP and CORE. In fact, the line between the two blurred as activists defined civil rights through the lens of the homeowner, while race-conscious civic associations adopted civil rights language when pressing for homeowner demands.⁶⁸ For example, black civic associations, like the Progressive Civic Association of New Cassel (PCANC) or the Ronck Park Civic Association in North Amityville, operated as any civic association in white neighborhoods. They fought for the interests of their home-owning constituents, including the preservation of ‘residential character,’ quality public services, congestion and noise abatement, or environmental protection. This meant demanding paved roads, sidewalks, or playgrounds, and fighting down-zoning proposals, factory development, or illegal apartments.⁶⁹ Unlike their white counterparts though,

⁶⁷ Preston H. Smith studies the class dynamic that operated within the postwar civil rights housing struggle in Chicago, arguing that black civic leaders and policy elites fought to open housing to African Americans, but did so within the assumptions of America’s class-stratified housing market, meaning suburban housing should be open to African Americans capable of affording those homes. I find that black suburban activists on Long Island operated with the same premises. See Smith, *Racial Democracy and the Black Metropolis*.

⁶⁸ For a discussion on the suburban civic association, consult Robert Jay Dilger, *Neighborhood Politics: Resident Community Associations in American Governance* (New York: NYU Press, 1992), 108. For an excellent analysis of Long Island civic association activism in environmental matters, see Christopher Sellers, *Crabgrass Crucible*.

⁶⁹“The President Speaks,” *New Cassel News*, March 1962, “New Cassel” box, Historical Society of the Westburys (hereafter HSW); *New Cassel News*, July/August 1963, HSW; *New Cassel News*, July/August 1962, HSW; “Down zoning dropped for Prospect Garden Apartments,” *New Cassel News*, September/October 1963, HSW;

black civic associations approached these problems as a racial minority. North Amityville's civic associations operated as a racial organization, fighting an attempt to re-zone forty-three acres of the hamlet for industry with chants of "we shall overcome."⁷⁰ So did PCANC, who argued that "it is very hard for us in a minority group to obtain homes" when New Cassel was threatened with a new industrial park near their residential community.⁷¹

Long Island's NAACP branches likewise interpreted the concerns of their home-owning constituency as civil rights problems. The NAACP had a small presence on Long Island dating to the 1930s, but the postwar migration of middle-income African Americans and the national board's encouragement of neighborhood organizations transformed the NAACP's local presence. By 1965 there were fourteen branches representing all of Long Island's black neighborhoods, from Great Neck in the extreme north-east of Nassau County to Riverhead and Greenport on the east end of Suffolk.⁷² Collectively, membership totaled over 2,800 Long Islanders.⁷³ Members in solidly middle class neighborhoods used the branches as both community centers and sources of homeowner activism. The Central Long Island branch (stationed in North Amityville), representing the entire Town of Babylon, grew to include over 1,300 members in the 1950s

"PCANC Wins Supreme Court Decision," *New Cassel News*, March 1962, HSW; Christopher Sellers, "Nature and Blackness in Suburban Passage," *To Love the Wind and the Rain: African Americans and Environmental History*, eds. in Dianne D. Glave and Mark Stoll (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 112; "He Says Sanitary Conditions Bad," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 29, 1953; "North Amityville Group Plans Rally," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 22, 1952; "Answers Playground Needs in Amityville," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 8, 1952.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Charles F. Howlett, "The Long Island Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Part Two: Schools and Housing," *Long Island Historical Journal* 9, No. 1 (Fall 1996): 33, 39.

⁷¹ "Town Drops Protested Industrial Zone," *Newsday*, June 13, 1957, 21.

⁷² The NAACP had a small presence before World War II. For information, see Box G-131, folders 20-22, NAACP Records, LoC and Box G-132, folder 24, NAACP Records, LoC; By 1966, the NAACP New York State Conference listed 14 branches: Bay Shore, Central Long Island, Deer Park, Eastern Long Island, Far-Rockaway-Inwood, Freeport-Roosevelt, Glen Cove, Great Neck, Hempstead, Lakeview, Long Beach, Patchogue, Rockville Centre, and Westbury. See "Memberships and FFF Contributions Received from Branches," Part VI, Box C 116, folder 20, NAACP Records, LoC.

⁷³ "Memberships and FFF Contributions Received from Branches," Part VI, Box C 116, folder 20, NAACP Records, LoC.

under the tutelage of “Mr. NAACP” Dr. Eugene T. Reed, who helped organize banquets, a credit union, and the 1954 New York State Conference of Branches of the NAACP.⁷⁴ The branch bulletin reported on zoning changes to black neighborhoods and occasionally lent official support to homeowner efforts, from fights against downzoning proposals to promoting large-lot housing tracts for affluent African American homebuyers.⁷⁵ The Central Long Island Branch was far from alone in these efforts. The neighboring Deer Park NAACP branch won an NAACP Thalheimer local branch award in 1966 for opposing the “‘down-zoning’ of a nearby tract for industry.”⁷⁶ Overall, the NAACP exemplified its middle-class outlook most explicitly in the suburbs, where local branches supported black homeowners in their quest to secure equal status among white middle class suburbs.

These local homeowner’s associations and NAACP branches were embedded within the broader fight against racial inequality, particularly the national struggle for integration. High-profile legal tactics, including two NAACP suits against Levittown for using illegal racial covenants, looked to strike down the structural barriers to housing choice.⁷⁷ After New York State passed the Metcalf-Baker Law in 1961 (which barred racial discrimination in housing sales or rentals), the Long Island Council for Integrated Housing, an interracial volunteer organization founded to lobby for the law’s passage, tested real estate offices and provided financial support

⁷⁴ “Bulletin, November 1956,” in Branch Newsletters and Printed Material 1956-1965, Part 25, Series C, reel 6, slides 36-59, *Papers of the NAACP*; “Bulletin, December 1956,” in Branch Newsletters and Printed Material 1956-1965, Part 25, Series C, reel 6, slides 92, *Papers of the NAACP*; “Press Release,” in Selected Branch Files 1940-1955, Part 26, Series B, reel 8, slides 143-153, *Papers of the NAACP*; Greg Postal and Mark Ponek, “The Civil Rights Movement in Amityville,” *Amityville: The Years After WWII*, ed. Amityville Memorial High School (Amityville, N.Y.: Amityville Memorial High School, 1986), 7.

⁷⁵ “Bulletin May 1961,” in Branch Newsletters and Printed Material 1956-1965, Part 25, Series C, reel 6, slide 524, *Papers of the NAACP*; Bulletin June 1961,” in Branch Newsletters and Printed Material 1956-1965, Part 25, Series C, reel 6, slide 532, *Papers of the NAACP*; “Bulletin January 1962,” Branch Newsletters and Printed Material 1956-1965, Part 25, Series C, reel 6, slide 559, *Papers of the NAACP*; Sellers, *Crabgrass Crucible*, 95.

⁷⁶ “1966 – Thalheimer Awards,” Branch Department General Subject Files, 1966-1970, Part 29, Series D reel 13, slide 656, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁷⁷ “Legal Department Monthly Report – January 1951,” Supplement to Part 1, reel 2, slides 143-144, *Papers of the NAACP*; This story is also described in Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 210-211.

to black homebuyers moving to white suburbs. The Council targeted real estate practices because it was the source of “the myths and misconceptions about real estate value, which are used to deny equality of housing.”⁷⁸ Even union locals joined in the crusade for integration, assuring members that any fears of black neighbors were unfounded. The overwhelmingly white Engineer’s Association of Arma (EAA), which represented engineers at the defense-oriented American Bosch Arma manufacturing plant, educated its members on the reasons why “well-to-do Negroes” would want “white housing,” including better schools, services, and the fact that “a Negro doctor, lawyer, or engineer has as little interest in common with a negro-laborer neighbor as would their white counterparts.”⁷⁹ The EAA’s efforts most directly reflected the class-specific vision of open housing for those that could afford it, a key element of the housing integration struggle in the postwar period.

Homeowners also encouraged integration themselves. In the wake of Lakeview’s rapid influx of African American professionals from 1959-1961, thirty-five of the 170 white-owned homes went up for sale, stoking fears of ‘white flight.’ Jamaican born World War II veteran and airline employee Lincoln Lynch, a new homeowner in the neighborhood, spearheaded a movement to ‘stabilize’ the racial ratio of the community. Lynch wanted to achieve a ten percent black population in all of Long Island’s suburbs, based on a rough national percentage of African Americans, and together with local white residents formed The Emergency Committee for a Stabilized Democratic Community. Lynch and the Committee first asked Morris Milgrim, the interracial private housing developer, for advice. Milgrim suggested the Committee steer sales towards whites. The Committee had difficulty finding white buyers for the neighborhood’s

⁷⁸ Quoted in Howlett, “The Long Island Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Part Two,” 34; “Mass Test of Brokers Brings LI Bias Charges,” *Newsday*, November 11, 1963, 4.

⁷⁹ “Housing...,” *SCOPE* 8, No. 4 (October 1961): 2-3, Box 12, EAA Papers.

high prices.⁸⁰ When black real estate brokers continued to show homes to black buyers, the Committee launched the “Freedom Dwellers” campaign in 1961, which actively discouraged further black home purchases in the hamlet. Lynch and other committee members barricaded roads and deterred minority buyers with signs like “Negroes! This community could become another Ghetto,” and “you owe it to your family to buy in another community.”⁸¹ Integration in this case extended beyond ‘open housing,’ pushing black buyers to become ‘pioneers’ in white neighborhoods themselves and reach an even quota across the metropolitan area. Similar efforts emerged in other neighborhoods in the early 1960s. In Hempstead, the interracial Hempstead Neighbors Committee went after supposed ‘blockbusters,’ picketing offending realty offices, persuading white sellers to remove their homes from the market, and investigating the origins of rumors they believed fomented white fears.⁸²

In no other fight were the efforts of the NAACP’s national office, activism of local branches, and interests of black homeowners more aligned than school segregation. Segregation was legal in New York State until 1938, and in Freeport, Hempstead, and Glen Cove, separate black elementary schools existed, though each fed into larger integrated high schools. After World War II however, all-in-one neighborhood school districts proliferated, where students stayed within a district from the kindergarten through the twelfth-grade. With over a hundred districts across Long Island, all funded locally through property taxes, one’s choice in housing was strongly tied to schools. As Jack Dougherty argues, school districts and developers were aware of the school-housing link. The former designed special programs to attract residents and

⁸⁰ “Memorandum: Calvin Banks to Jack Wood, June 20, 1961” and “Memorandum: Jack Wood to Roy Wilkins, June 21, 1961,” Group III, Box A-164, folder “Housing,” NAACP Records, LoC; Sussman, 49; Howlett, “The Long Island Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Part Two,” 34.

⁸¹ “Negroes, Whites Fight Lakeview Panic Sales,” *New York Times*, June 20, 1961, 7.

⁸² “Groups Unite to Avert Ghetto,” *Newsday*, October 1, 1963, 11.

carefully zoned its school boundaries for certain populations, while the latter advertised and attracted homebuyers to these school districts. In effect, shopping for a suburban home was also ‘shopping for schools.’⁸³

As black homeowners arrived on Long Island, their own search for schools confronted the reality of both housing and school segregation. Fortunately, activists could harness the national office’s financial and legal clout.⁸⁴ The challenge was choosing the best strategy to integrate schools where both ‘de jure’ and ‘de facto’ segregation existed. In 1949, young NAACP lawyer Constance Baker Motley successfully desegregated the Hempstead school district, distributing black students on the basis of their residence, not their race.⁸⁵ While a victory against overt segregation, the divided housing market nonetheless led to white and black schools, which worsened as more African Americans moved to Hempstead. Challenging the ‘neighborhood’ concept of schools as a source of discrimination proved difficult. In the Amityville School district, which encompassed children of Amityville village, North Amityville, and East Massapequa, two new elementary school sites were proposed in 1953, one in the northeast section of North Amityville, where Ronck Park and other black suburban developments were built, and another in the majority-white northwest part of the district in East Massapequa. The two schools, while meeting the need for new school buildings, were gerrymandered to be racially separate.⁸⁶ The Central Long Island NAACP sued the district in 1956, though lost because the courts adopted the housing market argument, stating that the

⁸³ Daniels, 28; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 180-181; Jack Dougherty, “Shopping for Schools: How Public Education and Private Housing Shaped Suburban Connecticut,” *Journal of Urban History* 38 (2): 205-224;

⁸⁴ Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, chapter 6; Davison M. Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North: The Battle over Northern School Segregation, 1865-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁸⁵ Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 180-183.

⁸⁶ Highsmith, “Demolition Means Progress.”

school board did not have to gerrymander lines to achieve a racial balance “because of the incidence of location.”⁸⁷

Activists had more success in the 1960s, thanks to deeper involvement of local homeowners who adopted direct confrontation strategies, as well as new court rulings and legislative solutions that overcame housing barriers. The most sensational battle emerged in the Malverne school district, which included children from the white and affluent village of Malverne as well as the middle class integrated community of Lakeview (along with a small sliver of students from Lynbrook). Of the district’s three elementary schools, Lakeview’s Woodfield Road School was overwhelmingly black – seventy-five percent of students were African American, compared to the other eighty-eight percent white schools. Residents with children in the Woodfield School complained that the district failed to distribute financial resources equally, left the school overcrowded, and therefore denied their children an equal education. The district’s solution was to build another elementary school next to Woodfield, though parents voted against it, and then the board planned a sixth grade wing for its junior high school, though the wing would be separated by geography, maintaining the racial order of the district. The NAACP challenged all measures, as did activists within the district. Black psychologist and local resident Dr. Lloyd Delany unsuccessfully ran for school board in spring 1962, and that same year Lincoln Lynch, the architect of Lakeview’s ‘neighborhood stability’ movement, along with other parents picketed school board meetings with signs reading “Equal Education for All Children” and “Separate Cannot Be Equal.” Lynch then staged what was considered Long Island’s first sit-in at a school board meeting in August, demanding the district

⁸⁷ “Bulletin - January 1958,” Branch Newsletters and Printed Material 1956-1965, Part 25, Series C, reel 6, slide 150, *Papers of the NAACP*; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 182; Untitled paper, Legal Department Case Files, 1956-1965: the Northeast, Part 23, Series B, reel 15, slide 444, *Papers of the NAACP*.

rectify 'de facto' segregation and distribute students evenly across all schools.⁸⁸ The already politicized housing situation in Lakeview now reached the schools, and a tension emerged between militant school integrationists and the desire to keep a balanced interracial population, particularly as the non-engaged white community disagreed with the confrontational tactics of Lynch and his allies.⁸⁹

The protests forced New York State Education Commissioner James E. Allen Jr. to intervene. Allen appointed Dr. Kenneth Clark and other prominent academics to study the Malverne school issue. Ironically, the committee found the school's education to be on par with the other elementary schools and excellent in all regards, despite its racial imbalance.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, Commissioner Allen implemented the 'Princeton Plan' in 1963 (splitting elementary schools by grade rather than neighborhood to achieve integration) because the segregated school "interferes with the achievement of equality of educational opportunity."⁹¹ The school board and a contingent of white parents refused to comply, and a nasty four-year battle ensued in the courts, state legislature, and streets. White parents and the school board sought a restraining order to delay the plans and denied funds for new crosswalks and buses. The NAACP meanwhile went to court to assure the Princeton Plan's implementation. Both sides resorted to sit-ins and protests. Five black parents, including Lincoln Lynch, were arrested after refusing to leave a school board meeting in 1963, while nine white women were arrested in 1966 after climbing onto vans filled with desks in preparation for integration. The Princeton Plan did not begin until 1967.

⁸⁸ For complete story of the Malverne's integration struggle, see Ross, 127; "Pickets Hit School 'Racial Imbalance,'" *Newsday*, May 9, 1962; "3 Sit-Ins Protest LI School 'Bias,'" *Newsday*, August 2, 1962.

⁸⁹ Sussman, 109-113.

⁹⁰ Ross, 138-139.

⁹¹ Quoted in Charles F. Howlett, "The Long Island Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Part One: The Struggle to Integrate Public Schools," *Long Island Historical Journal* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 154.

Malverne was the highest profile school segregation case, though one of many across Long Island's districts. From Manhasset in western Nassau County to Bellport on Suffolk County's south shore, black parents demanded integrated schools, a national goal of the civil rights movement refracted through the local politics of schools and housing. And in Long Island's black middle class hamlets, including Roosevelt, Amityville, Freeport, and Bellport, activists successfully desegregated schools in the 1960s after years of litigation, protest, and debate over the ideals of integration and its implementation.⁹² These fights, like the struggle for open housing and integrated communities, or the demand for equal treatment from local governments, sought parity with white suburbanites. The black middle class was already on "the stony road toward advancement" as PCANC member William F. Oliver put it, though Long Island's segregated landscape still produced inequities, even if there was no "aggravated injustice" or "sensationalistic situation." Oliver laid out what remained in the middle-class fight to his fellow PCANC members in New Cassel in 1961, asking:

"is there no local current situation when housing opportunities fosters segregation, when mothers fear for the quality of the education in neighborhood schools, when feelings of "step child" treatment results when area improvements are decided upon?"⁹³

While Oliver listed these concerns to remind civic association members of remaining challenges, it spoke as much to the achievements reached by the 1960s. A vigilant movement had secured thriving communities, confronted housing segregation, and dismantled school segregation.

⁹² "Negroes Sit In at Four LI Schools; Cops Arrest Five at Malverne," *Newsday*, September 4, 1963; "NAACP Tells Allen: Schools in Bellport are Unbalanced," *Newsday*, October 15, 1966; "Bellport Schools Choose Racial Balance Program," *Newsday*, July 24, 1968.

⁹³ William F. Oliver, "Editorial," *New Cassel News*, February 1961, HSW.

“Destined for Redevelopment”

As the black middle class bought homes, formed neighborhoods, and agitated for racial equality in suburbia, the black poor faced qualitatively distinct problems: homes unfit for habitation, few options outside concentrated low-income neighborhoods, overcrowding, and high prices. Though the activities of black homeowners made occasional headlines, the plight of the black poor was of central concern to postwar suburbanites and suburban government, viewed through the lens of ‘blight.’ As Amanda Seligman argues, ‘blight’ “connoted a type of physical decay with organic qualities,” that overcrowded or dilapidated housing was bad for the people living in it and could spread to nearby properties, engulfing whole neighborhoods into a spiral of lower property values, poor health, and moral decay.⁹⁴ There was widespread panic of ‘blight’ in the suburbs, as those moving from urban areas wanted to thwart the processes they believed responsible for urban decay. Robert Moses warned Long Islanders that without proper planning, “you are going to have suburban slums as sure as God made little apples.”⁹⁵ *Newsday* journalists noted in 1957 that “nothing seems to arouse quite the controversy among Nassau’s residents as the subject of slums.”⁹⁶ Since the African American poor disproportionately inhabited decrepit housing stock on Long Island, and because black skin itself was associated with ‘blight’ generally, suburban officials targeted poor black neighborhoods as the ‘cancer’ to a stable and slum-free Long Island. They wanted a “complete break from the past,” remaking outdated neighborhoods and integrating them into the vast expanse of industrial suburbia.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Amanda Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 41-42.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Wood, 96.

⁹⁶ “Long Island’s Ugly Ducklings Part Two: LI Areas Plagued by Housing Blight,” *Newsday*, September 17, 1957, 10C.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Samuel Zipp, “The Roots and Routes of Urban Renewal,” *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 3 (May 2013): 367.

Black middle class activists, including the NAACP, their white allies, local civic associations, and residents themselves were part of this debate. All supported efforts to improve housing, though they were also concerned about affected residents. The poor wanted better housing and input. Civic associations wanted to protect property values as low-income housing was remade. Civil rights activists wanted to address racial segregation, even though these problems were as much a product of poverty and class inequality as racism in housing. The overlapping interests evolved into conflict as projects to eradicate blight got underway. Urban historians interpret the efforts to clean up ‘blight’ as failures and detrimental to the people affected, as ‘negro removal’ both in purpose and outcome. Andrew Wiese argues that Long Island’s suburban renewal was a form of suburban ‘racial cleansing,’ as “white Long Islanders sought... not only to exclude African Americans but to displace many who were already there.”⁹⁸ While planners and politicians were surely reforming the ‘racial geography’ of Long Island, this reductionist interpretation ignores the complex intentions, goals, and outcomes of such efforts from all actors involved.⁹⁹ Most, including the poor, were supportive of improved housing, but the process and the outcomes produced conflict.

Suburban officials had three primary means to improve housing stock in postwar Long Island: public housing, code enforcement and condemnation, and urban renewal. Public housing, first possible in 1934 thanks to state legislation that permitted local municipalities to construct low-income housing, gained momentum during and after World War II.¹⁰⁰ The

⁹⁸ Wiese, 104-109.

⁹⁹ The historiographical interpretation is borrowed from a 2013 special section in the *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 3 (May 2013): 359-453; See Samuel Zipp and Michael Carriere, "Introduction: Thinking through Urban Renewal," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 3 (May 2013): 359-365 for an overview of the historiography.

¹⁰⁰ New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, *Housing and Community Renewal in New York State: A History of Experiment and Expansion* (Albany: New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, 1970), 11-12.

NAACP and League of Women Voters were strong advocates of these projects, but faced stiff opposition, driven by the same fears and anxieties of the pre-war period – attracting additional poor residents, concentrating poverty within their hamlets, and raising local taxes. In Freeport, the Nassau County branch of the NAACP lent its hand to the long-standing efforts to replace the Bennington Park slum with public housing in 1943. In 1946, Village voters struck down the project in fear of rising taxes and attracting new poor to Freeport.¹⁰¹ The League of Women Voters in Port Washington and local clergymen had more success, compelling the Town of North Hempstead to form a town-wide housing authority in 1946. The authority planned a low-rent project along Harbor Road, but local property owners sued the Town for destroying land values and building housing that “does not belong on tree-lined suburban Port Washington Boulevard.” But supporters won in State Supreme Court, and the project was completed in 1951.¹⁰² Port Washington’s ‘Harbor Homes’ was one of three New York state-sponsored housing complexes that replaced slum housing on Long Island’s North Shore by 1958, including the domestic enclaves of Manhasset (Spinney Hill) and Roslyn (Laurel Homes), 236 units in all.¹⁰³ This was in addition to the Village of Hempstead’s eighty-one unit ‘Parkside Gardens’

¹⁰¹ “Chairman of the Board of Directors,” Group II, Box A 313, folder 4, NAACP Records, LoC; “Plan \$750,000 Housing Project,” *The Leader (Freeport)*, July 15, 1943, 1; “Housing, Health Scored by Speakers at Institute,” *The Leader (Freeport)*, July 15, 1943, 3; *The Leader (Freeport)*, June 13, 1946, 1, 4; Wiese, 106.

¹⁰² “Town to Set Up Housing Authority,” *Nassau Daily Review-Star*, Apr 1, 1946, 1; Samuel Kaplan, “‘THEM’ BLACKS IN SUBURBIA,” *New York Affairs* 3 no. 2 (1976): 22; “Long Island’s Ugly Part Four: Slum Project Belies Critics’ Argument,” *Newsday* September 19, 1957, 10C; “Neary to Fight Housing Condemnation,” *Newsday*, July 21, 1950, 21; “After Six Long Years of Battling, Tenants Enter Public Housing,” *Newsday*, October 8, 1952, 19.

¹⁰³ “Survey of Housing Conditions, Town of North Hempstead,” Selected Branch Files, 1940-1955, Part 26, Series B, reel 4, slide 640, *Papers of the NAACP*; “Housing Project Set in North Hempstead,” *New York Times*, January 7, 1949, 16; Charles Grutzner, “Nassau and Suffolk Counties Moving Slowly to Eliminate their Slums,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1957, 27; New York State Division of Housing, Bureau of Urban Renewal and Community Services, *Special Survey and Analysis Report: Town of North Hempstead Nassau County, N.Y.* (Albany: New York State Division of Housing, 1960), 1-2; “Plight of Negroes Wins New Housing,” *New York Times*, January 21, 1949.

complex completed in 1951, and Freeport's Moxey Rigby homes that finally replaced parts of the Bennington Park area, opened in 1958.¹⁰⁴

Though public housing replaced 'blight' with sleek apartments, it solidified the low-income status of the area where it was built, necessitated state approval and intervention, required local taxpayers to share maintenance costs with the state, was constructed within wealthy hamlets with declining unskilled job opportunities, and faced nationwide opposition by the late 1950s.¹⁰⁵ As a result, public housing was rare on Long Island; by 1965, only 658 family units were available in Nassau County, and none existed in Suffolk.¹⁰⁶ In contrast, housing code enforcement was locally implemented and did not require long-term taxes to house the poor. It was also popular, "taking the profit out of human misery" by attacking 'slumlords' considered responsible for the deplorable conditions.¹⁰⁷ In reality though, few local governments had the power to condemn; only one of Long Island's thirteen large towns developed 'housing' codes, distinct from zoning and building codes because they could be imposed after construction.¹⁰⁸ Villages and cities, particularly in Nassau County, were more likely to both develop and enforce housing codes.¹⁰⁹ In 1955, the village mayors of Freeport and Glen Cove met with the New York State Rent Commission to plan a joint attack on slum landlords, using the combined

¹⁰⁴ League of Women Voters, *Hempstead Village, Yesterday and Today* (Hempstead NY: League of Women Voters of the Town of Hempstead, Long Island, New York, 1975), 21, 28; "Hempstead Opens Homes: 5 Families move into Low-Rent Project Aided by State Funds," *New York Times*, January 26, 1951, 25; "Chairman Cord Viebrock Announces Slum Move," *Freeport Leader*, October 2, 1958, 1; "Housing Project," *Freeport Leader*, November 27, 1958, 4.

¹⁰⁵ See John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987) and Joseph Heathcott, "The Strange Career of Public Housing." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 78, no. 4 (September 2012): 360-375 for an excellent overview of the relatively brief window of public housing support at the national level.

¹⁰⁶ Public Housing Boom: Or is it?" Part V, Box 1527, folder 9, NAACP Records, LoC.

¹⁰⁷ "Freeport, Cove Mayors Meet Rent Boss, Map Slum Campaign," *Newsday*, April 6, 1955, 7.

¹⁰⁸ "Minutes of Building Inspectors Association of Suffolk County," January 11, 1963, Box 1, folder "Literature – Housing," Gordon Papers.

¹⁰⁹ "Experts Give Blueprint for Battle on LI Slums," *Newsday*, March 1, 1963, 4.

powers of the state and local government to withhold rent, inspect, and condemn. Similar efforts were done in the city of Long Beach.¹¹⁰

Housing activists were torn by code enforcement. On one hand, they supported better housing quality for Long Island's poor and supported the state's interest in ending landlord exploitation. On the other, they felt local government disregarded what would happen to tenants and ignored housing segregation. In September 1955, Glen Cove's city government condemned one of the Cecil Avenue slum buildings along Glen Cove Avenue. Forty-three adults and sixty-eight children, all black, faced eviction. NAACP New York State Housing Chairman Laska Strachan, along with the Glen Cove NAACP branch and NAACP attorney Jawn Sandifer, demanded Glen Cove Mayor Joseph Stanco relocate the families, but Mayor Stanco refused, stating it was not his responsibility. The NAACP then turned to the courts to delay the eviction. Since the building was only two years old, it had clearly slipped under the city's building codes, representing a failure of the city to enforce its laws. But the NAACP went further, blaming the housing conditions on the people of Glen Cove for endorsing housing segregation, since "the residents of that building would not be in that condemned house if there was a free housing market." The point fell on deaf ears, though the NAACP secured an extra sixty days for tenants and arranged for the Long Island Home Builders Institute, a building industry trade group, to purchase and bring the building up to code. Tenants were then allowed to return.¹¹¹

The danger of code enforcement was eviction, eradicating 'blight' without a clear template for what would happen to the tenants, though activists could intervene to steer condemnation toward humane ends. This was less true of urban renewal projects, where the

¹¹⁰ "Freeport, Cove Mayors Meet Rent Boss, Map Slum Campaign," *Newsday*, April 6, 1955, 7.

¹¹¹ "Report on Glen Cove Housing Situation, 167-168 Glen Cove Avenue, Glen Cove New York" Group II, Box A 313, folder "Housing, Glen Cove N.Y. 1955," NAACP Records, LoC; "First Press Release, September 7, 1955" Group II, Box A 313, folder "Housing, Glen Cove N.Y. 1955," NAACP Records, LoC.

factions invested in remaking poor neighborhoods greatly overpowered critical voices.¹¹² Born from the Housing Act of 1949 and the 1954 amendments, ‘urban renewal’ was the most comprehensive answer to the problem of postwar suburban slums. Federal authorization and funding gave local governments the ability to take slum clearance and redevelopment into their own hands. Urban renewal also incorporated private developers, limiting public costs and attracting private capital to blighted areas. Renewal offered more than better housing; it promised to turn depressed land into commercially viable property for retail or industrial purposes, increasing tax revenues and providing property tax relief. This is why urban renewal attracted such broad support, including planners, labor unions, business and commercial interests, housing advocates, and even tenants.¹¹³ These factors led to a flurry of proposals in the late 1950s across Long Island, what the *New York Times* described as a “ferment of suburban renewal on a scale that was never before possible.”¹¹⁴ As a *Newsday* article argued in 1957, the major difference between Long Island’s poor communities and the rest of the island was that places like “Levittown started life with a clean slate...they had no inheritance from the past.”¹¹⁵ Erasing the outmoded vestiges of the estate and agricultural past and making them conducive to a single-family oriented, automobile dependent, industrial park and mall-dominated landscape was the goal. Where the residents fit was only part of the equation.

This is not to say that residents’ needs were ignored; instead, housing and the needs of the poor were subsumed into the broader purpose of these projects, which included jobs,

¹¹² Andrew Highsmith makes this point when investigating urban renewal projects in Flint Michigan. He argues that “black residents...were the least powerful and the most institutionally disconnected proponents of slum clearance and relocation” and “had few options but to try to obtain racial fairness from inside of the city’s urban renewal coalition.” See Highsmith, “Demolition Means Progress,” 428; See also Jennifer Hock, “Bulldozers, Busing, and Boycotts: Urban Renewal and the Integrationist Project,” *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 3 (May 2013): 433-453.

¹¹³ Urban renewal has been a well-researched topic among urban scholars. For an overview, see Heathcott, 366.

¹¹⁴ “Growing Suburbs Battle Slum Blight,” *New York Times*, November 25, 1957, 1.

¹¹⁵ “Long Island’s Ugly Ducklings Part 5,” *Newsday*, September 20, 1957;

commerce, higher tax receipts, and integration into postwar suburbia broadly. Glen Cove's renewal proposal in 1959 looked to erase the ailing infrastructure of the estate economy, including horse-carriage roads, scattered factories, and rundown domestic enclaves. If residents supported the construction of industrial parks, a "miracle mile" commercial shopping district, and new multi-family housing units, "better living and working conditions are ours."¹¹⁶ In the Village of Freeport, slum clearance and a new industrial park was not only as a boon to the local job market, but could expand public services without raising costs thanks to more valuable property for tax purposes.¹¹⁷ The jobs and services were never directly reserved for local residents, but the benefits would trickle down to them nonetheless because the space itself would be integrated into the broader postwar economy. It was this logic that undergirded New York State Housing Commissioner James W. Gaynor's convertible public housing/middle-income coop project in Glen Cove, designed so that tenants could convert their subsidized low-income apartment to a middle-income cooperative as their wages rose. As he argued, the wealth distribution in American society was no longer a pyramid, but a diamond, "with the bottom representing the low-income group and the wide center the middle income level." Postwar suburbia offered mass upward mobility, and poor housing districts were unnecessary as low-income Americans would benefit from the nation's egalitarian wealth distribution.¹¹⁸ As Andrew Highsmith argues, politicians simply saw 'blighted' neighborhoods as obstacles to economic growth.¹¹⁹ These obstacles trapped area residents as well.

¹¹⁶ Joseph A. Suozzi, "Glen Cove and Your Future," Group II, Box A 313, folder 7, NAACP Records, LoC.

¹¹⁷ "Your Home Town, the Friendly Village," *Village News* 4, no. 12 (December 1955); Wiese, 106-107.

¹¹⁸ Lawrence O'Kane, "L.I. Housing Project Planned for Easy Conversion to Co-Op," *New York Times*, September 19, 1960.

¹¹⁹ Highsmith, "Demolition Means Progress," 412.

Fifteen projects were planned across Long Island in 1959, from Inwood in the southwest of Nassau County to Patchogue in Suffolk County.¹²⁰ Four large-scale projects began in 1960, affecting an estimated 578 black and 108 white families in the domestic enclaves of Huntington Station, Long Beach, Glen Cove, and Rockville Centre.¹²¹ They drew support from politicians, planners, and private developers, but also from civil rights groups and tenants themselves who hoped to benefit from the remodeling of their neighborhoods.¹²² Their support was contingent on three factors, particularly in the case of the NAACP. First, that adequate relocation and affordable housing be made available to affected residents. Second, that housing integration was included within the urban renewal project. And lastly, that tenants and advocacy organizations have direct input in the outcomes of the projects themselves.¹²³

The battle over Rockville Centre's urban renewal project, which at its outset looked to redevelop an area with over 1,100 black residents, illustrates the conflicts that emerged out of the process of fixing suburban 'blight.' The Village planned to demolish the 36-acre Banks Avenue domestic enclave and replace it with competitively-priced suburban single-family homes, commercial space, and a large industrial park covering 24 acres.¹²⁴ The plan received federal approval in 1958, and site resident Zeddie Brown contacted the Central Long Island Branch of the NAACP "for protection and to get the full benefit of the program." Brown hoped to use the NAACP's clout to incorporate affected residents into the renewal process, and in 1959, she was

¹²⁰ "LI Communities making Plans and Progress in War on Slums," *Newsday*, January 7, 1959, 10C-11C.

¹²¹ "Press Release" November 24, 1961, Group III, Box A-164, folder "Housing – New York," NAACP Records, LoC.

¹²² As Andrew Highsmith finds, scholars have overlooked black support for urban renewal. See Highsmith, "Demolition Means Progress, 432n54.

¹²³ These demands were not unique to Long Island; for other African American leaders with similar demands in urban renewal projects, see Irene V. Holliman, "From Crackertown to Model City?: Urban Renewal and Community Building in Atlanta, 1963-1966," *Journal of Urban History* 35, no. 3 (March 2009): 369-386.

¹²⁴ "Rockville Centre: Racial 'Stalemate'," *Newsday*, June 20, 1966; "Confused About Urban Renewal? Read This," February 1965, Box 12, folder "Rockville Centre, New York, 1965-1966," Javits Papers; "Slum Clearance in RVC: Boon or Bust?" *Newsday*, June 14, 1960, 18.

appointed to the urban renewal area's Citizen's Advisory Committee, though they only met three times.¹²⁵ In August 1959, the Mid-Village Civic Association analyzed the demographic statistics of the village's renewal application and concluded Rockville Centre government did not provide adequate housing for the area's low-income residents. The civic association was "fully in accord with the Village's desire" to carry out the renewal project, but wanted the final plan to be "sound in conception, fair to the people in the area, and one which will receive full support of all citizens of Rockville Centre."¹²⁶

The Central Long Island NAACP also affirmed their support for better housing in a May 1960 report with qualifications. The report asked whether displaced residents would receive temporary housing, whether owners would get full market value for their property, and whether affordable housing would be included in the renewal project. In addition, the NAACP added their own long-standing fight against housing segregation, that without 'special attention' to this issue, the urban renewal program would eliminate the black population, leaving Rockville Centre virtually 'all-white.'¹²⁷ Calls for integration contrasted with the immediate need for affordable housing, which could not be met in the nearby private housing market. The NAACP surveyed 67 families, and determined that 54 made too little to own an FHA home. Only thirteen could and wanted to purchase homes in the urban renewal area, while most needed affordable rental units.¹²⁸ Though segregation limited housing choice, so too did the low-incomes of these

¹²⁵ "Rockville Centre Branch," Group III, Box A-163, folder 12, NAACP Records, LoC; "Draft of a Proposed Letter to Mr. Howard N. Snell, Executive Director, August 10, 1959" Group III, Box A-163, folder 4, NAACP Records, LoC.

¹²⁶ "Low-Income Families Not Aided by Urban Renewal, Mid-Village Claim," *Long Island News and the Owl*, October 9, 1959, 1, 12; Letter from Village of Rockville Centre Department of Urban Renewal to Mr. & Mrs. Zeddie Brown, November 21, 1962, Group III, Box A-163, folder 12, NAACP Records, LoC.

¹²⁷ "Report on Urban Renewal in Rockville Centre," Group III, Box C-94, folder 5, NAACP Records, LoC.

¹²⁸ Handwritten survey found in Group III, Box A-163, folder 12, NAACP Records, LoC.

residents, who were unable to remain in the area given the high cost of housing elsewhere in the village and the demolition of cheap units.

The village balked at the NAACP's demands, promising only sixteen families affordable housing.¹²⁹ With federal funding involved, NAACP housing director Jack Wood filed complaints with the federal Urban Renewal Administration, New York State Division of Housing, and State Commission against Discrimination (SCAD) to halt all four of Long Island's renewal projects in November 1961. In December, the NAACP staged three simultaneous demonstrations at the Glen Cove, Long Beach, and Rockville Centre renewal sites, condemning the projects as "racial relocation with federal funds" and for forcing black residents to be "driven out" to make way for "a shopping center & high-cost housing."¹³⁰ The NAACP still supported urban renewal generally, and Dr. Eugene Reed claimed the demonstrations "showed the concern of Negro residents for fair urban renewal programs."¹³¹ The protests forced the Village Board to capitulate, and in January 1962, they agreed to relocate residents within the area "according to what they are able to pay." Resident Zeddie Brown, now president of the new Rockville Centre chapter of the NAACP, re-affirmed the support for the program though lamented the lack of commitment to village-wide open occupancy.¹³²

Now the problem of relocation came to the fore, as the Village proceeded to condemn properties and had difficulty finding accommodations for low-income residents and domestic

¹²⁹"Rockville Centre Branch," Group III, Box A-163, folder 23, NAACP Records, LoC; "Causes of Racial Tension in an Urban Renewal Program – An Investigation into the History of the Rockville Centre, New York, Project" February 1966, p. 3 in Box 67, folder "Human Rights," Nickerson Papers.

¹³⁰ Rockville Centre Branch," Group III, Box A-163, folder 23, NAACP Records, LoC; "NAACP to Urge Probe of Slum-Cleanup 'Bias,'" *Newsday*, November 4, 1961, 7; "NAACP Sets Protest of LI Renewal Areas," *Newsday*, December 6, 1961, 4; "NAACP Pickets Hit LI Urban Renewal," *Newsday*, December 8, 1961, 51.

¹³¹ "Press Release –Dec. 9," Group III, Box A-164, folder "Housing New York 1956-1963," NAACP Records, LoC.

¹³² "LI Slum Cleanups Shout Out Negroes," *Newsday*, November 2, 1961, 1, 4, 98; "Rockville Centre Branch" 5, Group III, Box C-106, folder 2, NAACP Records, LoC; "RVC Negro Leader Oks Renewal Plan," *Newsday*, January 11, 1962, 33.

‘roomers.’ The NAACP suggested the Village shoulder the responsibility of housing roomers and directly accept monthly rental payments.¹³³ When the Village followed this route, it essentially became ‘slumlords,’ placing low-income tenants in temporary housing in and near the renewal area, collecting rent on homes equipped with wood-burning stoves, kerosene heaters, and kitchen sinks for bathing. The village refused to improve housing soon to be demolished.¹³⁴ By 1963, these conditions pushed the NAACP to fully oppose Rockville Centre’s urban renewal project. In January, NAACP housing secretary Jack Wood condemned the project for promoting both segregation and a ‘negro exodus’ at a local NAACP meeting in Rockville Centre, and in February, the organization forced the New York State Division of Housing to withhold funding until the village met affordable housing needs and furthered integration.¹³⁵ Rockville Centre Mayor W. Harry Lister was confused about the charges of promoting segregation, arguing that “this project doesn’t have anything to do with integration or segregation...the thing is not to cause it.” In his mind, the goal was simply to rehabilitate a blighted area. The NAACP’s demands to integrate was an added requirement, difficult to meet given the village’s expensive housing market. Prioritizing the residents could secure housing, but would end up with another segregated enclave.¹³⁶

By March 1964, the Village promised a new 164-unit mixed middle and low-income complex.¹³⁷ The accusations of segregation and ‘negro removal’ remained unresolved, and as

¹³³ “Rockville Centre Branch,” Group III, Box A-163, folder 23, NAACP Records, LoC.

¹³⁴ “Causes of Racial Tension in an Urban Renewal Program – An Investigation into the History of the Rockville Centre, New York, Project” February 1966, p. 12 in Box 67, folder “Human Rights,” Nickerson Papers.

¹³⁵ “Claim RVC Renewal Edges Negroes Out,” *Newsday*, January 15, 1963, 25; “U.S. Aide Upholds Plan for RVC Renewal Site,” *Newsday*, February 28, 1963, 25; “‘Ghetto’ Charges Spur NY Review on Renewal,” *Newsday*, March 28, 1963, 11; “Causes of Racial Tension in an Urban Renewal Program – An Investigation into the History of the Rockville Centre, New York, Project” February 1966, p. 4 in Box 67, folder “Human Rights,” Nickerson Papers.

¹³⁶ “State, Village Divided on Who May Live in Renewal Project,” *Newsday*, September 28, 1963, 17.

¹³⁷ “Causes of Racial Tension in an Urban Renewal Program – An Investigation into the History of the Rockville Centre, New York, Project” February 1966, p. 4, 27, Box 67, folder “Human Rights,” Nickerson Papers; “164-Unit Renewal Plan Gets RVC Green Light,” *Newsday*, March 26, 1964, 27.

the Village continued to condemn properties and house low-income residents in the remaining dilapidated dwellings, conflict between the Village and residents escalated. In October, Mayor Lister listened to criticisms from over 100 opponents at a village board meeting and kicked Richard Stimpfl, who denounced the whole project for building a ‘ghetto’ for African Americans looking to escape, out of the meeting.¹³⁸ When residents complained of primitive temporary housing accommodations, Urban Renewal director Howard Snell defended these conditions because the residents were “used to living that way.” Their demands for modern amenities were uncalled for because these houses “have been rented for many years as cold water flats... [and] we have apartments that do not include bathroom facilities in the apartments and this is now being demanded.”¹³⁹ Anecdotal evidence corroborated accusations of racism. When Mary Flower Thomas approached Mr. Snell about new housing for her family, she was told to leave Rockville Centre, and when William Osborne asked Mr. Snell whether urban renewal would attract new black residents, Snell responded that the village was trying to get them out.¹⁴⁰

By 1965, tenants, with support from the NAACP and CORE, began a series of marches, sit-ins, and other demonstrations to force the Village to improve temporary housing conditions, immediately begin construction in the renewal project, and fire the renewal authority members.¹⁴¹ The Village responded with a timetable for construction beginning in February 1966, though did not promise action on the housing conditions, and at a meeting in October, Zoning Appeals Board chairman Robert Sasseen slapped tenant-activist Alfreda Brown in the face after an altercation instigated by a racial epithet Sasseen hurled at Brown. Demonstrations

¹³⁸ “Renewal Session Hot as Mayor Boots Critic,” *Newsday*, October 1, 1964, 27.

¹³⁹ “Causes of Racial Tension in an Urban Renewal Program – An Investigation into the History of the Rockville Centre, New York, Project” February 1966, p. 17, Box 67, folder “Human Rights,” Nickerson Papers.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁴¹ Summary can be found in Ross, 88-90; “Urban Renewal Protest Staged in RVC,” *Newsday*, June 8, 1965, 15; “Causes of Racial Tension in an Urban Renewal Program – An Investigation into the History of the Rockville Centre, New York, Project” February 1966, p. 23, Box 67, folder “Human Rights,” Nickerson Papers.

followed the incident, and when the Village delayed the start of the building project in 1966, the Rockville Centre Tenants Association staged a ‘dig-in,’ an unofficial groundbreaking ceremony.¹⁴²

After seven years, seven revisions, a dozen protests, and countless meetings, Rockville Centre’s project began. The process was particularly ugly in this instance, and clearly racism was deeply intertwined in the drawn-out debates over renewal, particularly as the Village opposed the demands of residents and the NAACP. Numerous organizations condemned the racism and manipulation of the local residents “to secure the benefits of added wealth to the Village through a twist of the federal Law” as the Catholic Commission on Interracial Affairs concluded. A Nassau County investigation reported that the village emphasized “the economic and legal aspects of urban renewal... [with an] almost complete disregard of the human problems involved.”¹⁴³ But for urban renewal supporters, in Rockville Centre and elsewhere, the ‘economic and legal aspects of urban renewal’ were not divorced from the human problems; the former would improve prospects for the latter. This was true of all anti-blight strategies. Public housing, code condemnation, and urban renewal all aimed for ‘integration’ of housing to meet postwar standards and incorporate poor neighborhoods into postwar industrial suburbia. Civil rights groups, while supportive of the opportunity for better housing, nonetheless wanted ‘integration’ in a different sense; open occupancy to break down the concentration of poor black Long Islanders into the most decrepit and oldest housing stock in the region. The former

¹⁴² Ross, 90-91; “Slap in Face Ends L.I. Board Meeting,” *New York Times*, October 20, 1965; “Protestors to Really Dig Urban Renewal,” *Newsday*, July 14, 1966, 29.

¹⁴³ “Causes of Racial Tension in an Urban Renewal Program – An Investigation into the History of the Rockville Centre, New York, Project” February 1966, p. 30-33, Box 67, folder “Human Rights,” Nickerson Papers.

understood blight as the obstacle to civic progress; the latter viewed blight as the consequence of racist housing policy.

While the controversies surrounding these projects drew the most attention, it was the slow process of condemnation, renewal, and affordable housing construction that left residents uncertain of their current living conditions and future homes. For all the fanfare, the “glacier-like progress of urban renewal” and the focus on spatial redevelopment offered little to displaced residents except destroyed homes. Alexander Clifford Johnson, a young cook who had left Freeport’s Bennington Park during its decades-long renewal process, concluded that “urban renewal is a lot of bull shit...you can’t eat salvation.”¹⁴⁴ Affected residents generally agreed with his sentiments, because only determined residents waited out these public projects; the rest left, producing the outcome of ‘Negro removal’ regardless of the project’s intent. Rockville Centre’s black population dropped by a third from 1960-1965, while the urban renewal office in Glen Cove estimated that the city lost twenty percent of its black population living within the renewal area’s boundaries. Overall, former domestic enclaves lost black residents from 1960-1970 as Nassau County’s black population grew by two-thirds. Inwood lost a quarter of its black population, Rockville Centre’s dropped by a fifth, Manhasset lost seventeen percent, and Glen Cove’s black population dropped fourteen percent.¹⁴⁵ Since developers demolished more than 700 substandard dwellings and only 303 units of housing replaced them by 1969, such losses are unsurprising.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in “Hope Revived for Freeport Renewal,” *Newsday*, January 22, 1971, 6.

¹⁴⁵ “Urban Renewal: Is it Negro Removal?” *Newsday*, April 10, 1967, 1A; Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, *U.S. Census '70: Volume 2: Race* (Hauppauge, New York: Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, 1972), 19.

¹⁴⁶ “Urban Renewal: Progress by Inches,” *Newsday*, May 15, 1969, 13.

Class vs. Class

The goal of fighting ‘blight’ was to prevent suburban slums on Long Island, but while substandard housing was demolished, the poor remained. As a study on Suffolk’s code enforcement and relocation policies concluded, “the problem is being moved, not removed.”¹⁴⁷ The poor continued to reside on Long Island, joined by new low-income African American migrants from the South and the five boroughs. As the older domestic and agricultural laborer enclaves were bulldozed and remade, the problem of affordable housing only grew more acute in the 1960s, further limiting housing choice in the affluent suburban market. Low-income housing demand nonetheless offered opportunities for profit, and racial segregation, along with the class divide among the region’s suburbs, provided the cracks within the residential market to meet poor black housing needs.

Long Island’s most affordable postwar suburbs, including its integrated and thriving black hamlets, were the destinations for most of the new black suburbanites in the 1960s, including the black poor. Racial concentration intensified during the decade. Among Nassau County’s ninety-four neighborhoods, over eighty-percent of African Americans resided in just thirteen communities by 1970, a jump from two-thirds a decade prior. In Suffolk, only a third of African Americans resided in the five largest black neighborhoods in 1960. A decade later, that concentration rose to sixty percent.¹⁴⁸ Among these migrants were refugees from urban renewal and condemnation projects. From Rockville Centre alone, a survey of sixty-seven renewal area

¹⁴⁷ “Proposal for a Public or Private Housing Relocation Agency for Suffolk County, New York,” p. 6, Box 2, folder 100, Dennison Papers.

¹⁴⁸ Cavaoli, 16.

residents found that fifty-four relocated within Nassau County's five largest black hamlets: Hempstead, Freeport, Roosevelt, Lakeview, and New Cassel.¹⁴⁹ In Suffolk's wide rural expanse, the condemnation of dilapidated housing in Riverhead pushed families out to other largely black enclaves within the Town of Riverhead, Brookhaven, and Southampton, including suburban North Bellport.¹⁵⁰

These postwar communities, constructed within the suburban boom for an FHA-qualified middle class constituency, were formerly closed off to low-income residents, save the few pre-existing affordable units that zoned these neighborhoods safe for black FHA housing. But amidst racial transition, 'blockbusters' not only profited from the wedge between the 'dual' black-and-white housing market, but used segregation to make low-income housing enclaves in middle class suburbs. The actions of real estate 'blockbusters' in the postwar period, striking fear into white homeowners of black neighbors to induce quick sales which were then flipped to prospective black buyers at inflated prices, is well documented.¹⁵¹ As Amanda Seligman argues, the controversy surrounding 'blockbusting' was as much about the fears associated with rapid racial change as it was the actual tactics blockbusters used. Some realtors condemned as 'blockbusters' were opening opportunities for aspiring black homeowners in a market with limited supply, and not necessarily acting in an unscrupulous manner. Most importantly,

¹⁴⁹ "Causes of Racial Tension in an Urban Renewal Program – An Investigation into the History of the Rockville Centre, New York, Project" February 1966, p. 8 in Box 67, folder "Human Rights," Nickerson Papers.

¹⁵⁰ "Proposal for a Public or Private Housing Relocation Agency for Suffolk County, New York" p. 6, Box 2, folder 100, Dennison Papers; "Housing Relocation in Suffolk County" p. 7, Box 1, folder "SCHRC Housing Committee," Gordon Papers.

¹⁵¹ The literature on blockbusting is voluminous. Some of the sources of suburban blockbusting include Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 194-197; Wiese, 245-247; Baxandall & Ewen, 183-188; Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009).

blockbusting was impossible without the larger structural context: a racially divided housing market where homogeneity was critical to an investment's security.¹⁵²

A similar dynamic occurred to meet low-income housing demand, though rather than realtors purchasing homes to flip at inflated costs, it was primarily speculators in search of rental income who turned FHA single-family homes into low-income living quarters. The process remains more elusive than racial blockbusting. In Nassau County and western Suffolk, from New Cassel and Roosevelt to North Amityville and Wyandanch, speculators posed as real estate brokers, buying up homes from both white and black owners, splitting the rooms between multiple families, and collecting rental checks. Enterprising homeowners joined the speculators, putting up walls in their basements, building makeshift dormers, and renting out spare rooms to low-income tenants, adding multiple families to their single-family homes or acting as absentee landlords.¹⁵³ While some homeowners profited from rental housing demand, others were desperately holding onto properties as local costs rose. As a New Cassel civic leader explained the process in her hamlet:

Here were, in many cases, hard pressed non-whites, running to get away from slums and ghettos... They wanted them to have a place to grow and enjoy living. They came. Taxes skyrocketed and their income was not commensurate. The children grew up and moved on their own and the homeowner takes in roomers at \$20, \$25 a week. Suddenly, the first hint of crabgrass suburbs, absentee landlords and all.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Seligman, chapter 6.

¹⁵³ "Slumlord Complaints Ignored, Tenants Say," *Long Island Press*, July 29, 1967 in Box 67, folder "Human Rights," Nickerson Papers; Anonymous letter, 1973, folder 2, Joint Council of Civic and Taxpayer Associations Papers, Town of Babylon History Collection, Office of Historic Services, Town of Babylon, Babylon, New York; "Portraits of a Housing Crisis," *Newsday*, November 13, 1972.

¹⁵⁴ Class vs. Class in Long Island: The Negro Problem in Suburbs: Negroes at odds with Each Other," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 24, 1966, 25.

Cash-strapped homeowners put their main asset to work so they could sustain a livelihood in suburbia. In addition, high rents encouraged tenants to sub-lease their rentals to boarders, contributing to overcrowding in illegally rented housing.¹⁵⁵

In eastern Suffolk County, a spate of foreclosures attracted investors who bought up affordable single family homes for the low-income market. In the tiny hamlet of North Bellport along Suffolk's south shore, developers constructed a half-dozen subdivisions catering to white blue-collar employees of a local Republic Aviation plant. When the plant closed in 1957 during defense cutbacks, foreclosures and quick sales attracted speculators, who bought homes below original selling price. By 1964, twelve percent of single-family houses were renter-occupied, and sixty-seven percent of those occupants were African American, while only ten percent of homeowners were black.¹⁵⁶ To the west in Central Islip, a small cheaply-built subdivision of 320 homes named 'Carleton Park' offered some of the most affordable FHA-approved homes in the county during the 1950s, twenty-five percent cheaper than Levittown.¹⁵⁷ Mostly white in the 1950s with a small number of black homeowners, blockbusters exploited a small foreclosure crisis in the 1960s. By 1965, seventy homes were vacant, and a local civic association report revealed that four holding companies, the FHA, and VA held title to ninety-one houses, almost a third of the development. High school principal James Northrup began buying up the mortgages that same year, renovating the homes for people he described as desperate for "anything with a roof and four walls." With 196 homes in his name, Northrup rented the houses to low-income

¹⁵⁵ Marquita L. James, "Blacks in Roosevelt, Long Island," *The African American Media Network*, March 10, 2009, accessed January 2, 2016,

https://web.archive.org/web/20090310031203/http://www.rooseveltlongisland.org/roosevelt_history.htm

¹⁵⁶ Neil Philip Buffett, "Black White and Green: High School Student Civil Rights and Environmental Activism in New York City and on Long Island, 1968-1975," (PhD diss.: Stony Brook University, 2011), 72-81; New Directions Community-Based Research Institute, Inc., "Bellport Station: First Phase of "Learn by Doing," a grassroots community-building initiative," (Malverne NY: New Directions Community-Based Research Institute, Inc., 2002), 1-3.

¹⁵⁷ "No Lights? Not FHA's Fault," *Newsday*, September 18, 1954, 10.

families, netting over \$1,000,000 by 1969.¹⁵⁸ Whether in Nassau or Suffolk, these were simply new rooming houses, constructed in a Levitt-style Cape Cod or ranch rather than a turn-of-the-century Victorian or colonial houses.

Race and class blockbusting ultimately met the housing needs of the black poor and middle class in the same suburbs. As Table 3.1 indicates, Long Island's postwar black suburbs, along with some of its former white hamlets and Freeport, one its largest black domestic neighborhoods, all experienced growth in both their black middle class and low-income populations. Though only six percent of Long Island's families lived in Freeport, Roosevelt, Hempstead, New Cassel, Lakeview, North Amityville, Wyandanch, Central Islip, and North Bellport, the rate of families in poverty residing in these communities was thirteen percent in 1969. And nearly sixty percent of all black families lived in these communities, including over half of all black families in poverty that same year.¹⁵⁹

For civic associations, NAACP branches, and homeowners, the migration of the poor complicated the politics of integration, formerly rooted in the class homogeneity of postwar suburbia. Unlike new black middle class residents who exacerbated segregation but preserved a hamlet's class makeup, the poor posed new *economic* threats. They jeopardized property values, suburbanites' largest investment. On a larger scale, the poor signaled to the FHA that the neighborhood was now an insurance risk, and in the worst cases, like Central Islip's Carleton Park, the FHA and VA refused to authorize mortgages in the area. Such an outcome wrote the

¹⁵⁸ "Civic Leaders Frght [sic] Growing Area Blight in C.I. Carleton Park," *Islip Bulletin*, April 1, 1965, 2; "Reliefers Living on Streets of Despair," *Newsday*, December 3, 1969, 10; "Claiming Harassment, Northrup Increases Rents in Poor Sections," *Islip Bulletin*, November 5, 1970, 3.

¹⁵⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, Race, 1970. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1970/R11104511> (accessed May 6, 2015); U.S. Census Bureau, Poverty Status for Families, 1970. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1970/R11104511> (accessed May 6, 2015); U.S. Census Bureau, Poverty Status for Black Families, 1970. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1970/R11104511> (accessed May 6, 2015).

entire community out of the postwar mortgage market.¹⁶⁰ More importantly, within Long Island's balkanized taxing jurisdictions, the quality of public services rested on the property taxes of local neighborhoods, costs borne by a small number of homeowners rather than the

¹⁶⁰ "Two Civic Groups March on Town Hall to Protest Conditions near Homes," *Islip Bulletin*, June 18, 1964, 3, 8-B.

Table 3.1: Income Distribution Changes, Black Population, and Poverty rates in Long Island's Black Suburbs, 1960-1970

Nassau County						
	Freeport		Roosevelt		Hempstead	
	1960	1970	1960	1970	1960	1970
Black Population	2,407	7,467	2,241	10,135	7,594	14,111
Proportion (%)	7	18.5	17.4	67.5	21.9	35.8
Incomes						
Total Families	8,960	10,296	3,262	3,321	9,127	9,867
50% or less CMI ¹	1,336	1,879	511	902	1,396	2,156
% of total families	15	18	16	27	15	22
70% or more CMI ¹	6,212	6,735	2,033	1,914	6,058	5,893
% of total families	69	65	62	58	66	60
	New Cassel		Lakeview			
	1960	1970	1960	1970		
Black Population	2,693	5,355	2,509	4,495		
Proportion (%)	35.6	61.4	52	82.2		
Incomes						
Total Families	1,865	1,983	1,837	1,235		
50% or less CMI ¹	276	434	248	332		
% of total families	15	22	14	27		
70% or more CMI ¹	1,164	1,264	1,187	701		
% of total families	62	64	65	57		
Suffolk County						
	North Amityville		Wyandanch²			
	1960	1970	1960	1970		
Black Population	6,350	7,768	2,193	6,371		
Proportion	75.9	65.1	59.2	86.2		
Incomes						
Total Families	1,854	2,724	847	1,619		
50% or less CMI ³	354	510	80	316		
% of total families	19	19	9	20		
75% or more CMI ³	1,072	1,494	549	865		
% of total families	58	55	65	53		

Source: Cavaoli, 16-17; Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, *U.S. Census '70: Volume 1: Number of Inhabitants* (Hauppauge, NY: Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, 1971), 7-25; U.S. Census Bureau, *Family Income, 1960*. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1960TractDS/R11104505> (accessed May 6, 2015); See U.S. Census Bureau, *Family Income, 1970*. Prepared by Social Explorer, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1970/R11104508> (accessed May 6, 2015).

¹ CMI stands for 'County Median Income.' Income brackets are inexact in Census records, so '50% or less CMI' are those Nassau families making below 47% of the CMI in 1960 and 47.8% in 1970. '70% or more CMI' are those families making at least 70.4% of the CMI in 1960 and 68.3% in 1970.

² Wyandanch's accepted borders were incongruous with census tract borders in 1960 and 1970. I used the hamlet's most populous tract, and the tract with the largest black population. This is tract BA-25 in 1960 and 1225 in 1970.

³ '50% or less CMI' are those Suffolk families making below 44% of CMI in 1960 and 41.4% in 1970. This is an underestimate of the growth in families below half the county median for Suffolk County. '70% or more CMI' are those Suffolk families making at least 73.4% of the CMI in 1960 and at least 74.4% of the CMI in 1970.

broad swath of the suburban population. No institution felt the pain of locally bounded funding more acutely than school districts, the most local form of government and costliest element of suburban homeownership. A school district's property tax rate varied depending on the proportion of assorted revenue streams (residential, commercial, industrial, or exempted property), versus the costs of educating resident students. Families with multiple children, lower-income students, and students with disabilities used more services than they paid in taxes, and the rest of the community shouldered the expense. Illegal rentals added families without contributing taxes. Industrial and commercial property meanwhile provided revenue at no cost to school districts, though these land-uses were unevenly distributed across suburbia. What emerged were higher-cost educational systems among lower-income suburbs, and when those suburbs did not have lucrative industrial or commercial property within their borders, the burden of sustaining the school system rested on residents living within the school district who were less able to support the costs of educating their children and neighbors. With multiple families moving into single-family homes, schools became strained, physically and fiscally.¹⁶¹

Affected homeowners mobilized all the strategies available to fight these changes, most of which were familiar from earlier civil rights and anti-blight efforts: stabilizing housing integration, enforcing housing or building codes, and demanding local authorities redress the problem. Class dynamics complicated these tactics. Stabilizing integration was the least effective tool, since it was predicated on the belief that the arrival of black residents alone was responsible for white flight, and that addressing private actions of realtors and homeowners

¹⁶¹ The Bi-County Temporary State Commission for Tax Relief on Long Island, *Working Paper #9, School Operations: Nassau & Suffolk Counties*, April 1992, 96-97, 118; Anthony Downs, *Opening Up the Suburbs; An Urban Strategy for America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 53-55; For a detailed discussion of the revenue streams of different forms of property, see Paul Gendler, "An Analysis of Erosion of the Property Tax Base in Selected Suburban Communities" (Ed.D diss., New York University, 1970).

could thwart the exodus. This was apparent in Roosevelt, where white and black homeowners formed the United Organization of Roosevelt, a collection of homeowner groups fighting to maintain a 60/40 black-white ratio and prevent further ‘inverse segregation’ as its leader Morton Decker described the process.¹⁶² This was a typical response to racial transition, particularly from whites, who looked to stabilize communities and halt ‘white flight’ by keeping whites in and blacks out, policing the buying and selling behaviors of their neighbors and the actions of local real estate agents.¹⁶³ The problem was that homeowners were selling for reasons beyond the color of new residents’ skin. At a fiery meeting in 1966, 150 white and black Roosevelt residents argued for several hours about whether it was simply the arrival of black residents, school integration, or “the growth of the blighted area on the south end” that scared white homeowners.¹⁶⁴ PCANC, New Cassel’s black civic association, and the Westbury branch of the NAACP were not as confused about the motivations of white flight: it was the poor driving out whites and turning the hamlet into an all-black neighborhood.¹⁶⁵

Homeowners also demanded local government do something to redress the arrival of the poor, particularly state placement of welfare recipients in these hamlets. Though a tiny proportion of the population, indigent residents nonetheless faced strong opposition, partly a reflection of the national backlash against ADC recipients in the 1960s, but also because they were the most visceral reminder of downward neighborhood trajectory.¹⁶⁶ Both Nassau and Suffolk counties left recipients to the market for housing. Welfare recipients in search of cheap

¹⁶² Baxandall & Ewen, 189-190; “Racial ‘Coordinator’ Asked in Roosevelt,” *Newsday*, May 22, 1967, 20.

¹⁶³ Amanda Seligman argues that whites in Chicago used integration to police the boundaries of their communities and keep African Americans out. See Seligman, chapter 7.

¹⁶⁴ “Residents in Roosevelt Meet to Fight Blockbusting Rumors,” *Newsday*, March 18, 1966, 29.

¹⁶⁵ “Negroes Fault Cops, Welfare Dept. on Crime,” *Newsday*, November 29, 1966, 9.

¹⁶⁶ See Jennifer Mittelstadt, *From Welfare to Workfare: The Unintended Consequences of Liberal Reform, 1945-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), chapter 3 for case studies of 1960s opposition to ADC.

housing navigated Long Island's middle-class landscape using friends and relatives tied to landlords who accepted state-subsidized rental checks. With high rental costs, welfare recipients were a profitable source of passive income for cunning homeowners and speculators, and the housing market fissures along racial and class lines in North Amityville, Wyandanch, Central Islip, and North Bellport in Suffolk, along with New Cassel, Freeport, and Roosevelt in Nassau County enabled publicly-assisted housing to emerge within middle-class suburbia.¹⁶⁷

Residents alleged that the counties were colluding with landlords and concentrating the welfare population within their hamlets, called 'welfare dumping,' and they associated the problems of the community directly with the residents receiving public assistance. In Central Islip, homeowners complained that there were "too many welfare people who do as they please," leaving garbage and leading the area "down the sewer."¹⁶⁸ At a meeting about welfare housing in Roosevelt, Town of Hempstead Buildings Commissioner Matthew Russo argued that "the middle-class taxpayer is being destroyed by the thing he supports – welfare recipients who come in and wreck the most precious thing he has, his neighborhood and his home." While "these unfortunate people must have housing," declared United Organizations of Roosevelt chairman Morton Decker, "it is unfair to put large numbers of welfare recipients into one community." In New Cassel, PCANC blamed the Nassau County welfare department for 'white flight' because they permitted "welfare recipients [to] overrun our once-quiet residential neighborhood and have it downgraded with lawless acts."¹⁶⁹ The county welfare departments denied any wrongdoing because they played no role in placing welfare families in any specific community, and in New

¹⁶⁷ Randolph, Collier, and Inger, 48; For high welfare rental costs, see "Statement of the Nassau County Council of the League of Women Voters Before the County Board of Supervisors at the Budget Hearing, November 1962," Box 8, folder 321, LWV of Nassau Papers.

¹⁶⁸ "Tough Anti-Slum Law Wins Public Approval," *Islip Bulletin*, April 23, 1964, 1, 8.

¹⁶⁹ "Roosevelt Plan Splits Town," *Newsday* July 7, 1967, 9; "Probe Housing in Roosevelt for Violations," *Newsday*, June 30, 1967; "Negroes Fault Cops, Welfare Dept. on Crime," *Newsday*, November 29, 1966, 9;

Cassel, Nassau Welfare Commissioner Joseph Barbaro countered PCANC's accusation of 'welfare dumping' with statistics showing that as of 1966, all but 32 of 315 welfare cases in the hamlet were already residing in New Cassel when they applied for assistance.¹⁷⁰ In addition, home relief was only a fraction of the total welfare cases. In a 1967 survey of welfare recipients in Roosevelt, less than a fifth of 576 cases were rental subsidies. The majority were Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) cases, and further proved the 'indigenous' nature of welfare applications rather than deliberate welfare placements.¹⁷¹ The concentration of welfare recipients in these communities was a reflection of both segregation and disproportionate black poverty, not the actions of the welfare departments, though the public subsidies flowing through these hamlets nonetheless produced a distinct and concentrated housing market, and the welfare departments did little to curb this process.

Civic associations, taxpayer organizations, and civil rights organizations urged county and town governments to rectify the concentration of recipients. Eugene T. Reed, state president of the NAACP in 1966, wanted the county departments to house recipients on an "open occupancy" basis to avoid racial segregation, though both county welfare department chiefs argued that the problem was the dearth of affordable housing itself, which limited housing choice for the poor broadly.¹⁷² Local homeowner groups pressured town and county governments to withhold welfare payments and fine slumlords for illegal multi-family dwellings and dilapidated conditions. County and town governments had different powers to

¹⁷⁰ "Housing check Pledged for Welfare Cases," *Newsday*, Jan 19, 1967, 15; "Race Flareup Laid to Jobless," *Newsday*, August 27, 1966, 13;

¹⁷¹ "Available Data on Roosevelt Reflecting Poverty Conditions," p. 2, Box 66, folder "Economic Opportunity Commission," Nickerson Papers.

¹⁷² "Welfare Rents Aid Slums: NAACP," *Newsday*, April 4, 1966, 11; The class barriers to the poor were also noted by Hugh Wilson, of the Nassau Welfare Tenants Coordinating Committee. See Olivia Winslow, "Transcript of Full Hugh Wilson Interview," *Newsday*, February 15, 2008, Accessed July 30, 2015, <http://www.newsday.com/long-island/li-life/transcript-of-full-hugh-wilson-interview-1.878282?pts=392481>.

act against welfare concentration, since the county cut the checks while towns and villages were in charge of zoning and building codes.

Towns targeted dwellings. In New Cassel, the Town of North Hempstead sent 800 letters to houses asking for voluntary compliance of all codes before sending in inspectors. In Roosevelt, Town of Hempstead building inspector Matthew Russo sent out a small army of ten inspectors to investigate 118 homes, and wrote 15 summonses to landlords for misdemeanors and forty-one violation warnings, all in the hopes of thwarting overcrowding (and welfare concentration). While the United Organizations of Roosevelt and homeowners celebrated the inspections, an affected landlord felt that he and his tenants had done nothing wrong, that “the only crime of this family is that they’re poor and prolific.”¹⁷³ Efforts like these occurred periodically, but ‘warnings’ and voluntary compliance did little to stem the problem. In reality, zoning and code enforcement was selective and reactive, not universal and preventative. It relied on complaints from neighboring residents, and investigations into abuse were time-consuming for building authorities with over 225,000 housing units within their jurisdiction, like the Town of Hempstead.¹⁷⁴

The county welfare departments used their rental payments to exert influence over the quality of housing and the destination of recipients. They withheld rents in units violating housing or health codes, an authority given to them under New York State’s Social Welfare Law Section 143-b, but understaffed departments only visited recipients a few times a year, unable to manage the quick turnover and high demand for housing.¹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, counties

¹⁷³ “Probe Housing in Roosevelt for Violations,” *Newsday*, June 30, 1967.

¹⁷⁴ Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, *U.S. Census '70: Volume 4: Housing Inventory* (Hauppauge, New York: Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, 1972), 71-80.

¹⁷⁵ Discussion of state housing law enforcement can be found in “Minutes of Building Inspectors Association of Suffolk County,” January 11, 1963, Box 1, folder “Literature – Housing,” Gordon Papers; “Housing Check Pledged for Welfare Cases,” *Newsday*, January 19, 1967, 15; “Roosevelt Plan Splits Town,” *Newsday* July 7, 1967, 9; “Housing Drive to Assist Poor,” *Newsday*, August 24, 1967, 29.

increased their attention to recipient concentration in the late 1960s. In 1967, Nassau County established a Steering Committee in Roosevelt to explicitly bar welfare recipients and restrict applications to ‘qualified Roosevelt residents only.’ From July 1967 through March 1968, the committee, working with the welfare department, managed to locate only one recipient in Roosevelt, an administrative error. Despite the heavy regulation, the committee found that Roosevelt residents continued to apply for welfare, and the committee had limited control over recipients in Roosevelt, who were as likely to be local residents as ‘outsiders.’¹⁷⁶ With limited housing options and no county-owned public housing, Nassau and Suffolk resorted to motels to avoid the outcry of ‘welfare dumping’ and the explosive politics of welfare placement altogether. Initially an emergency measure, motel accommodations became an increasingly permanent feature of the two welfare departments, though Nassau’s problems far surpassed that of Suffolk County, as Nassau’s motel population climbed to over 300 families in the early 1970s. In Nassau County, rent fluctuated between \$500 and \$1,000 a family per month, over twice the median rent in 1970, all for rooms with overflowing cesspools and vermin infestations, but without stoves, refrigerators, laundry machines, or accessible transportation. Motel owners were the new slumlords in what became small poverty colonies, while tenants were basically prisoners, lacking access to opportunity until the department located real housing.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ “Status Report: The Roosevelt Project,” January 10, 1968, Box 59, folder “County Executive – Status Report #1,” Nickerson Papers; “Inter-Department Memo – March 11, 1968,” p. 3, Box 59, folder “Co Exec – Status Reports” [3 of 3], Nickerson Papers.

¹⁷⁷ “High-Rent Poor a 500-G Issue,” *Newsday*, November 22, 1968, 11; “Welfare Motel Use at New High,” *Newsday*, June 11, 1970, 7; “Statement for the Nassau County Human Rights Commission,” May 17, 1971, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 9, slides 782-804, *Papers of the NAACP*; “How Nassau Subsidizes Motel Slumlords,” *Long Island Free Press* 1, no. 5, December 1970, p. 1,4, Box 233, Tamiment Library Newspapers, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York; “Genocide...Nassau County Style,” *Black News*, August 1, 1971, p. 1, Box 233, Tamiment Library Newspapers, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York.

Recipients fought the efforts to limit housing choice. By 1967, twenty-two welfare advocacy organizations were assembled on Long Island, united under into two umbrella federations: the Nassau Welfare Tenants Coordinating Committee and the People for Adequate Welfare (PAW) in Suffolk.¹⁷⁸ They were part of the nationwide tenant advocacy and welfare rights movement that reached its peak in the mid to late 1960s, and recipients used these organizations to demand adequate housing. In 1967, six welfare recipients staged a sit-in at the Nassau County Department of Social Services (formerly the welfare department) for evicting them from dilapidated housing and only offering motel accommodations in return. One of the protestors, an African American mother of seven whose husband remained in North Carolina, found adequate rental housing, though it was above the department's threshold. The department only offered a motel room in exchange.¹⁷⁹ Bertha Grissett, an African American mother of five children from South Carolina housed in a Westbury motel for \$22 a day, found an eight room house in Roosevelt for just \$185 a month, but Nassau's welfare department claimed it was too expensive.¹⁸⁰ That same year, two welfare families sued the Nassau County Social Services Department over the department's steering efforts in Roosevelt, denying recipients housing in order to 'affect the racial balance' of Roosevelt, thereby infringing upon the fourteenth amendment's equal protection clause and their right to equal housing choice.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ "The LI Picture: Rising Complaints," *Newsday*, October 19, 1968, 23W; Peter Dreier, "The Status of Tenants in the United States," *Social Problems* 30, No. 2 (Dec., 1982): 190; Graham, 858-860; "Petition of Demands," Leadership Development Files, Part 3, Series B, reel 8, slides 436-441, Scholarship, Education and Defense Fund for Racial Equality Records (microfilm), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York, NY (hereafter cited as SEDFRE records); "Suffolk County People for Adequate Welfare (PAW) Press Release," Leadership Development Files, Part 3, Series B, reel 8, slides 447-452, SEDFRE records.

¹⁷⁹ "Mothers Sit in at Nassau's Welfare Office," *Newsday*, October 26, 1967, 6.

¹⁸⁰ "Get Welfare Recipients out of Motels: CORE," *Newsday*, November 9, 1967, 25.

¹⁸¹ James J. Graham, "Civil Liberties Problems in Welfare Administration," *New York University Law Review* 43 (November 1968): note 130; "Negroes Sue, Say Welfare Bars Move," *Newsday*, May 7, 1968, 6.

Despite the clamor surrounding welfare recipients, they were but a small fraction of the new arrivals, and the fight against them was a limited response to the broader racial and class transition. Overall, a socioeconomically diverse population came to inhabit these hamlets. In North Amityville, in the shadow of Ronek Park and other subdivisions, lived unskilled black workers in shacks along the remaining dirt roads, or in newly-built rooming houses and subdivided basements. A recently constructed trailer park along the main corridor on Route 110 was majority white, an enclave of white poor in an otherwise black middle class area. While the middle class drove cars to their jobs and to out-of-town retail centers, black day laborers gathered every morning near the Associated Shopping Center at the corner of Albany Avenue and Great Neck Road. They waited in the bid-and-ask market, as pick-up trucks canvassed for workers. Only a handful negotiated a job each day; the rest returned home, or hung out on the corner, in the local tavern, or the billiards hall nearby.¹⁸²

Tensions mounted between these two classes, and the NAACP branches were caught in between their middle class constituencies and the needs of the African American poor. In New Cassel, while spokesmen for the NAACP and other homeowner groups disavowed the claims they were anti-welfare, they nonetheless demanded an end to ‘handouts’ and encouragement of work and responsibility. As one resident exclaimed, “we love our people and we help our own, but we have to work – some of us some of us at two jobs. It’s hard but we maintain our incentive and we’re aware of our civic responsibilities to our neighbors and community.” Grace Snead, a single mother receiving ADC resented the claim that the poor were irresponsible to the community: “They made us feel as though we were animals and worthless and enjoyed or didn’t

¹⁸² “North Amityville Stepping Up Campaign Against Downzoning,” *Newsday*, December 30, 1969, 10; “LI Powder Keg: What Lights Fuse in Ghetto Blast?” *Newsday*, August 15, 1966, 5; “LI Powder Keg: Awaiting Jobs that May Never Come,” *Newsday*, August 16, 1966, 4.

care about our hardship, when most of us are doing everything we can to help ourselves.”

Tensions played out in a fight over a strip of taverns that local day laborers and domestics frequented along New Cassel’s Prospect Avenue. In 1966, PCANC and the Westbury Branch of the NAACP attacked these ‘lawless’ hangouts and successfully thwarted an attempt to expand the neighborhood grill to accommodate new customers.¹⁸³

In Wyandanch, the class battle played out in the local school district. From 1966 to 1970, the district’s ADC population climbed from forty to sixty-eight percent of all students. Local taxpayers bore the costs of these students, paying the eleventh highest school property tax rate in Suffolk County (of seventy six total districts) in a hamlet with a poverty rate of ten percent.¹⁸⁴ The national office of the NAACP, in cooperation with middle-class residents of Wyandanch, tried to dissolve the school district altogether and integrate students into the surrounding white districts. This was in line with the longer history of school integration, though now inflected with class and fighting the fragmented ‘fiction’ of school district lines that imposed real costs on homeowners. Lower-income residents and the school superintendent James Lewis opposed the measure, arguing that the black majority gave parents control over their children’s education. When the State Board of Education denied the request to dissolve the district, middle class residents then organized and won a majority on the Wyandanch’s Board of Education in 1969. They cut taxes, eliminated special needs programs, and instituted austerity measures. This drew the ire of Wyandanch’s lower class, who accused the Board and their supporters of being ‘Uncle Toms.’¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³“Crime Area Toured,” *Newsday*, December 5, 1966, 15; “Class vs. Class in Long Island: The Negro Problem in Suburbs: Negroes at Odds with Each Other,” *New York Amsterdam News*, December 24, 1966, 25.

¹⁸⁴ New York State Bureau of Municipal Research and Statistics, *Overall Real Property Tax Rates: Local Governments in New York State* (Albany, NY: Department of Audit and Control, Division of Municipal Affairs, Bureau of Municipal Research and Statistics, 1971), 81-82; Wyandanch was “Babylon District #9.”

¹⁸⁵Koubek, 30-32, 38, 78-82; “Wyandanch Split by NAACP Plan,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1967, 38; “Merging Schools Endorsed on L.I.,” *New York Times*, November 25, 1967, 47; “Wyandanch Plan Refused by

In a few instances, tensions boiled over into outright violence. As Thomas Sugrue and Andrew Goodman note, the riots of the mid to late 1960s were not limited to segregated inner-city ghettos, and in 1967 alone, over a quarter of all racial disturbances occurred in towns with fewer than 50,000 people. While these riots were embedded within the national racial politics of the period, each had local contexts and local grievances, even if refracted through the Black Power movement or the high-profile riots in nearby cities.¹⁸⁶ On Long Island, two disturbances took place in 1966 and 1967, all within Suffolk County's black hamlets among young black men over unfair police treatment and little opportunity. In early July 1966, an angry crowd of 400 attacked Suffolk County police officers in North Amityville, and during a meeting between local residents, the Suffolk County Executive, and the County Police Commissioner on July 29th, youths began chanting "black power" while a garbage can was hurled through a store window. Bottles, rocks, and Molotov cocktails were thrown at police, and it took more than three hours and a helmeted force of 300 policemen to restore order. Police cordoned off a one square mile area of the community, and by the end of the evening, nine were arrested as the shopping center where the meeting took place, the same center where day laborers awaited work, was locked down.¹⁸⁷ The next summer in Wyandanch, a small group of youths set a store, two cars, a local VFW, and a school auditorium afire over the course of two nights in August, all while hurling stones and bottles at police.¹⁸⁸

Allen," *New York Times*, July 26, 1968, 34; "Wyandanch Austerity Begins at Home," *Newsday*, September 10, 1969, 7.

¹⁸⁶ Thomas J. Sugrue and Andrew P. Goodman, "Plainfield Burning: Black Rebellion in the Suburban North," *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 4 (May 2007): 568-601.

¹⁸⁷ "Poverty Group to Try Cooling Amity Tension," *Newsday*, July 29, 1966; "Negro Violence Ends LI Rally – Nab 8 after 'Cooling-Off' Meeting," *Newsday*, July 29, 1966; "Race Riot in Suffolk – Negro Mob Clashes with Police," *Long Island Press*, July 29, 1966.

¹⁸⁸ "Violence Strikes L.I. Village again," *New York Times*, August 3, 1967, 18.

Post-disturbance meetings revealed a variety of grievances of community members. They included police-community relations, as a number of North Amityville protestors were upset at the police's regular usage of "nigger." Protestors and aggrieved youth also wanted greater recreational opportunities in both North Amityville and Wyandanch, including parks and movie theaters. In Wyandanch specifically, there were complaints that local markets were overcharging African American buyers. But central to the protests and disturbances was the interrelated demand for better housing, public transportation, and jobs.¹⁸⁹ As a protestor who seized the microphone during the outdoor meeting in North Amityville in July 1966 exclaimed, "a Negro has to be a superman to get an ordinary job." The inability to reach jobs, the limited access to housing, and the lack of good paying jobs themselves, were the major grievances. And while these acts were perpetrated by young men in both communities, local resident and North Amityville anti-poverty activist William Larregui summarized the feelings of residents in black hamlets generally when, in the wake of the riots, he declared, "we all came out here for one basic reason...we felt we could better our circumstances, but we had not been here long before we found out that many of the problems which had plagued us before are with us here."¹⁹⁰

Conclusion

The story above is familiar, told and re-told in urban histories. Segregated housing, urban renewal, racial transition, blockbusting, class conflict, welfare opposition, and riots roiled America's urban centers as millions of African Americans entered segregated housing markets in cities while urbanization spread beyond municipal borders and the state remade urban cores to

¹⁸⁹ "Rioting in North Amityville Gives Way to Tense Calm," *Long Island Press*, July 30, 1966; "N. Amityville: We're Waiting Man," *Long Island Press*, Aug 1, 1966; "Wyandanch Negro Youth List Complaints in Move to End Strife," *New York Times*, August 5, 1967, 8.

¹⁹⁰ "Town Spurs Recreation Program n wake of Shop Center Clash," *Amityville Record*, August 4, 1966.

counter the ‘overdevelopment’ of suburbs.¹⁹¹ Most histories tell this story in American cities, but as the chapter makes clear, similar processes were at work in suburbs. On Long Island, public policy constrained black housing choice, urban renewal remade largely black neighborhoods, blacks and whites defended and retreated from racial boundaries block by block, middle class and poor clashed over housing needs versus community stability, and frustration over limited prospects led to rioting, all in what were considered leafy-green suburbs. The fact that similar dynamics were at work in both cities and suburbs speaks to the metropolitan nature of segregation, one which crossed municipal boundaries and divided suburbs as much as urban neighborhoods.¹⁹² The state was central to segregation, because without state support and without federal policy influencing local authorities, realtors, and homeowners, more African Americans with the economic means to move to the suburbs could have done so. Even if the FHA standards reflected the mass desires of suburbanites, they could not rely on state power to compel segregation. But the development of black middle class neighborhoods and some integration across racial lines illustrates that segregation alone did not thwart racial progress; disproportionate black poverty and low-incomes did so. Segregation enabled blockbusters and speculators to exploit black, integrated, and affordable white suburban hamlets for poor housing opportunity, but this was not possible without the pressure from a disproportionately black poor in a housing market dependent on the labor market prosperity of postwar Long Island. And it was the unequal status of African Americans in the regional labor market that compounded the effects of segregation, making Long Island’s black suburbs poorer than its white ones.

¹⁹¹ Some works that address such topics include Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Self, *American Babylon*; Robert A. Beauregard, *When America Became Suburban* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Seligman, *Block by Block*; Walter Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Wendell E. Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) among others.

¹⁹² Lassiter and Niedt, “Suburban Diversity in Postwar America.”

The housing politics of the 1950s and 1960s, from black middle class integration and white neighborhood ‘stability’ efforts, to housing condemnation and urban renewal largely operated within an ideology of ‘affluence,’ uncritical of the structure of Long Island’s prosperity. Civil rights and black homeowner activism challenged the public policies that racially discriminated against African Americans, though they upheld the class hierarchy of postwar suburbia, demanding parity within the FHA-standardized housing market. Groups interested in the plight of the poor treated the problems of acute housing shortages and eviction differently, viewing integration as the solution, without considering limited incomes. Local governments meanwhile employed anti-blight strategies to clean up slums, the living arrangements of the black poor, housing districts unsuited for industrial and FHA-standardized suburbia. At their best, they improved housing at the cost of instability for former residents who put pressure on other affordable (or newly affordable) neighborhoods; at their worst, they forcibly removed people for the sake of higher property values. In sum, the anti-blight strategies failed to account for the class segregation in the market.

By the late 1960s, segregation placed the black poor into black middle class enclaves, tentatively integrated hamlets, or white neighborhoods with modest homes, illustrating the problems of using housing policy to eradicate slums without addressing the low-incomes that made exploitation possible. As single-family housing was split up for multiple families in desperate need of accommodations, the fight for integration increasingly turned to decrying the concentration of poverty, and while this was in many ways an extension of the fight to break down racial barriers, integration always assumed class homogeneity and could not be used to house the poor. Solving black poverty was more difficult than demanding open housing, and forcing them out was a continuation of the original problem: moving, but not removing the poor.

Simply put, housing politics had only a limited capacity to improve the plight of the poor. As a 1968 social work survey of Long Island's black enclaves concluded, "the not always fulfilled promise of employment" was responsible for the "growing enclaves of poverty [that] have come to be a common occurrence in suburbia, sometimes as in the case of a few villages on Long Island engulfing whole communities," and while "not so unsightly as the huge slums of the central city, indeed, often all but invisible in the surrounding plenty, these pockets of poverty mirror in microcosm the problems of their sister communities in the city's core."¹⁹³ Why they were not part of the greater prosperity around them, and how to better integrate them into prosperity would have to be fought on fronts beyond housing.

¹⁹³ Joseph Agovino, David Fisch, Frank Lawrence, Naomi Merritt, Roger Witherspoon, and Rhetia Zeitlin, "An Analysis of Social Welfare Innovations through Community Action Projects in Nassau County: Summer Head Start Program in the Economic Opportunity Council of Nassau County as a Social Innovation" (M.S.W., Adelphi University, 1968), 58-59.

Chapter 4

Fair and Full Employment

On the night of January 1, 1963, the NAACP hosted a dinner in Nassau County marking the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation. Attendees included NAACP labor secretary Herbert Hill, Georgia state senator Leroy R. Johnson, state assembly speaker Joseph Carlino, and an assortment of local politicians. Lincoln Lynch, Lakeview's fiery integration activist and chairman of the Long Island Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), was among the half-dozen speakers and by far the most memorable, using the occasion to note the failures of the local civil rights struggle. He chastised local government's "dwarf-like steps" against racism, though he saved his harshest criticism for the mostly black audience, stating that the "largest" portion of the blame rested "squarely at the door of the Negro himself, especially so of those who claim to have achieved middle-class status." Black suburbanites "engaged in a mad scramble to attain middle-class status and to acquire the trappings and false values dictated by the same society which holds him contempt." They had forgotten that African Americans "cannot attain freedom until all Negroes have freedom." Lynch wanted the middle class to broaden their struggle and "finance lawsuits, badger elected officials for legislation, to picket or sit-in or boycott, if necessary" to achieve full equality for all black Long Islanders.¹

Lynch's words and stance reflected an alternative to the middle-class dominated fight for equality: militant, confrontational, and focused on the broader inequalities faced by African American Long Islanders. Employment was at the center of this struggle, because as Lynch argued, "the gap between Negroes and whites in terms of family income has widened in Nassau

¹ "LI Negroes Let Race Down: CORE Aide," *Newsday*, January 2, 1963; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 287.

County...[and] the failure of Negroes to secure better jobs in the entire range of employment opportunities is part of the source.”² Alongside the decade-long fight for integrated housing, schools, and equal public services emerged a jobs-oriented movement in the 1960s, headed by CORE but including a host of new organizations, including a black labor federation, a black union, and the national NAACP office. These groups targeted Long Island’s major employment sectors: retail, banking, and public employment, but no sector offered more opportunity than Long Island’s defense-oriented manufacturing companies.

Cold War firms accounted for one of every six Long Island jobs, nearly all of which were well-paying and pivotal to postwar suburbanization.³ While whites enjoyed open access to defense work after 1945, the industry’s racial policies changed during the Cold War, and few African Americans were able to use the industry as a source of upward mobility. Though the federal government’s fair employment agencies proved necessary to expanding opportunity for black Long Islanders during World War II, the successors to Roosevelt’s Fair Employment Practices Committee were weak and left activists with few tools to combat discrimination and improve black prospects in the industry. This changed when John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson empowered their fair employment committees to monitor minority hiring and revoke contracts. By the 1960s, civil rights groups and African American workers had strong institutional support to demand fair employment.

But as activists quickly learned, improving minority hiring was not merely a matter of fair hiring; the number of jobs, the qualifications within the industry, and the fortunes of Long

² Letter from Marvin Rich to Lincoln Lynch, February 11, 1963, Departments and Related Organizations, 1946-1967, Series 5, reel 22, slide 928, *Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967* (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corporation of America) (microfilm) (hereafter cited as *Papers of CORE*).

³ Defense dependence calculated from Nassau County Planning Commission, *Selected Population and Economic Data: Nassau County*, 7; Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, “Economic Highlights,” *Long Island Economic Trends* 7, No. 8 (August 1976): 1.

Island's firms were under intense pressure in the postwar period. Defense spending, and therefore defense-related jobs, fluctuated as Cold War strategy changed, defense budgets were cut, the procurement process was streamlined, and technological progress altered the workforce. After the Korean War, military demand shifted from conventional aircraft to missiles and space, turning 'aircraft' into the 'aerospace' industry. By the early 1960s, calls for a leaner defense budget further jeopardized the industry, and Defense Secretary Robert Strange McNamara reorganized the entire defense purchasing process. Companies collapsed in the wake of the changes, including Long Island's Republic Aviation. Those that survived adjusted to the new market by augmenting their labor force, hiring white-collar scientists, engineers, and managers over blue-collar production workers. Ultimately, defense was moving in the same direction as the private sector – toward higher credential and skill requirements. By 1970, the defense industry no longer served to buttress employment among blue-collar and unskilled workers in the northeast. Spending favored southern and western firms, produced fewer aggregate jobs, and concentrated those jobs in skilled sectors. Public spending no longer produced the same employment benefits on Long Island.

Activists concerned with black employment had to contend with all of these factors, from a labyrinth of federal bureaucracies in charge of racial mediation to a job market shedding blue-collar jobs in favor of fewer skilled positions. They altered their goals, adding black mobility into skilled and white-collar positions to their demands of minority hiring. But their fight nonetheless occurred at a pivotal moment in the industry's history, as aerospace evolved out of its mass-employment role and source for blue-collar jobs on Long Island. What activists demanded – secure employment that paid a middle-class wage – was exactly what white and black unskilled workers were losing. They ultimately achieved Affirmative Action compliance,

though racial quotas were met from national labor pools and benefitted the already credentialed. It did not challenge the trajectory of the industry itself. Fair employment for the mass of Long Island's black population could not be uncoupled from full employment, and the industry's transformation closed the door on industrial mass opportunity, affecting working class Long Islanders both inside and outside the defense industry, and by extension, ending the region's role as a haven for mass upward mobility during and after World War II.

The Shift to Jobs

While housing and schools dominated Long Island's civil rights agenda, jobs moved to the center of the agenda in the 1960s, largely thanks to the ascendance of Long Island's Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) chapter, which transitioned from a minor player in Long Island's housing struggles to the leading organization fighting employment discrimination. CORE originated in Chicago as a non-violent and interracial organization in 1942, and the Long Island chapter was founded in the 1950s, popular among whites concerned with local housing and the southern civil rights movement, though lacking support from black Long Islanders. Aside from a clothing and book drive for the southern movement, a February 1962 report admitted the chapter had "not received a discrimination complaint in any area, and to our knowledge the public services in this area are not discriminatory." CORE tried promoting black employment at a local bank, but dropped the effort because they could not find willing black applicants. Good projects were needed, both to motivate existing members and attract black members so the organization was truly 'interracial.'⁴

⁴ "Report Form," March 21, 1962, Departments and Related Organizations, 1946-1967, Series 5, reel 41, slides 722-723, *Papers of CORE*.

By June 1962, Long Island CORE was transformed. Lincoln Lynch was elected chairman and set CORE on a path toward a “more aggressive, dynamic, active program.” The chapter favored African American membership (Lynch moved the headquarters from Levittown to Hempstead) and shifted toward employment.⁵ This was the direction of CORE’s northern chapters in general, who adopted various forms of direct action to force companies into accepting minority hiring quotas, first employed in Philadelphia’s consumer boycotts in 1960. The goals differed from earlier civil rights demands that firms hire “regardless of race,” as CORE pressured companies to enact “compensatory hiring” policies that would allow blacks to ‘catch up’ in the job market.⁶ This strategy was direct, giving companies an opportunity to avoid confrontation if they were willing to negotiate. CORE initially submitted a series of numbered proposals to a company, including demands to advertise jobs openings to minorities, hire a specific number of minorities by a specific date, and inform CORE of any relevant decisions the company made in regards to racial hiring and promotions. Then CORE met with the employer, and if demands were satisfied, CORE publicized the company’s promises. If the company refused, CORE advertised the failures and protested the inaction, hoping to affect consumers and force the company into concessions.

The tactic proved effective and raised Long Island CORE’s stature in the region. Part of the success was due to Lynch’s hard-nosed negotiating skills. When CORE approached Franklin National Bank, Long Island’s largest mortgage financier, to hire black workers in “visible” teller and office positions, Lynch openly refuted the bank’s excuses for its paltry black employment numbers. When the bank argued that few blacks applied for work, Lynch placed the blame on

⁵ “Report Form,” June 26, 1962, Departments and Related Organizations, 1946-1967, Series 5, reel 41, slide 748, *Papers of CORE*.

⁶ Hugh Davis Graham, *The Civil Rights Era: Origins and Development of National Policy, 1960-1972* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 105-106.

Franklin National's poor outreach. After the bank agreed to do better, Lynch demanded ten jobs for black recipients within thirty days and that seventy-five percent of their high-school hires should be black. While the bank nearly cut off negotiations because of CORE's insistence, Lynch was able to secure a four-point program that would ensure fifty jobs for African Americans and a long-term commitment to minority recruitment and hiring.⁷

When negotiations did not work, Lynch and CORE boycotted and picketed employers. When the Merchant's Association of the Roosevelt Field Mall dismissed CORE's demands for black retail jobs in 1963, Lynch threatened to protest during the holiday season, bringing the association back to the negotiating table. By late November, two hundred jobs were secured for minority workers, and a program of minority recruitment was put in place, "a model for other shopping centers in Nassau and Suffolk Counties" according to Lynch.⁸ CORE saved its largest demonstrations for the Long Island State Parks Commission. CORE conceded that "there is no deliberate practice of racial discrimination" but that summer help recruitment favored whites. CORE wanted the Commission to take positive and deliberate steps to hire black workers, including temporary help and permanent employees. When the Parks Commission dismissed CORE, Lynch coordinated a picket, sit-in, and kneel-in at Jones Beach, blocking automobile traffic and pedestrians from accessing the beach on July 4th, the busiest day of the year. Picketers carried signs saying "Laws aren't Enough, We Need Jobs" and "Jobs Not Promises." Two protestors were injured by police. While CORE had to cancel follow-up demonstrations

⁷ "Negotiating Session of 12/20/1962," Departments and Related Organizations, 1946-1967, Series 5, reel 41, slides 762-764, *Papers of CORE*; "Negotiating Session of 1/16/1963," Departments and Related Organizations, 1946-1967, Series 5, reel 41, slides 924-926, *Papers of CORE*; "CORE Wins Job Agreement at LI Bank," *Newsday*, January 17, 1963

⁸ "L.I. CORE's Proposals to Roosevelt Field Inc. And Roosevelt Merchant's Association," Departments and Related Organizations, 1946-1967, Series 5, reel 22, slide 936, *Papers of CORE*; Letter from Lincoln O. Lynch, October 30, 1963, Departments and Related Organizations, 1946-1967, Series 5, reel 22, slide 937, *Papers of CORE*; "Shopping Center in Fair Hiring Pact - Including Construction," Departments and Related Organizations, 1946-1967, Series 5, reel 41, slide 787, *Papers of CORE*.

after several threatening phone calls directed at members, the protests forced the State Park Commission to negotiate, and they agreed to CORE's demands for the following summer.⁹

By the end of 1963, CORE emerged as the most powerful civil rights group on the Island, and Lynch its controversial leader. Moderate activists and Long Islanders generally disagreed with his militancy, and the chapter was embroiled in a fierce election in 1964 to remove him from the chair position, though Lynch prevailed.¹⁰ But for all the publicity and the significance of CORE's affirmative action plans, the chapter opened a few hundred jobs in the service sector. This was only the first shots in a much broader economic war aimed at what Lynch believed to be Island-wide discriminatory hiring practices, including the construction industry, migrant farmworkers, and the importation of domestics into Long Island, what Lynch called a "black slave-running operation."¹¹ And no target offered more opportunity than Long Island's defense industry, and it was against this industry that Lynch was willing to "take any action necessary to bring about full employment of Negroes."¹² While CORE would utilize the tactics that worked so well in retail, banking, and public service, the defense industry proved a more difficult sector to crack, and the changes riling the industry complicated the activists' goal of getting blacks hired.

⁹ "Long Island CORE and the Civil Rights War, 1963," Departments and Related Organizations, 1946-1967, Series 5, reel 22, slide 940, *Papers of CORE*; "CORE Unit Lie-in over Park Jobs on LI," *Newsday*, July 2, 1963, 7; "Sit-Ins Halt Cars at Jones Beach: CORE Tries Spirit of 63 at Jones Beach," *Newsday*, July 5, 1963, 1.

¹⁰ "Challenge Fails, Lynch Re-elected," *Newsday*, May 5, 1964, 21.

¹¹ "CORE's Economic War Aims at New LI Target," *Newsday*, May 31, 1963, 2; Ross, 47-56; "CORE Dumps Garbage in Riverhead; Arrest 3," *Newsday*, June 22, 1964, 4; "8 Arrested in Protest over Slum Farm," *Newsday*, June 29, 1964, 4; "Says Maid-Importing is 'Slave Operation'" *Newsday*, January 28, 1966, 73.

¹² "But Why Grumman?" *Newsday*, April 16, 1966, 1W.

Fair Employment

Based on the number of jobs, the relatively high wages, the heavy role of the state, and low black participation in the defense industry, CORE had chosen the perfect employment sector to improve black opportunity on Long Island. As of 1959, African Americans were only 3.8 percent of the workforce among Long Island's five largest defense employers, or 1,974 employees out of a labor force totaling over 50,000.¹³ Among Long Island's largest subcontractors, black employment was even lower. Reeves Instrument in Garden City hired thirty-three blacks out of a workforce of 1,408, and Potter Instruments Company in Plainview employed five African Americans of 267 total employees.¹⁴ While one could defend the industry's low black employment numbers by pointing to Long Island's overall black population (and therefore housing segregation), the industry's labor market included New York City. In 1961, two-thirds of Republic Aviation's black employees commuted from the five boroughs.¹⁵ The industry was also pivotal to the suburbanization of New York City's working class, so when compared to the combined Long Island and New York City black population proportion of twelve percent, the industry's black employment numbers were deficient. This was not unique to Long Island's defense firms; nationwide, participation among prime defense contractors was 3.6

¹³ Author's calculations from summaries of minority employment among Long Island firms, stored alphabetically in "Comparative Analysis: Occupational Breakdown by Race," box 3, folder "Comparative Analysis – New York," Comparative Analysis Summaries of Minority Employment, 1958-1961, Records of the President's Committee on Government Contracts 1953-1961, Records of Temporary Committees, Commissions, and Boards, RG 220, National Archives and Record Administration II, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as RG 220, NARA II); The five major defense employers as of 1964-1965 (not calculated annually) were Grumman, Republic, Sperry Gyroscope, Airborne Instruments Laboratory (a division of Cutler-Hammer), and Fairchild's various Long Island divisions. Overall, Grumman, Sperry, Republic and Airborne Instruments Laboratory were among the top 10 employers on Long Island overall, while Fairchild's divisions stretched from 13th to 46th largest employer. See O'Rawe Jr., 145-147.

¹⁴ "Comparative Analysis: Occupational Breakdown by Race," box 3, folder "Comparative Analysis – New York," Comparative Analysis Summaries of Minority Employment, 1958-1961, Records of the President's Committee on Government Contracts 1953-1961, RG 220, NARA II.

¹⁵ Taken from a sampling of black employees and their place of residence in complaint files C-4-516 to C-4-567, Box 31, folders "Republic Aviation, Farmingdale, New York," Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II.

percent, despite the fact that defense firms were located in regions with substantial black populations, including the south and western metropolitan areas like Los Angeles.¹⁶

Low black participation during the Cold War contrasted sharply with the gains made during World War II, when acute labor demand and government commitment to anti-discrimination opened jobs to unskilled black workers. Firms shed their black and white workforces in 1945, and while the Cold War revived defense production, military spending never produced the same labor demand. Within this context, a ‘neo-traditional’ white male-dominated work culture, divided by gender and ethnicity, set in among the Island’s major firms. As Stephen Patnode argues, Grumman developed an unwritten rule against women on the shop-floor. Females were recast as ‘assistants’ and relegated to clerical and other non-production positions, a practice made explicit at Grumman but replicated across Long Island’s major firms.¹⁷ On the production floor, male workers divided the various job areas by ethnicity. At Republic Aviation, Long Island’s largest employer in the 1950s, a management culture existed where supervisors “preferred to have members of their own race working under their supervision,” and “Italians, Germans and Poles...refused to work with members of other races.” Such practices restricted hiring networks to family and friends within ethnic groups, denying

¹⁶ Herbert Roof Northrup, *The Negro in the Aerospace Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 21; Bruce Schulman argues that post-1941 industry in the south “bypassed” southern blacks geographically, though they also excluded blacks occupationally, and weak federal commitment allowed defense to avoid hiring minorities, which limited black migration to these new industrial regions. See Schulman, 179-180; In contrast, Joshua Sides blames housing segregation for low black employment in Los Angeles’ aerospace industry, though concedes that North American Aviation was located near South-Central Los Angeles, a largely black neighborhood after World War II. But beyond this one manufacturer were a collection of aircraft and electronics firms, including Northrop and Douglas Aviation. These firms, their subcontractors, and electronics companies made up the Santa Monica-El Segundo-Hawthorne industrial agglomeration, one of the largest in Los Angeles. Most importantly, these jobs were within ten miles of south-central Los Angeles, the primary black district in Los Angeles in the postwar period. For Sides argument, see Sides, 81-88; For information on the defense industry’s geography in Los Angeles, see Allen John Scott, *Technopolis: High-Technology Industry and Regional Development in Southern California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 13, 90-92, 140-142.

¹⁷ Patnode, chapter 2.

opportunity to prospective black employees who had to rely on a tiny network within the industry.¹⁸

The federal government did little to alter these practices or mandate black hiring. After the FEPC ended in 1946, President Truman and liberal Congressmen envisioned a permanent version of the Committee with expanded authority to enforce fair employment on public employers, contractors, and private companies. A conservative Congress thwarted these efforts, and Truman established a successor to the FEPC, the Government Contract Compliance Committee during the Korean War. With jurisdiction limited to defense contracts and no enforcement powers, the Committee merely advised and encouraged contractors to voluntarily hire more African Americans. Eisenhower abolished this committee in 1953, establishing the similarly named President's Committee on Government Contracts (GCC) which differed little from its predecessor besides collecting contractor data to assess black employment numbers in the late 1950s.¹⁹ But without the federal mandate to actually provide racial employment statistics, the GCC was powerless to even compile numbers. Contractors simply did not count black employees, and compliance officers had to enter factories and count heads to determine the number of "very dark skinned persons who may have some Negroid ancestry."²⁰

In comparison to the toothless GCC, New York State's Commission against Discrimination (SCAD), successor to New York's Committee on Discrimination, proved more

¹⁸ "Alleged Discrimination in Employment – Respondents, Republic Aviation Corporation and Republic Lodge 1987, IAM, AFL-CIO," August 10, 1961, p. 6, Box 14, folder C-4-1-174, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II.

¹⁹ Anthony S. Chen, *The Fifth Freedom: Jobs, Politics, and Civil Rights in the United States, 1941-1972* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 51, 86.

²⁰ "Comparative Analysis – United Aircraft Corp. (Norden Div.—Ketary Dept.) Commack, NY," December 1, 1960, Box 3, folder "Comparative Analysis – New York," Comparative Analysis Summaries of Minority Employment, 1958-1961, Records of the President's Committee on Government Contracts 1953-1961, RG 220, NARA II; "Comparative Analysis - Gyrodyne Company of America, Inc. – St. James, NY," September 27, 1960, Box 3, folder "Comparative Analysis – New York," Comparative Analysis Summaries of Minority Employment, 1958-1961, Records of the President's Committee on Government Contracts 1953-1961, RG 220, NARA II.

effective. While SCAD enforced existing non-discrimination laws through investigations, subpoenas, and court orders, its commissioners chose to use “conciliation and persuasion” rather than the penal tools at their disposal.²¹ If SCAD found any discrimination in a company’s hiring or promotion policies, confidential negotiations took place to correct the practice, and SCAD conducted post-case reviews after six months.²² The agency sought above all “improvement,” as was the case involving a Long Island defense plant in 1953 that allegedly refused to hire blacks. SCAD investigated and determined that the firm had no black workers in its 900-person workforce. After negotiations and two follow-up reviews, the firm employed thirty-two African Americans, who made up about two percent of the firm’s employees.²³ These were like CORE’s negotiations, and they did increase black employment, but this case was an exception, as Long Island’s defense firms were rarely targeted. From 1945 to 1960, SCAD received fifteen complaints against Republic Aviation: eleven from African Americans, two from Jewish workers, and a one from a Protestant employee. All were dismissed “without probable cause.”²⁴

Federal concern changed when John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925 on March 6, 1961, which abolished the GCC and transformed the federal role in anti-discrimination policy with yet another agency, the President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity (PCEEO). The PCEEO went beyond anti-discrimination to a loose kind of ‘affirmative action,’

²¹ Biondi, 18-20, 99-106.

²² Graham, *The Civil Rights Era*, 19-21.

²³ Since SCAD cases were confidential, the agency stored its records by an assigned code number without an index to avoid public exposition of company hiring policies. See New York State Commission against Discrimination, *Annual Report of the State Commission against Discrimination 1953* (Albany, NY: State Commission Against Discrimination, 1954), 13.

²⁴ “Alleged Discrimination in Employment – Respondent: Republic Aviation Corporation (Randolph R. Ford),” February 21, 1962, p. 3, Box 31, folder C-4-1-538, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II.

requiring federal employers, contractors, and unions hire and promote minorities.²⁵ The PCEEO demanded compliance reports from firms during the contract process, and also accepted “complex group complaint situations.”²⁶ The compliance reports and group grievances shifted discrimination investigations from individual cases to statistically based inquiries, a more effective tool to challenge discriminatory employment practices. The PCEEO also encouraged business owners to voluntarily adopt non-discriminatory practices and made business-government cooperation a public matter. Dubbed “Plans for Progress,” contractors committed to hiring, promoting, and training regardless of race, and would actively canvass for jobs in all forms of media to increase minority employment.²⁷ Business owners designed their own individual plans signed in ceremonies with heavy press coverage. While the dual role of the PCEEO, promoting both compulsory and voluntary means to open jobs to minorities, produced conflict, the Commission was nonetheless capable of mounting major investigations into potential discrimination cases. Within the first year of operation, it received more complaints than Eisenhower’s GCC in its entire existence.²⁸

The PCEEO’s aggressive and statistics-driven approach matched Long Island CORE’s assertive and numbers-oriented tactics. Within one year of JFK’s executive order, all of Long Island’s major defense contractors had signed a ‘Plans for Progress,’ further tying these firms to the PCEEO’s minority hiring efforts.²⁹ Just as World War II activists relied on a committed

²⁵ Judson MacLaury, “President Kennedy’s E.O. 10925: Seedbed of Affirmative Action,” *Federal History 2* (January 2010), Accessed August 13, 2014 http://shfg.org/shfg/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/4-MacLaury-design4-new_Layout-1.pdf

²⁶ Executive Order 10925 of March 6, 1961, Establishing the President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, accessed August 13, 2014 <http://www.thecre.com/fedlaw/legal6/eo10925.htm>; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 268.

²⁷ Graham, *The Civil Rights Era*, 42, 51-53.

²⁸ Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 268.

²⁹ American Bosch Arma signed in late November 1961, while Grumman, Sperry, and Republic signed it in early February 1962. See “12 CONCERNS SIGN ANTI-BIAS VOWS: More Defense Contractors Act in White House Rite,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1961; “31 More Defense Concerns Sign Pact Against Job Discrimination,”

federal government to pry open the industry, CORE had a willing government agency linked to the industry's only consumer. And since Long Island's firms pledged to hire African Americans in the abstract, CORE could apply their protest-negotiation strategy to Long Island's largest employers, transforming employment opportunity for the region's black population.

The End of Full Employment

The contention that defense manufacturers could solve black unemployment on Long Island rested on firm ground, not only because of the industry's role in employing black workers during World War II or the government's renewed commitment to fair employment, but because defense spending was the closest the federal government came to full employment policy beyond aggregate demand management measures after the end of the WPA. Virtually every government activity has an effect on employment, and while defense spending was not an explicit employment policy, it was the largest part of the federal budget with direct employment outcomes, aside from the military itself.³⁰ During the 1950s, defense procurement consumed between fourteen and twenty-three percent of the federal budget, and remained above ten percent of total GDP.³¹ Governmental priorities first shifted toward defense during World War II. These well-paying, unionized jobs, particularly in the aircraft industry, supported new constituencies, including defense firms, workers, and politicians, all of which made New Deal-era employment programs less attractive. And although the Roosevelt administration wanted to include the 'right

New York Times, February 8, 1962; See "A Summary of Activities and Accomplishments, 1965-1968," Box 69, folder "EEO Plans for Progress 1969," Records of the Secretary of Labor George P. Schultz 1969-1970, General Records of the Department of Labor, RG 174, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as RG 174, NARA II).

³⁰ Gary Mucciaroni, *The Political Failure of Employment Policy, 1945-1982* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 5.

³¹ Dennis S. Ippolito, *Federal Budget Policy and Defense Strategy* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1996), 6.

to work' as part of the welfare state during the war, defense-related deficit spending did more than help people survive a Depression like the WPA and other New Deal jobs programs; it spurred recovery and growth, vindicating the Keynesian proscriptions for the economy.³² The warfare state accomplished the long-term goals of the New Deal, and the public understood the cause and effect of defense spending on unemployment.³³ The postwar surge that followed the war further limited the need for direct job creation, and the 'Great Disarmament' of 1945 and 1946 did little to phase consumer industries, though the aircraft industry suffered.

Within two years though, global uncertainty made aircraft's lull a threat to national security, while the ailing industry also jeopardized technological progress and employment. The Truman administration responded by forming the Air Policy Commission in 1947, assembled to maintain publicly-funded aircraft production to meet the nation's military needs, sustain America's economic welfare, and support air innovation. Key to the Commission's recommendations was that the industry should not be subject to the 'normal laws of supply and demand,' that even marginal manufacturers should be kept afloat for the sake of national security. While the Commission only suggested two producers associated with the Navy and Air Force for each type of aircraft (bombers, fighters, etc.) along with the necessary component manufacturers, the government, already the near-exclusive customer of aircraft firms' goods, was

³² Gregory Hooks and Brian McQueen, "American Exceptionalism Revisited: The Military-Industrial Complex, Racial Tension, and the Underdeveloped Welfare State," *American Sociological Review* 75, no. 2 (2010): 201; Philip Harvey, "Why is the Right to Work So Hard to Secure?" in *The State of Economic and Social Human Rights*, ed. Lanse Minkler (Boston: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 135-136, 157-160; For the popularity of military spending see Aaron L. Friedberg, "Why Didn't the United States become a Garrison State?" *International Security* 16, no. 4. (Spring, 1992): 122.

³³ Bernard Udis, "Overview and Summary," in *The Economic Consequences of Reduced Military Spending*, ed. Bernard Udis (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1973), 1.

committing itself to supporting an entire industry.³⁴ Growing tensions in Greece, Turkey, and the outbreak of the Korean War only cemented the government's support for aviation.

This spending supported an industry rivaling automobiles in the United States. In 1954, aircraft led all industries in employment, R&D investment, and sales, a first during peacetime.³⁵ In the years following, aircraft remained the nation's second largest manufacturing sector through the 1980s.³⁶ Though the government directly employed over 2 million people as of 1955, its support of the defense-related aircraft industry (along with other defense manufacturing generally), was a significant component of the state's employment toolbox. Of course, defense spending was never explicitly an employment policy; such spending was justified as necessary to national security, not to keep Americans employed. Nonetheless, it was considered the "the *sine qua non* for full employment, and as the basis for the prosperity of several states and certain sizeable industries."³⁷ Economists in particular understood the employment benefits of defense spending, and when unemployment reached eight percent in 1949, Council of Economic Advisors chair Leon Keyserling, an avowed Cold Warrior who molded the economics of NSC-68, fully embraced the economic benefits of defense spending. He was then vindicated by the employment levels during the Korean War. It became a key component of his full employment plans following the war, the "default source of revenue" to finance his full employment drive and post-Korea prosperity, as Edmund F. Wehrle argues.³⁸ Truman, the Department of Defense, labor organizers and economists meanwhile looked to defense spending to aid depressed areas,

³⁴ Thomas K. Finletter and the President's Air Policy Commission, *Survival in the Air Age: A Report* (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1948), v, 48.

³⁵ Pattillo, 200.

³⁶ Barry Bluestone, Peter Jordan, and Mark Sullivan, *Aircraft Industry Dynamics: An Analysis of Competition, Capital, and Labor* (Boston, Mass: Auburn House Pub. Co, 1981), 3.

³⁷ James L. Clayton, *The Economic Impact of the Cold War: Sources and Readings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970), 3.

³⁸ Edmund F. Wehrle, "Guns, Butter, Leon Keyserling, the AFL-CIO, and the Fate of Full-Employment Economics," *The Historian* 66, no. 4 (2004): 730-736.

enshrined in Defense Manpower Policy no. 4, passed in 1952 to permit contractors in ‘labor-surplus’ areas to match low bids. There were critics of this approach, like Budget Bureau director James Webb, who feared what military spending meant for domestic priorities like education, housing, industrial policy, and agriculture, and the ‘guns versus butter’ debate was alive and well in the late 1940s.³⁹ But defense spending, unlike the contentious domestic social welfare policies of the ‘Fair Deal,’ had bi-partisan support, largely because national security appropriations were first and foremost for defense and had only ancillary employment effects, though every Congressmen whose district depended on defense dollars was aware of the local impact of such spending.

Despite the clear employment outcomes of defense procurement and spending, jobs were weighed against other priorities, including the size of the military budget, overall military necessity, foreign policy strategies, technological change, and institutional rivalries between military branches. Congressmen wanted defense dollars to flow into their districts, while the military branches demanded affordable high-performance products from trusted contractors, which resulted in concentrated spending in already saturated markets. The three military services meanwhile defended the enormous defense budget as necessary to national security, while Truman, Eisenhower, and Congress were wary of deficits and the political implications of the federal budget’s military dominance. Finally, the executive branch had to consider what weapons would best meet the nation’s military strategy, which constantly evolved in response to Soviet maneuvers, newly perceived global threats, and domestic politics.⁴⁰ Keeping contractors

³⁹ See Michael Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chapter 3 for the ‘guns versus butter’ debate of the early Cold War.

⁴⁰ Roger E. Bolton, *Defense Purchases and Regional Growth* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1966), 140; Hogan, 7; Friedberg, 142.

a float, and by extension, hundreds of thousands of industrial workers employed, was submerged within these broader concerns about how to fight the Cold War, what weapons were necessary, and what they should cost. While we think of the defense industry as powerful agents in the ‘military-industrial’ complex, in reality contractors were at the whim of these larger bureaucratic decisions and global contingencies, not to mention the irregularities involved in war production, a crucial factor during Korea and later Vietnam.⁴¹ Remaining profitable and keeping plants open necessitated that firms be attuned to the ever-changing environment of defense procurement. While Long Island’s two largest airframe manufacturers, the Air Force-associated Republic Aviation and Navy-dependent Grumman, were one of the fifteen firms laid out in Truman’s 1947 Air Policy Commission report, their privileged relationship, and the workforce relying on this relationship, were challenged by two interrelated factors after the Korean War: the technological shift toward high-tech weaponry and the regional shift of defense contracts toward the South and West.

The Korean War fully revived Long Island’s airframe producers who limped along with small contracts during the late 1940s, re-establishing the industry’s dominance in the region. Grumman and Republic hired thousands and subcontracted work to hundreds of small firms to build jet aircraft. Republic’s F-84 Thunderjet fighter-bomber, capable of air-to-air refueling and atomic weapons deployment, proved to be a devastating asset to the U.S. Air Force, destroying dams across North Korea.⁴² Republic produced over 7,000 F-84s and became the “workhorse of

⁴¹ I am indebted to Eugene Gholz for this insight, who argues against the theory of the ‘military-industrial complex’ as the determinant of high defense spending or why firms succeed and fail. As Gholz contends, government bureaucrats within the military, executive branch, and security agencies had broad discretion over procurement policy, making decisions based on military strategy above all other considerations. The power rested with the state, not the contractors. As Gholz concludes in his study of the Curtiss-Wright Corporation, “the defense business was risky during the Cold War, despite the sustained high level of defense spending. Prime contractors could and did fail.” See Eugene Gholz, “The Curtiss-Wright Corporation and Cold War-Era Defense Procurement: A Challenge to Military-Industrial Complex Theory,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 2, no.1 (Winter 2000): 35–75.

⁴² Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2010), chapter 6.

Korea,” the world’s largest private producer of jet aircraft and Long Island’s largest employer in 1952 with 22,000 workers.⁴³ Grumman’s F9F Panther proved useful to the Navy, and they built over 1,000 during the war, as Grumman’s workforce reached 11,000 by 1953.⁴⁴ Following the Korean Armistice and brief disarmament, defense spending consistently rose, though the nature of spending changed. ‘Cold War’ military strategy turned away from the construction of planes and tanks toward experimental weaponry as the United States committed itself to the escalating arms race with the USSR. With the Soviet detonation of the A-bomb, the drive for deterrents created the first arms-race economic boom: guided missiles.⁴⁵ Defense expenditures for guided missile development increased from under one percent in 1951 to almost a quarter of the entire defense budget by 1959.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, between 1953 and 1957, the value of conventional armaments dropped from \$11 to \$2 billion.⁴⁷ Missiles jeopardized established aircraft manufacturers, making former airframe production facilities obsolete and exposing firms to competition from the electronics industry. In this regard, California companies like North American, Lockheed, and Martin adapted quickly. Lockheed for example transformed itself from airframe to missile producer within three years, as missile development jumped from two percent in 1957 to over seventy-five percent of the company’s production in 1960.⁴⁸ Long Island’s two airframe producers, Republic and Grumman, joined the guided missiles race as well, though not to the extent of their west coast competitors. Republic opened a dedicated missile plant in 1954,

⁴³ “Republic Engineers Produced Korean “Workhorse,”” *Long Island Daily Press*, January 17, 1955, 23A; “Republic Thunderjet Plant on L.I. Booming,” *New York Post*, December 29, 1950, 37; Stoff, “Grumman Versus Republic,” 115; Stoff, *The Thunder Factory*, 8, 93.

⁴⁴ Lawrence Feliu, “Impact on Long Island, Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation,” Table VI.

⁴⁵ Ann Markusen differentiates between ‘hot war’ and ‘cold war’ booms, the former (Korea, Vietnam) necessitating conventional armaments, the latter (Sputnik, SDI) demanding experimental weaponry. See Markusen, et. al, 9.

⁴⁶ Stekler, 17.

⁴⁷ Clayton, 58-9.

⁴⁸ G.R. Simonson, “Missiles and Creative Destruction in the American Aircraft Industry, 1956-1961,” *The History of the American Aircraft Industry: An Anthology*, ed. G.R. Simonson (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1968), 229-238.

while Grumman expanded to electronic surveillance aircraft and a variety of smaller military goods.⁴⁹ Long Island's electronics manufacturers procured missile contracts more effectively. American Bosch Arma in Roosevelt Field developed the inertial guidance systems for the ATLAS and TITAN Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles, while Sperry Gyroscope won a number of contracts in the late 1950s, constructing guidance systems for the Navy's Polaris submarines and tracking systems for air-to-air missiles.⁵⁰

Missile demand declined in the 1960s, though the 'space' boom followed shortly after *Sputnik's* launch in 1957. NASA provided a new source of funding in 1959, and companies once again jostled for contracts in what was now the 'aerospace' industry. On Long Island, the fortunes of Republic Aviation and Grumman reversed during the space boom. Republic Aviation had been the largest employer on the Island through the 1950s, and it invested over \$700,000 and two and a half years of work into space research, including the multi-million dollar Paul Moore Research and Development Center in 1958. Nevertheless, the company lost a key contract for the Apollo spaceship.⁵¹ In contrast, Grumman was awarded the Apollo Lunar Module (LM) contract in 1962. From here, the company moved to the center of the space race, becoming NASA's second largest contractor and building twelve lunar modules. By 1964, Grumman employed one out of every seven Long Islanders in manufacturing and was the largest employer on the Island.⁵²

⁴⁹ Stoff, *The Thunder Factory*, 144-146; Thruelson, 263.

⁵⁰ "American Bosch Arma Corporation," *Careers in Astronautics*, April 1959, folder "Arma – Garden City," CAM; "Sperry Golden Anniversary Book," folder "Sperry Gyroscope Corp. – Brooklyn/Lake Success," CAM.

⁵¹ Stoff, *The Thunder Factory*, 156. "Republic Aviation Corporation, Farmingdale, Long Island, N.Y.," folder "Republic Aircraft Corp. – Miscellaneous," CAM.

⁵² Onkst, 20-24; Thruelson, 333; Lawrence Feliu, "Impact on Long Island, Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation," Table VI; Letter from F.J. Edwards, Jr. to Jack Rettaliata, March 16, 1964, Alphabetical Files, Section A-10, cabinet "Long Island-Manufacturing," folder "Long Island," Northrup-Grumman History Center, Bethpage, New York (hereafter cited as NGHC).

If Long Island's firms internally managed the technological transitions of the industry, they had less power to prevent the defense spending shift toward the South and West, particularly California. New York's share of defense procurement fell from 13.5 percent in 1952 to 10.5 percent in 1962, while California's rose from 11 percent to over 19 percent during the same period. Annual defense purchases in New York dropped over one million dollars from 1953 to 1956, and though they climbed afterwards, they did not reach the 1954 peak through 1962. In comparison, California's high of 5.7 million in 1954 dropped by 1956, though just one year later, the state hit a new record and continued to do so every year through 1962.⁵³ The shift toward the south and west was not a process of firms leaving one region for the other, but of contract cancellations in the Northeast and Midwest coinciding with new contracts in the Sunbelt. Republic Aviation felt the pains of cuts, particularly when the Air Force cancelled the F-105E Thunderchief contract, leading to a loss of 7,000 jobs in 1957.⁵⁴ Republic was not alone; Fairchild's engine division, formerly Ranger Engines during World War II, closed down entirely in 1959 in response to the Air Force J-83 engine contract cancellation in favor of General Electric's J-85 engine, laying off 2,600.⁵⁵ Concerns over regional parity reached Congress when New York Senators Jacob Javits and Kenneth Keating, along with every House member from New York, introduced Senate Bill 1875, the Armed Services Competitive Procurement Act of 1959. The bill would ensure fair distribution of defense contracts among small businesses, areas with 'labor surpluses,' and most importantly, to different geographic areas in the country, especially eligible contractors in defense-starved regions. As the bill argued:

The security of the nation requires that its economy, and the economy of each section of the country, be maintained at a level which can support its programs for

⁵³ Bolton, 118, 152-162.

⁵⁴ Schulman, 142-143; "Contract Loss Threatens 600 Republic Jobs," *Newsday*, December 29, 1960, 3.

⁵⁵ "Fairchild Layoffs: A Canceled Contract Jolts LI's Economy: Is Fairchild Canceled Out?" *Newsday*, January 16, 1959, 1C.

defense and sustain the private economic system, and that procurements by agencies under this chapter have a meaningful effect upon the Nation's economic health.⁵⁶

This was a call for jobs couched in the language of national security. But the bill did not pass, and the Department of Defense countered that New York firms weren't competitive enough.

Defense Department procurement policy director G.C. Bannerman testified that New York must "present new ideas if it expects more contracts." As Bannerman argued, "we're not buying the production of a missile but we're buying the brain power."⁵⁷

Long Island's defense firms invested in brain-power to remain competitive, and this led to the slow transformation of the industry's workforce from unskilled and semi-skilled production workers to engineers, scientists, and other specialized technical staff. Nationwide, production workers fell to forty percent of the workforce by 1962, while one in nine of the nation's engineers and scientists worked in aerospace that same year.⁵⁸ Long Island firms followed this trajectory. Republic's proportion of white collar workers doubled from nine to eighteen percent from 1954-1959, while engineer hiring outpaced production worker employment by sixty-one percent from 1957-1961.⁵⁹ This reflected President Mundy Peale's assertion that the company was "part university research lab, part giant machine shop, part space medicine center, part undersea exploration lab, part military systems analyst, part weapons manufacturer, part satellite and spacecraft builder, and more...much, much more."⁶⁰ Grumman's space contracts required physicists, medical researchers, hydro-dynamicists, and all sorts of

⁵⁶ Quoted in Bolton, 141.

⁵⁷ "Pentagon Tells NY Plants: 'Ideas' Get the Contracts," *Newsday*, February 25, 1959, 33.

⁵⁸ Simonson, "Missiles and Creative Destruction in the American Aircraft Industry," 233; Murray L. Weidenbaum, "The U.S. Aircraft Industry," *Financial Analysts Journal* 19, no. 2 (April 1963): 51-52.

⁵⁹ "Comparative Analysis: Occupational Breakdown by Race – Republic Aviation," April 10, 1957-January 10, 1961, Box 3, folder "Comparative Analysis – New York," Comparative Analysis Summaries of Minority Employment, 1958-1961, Records of the President's Committee on Government Contracts 1953-1961, RG 220, NARA II.

⁶⁰ Stekler, 100; "Republic Aviation Corporation, Farmingdale, Long Island, N.Y.," folder "Republic Aircraft Corp. – Miscellaneous," CAM.

engineers. Nearly 7,000 worked on the Apollo contract, a project where production resembled a handmade cottage industry. About one-third of Grumman's entire workforce focused on the company's space projects in the 1960s, with 2,400 engineers working on the Lunar Module project alone.⁶¹

The transition from assembly-line production to technical craft and R&D put unskilled and semi-skilled workers at a disadvantage. While defense jobs did not decline in absolute numbers, the skills necessary to remain employable increased and production workers had to compete with well-educated and younger engineers entering the field.⁶² Bob Schmidt, who began as a riveter at Grumman in 1941, realized that in the decades after World War II, the industry

got so high tech that you couldn't slump along as a high school graduate only, a tech school graduate, and really hope to get anywhere, because it got to be so that you'd have to be practically an engineer like the guys that work on the cars today. The airplanes got so complicated.⁶³

These changes led to layoffs, and while workers were accustomed to periods of unemployment since the post-World War II and Korean War cutbacks, layoffs in the late 1950s and early 1960s coincided with R&D investment and engineer hiring. Fairchild, a Maryland-based aviation manufacturer with a Guided Missile Division on Long Island, cut its production workforce by nearly seventy percent from 1957 to 1959 as they increased their technical staff eight percent.⁶⁴

Layoffs were no longer a temporary measure following a contract cancellation or short-term

⁶¹ Thruelson, 287, 333; Markusen et. al., 124; Onkst, 23.

⁶² David Onkst notes the blue collar/white collar dynamic at Grumman in his correspondences with former Grummanites, finding that white collar workers (scientists/engineers) were often well educated and young, while blue collar workers (production) were older, and from immigrant backgrounds. See Onkst, 23-24.

⁶³ Oral history transcript of interview with Bob Schmidt by Elly Shodell on January 31, 1995, p. 43, Aviation Oral History Collection, PWLHC.

⁶⁴ "Comparative Analysis: Occupational Breakdown by Race – Fairchild Engine & Airplane Company (Guided Missiles Division)," Box 3, folder "Comparative Analysis – New York," Comparative Analysis Summaries of Minority Employment, 1958-1961, Records of the President's Committee on Government Contracts 1953-1961, RG 220, NARA II.

disarmament; they were a narrowing of opportunity for production workers due to the divide in the labor market between production and white-collar workers and the increased technical requirements favoring the latter.

For production workers who relied on defense jobs to sustain suburban homeownership, unemployment threatened to end their foothold in middle-class society. In the wake of the mass 1957 layoff at Republic Aviation, social workers found that while production laborers were “essentially middle class in terms of values, status, and goals...many families are far removed in terms of income and resources.”⁶⁵ Workers leveraged their relatively high wages at Republic to secure loans and credit for the various accoutrements of the postwar middle class. One family in the social work survey, a married couple with a three-year old son, had monthly payments for their freezer, car, fence, furniture, storm windows, refrigerator, new tires, auto insurance, VA mortgage, and an FHA loan to finish the attic. The loss of the husband’s job at Republic after four years of employment forced the family onto welfare for over a year.⁶⁶ While such a case was extreme, most families relied on credit to finance their suburban living on Long Island.⁶⁷ When laid-off workers re-entered the workforce as cab-drivers, gas station attendants, construction workers, or retail employees, jobs that paid ten percent less on average per year with fewer hours of work available, their middle-class suburban lifestyle was increasingly precarious.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Alice Diaz, Eleanor Kremen, Saul Gessow, Virginia Lerner, Dorothy Hechtman, Sheila Ruth Perman, Morris Karmel, and Fanny Steinberg, “Economic Impact of Prolonged Unemployment on Families: Republic Lodge 1987 Unemployment Survey” (M. Social Services Thesis, Adelphi University, 1959), 47.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-33

⁶⁷ Harold Wattel, “Strikers and Consumer Credit,” *Long Island Business* 5, no. 2 (February 1958): 1-2, Box 1, Business Records, LISI.

⁶⁸ Harold Wattel, “Unemployment on Long Island,” *Long Island Business* 4, no. 1 (November 1957): 1, Box 1, Business Records, LISI; William N. Leonard, “Business Outlook for 1958,” *Long Island Business* 5, no. 1 (January 1958): 2, Box 1, Business Records, LISI.

Production workers could hold onto defense jobs if they climbed the company ladder through promotions and training. In an industry that evolved so rapidly and required all sorts of new and sometimes arcane skills to solve cutting-edge problems, internally coordinated training programs tied to the promotion process were a necessity. Sperry offered educational reimbursement for production workers who took industrial technology courses, along with a comprehensive professional engineering program to upgrade engineers for the space age.⁶⁹ Unions like the Engineer's Association of Arma (EAA) provided funds to attend classes at local colleges, and even sponsored lectures on new equipment.⁷⁰ Grumman offered the most comprehensive training programs, outlaying 600,000 dollars a year on average to train over 18,000 employees in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They offered tuition reimbursement for night classes, and provided an incentive for their employees to excel in coursework (you could only receive full tuition remission if you managed an 'A,' eighty-five percent for a 'B' and so on). Grumman even developed a Corporate Training Development Department responsible for all employee training across the company's divisions.⁷¹ These training programs, whether union or corporate subsidized, were central to promoting workers within a firm since seniority did not prepare them for more technical work.

The changes occurring within aerospace and the path to job security was of particular significance to the industry's black workforce. The burden of production job loss fell disproportionately on African American workers, who occupied the lowest positions in the corporate ladder. In 1961, Republic Aviation had greatly improved their overall proportion of black employees, though hired or promoted only ninety-five non-whites to supervisory,

⁶⁹ O'Rawe Jr., 152.

⁷⁰ *EAA Scope* 1, no. 1 (June 1952), 2, Box 12, EAA Papers.

⁷¹ O'Rawe Jr., 150; Thruelson, 320-321.

professional, technical, or clerical positions (see Table 4.1) and only 127 were skilled craftsmen. Meanwhile, 655 were operatives, mostly assemblers and fabrication workers.⁷² Grumman's distribution was similar. Of 605 black employees, only fifty-nine held clerical, supervisory or professional/technical positions, though forty percent of Grumman's overall staff were employed in operative categories.⁷³ These numbers were even more skewed at electronics firms: Reeves Instrument had three black workers in white-collar or technical positions, while the remaining thirty were blue collar, and Fairchild's Stratos division in Bay Shore had no black workers in any of its white-collar/technical positions.⁷⁴ Overall, in a cross-examination of nine major defense manufacturers in 1959, the distribution between white-collar and technical positions versus blue-collar production was even (they were forty-three percent of the workforce each, service occupations making up the difference), while the non-white distribution was skewed: eighty-eight percent held blue-collar production jobs, while only eleven percent were employed in white-collar positions.⁷⁵

Two factors accounted for the disparity between the industry's white and black workforce. In the defense industry, the education gap between blacks and whites played a

⁷² 'Non-whites' included 836 'Negroes,' 34 'Orientals,' and 51 'Other.'" See Republic Aviation Occupational Distribution by Race Report, November 15, 1961, Box 31, folder C-4-1-538, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II.

⁷³ "Comparative Analysis: Occupational Breakdown by Race- Grumman Engineering Corporation," October 19, 1959, Box 3, folder "Comparative Analysis – New York," Comparative Analysis Summaries of Minority Employment, 1958-1961, Records of the President's Committee on Government Contracts 1953-1961, RG 220, NARA II.

⁷⁴ See Reeves Instrument January 4, 1960 and Fairchild Stratos October 25, 1960 Occupational Breakdown by Race forms, Box 3, folder "Comparative Analysis – New York," Comparative Analysis Summaries of Minority Employment, 1958-1961, Records of the President's Committee on Government Contracts 1953-1961, RG 220, NARA II.

⁷⁵ The companies measured were American Instruments Laboratories 1959, American Bosch Arma, 1957, Fairchild Stratos, 1959, Fairchild Guided, 1959, Grumman, 1959, Reeves Instrument, 1960, Republic 1959, Weksler Instruments, 1960, Potter Instruments 1960. See their respective Comparative Analysis: Occupational Breakdown by Race forms, Box 3, folder "Comparative Analysis – New York," Comparative Analysis Summaries of Minority Employment, 1958-1961, Records of the President's Committee on Government Contracts 1953-1961, RG 220, NARA II.

Table 4.1: Racial Composition of Republic Aviation, by Job Category, 1961

	All Workers	Non-White	Percent Non-White (%)
Officials and Supervisors	1,816	17	0.94
Professional and Administrative	2,374	47	1.98
Sales	23	0	0
Technicians	505	9	1.78
Office/Clerical	2,278	22	0.97
Craftsmen	2,893	127	4.39
Operatives	5,342	655	12.26
Service Workers	281	41	14.59
Laborers	31	3	9.68
TOTAL	15,543	921	5.93

Source: Republic Aviation Occupational Distribution by Race Report, November 15, 1961, Box 31, folder C-4-1-538, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II.

Note: See footnote 72 for breakdown of 'non-white' category.

critical role in aerospace's particular racial division. Herbert Northrup's comprehensive study of black participation in aerospace revealed that regardless of any discrimination, the low participation of minorities was "above all a function of the skill requirements of the industry."⁷⁶ Nonetheless, with training programs and promotional opportunities available, the issue was not simply one of educational deficiencies, and black workers pointed to discrimination as a potential source for the industry's racial disparity. Republic production employee Norman Baskin claimed "negroes in production jobs are often passed over for promotion to white collar jobs in preference to white employees."⁷⁷ Such discrimination threatened to decimate the industry's paltry black population. For activists interested in improving the minority representation at defense plants, the uneven distribution of black workers added a layer of complexity to their struggle, as saving existing jobs was as important as opening new ones.

⁷⁶ Northrup, *The Negro in the Aerospace Industry*, 46.

⁷⁷ "Complaint Form: Norman Baskin," February 12, 1962, Box 31, folder C-4-1-553, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II.

Bias and the end of Republic

The end of defense as a mass unskilled employer, federal re-commitment to black employment, and the racial disparity within the workforce all came together at Republic Aviation in the early 1960s, illustrating the challenges activists confronted in Long Island's largest job sector. Eight months after the PCEEO's establishment, the national NAACP compelled the Committee to end discriminatory practices across the nation's largest industrial sectors. NAACP Labor Secretary Herbert Hill targeted aerospace in particular for exhibiting "an industry-wide pattern of racial discrimination," and in November 1961, the NAACP launched its largest PCEEO complaint against Republic Aviation. Hill amassed sixty-two promotions complaints from black employees at the plant, including mechanics, riveters, assemblers, punch-press operators, and electricians. These 'lower grade production workers' were allegedly passed over for promotions by whites with lesser qualifications. Hill accused the company of "discriminatory practices against Negroes in employment and upgrading," stating that "many Negroes at Republic would be much further along than they are if color were not involved in many promotions."⁷⁸

The sixty-two complaints were filed together, and most grievances were pre-made forms workers signed stating blacks were denied promotions solely because the "person was a Negro."⁷⁹ A few made additional individual complaints, revealing the complex nature of bias within the industry. One was Randolph Ford, hired as a press brake operator in 1951. Ford was

⁷⁸ "Republic Corp. Biased in Promotions: NAACP," *Newsday*, November 30, 1961, 4; "US Probing Bias in 128 Companies," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 9, 1961; "Republic Aviation Denies Color Bias," December 1, 1961, folder "Newspaper Clippings - Industry, Republic Aviation 1960-1961," The Archives at Queens Library, Jamaica, New York.

⁷⁹ See case files C-4-1-516 to C-4-1-567 in Box 31, folder "Republic Aviation, Farmingdale, New York," Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II.

trained as an engine mechanic in the Air Force, and hoped to parlay his experience into an engine mechanic position at Republic in 1952. Despite this experience, he watched fellow white Air Force mechanics become Republic mechanics while he was deemed unqualified. In need of better pay to support his wife and newborn child, Ford took a job as a stock clerk. He remained a clerk for the entirety of the decade. Though he excelled at the position, and broke few rules at the plant (aside from the commonly-broken prohibition against posted flyers inside work stations), white clerks were promoted to supervisory positions over him.⁸⁰ John Diggs likewise experienced promotion discrimination that ultimately cost him a job in 1961. Diggs was a structural assembler since 1958, though he contended that the ‘assembler’ classification was meaningless since he and other workers did a variety of jobs, including assembling, drilling, and installing rivets on plane skins. In July 1960, Diggs wanted his classification as an assembler changed, though the request was denied. A few months later, he and eighteen other workers were laid off during a company-wide reduction-in-force, though Diggs was the only employee who was not called back. The company offered jobs to seven laid-off white workers in other classifications because they were deemed ‘qualified’ for those positions, thus saving them from unemployment. Diggs filed a grievance, but was not rehired given his ‘poor work performance.’ He denied this, stating that his ‘slow’ productivity was due to over-work with too few tools, part of the multi-tasking that occurred on the shop floor. Diggs was laid-off, denied a new classification, and placed in the re-hire queue, as per union rules.⁸¹

⁸⁰“Alleged Discrimination in Employment – Respondent: Republic Aviation Corporation (Randolph R. Ford),” February 21, 1962, p. 2-4, Box 31, folder C-4-1-538, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II; Handwritten testimony from Mr. Randolph R. Ford, Box 31, folder C-4-1-538, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II.

⁸¹“Alleged Discrimination in Employment – Respondent: Republic Aviation Corporation (John Diggs),” August 10, 1961, p. 2-5, Box 31, folder C-4-1-538, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II; “Exhibit A: Complaint,” Box 31, folder C-4-1-538, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II; “Exhibit C:

In both cases, the PCEEEO dismissed the discrimination allegations based on a lack of documentary evidence, stating that testimony from Republic supervisors and black employees was inadequate. The PCEEEO investigations, while unable to find explicit discrimination, nonetheless discovered pervasive favoritism, sometimes along racial lines. Lawyer Simpson, IAM union steward, admitted that “by making a job offer to some favorite employee whom they did not wish to lay off” the company discriminated “against any other more qualified employee subject to lay-off.”⁸² This favoritism, as was the case with John Diggs and Randolph Ford, promoted white workers to ‘safe’ classifications and helped white workers save their jobs during layoffs. Black workers, if unable to climb into these more secure positions, faced job loss. And promotions, or even just reclassification, was pivotal to job security at Republic in the early 1960s because of major contract losses. It could mean the difference between having a job and collecting unemployment insurance.

As outlined previously, defense spending had been politically contentious in the 1950s, including where dollars went, the problems of ‘wasteful duplication’ from inter-service rivalries, and rising costs. John F. Kennedy entered office following the longest peacetime military buildup in US history, and while committed to expanding the defense budget and closing the alleged ‘missile gap,’ he was wary of the spiraling costs associated with current procurement practices. Higher taxes could pay for new missiles, but Kennedy also entered office during a sluggish recovery from the 1958 recession, and increased taxes threatened to stall the economy. So JFK opted to streamline the contract process, because “while it is vital for us to maintain a

Disciplinary Notice,” Box 31, folder C-4-1-538, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II.

⁸² “Alleged Discrimination in Employment – Respondent: Republic Aviation Corporation (John Diggs),” August 10, 1961, p. 5, Box 31, folder C-4-1-538, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II.

military force structure that will insure our security and sustain our foreign policy commitments, it is also vital to our economic health that we operate this force at the lowest cost possible.”⁸³ Kennedy chose Ford Motors President Robert Strange McNamara to lead the Defense Department. McNamara enforced the recently passed Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1958, which gave the Secretary of Defense control over weapons acquisitions formerly managed by the military branches. With direct control over all procurement, McNamara brought his private sector acumen to the Defense Department, hiring systems analysts, introducing the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) to the Pentagon, and creating an office of Systems Analysis, among other changes.⁸⁴ The goal was to cut costs *and* improve military capability through increased efficiencies. Purchasing weapon systems for the entire military could reduce costs without sacrificing security. Weighing what system to purchase depended on its function in the overall military strategy, or as McNamara put it, asking whether each weapon system adds “something significant to our national security.”⁸⁵

The new process shifted procurement from within each military branch to broad competition among all contractors. This, coupled with a ‘try before you buy’ policy, introduced new market mechanisms to the contract process, a fundamental transformation in the structure of the entire industry. McNamara could theoretically cut unnecessary spending without sacrificing military preparedness, because the health of the industry was no longer the primary concern, but rather what spending could best meet the military’s overall strategy. Essentially, McNamara did

⁸³ John F. Kennedy, "Statement by the President Concerning a Cost Reduction Program in the Defense Department," July 8, 1962, Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed June 18, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8761>.

⁸⁴ Thomas L. McNaugher, *New Weapons, Old Politics: America's Military Procurement Muddle* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1989), 53; Ronald J. Fox, David G. Allen, Thomas C. Lassman, Walton S. Moody, and Philip L. Shiman, *Defense Acquisition Reform 1960-2009 An Elusive Goal* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 2011), 35-36; Laurence E. Lynn, Jr. and Richard I. Smith, “Can the Secretary of Defense Make a Difference?” *International Security* 7, no. 1 (Summer, 1982): 49-51.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Clayton, 115.

not alter the quantity of defense spending, though these reforms altered its quality.⁸⁶ Aircraft contracts were ripe for re-shuffling, as the Navy, Army, and Air Force each had their own jet fighters from distinct contractors. In 1961, McNamara forced the Navy and Air Force to jointly develop a new multipurpose fighter, known as the Tactical Fighter Experimental (TFX), estimated to potentially save \$1 billion. The announcement threw all aircraft contractors into panic, including Republic and Grumman, whose cozy relationship with the Air Force and Navy respectively kept each firm running. Ten companies competed for the largest contract since World War II and what would also be the only major aircraft contract of the decade. Since the Navy and Air Force had different interests in the plane, companies either teamed up with a competitor associated with a different branch, like the Navy-friendly Chance-Vought with Republic or General-Dynamics and Grumman, or went it alone, like Boeing. On January 24, 1962, Boeing and General-Dynamics/Grumman were chosen in a final eight week runoff, though Grumman was a subcontractor in this instance, and the majority of the plane would be built in Fort Worth, Texas.⁸⁷

The question was what would happen to the rest of the aircraft manufacturers. Republic Aviation was in the most trouble because 100 percent of its business depended on defense contracts. Aside from Grumman, no company had greater than 90 percent dependence on defense procurement.⁸⁸ Having lost space contracts, the TFX contract, and the ‘phase-out’ of the F-105D, Republic made its first post-McNamara ‘reductions-in-force’ on February 23, 1962, cutting 201 employees from the workforce. Another 8-9,000 were estimated in the next two

⁸⁶ Andrew Preston, "Kennedy, the Cold War, and the National Security State," *The Cambridge Companion to John F. Kennedy*, ed. Andrew Hoberek (Boston: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 93.

⁸⁷ Graham T. Allison, "Overview of Findings and Recommendations from Defense and Arms Control Cases," in *The Commission on the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy Appendices, Vol. 4* (June 1975), 27; For the full story of the TFX contract fight, see Richard Austin Smith, *Corporations in Crisis* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), 171-204.

⁸⁸ Clayton, 99.

years. This was besides the estimated 8,000 subcontracting jobs on the line.⁸⁹ In Congress, first congressional district representative Otis Pike, hailing from Long Island's east end, asked Air Force Secretary Eugene M. Zuckert "how are you going to keep the airframe industry competitive when one by one the companies are going out of business, and where Bell is gone, Curtiss-Wright is gone, and Republic is apparently going?" Zuckert replied "What happens to the industry after that I can't say. There certainly is going to be need for some consolidation."⁹⁰

While Pike's question represented the twenty-year old concern about defense spending's regional employment impact, Zuckert's response reflected the new approach to defense manufacturers and the defense budget itself. Economists and politicians increasingly turned away from the idea that defense spending was good for the economy. Charles J. Hitch and Roland N. McKean's 1960 book *The Economics of Defense in the Nuclear Age* influenced the drive for efficiency, but books like *Disarmament and the Economy* by pacifist economist Kenneth E. Boulding directly challenged the pro-spending theory, arguing defense cuts would not hurt the economy, and if spending was redirected to 'more useful' programs, it would produce greater economic and social benefits. A growing school of economists dug into the data to prove this, estimating the real costs of defense spending on a per capita basis for the first time and advocating a re-orientation of defense spending toward domestic development in the early 1960s. These ideas reached the floor of Congress in 1963 when newly-elected Senator George McGovern gave an impassioned speech against the defense budget and for the utility of domestic

⁸⁹"Alleged Discrimination in Employment – Respondent: Republic Aviation Corporation (Randolph R. Ford)," February 21, 1962, p. 2, Box 31, folder C-4-1-538, Complaint Files, 1961-1965, President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961-1965, RG 220, NARA II; "Cutback Perils 9,000 Republic jobs: Republic May Ax 9,000 by June '63," *Newsday*, February 1, 1962, 1.

⁹⁰ William Lee Baldwin, *The Structure of the Defense Market, 1955-1964* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1967), 198-199.

social spending.⁹¹ Supporting the industry and its jobs was no longer the primary concern, though economists spoke of how best to transition these factories and workers toward peacetime activities.

While Kennedy remained a Cold Warrior, these ideas were not far removed from the plans of his administration, particularly the architect of Kennedy's domestic economic policy, Council of Economic Advisors Chairman Walter Heller. Heller had been pushing Kennedy to support a Keynesian tax cut to boost aggregate demand, and while there would be no large-scale spending cuts to match the revenue loss, defense cutbacks would at least partly reduce budget growth. On July 10, 1963, Heller organized an informal disarmament committee to investigate the economic impact of defense spending cuts on dependent regions and communities. Johnson made the committee permanent in December, adding that the Committee on the Economic Impact of Defense and Disarmament would aid governments, private industry, and labor on ways to "minimize potential disturbances which may arise from changes in the level and pattern of defense outlays."⁹² In the two years following, Heller's Committee (later an agency), published reports concluding shifts away from defense would have no major impacts on employment or growth, even with complete disarmament.⁹³ These findings coincided with the eventual passage of the 1964 tax cuts. Vigorous economic growth in 1963 and 1964, occurring alongside reduced proportional defense spending, marked the first time since World War II that unemployment fell during defense reductions, confirming Heller's economic approach.⁹⁴ Aggregate demand measures replaced targeted industrial policy no longer justifiable for national security.

⁹¹ Clayton, 5; See Emile Benoit and Kenneth E. Boulding, *Disarmament and the Economy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) for this general 'disarmament' argument.

⁹² Lyndon B. Johnson, "Memorandum Establishing the Committee on the Economic Impact of Defense and Disarmament," December 21, 1963, Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed June 22, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26554>.

⁹³ Udis, "Introduction," 2.

⁹⁴ Boulding "The Impact of the Defense Industry," 237.

This broad transitional plan was hardly transparent to affected firms and their workers. In response to the loss of contracts at Republic and the 13,000 jobs now in jeopardy, Republic production workers went on strike in April 1962, stipulating the company no longer use workers outside their job title (thereby avoiding promotions), but most importantly, demanding better supplemental unemployment benefits and increased severance packages. After 80 days of no production, Kennedy invoked Taft-Hartley to force negotiations because the strike, “if permitted to continue, will imperil national safety.” The union won, but jobs were still on the line.⁹⁵ Workers, their families, and Long Islanders in general wrote over 50,000 letters to Washington demanding more contracts. Journalists, union officials, and workers justified their call for more contracts beyond the terms of national security; for Long Islanders, employment was a government responsibility. *Newsday* editors established the basic argument: “even before World War II, the government has encouraged Republic and similar defense plants to expand to the point where all of them represent a crucially important source of employment... [the federal government] has a responsibility to these people that extends beyond emergency help.”⁹⁶ Justin Ostro, President of Republic Aviation’s IAM union Lodge 1987 similarly contended that “many of the men who will be laid off in the next month... came out to work in the defense industry for the Government and it’s up to the Government to look out for these workers now.”⁹⁷ Workers thought in the same terms, as one laid-off Republic employee demanded the government “use the billions of dollars they are wasting trying to reach the moon” to keep workers like him

⁹⁵ “Republic Union Calls Strike Vote,” *Newsday*, March 17, 1962, 1; “Strike is on at Republic: Production Halts, No Talks Set,” *Newsday*, April 2, 1962, 1, 3, 82; John F. Kennedy, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, January 1 to December 31, 1962* (Washington DC: GPO, 1963), 497-498; “Republic Aviation Strike Settled,” *Newsday*, August 13, 1962, 5.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Michael Brenes, “For Right and Might: The Militarization of the Cold War and the Remaking of American Democracy,” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2014), 107.

⁹⁷ “Republic Lays off 151 at L.I. Factory,” *New York Times*, February 24, 1962, 29.

employed.⁹⁸ Such a statement was on one hand ironic, since federal spending on the space race supported aerospace manufacturers like Grumman, but this kind of spending did not benefit production workers like conventional defense appropriations. For workers, union representatives, and journalists, not to mention politicians like Otis Pike representing them, federal spending was still necessary to maintain employment. This contention was premised on the direct benefits Long Island had received from defense dollars since 1940.

The local outcry finally found a national platform in the 1964 elections. By that point, Republic was laying off the last round of a total 13,600 workers, three-quarters of their entire workforce. Suffolk County's unemployment rate hit 7.1 percent, and the county government considered separating Suffolk from the metropolitan area to qualify for 'depressed area' funding.⁹⁹ On October 25, U.S. Senate candidate Robert F. Kennedy promised defense workers a visit from Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz and Robert McNamara in January 1965 to see how the area's declining economy could be rebuilt, particularly because Long Island's population was set to grow by 400,000, and as RFK put it, "where are we going to get the jobs?"¹⁰⁰ In the meantime, the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the outgrowth of Heller's disarmament committee, sponsored a report to prepare these workers for the private economy entitled the *Transferability of Defense Job Skills to Non-Defense Occupations*. The government committed to "research and placement, retraining, and relocation," relying on the private labor market to absorb these manufacturing workers who had depended on federal stimulus dating

⁹⁸ New York State Department of Labor, Division of Employment, *The Transferability of Defense Job Skills to Non-Defense Occupations: A Report* (December 1965), 77.

⁹⁹ NYS Department of Labor, *The Transferability of Defense Job Skills*, 2; "Tempera Plans to Seek more U.S. Job Aid," *Newsday*, October 27, 1964, 15.

¹⁰⁰ "Wirtz to Study LI Job Problem: RFK Pledges Study of LI Job Problem," *Newsday*, October 26, 1964, 1.

back to World War II.¹⁰¹ In addition, the Department of Labor and Defense sponsored a relocation project through the Manpower Development and Training Act, encouraging former Republic employees to work for Douglas Aircraft Company in Long Beach, California.¹⁰²

Kennedy's campaign promise was not fulfilled until October 1965, when Secretary McNamara landed in Lake Success to tour Long Island's defense plants. By this point, Republic had all but collapsed, and Maryland-based Fairchild Hiller Corporation bought what remained of the company. The 'Republic' division of Fairchild Hiller received some subcontracting work, building the tail section for McDonnell Aircraft's F-4, but its new workforce was lean and R&D oriented, numbering around 3,700. Approximately a fifth of these workers were engaged in production compared to Republic's eighty percent proportion.¹⁰³ Politicians, desperate for a way to boost industrial employment, expected McNamara to forecast future defense spending. Union officials meanwhile pressed McNamara for a pilot project to convert the local defense economy toward consumer production.¹⁰⁴ Instead, McNamara used the opportunity to inform Long Island the defense boom was over. Though he discussed the prospect of two contracts for Fairchild-Republic and Grumman, he reminded workers that new contracts did not mean more employment, and that Grumman's success depended on the company's ability to keep costs down, labor costs and subcontracts in particular. McNamara generally scolded Long Island's government, business, industry, and education leaders for relying on defense spending because "the defense industry is a highly erratic industry and you should not try to build an economy on it." It was time to shift to non-defense industries, and political leaders should not expect new

¹⁰¹ Special thanks to Peter-Christian Aigner for digging up a brief correspondence about this report. See "Memorandum to Mr. Valenti," September 28, 1964, Part I, Box 25, folder 15, Daniel Patrick Moynihan Papers, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

¹⁰² "Douglas Offer is Seen Attracting 400 LIers," *Newsday*, October 29, 1965, 33.

¹⁰³ Stoff, "Grumman versus Republic," 116; NYS Department of Labor, *The Transferability of Defense Job Skills*, 2.

¹⁰⁴ "Mac to Visit LI Industry," *Newsday*, September 15, 1965, 4.

defense dollars. When asked whether Long Island's high wages penalized the area, McNamara denied it, though added "if you are there isn't anything I can do about it."¹⁰⁵

McNAMARA TELLS LI: DIVERSIFY INDUSTRY

Sees 2 Plane Contracts Possible

Story on Page 3

Figure 4.1: The Long Island equivalent of "Ford to City: Drop Dead." From "McNamara Tells LI: Diversify Industry," *Newsday*, October. 14, 1965, 1.

Essentially, McNamara was informing these workers that the government was no longer committed to employing industrial workers, and what happens to these plants, workers, and the region in general was not the state's responsibility. Contracts would continue to flow to Long Island, though based entirely on how well firms competed in the marketplace. The trajectory toward more technical weaponry would also continue. McNamara's demand that defense firms and politicians shift toward non-defense activities ignored the structure of the industry, one that could not simply transition into private consumer production. Defense-oriented companies had low capitalization, little commercial marketing capabilities, and no experience producing low-cost items in high volumes. They were an outgrowth of the warfare state, committed to meeting their one customer with high quality products made from over 10,000 parts.¹⁰⁶ Assisting defense workers' transition into the private economy misunderstand the challenges of the region,

¹⁰⁵ "McNamara Tells LI: Diversify Industry," *Newsday*, October 14, 1965, p. 1, 3, 60, 118.

¹⁰⁶ Boulding, "The Impact of the Defense Industry," 267.

focusing on worker skill deficiencies rather than industrial opportunity. The Disarmament Agency overstated the skill divide between consumer and defense production because most production workers were essentially light assembly operators working in gigantic job shops.¹⁰⁷ The problem was the lack of industries hiring production workers, as defense firms cut jobs and moved toward high-skill technical contracts. Relocation meanwhile only poached workers away from Long Island (and fewer than two hundred relocated anyway), and Congressman James Wydler demanded McNamara move work to Long Island rather than workers to California, all to deaf ears.¹⁰⁸

The post-layoff experiences of Republic workers illustrate the consequences of these defense procurement reforms in the early 1960s. Technical contracts kept the booming electronics industry and Grumman's space work going, and Republic's laid off engineers and professional employees found plenty of opportunity. Professionals were unemployed for an average of three months, and they overwhelmingly returned to manufacturing, either in the same job category or in higher positions.¹⁰⁹ This represented a minority of Republic's unemployed; only five percent of employees held bachelor's degrees while slightly less than 80 percent were high school graduates. These production workers were unemployed for an average of five months, and over a third exhausted unemployment benefits entirely. When they returned to work, they earned on average less than half what they had been at Republic. Less than one percent of Republic's workforce made under \$450 a month when employed at the plant (around \$3,200 in 2012), but forty-three percent made less than \$450 a month by March 1965, placing

¹⁰⁷ Clayton, 60.

¹⁰⁸ "Ask Mac to Confer on LI Labor Search," *Newsday*, November 29, 1965, 21.

¹⁰⁹ United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *The Post Layoff Labor Market Experiences of Former Republic Aviation Corporation (Long Island) Workers* (Washington, 1966), 6-8, 26-27, 144; 58.2% of professionals returned to manufacturing jobs, while around 21% joined engineering consulting firms, providing technical expertise to multiple contractors rather than working for one company.

them below the Bureau of Labor Statistic's 'lower budget' threshold.¹¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, over half of workers were dissatisfied with their new jobs. Salaries and their new status were the leading reasons for discontent. One Republic worker feared the "possible loss of my home if I do not find employment soon." Another worker claimed that "the local sweat shops take advantage of the situation and offer you a salary which it is impossible to live on... when most of them offer two dollars an hour less it is impossible for a family man to survive on such an insult."¹¹¹ These workers were entering Long Island's increasingly 'diversified' industrial economy, one with an influx of low-wage industries like textile and non-electrical machinery, making it difficult to live in high-cost Long Island.¹¹²

For the NAACP and black workers demanding increased minority representation and fair promotions, the changes taking place within the industry made such struggles difficult. While the PCEEO strengthened the government's obligation to ensure equal opportunity in the defense industry, there were fewer jobs to enforce fair employment. As the Republic case illustrates, the government was no longer using defense spending as a means to boost employment; the defense budget was fully wedded to other priorities by 1961. Simply put, the state's renewed commitment to fair employment meant little when the state's commitment to full employment was ending. The consequences were felt across the region's blue-collar workforce, and seriously compromised the efforts of black activists to incorporate African Americans into the region's prosperity.

¹¹⁰ US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 11, 32, 133; B. Curtis Eaton, "The Individual and the Defense Mass-Layoff," *The Economic Consequences of Reduced Military Spending* ed. Bernard Udis (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1973), 181-186, 200.

¹¹¹ US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 71, 73, 135.

¹¹² Kamer et. al., *Manufacturing in Suburbia*, 18.

CORE vs. Grumman

Despite the collapse of Republic in 1964, defense-oriented manufacturing remained the largest employment sector outside low-wage retail jobs through the 1960s, and the problems of fair promotions, production versus technical employment, and the role of federal civil rights agencies were still relevant. Grumman, Long Island's largest employer by the 1960s, remained competitive during McNamara's reforms and was closely tied to NASA's non-defense contracts. Here CORE hoped to improve black prospects, introducing their aggressive tactics to secure promotional opportunities and black hiring at the last major industrial firm on Long Island. From 1961 to 1965, Grumman's workforce more than doubled, mostly thanks to NASA space contracts. Lincoln Lynch was aware of Grumman's employment growth, its 'Plans for Progress' pledge, the PCEEO's nascent 'affirmative action' framework, and the need to place black workers across the entire occupational ladder to improve minority representation in the industry. The fight to open up jobs at Grumman was, in Lynch's words, "the opening gun in our battle... [to] open up the entire defense industry."¹¹³ For Lynch, African Americans should be included within the employment benefits of such spending, especially since the PCEEO could force firms to employ black workers. And since Grumman had paltry minority employment, CORE could use Grumman's non-discrimination pledge and the PCEEO to negotiate an affirmative action plan.

Despite the company's claims that it was "unique in its achievement in the field of human relations," only 1.1 percent of their workforce were African American as of 1962. Of 187 black workers, 157 were production workers, and there were only two black managers. In the wake of Plans for Progress, Grumman made concerted efforts to employ more African Americans, and

¹¹³ "Grumman Denies CORE'S Charge of Employment Bias," *LI Press*, August 6, 1965, Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

the company boasted that their black workforce had grown to 3.6 percent of total employment by 1965. They had increased their black employment numbers by 256 percent compared to an overall employment increase of 71 percent, and the greatest gains were in skilled blue collar and white collar positions. Black skilled craftsman increased over two-hundred percent, while professional/technical employees quintupled, and black clerical workers increased a whopping 1,320 percent.¹¹⁴ Of course, as a memo attached to Grumman's own report noted, these ridiculous percentages illustrated the company's low black employment prior to 1962 and undermined their assertion that they consistently maintained a fair hiring policy.¹¹⁵

Lynch and CORE submitted a fifteen-point proposal to Grumman on August 5, 1965, laying out the company's faults, including its low black employment numbers and the various ways the company excluded African Americans from higher positions. These included an esoteric promotion policy, a transfer system that 'loaned' black workers between departments while limiting skill development, and the "virtual exclusion of blacks from the available Rocket Training School," thereby denying them "an opportunity for the development of superior technical skills and promotional opportunities." To rectify these failings, CORE proposed Grumman 'vigorously' recruit black workers for jobs, advertise in black media outlets, and target heavily black areas on Long Island. In addition, Grumman must have 'meaningful representation' in all its departments, from research and development to sales and service, and on-the-job training should favor blacks. To combat future cases of bias, CORE demanded the company establish an employee-elected minority grievance panel. Most importantly, CORE

¹¹⁴ "A STATEMENT BY GRUMMAN AIRCRAFT AFTER FOUR MEETINGS WITH LONG ISLAND CORE," undated, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC; "Draft," August 19, 1965, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

¹¹⁵ "Hank" to Jack Rettaliata, Revision to Draft, August 19, 1965, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

wanted Grumman's plan to meet these objectives within thirty days, and CORE asked for periodic updates on Grumman's racial progress.¹¹⁶

Grumman balked at the proposal. Though the company benefitted from space contracts, its long-standing partnership with the Navy, and American involvement in Vietnam, Grumman was painfully aware of the national race for dwindling military contracts. The company had transformed over the past decade to remain competitive, and its flagship Lunar Module project required a massive recruitment drive for engineers and scientists.¹¹⁷ CORE's social demands jeopardized Grumman's ability to get the best engineers and scientists, and by extension, threatened the contracts that kept Grumman in business.¹¹⁸ Grumman President E. Clinton Towl even went as far as claiming that discrimination was impossible at the company, given the high standards for talent and quality to make air and spacecraft.¹¹⁹ Grumman personnel manager P.E. Viemeister took offense to CORE's publicity gathering campaign that used Grumman as a 'symbol' to prod the entire defense industry on Long Island to "bend over backwards to compensate for past discrimination."¹²⁰ The company was particularly opposed to the demand that the civil rights group be included in the decisions made within the company, because CORE was "unqualified to advise us in meeting the responsibilities inherent in the conduct of a highly complex business."¹²¹

¹¹⁶Letter from Long Island Congress of Racial Equality to Grumman Aircraft Corp., et al , August 5, 1965, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC; James J. Hill to Robert Bradshaw, "Suggested Methods of Implementing Proposals," September 23, 1965, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC;

¹¹⁷ Onkst, 23-24.

¹¹⁸ "A STATEMENT BY GRUMMAN AIRCRAFT AFTER FOUR MEETINGS WITH LONG ISLAND CORE," undated, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC;

¹¹⁹ "Draft," August 19, 1965, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

¹²⁰ Quoted in Onkst, 255; See also P.E. Viemeister, "Who's Who in Civil Rights," September 15, 1965, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

¹²¹ "Statement to CORE," August 19, 1965 , p. 2, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

Grumman took a strong public stance against CORE, though behind the scenes, the company feared CORE's protests. Management was particularly concerned that such protests provided a wedge for unionization. The company favored government intervention to labor strife, hoping that federal fair employment agencies might settle the case without disruption.¹²² By the end of August, management agreed to twelve of the fifteen proposals, though three of the most contentious proposals stalled compromise: the employee-elected grievance panel, written notification to employees of all new job openings, and detailed implementation plans submitted to CORE.¹²³ The company offered to train minority Long Islanders in general 'employability' skills, like "grooming," "personal finance," and "motivation and attitude," along with basic industrial skills. Grumman also proposed a Long Island Fair Employment Board, a regional private FEPC that would settle discrimination grievances in the industry.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, the company outright refused to offer any jobs or much meaningful commitment to training. Grumman agreed to join a 'Job Opportunity Day' where Long Island's major industries would provide job and training opportunities, though the company clarified that it was only offering advice for qualification.¹²⁵ These plans did not satisfy CORE's primary grievances, and neither side reached any agreement from September through November 1965. Grumman ceded no operational control to CORE nor any input in the company's personnel decisions. On November 1st, Lynch called off further negotiations, citing that he and the organization were "tired of

¹²² Peter Viemeister to Jack Rettaliata, September 20, 1965, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.; P.E. Viemeister, "Who's Who in Civil Rights," September 15, 1965, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

¹²³ "Grumman OKs CORE Points," *Newsday*, August, 28, 1965.

¹²⁴ P.E. Viemeister to L.J. Evans, October 13, 1965, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

¹²⁵ "A STATEMENT BY GRUMMAN AIRCRAFT AFTER FOUR MEETINGS WITH LONG ISLAND CORE," undated, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC; "'Job Opportunity Day' Sought After Grumman Talks on Bias'," *Newsday*, October 1, 1965.

agreements in principle which mean nothing in fact.”¹²⁶ Grumman management for their part concluded that “CORE wont [sic] be convinced of Grumman sincerety [sic].”¹²⁷ They bluntly stated that the company “can fulfill its obligations to all its employees and to the U.S. Government...or it can follow the dictates of Long Island CORE. It cannot do both.”¹²⁸

While CORE threatened protest, the pickets never came. Lynch admitted in April 1966 that “the exciting times of the demonstrations, while not over, are diminishing.” Lynch himself left Long Island CORE that same month to become associate national director under newly elected national director Floyd McKissick.¹²⁹ CORE’s approach, while useful in the growing service sector, proved powerless against the aerospace employer. CORE used tactics that could threaten local businesses’ customer base, but Grumman’s only customer was the federal government, and with a vague mandate under the PCEEEO, the company could maintain a non-discriminatory employment policy while improving minority hiring, limiting their racial employment policy to informing minorities of jobs and providing them the opportunity to promote themselves.

If Grumman could ignore CORE’s demands, it could not avoid increasing pressure from the federal government. CORE’s own compensatory quota struggles informed a national debate on such a policy as early as 1963, and in the flurry of civil rights legislation in 1964 and 1965, President Lyndon Johnson abolished the PCEEEO and created yet another compliance agency, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFCC). This agency, part of the Department of Labor, had direct control over the contract purse, and it required non-discrimination clearance or

¹²⁶ “CORE Says it will Stop Talking, Start Acting in Grumman Case,” *Newsday*, November 1, 1965, 27.

¹²⁷ Lynch statements quoted in Onkst, 259-260; Grumman quote from handwritten notes on back of “A STATEMENT BY GRUMMAN AIRCRAFT AFTER FOUR MEETINGS WITH LONG ISLAND CORE,” undated, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet “Com-Cu,” folder “CORE,” NGHC.

¹²⁸ “A STATEMENT BY GRUMMAN AIRCRAFT AFTER FOUR MEETINGS WITH LONG ISLAND CORE,” undated, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet “Com-Cu,” folder “CORE,” NGHC.

¹²⁹ “LI’s Lynch Moves up in CORE,” *Newsday*, April 19, 1966, 7.

‘affirmative action’ hiring policies prior to contract awards. Construction protests in 1966 and 1967 sharpened the definition of ‘affirmative action.’ The term now meant that companies must provide numerical goals for minority hiring, when they would hire them, and what positions they would hold. By 1968, ‘affirmative action’ plans, now clearly defined, were required as part of the bidding process itself.¹³⁰ When mixed with McNamara’s intensified contractor nationwide competition, the new quota system could prod firms into improving their racial numbers.

Indeed, Grumman was sensitive to its own racial deficiencies and the negative publicity they might draw in the wake of this legislation. The company embraced Johnson’s War on Poverty, designing a small job training program for the ‘hardcore’ unemployed. They also visibly increased black participation in training courses, averaging between twenty and thirty percent of all graduates between October 1967 and August 1968.¹³¹ In addition, the company targeted North Amityville and Wyandanch residents in February 1968. Grumman was inundated with over two hundred hungry job-seekers who waited up to three hours for interviews. The recruiters were surprised at the amount of skilled labor they found among the ninety-percent minority population that applied, though given the layoffs at Republic, a pool of qualified unemployed or underemployed workers in search defense jobs was not surprising. They hired thirty-five workers immediately and planned to hire around sixty-percent of those who came in for interviews.¹³² In regards to promotion and grievance procedures, Grumman President Lew Evans formed the Open-Door Advisory Council (ODAC), which held bi-weekly meetings to handle discrimination charges within the company. ODAC had both black and white employee

¹³⁰ Graham, *Civil Rights Era*, 187-188, 283; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 363; Onkst, 261-262.

¹³¹ 1967 Training Folder, Alphabetical files, Section A-19, cabinet “Stol-Tim,” folder “Training,” NGHC.

¹³² See Onkst, 265-266; “Grumman Hires 28 in 2 Poverty Areas,” *Newsday*, February 5, 1968, Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet “Com-Cu,” folder “CORE,” NGHC; “Hunt For ‘Black Energy’ Proves Boon for Grumman,” *Long Island Press*, February 5, 1968, Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet “Com-Cu,” folder “CORE,” NGHC.

representatives and handled discrimination charges on an individual basis to include African Americans equally in upgrades and transfers.¹³³

Grumman's efforts, while unprecedented in the company's history, were slow and faced potential setbacks from broader industrial changes. The company increased its minority representation to four percent by 1968, though black workers were concentrated in unskilled/semi-skilled production jobs compared to an overwhelmingly white technical staff. As NASA contracts declined in 1967 and Grumman's F-111B contract remained in limbo, the company was in flux. Grumman reached its peak employment in 1967 with over 37,000 employees, but by the end of that same year, the company's "general re-evaluation of the workforce for the sake of efficiency" led to a reduction-in-force of 800 workers.¹³⁴ In January 1968, black Grumman employees Robert Caupain and Bill Paige, along with members of CORE, the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission, and local Community Action Programs, met with black Grummanites to discuss ways of improving black positions at the company and secure better jobs, a concern in the face of possible layoffs.¹³⁵ From these meetings, Big Brother was formed, an organization chaired by Bob Caupain to encourage current black employees to join training programs and to inform prospective employees of necessary skills and credentials to get jobs at Grumman. It explicitly avoided the function of a grievance committee, and Grumman never officially recognized the organization.¹³⁶ Nonetheless, over the course of 1968, Big Brother became the de facto 'black' representative organization for minority Grummanites, and

¹³³ "They Call Them as They See Them During Open-Door Council Sessions" *Grumman Plane News* 27, no. 16 (September. 13, 1968), folder "1968," NGHC; "Statement of Purpose," undated, Alphabetical files, Section A-10, cabinet "Dept. (O)," folder "Department – Equal Opport. Open Door council '68," NGHC.

¹³⁴ "Grumman Reports Sharp Decline in Space Work, Sees New Gains," *Newsday*, December 2, 1967, 31; "Employment Up: Grumman," *Newsday*, July 16, 1968, 15.

¹³⁵ Employment Improvement Organization to Grumman Negro Employees, January 24, 1968, Leadership Development Files, Part 3, Series B, reel 4, slide 869, SEDFRE records; "Inter-office Memorandum," February 14, 1968, Leadership Development Files, Part 3, Series B, reel 4, slides 870-873, SEDFRE records.

¹³⁶ "Big Brothers Statement of Purpose," Box 1, folder 2, Burghardt Turner Collection.

Bob Caupain met several times with management to offer suggestions about employee race issues. The organization negotiated a company promise of 47 supervisory positions for minority members as well as a black Corporate Director of Personnel by December 1968. With around 500 members, Big Brother formed what was essentially a racial labor union, and when their demands were unresolved a year later, Big Brother broke off negotiations with the company and turned to Long Island CORE to address their grievances.¹³⁷

Unlike CORE's initial failed attempt, the civil rights group now had a substantial number of complaints to justify their protest because Big Brother claimed to represent nearly one-third of Grumman's minority workforce. More importantly, the OFCC could cancel contracts if the company did not meet affirmative action requirements, and since Grumman won the new Navy VFX jet fighter contract in January 1969 (out of which emerged the F-14), compliance would be a mandatory part of the contract process.¹³⁸ Given these factors, CORE, now chaired by defense-oriented Sperry Gyroscope employee Lamar Cox, was given a second chance to make Long Island's defense industry a minority employer. On March 24, 1969, Big Brother and CORE held a press conference in Hempstead where CORE alleged that Grumman had made "no real move to place blacks into decision-making jobs, or any positions of real power." They contended that black workers were concentrated in food service and janitorial positions (half of these positions were minority-filled), while there were few black foremen or managers (around fifty). Promotions, salaries, and raises also differed between blacks and whites. Both

¹³⁷ "Outline – Complaints against Grumman Aircraft in Regard to Bias in Employment, Placed by Long Island CORE and Big Brothers," Box 1, folder 2, Burghardt Turner Collection.

¹³⁸ "Grumman Accused—Denies Bias on Blacks," *New York News*, March 25, 1969 and "Charge Bias at Grumman; It's Denied," *Long Island Press*, March 25, 1969 in Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC; See Onkst, 268; Lamar Cox was an engineer at Sperry and admitted that Grumman was only the first of CORE's efforts to require Long Island Companies to maintain fair hiring policies. See "Blacks Seek Grumman Showdown" *New York News*, July 18, 1969, Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC; See also "LI Blacks Urge Strikes Monday," *Newsday*, September 25, 1969, Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

organizations buttressed their allegations with support from black Grummanites. CORE sent the OFCC executive director a petition signed by six hundred employees, while Big Brother sent Grumman over two-hundred written complaints.¹³⁹ CORE demanded that the government investigate these allegations, especially in relation to Grumman's recent VFX contract, and sent out letters to the Labor and Defense Departments for a review of Grumman's hiring and promotional practices. On April 1, 1969, the OFCC agreed to launch a "routine investigation" into the charges of discriminatory labor practices.¹⁴⁰

CORE's three-pronged approach, including publicity gathering, direct allegations, and the federal investigation, put Grumman's VFX in jeopardy, and local officials like Suffolk Labor Commissioner Lou Tempera warned that CORE's attack posed "a threat to the corporation's position as Long Island's largest employer" and to Long Island's economy when over 36,000 jobs depended on the VFX contract.¹⁴¹ Mud-slinging then ensued between CORE's Lamar Cox and Labor Commissioner Tempera, as Cox denounced Tempera as an "irresponsible bigot...an enemy of the black people" for defending the company, while Tempera reiterated the gravity of a contract cancellation to Long Island's economy.¹⁴² Grumman chose to wait until the federal investigation unfolded, re-iterating their long-standing anti-discriminatory hiring and promotions policies. Grumman's future ultimately rested in the hands of the OFCC, but since the compliance office had yet to cancel any contracts on the grounds of racial discrimination, the

¹³⁹"U.S. to Study Charge of Bias at Grumman", *Newsday*, April 1, 1969; "Blacks at Grumman List Complaints," *Newsday*, April 2, 1969; "Grumman Keeping Us Down: Blacks," *Interavia*, April 4, 1969.

¹⁴⁰ See Onkst, 267; See also "U.S. to Study Charge of Bias at Grumman", *Newsday*, April 1, 1969, "U.S. to Investigate 'Bias' at Grumman," *Long Island Press*, April 1, 1969, and "Grumman Hiring to be Probed," *Suffolk Sun*, April 1, 1969, in Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

¹⁴¹ "'Out of Proportion' Tempera Decries Grumman Probe," *Suffolk Sun*, April 7, 1969, Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

¹⁴² "Tempera is Denounced for Grumman Position", *Newsday* March 28, 1969, and "Press Bias Charges Against Grumman," *Long Island Press*, March 28, 1969, Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

company's contracts were relatively secure.¹⁴³ On April 14, 1969, the New York Regional Office of the Defense Supply Agency launched its investigation at Grumman. Finding no 'overt bias,' OFCC officials (through the Defense Supply Agency) concluded there was "room for improvement," namely that Grumman had not implemented an Affirmative Action program.¹⁴⁴ The company responded with an updated Affirmative Action policy focused on equal promotion opportunities, and laid the groundwork for an entirely new department devoted specifically to racial employment policy, the Opportunity Development Department (ODD). The ODD took over the responsibilities of ODAC and had expanded authority, including running a company-wide promotion review board, operating recruitment drives for minority workers, seeking out qualified minority employees for supervisory positions, and monitoring the company's overall Affirmative Action policy. Essentially, the ODD was an internal bureaucracy to take care of the race problem in-house, as required to ensure contract compliance.¹⁴⁵ It addressed the central problem of promotions, adding a layer of safeguards and inspection across the company to avoid bad press and contract cancellations.

The OFCC investigation and Grumman's new commitments did little to satisfy CORE or Big Brother. CORE immediately responded with a new lawsuit, this time targeting not only Grumman, but the secretaries of Labor, Defense, and the OFCC because they failed to adequately address discrimination at the company as outlined in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. CORE filed the unprecedented lawsuit (no one had charged the federal government for failing to

¹⁴³ Chen, 177.

¹⁴⁴ "U.S. Begins Job Bias Study at Grumman," *Newsday*, April 15, 1969, Alphabetical files, Section A-10, cabinet "Dept. (O)," folder "Department – Equal Opport. Open Door council '68," NGHC.

¹⁴⁵ "Esquerre, Voorhest to head Opportunity development," *Grumman Plane News* 28, no. 14 (July 29, 1969), folder "1969," NGHC; "Grumman Inter-Office Memorandum," September 10, 1969 Alphabetical files, Section A-10, cabinet "Dept. (O)," folder "Department – Equal Opport. Open Door council '68," NGHC; "Grumman Inter-Office Memorandum," November 15, 1969, Alphabetical files, Section A-10, cabinet "Dept. (O)," folder "Department – Equal Opport. Open Door council '68," NGHC.

enforce contract compliance) to compel the government to “stop being hypocritical by passing laws that it has no intention of enforcing,” and the organization hoped the case could affect every company with federal contracts.¹⁴⁶ To CORE, the lack of minority employees was a consequence of widespread discrimination among defense firms, and the in-house solution that both Grumman and compliance officers agreed upon would not open the industry, instead only adjusting the promotion and hiring process to ensure non-discrimination and fair job advertising. The suit, by charging that all involved parties failed to reform the racial employment landscape of the industry, was intended to force firms to absorb African Americans from local labor markets and to include them in every position within the occupational ladder, a solution for two decades of exclusion from the industry.

While CORE prepared its lawsuit for the courts, Big Brother grappled with a looming reduction-in-force. The agreement reached between Grumman and compliance officers, including the new Affirmative Action policy and the Opportunity Development Department, did not address layoffs disproportionately affecting production workers. When a round of layoffs hit in 1968, over half of Grumman’s reduction-in-force were blue-collar workers (329) compared to just seventeen percent of whom were engineers. While Grumman won the F-14 contract in 1969, production would not begin until 1970, and the company announced it would let ten percent of its workforce go (around 3,500) over the course of 1969 as the Lunar Module program came to an end and its defense obligations declined. Seniority, necessity, and performance factored into layoffs, though Grumman President E. Clinton Towl admitted that the pain would

¹⁴⁶ See “CORE to file Grumman Suit,” *Suffolk Sun*, May 19, 1969, “CORE Plans Suit to Kill Grumman Defense Contract,” *Long Island Press*, May 19, 1969, “Blacks Sue to Halt U.S. Contracts to Grumman,” *Long Island Press*, October 31, 1969, and “Action Against Grumman May be a Landmark Case,” *Long Island Press*, November 3, 1969 in Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet “Com-Cu,” folder “CORE,” NGHC.

be felt more heavily among manufacturing employees.¹⁴⁷ With black workers concentrated in production and with little seniority, they faced higher job losses. By August 1969, Big Brother claimed that two-hundred black workers were laid off, or between seventeen and twenty percent of the total layoffs, despite the fact that only ten percent of the total workforce was to be let go. While company officials challenged the data, stating that 164 of those minority members left the company for reasons other than layoffs, Grumman's black population was nonetheless shrinking despite major breakthroughs in the company's racial employment policy.¹⁴⁸

Grumman's new Affirmative Action policy and the dedicated ODD could check discrimination in hiring and promotions, but could do little aside from a general commitment to color-blind layoffs. Big Brother threatened to shut down the company in reaction, and Chairman Bob Caupain promised to fight "even if it means bloodshed."¹⁴⁹ In July 1969, Big Brother and CORE laid out seventeen demands to Grumman, including company recognition of Martin Luther King's Birthday, a black vice president, and "extensive training to allow Negroes and "exploited" whites to advance." If these mandates were not met, Big Brother threatened to "disrupt, impede and harass Grumman's production, morale, and image."¹⁵⁰ When the demands were ignored and the company fired twenty-three black workers and hired thirty skilled workers at the end of July, Big Brother staged a strike on August 4th. Sixty protested outside the personnel building, holding signs reading "Blacks work for nothing – no respect, no money, no advancement," "how the hell can you get seniority when you are laid off?" and "Sweeper,

¹⁴⁷ Onkst 331, 343-349; "Layoff No Blow to Industry: Grumman," *Newsday*, May 21, 1969, 9.

¹⁴⁸ See "Blacks walkout threatened at Grumman," *Newsday*, August 2, 1969, "Grumman Blacks to Fight Firings," *Long Island Press*, August 2, 1969, "Blacks Picket Grumman over 'Bias,'" *Newsday*, August 5, 1969, in Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

¹⁴⁹ "Black Organization Threatens to Shut Down Grumman," *Long Island Press*, June 20, 1969, "Grumman Charged Anew with Bias," *Newsday*, June 20, 1969, in Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

¹⁵⁰ "Grumman Blacks Demand Change," *Newsday*, July 17, 1969; "Blacks Seek Grumman Showdown," *New York News*, July 18, 1969.

Janitorial, Cafeteria: that's as far as you go Black Boy." Caupain wanted seniority waived in layoffs until more African Americans held skilled positions, and when prodded about how the company would select the white Grumman employees to be laid off in lieu of black workers with less seniority, Caupain said "I don't have time to worry about whites. I'm worrying about black people."¹⁵¹ Big Brother's racial promotions-based approach generated only modest support, primarily because they challenged only one aspect of a broader layoff affecting black and white workers. Whites still dominated the reduction-in-force, and the problems of discrimination in hiring and promotion hurt minority employees at the bottom of the hierarchy, doing little to skilled workers and not inducing them to join the protests. When Big Brother staged a walkout and ten mile march from Bethpage to Garden City, it coincided with the nationwide construction-site 'Black Monday' protests on September 29.¹⁵² The walkout only attracted five people at the Bethpage plant in the morning, and by the time the march reached its endpoint in Garden City ten miles west, around eighty protestors joined the original five, including former and current Grumman and Republic Aviation employees.¹⁵³ The race-based strike, in targeting both the problem of layoffs and discrimination, managed to unite few to its cause.

CORE's suit failed in the courts. The case, initially deliberated in US district court in 1970 and appealed in 1972, found the defendant innocent of any wrongdoing. Since black Grummanites and CORE requested a general government inquiry into hiring practices, the

¹⁵¹ See "Grumman Plant Picketed by Blacks over Layoffs," *New York News*, August 5, 1969, "Black Workers Protest 'Bias' at Grumman," *Suffolk Sun*, August 5, 1969, "Blacks Picket Grumman over 'Bias,'" *Newsday*, August 5, 1969 in Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

¹⁵² "Black Labor Unit is Formed on LI," *Newsday* September 27, 1969 Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC; "May 1970 Preview Edition," *Long Island Free Press*, reel 71, Underground Newspaper Collection, Queens Media Center, Benjamin S. Rosenthal Library, Queens College, Flushing, New York (hereafter cited as Underground Newspaper Collection).

¹⁵³ See Onkst, 286-288; See also "'Black Monday' Protest off to a Slow Start," *Long Island Press*, September 29, 1969, "'Big Brother' Pickets Grumman," *Long Island Press*, September 30, 1969 and "80 Pickets at Grumman Charge Discrimination," *Newsday*, September 30, 1969 in Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CORE," NGHC.

plaintiffs had not exhausted all avenues to address discrimination claims through Executive Order 11246 or Title VII. Therefore, they were not allowed to sue administrative bodies that they had not contacted in the first place.¹⁵⁴ After over twenty years of weak fair employment committees, a labyrinthine network had emerged to formalize negotiations between employers and minority workers. Long Island CORE and Big Brother continued to use publicity gathering tactics, including the high-profile lawsuit, but state regulation of fair employment had returned.

Conclusion

The difference between 1943 and 1969, and therefore the victories of earlier activists versus the failures of CORE and Big Brother, was the health and structure of the industry. Demands for fair employment corresponded with the end of full employment. From 1969-1971, defense related jobs declined by 23,000 and the workforce contracted by a fifth.¹⁵⁵ The racial protests were a part of a broader debate over Long Island's industrial future and what to do about declining defense dollars. On November 25, 1969, Nassau County officials, defense employers, and union representatives met to discuss 'conversion to a peacetime economy,' a meeting based on the premise that the defense industry had employed thousands on Long Island since World War II and therefore the federal government had the responsibility to sustain employment regardless of current defense priorities. While this harkened back to the discussions during the Republic closures, five years of anti-war protests and disarmament plans shaped an alternative strategy to sustaining defense manufacturing firms. The hope was to sustain high levels of spending, though divert defense dollars toward social needs, including environmental solutions

¹⁵⁴ Wesley Freeman et al. v. George P. Shultz et al., 468 F.2d 120 (U.S.App.D.C. 16, 1972); See Onkst, 289-293, 298-315 for an exhaustive review of the case.

¹⁵⁵ Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, "Economic Highlights," *Long Island Economic Trends* 7, No. 8 (August 1976): 1.

to air pollution, waste management, more efficient housing technologies, urban transportation innovations, educational technologies, and more. The Long Island Federation of Labor, the region's AFL-CIO umbrella organization, laid out specific projects for the government to fund, including a jet port, mass transit, and a bridge spanning the Long Island Sound, all of which would benefit from the skills Grumman and Republic workers possessed. While some ideas were R&D focused, others were infrastructure based, and all could tighten the regional labor market.¹⁵⁶ Such ideas also had popular support. At a "Full Employment Day" rally on Labor Day in Eisenhower Park in 1970, Democratic congressional candidate Karen Burstein argued that "the investment in the future requires our acceptance of the idea that the government must play as significant a role in waging peace as it does in waging war." Just as CORE wanted compensatory hiring, so too did those laid off from defense jobs and the politicians who advocated for them.¹⁵⁷

Contracts for social development never came. Defense spending slightly rebounded as Grumman won the F-14 contract, but still favored skilled workers and a leaner workforce.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, CORE's five year effort to increase black employment at Grumman was victorious, though not in the way they intended. From 1965 to 1971, the minority proportion had increased from 3.6 to five percent of the total workforce. While African Americans had increased in proportion, their total numbers had declined from an estimated 1,500 during Grumman's peak employment in 1967 to 1,142 workers by 1971. In addition, the new hires were concentrated in skilled positions. By 1971, nearly half of all black Grummanites were categorized as

¹⁵⁶ "Opening Statement," November 25, 1969, Box 67, folder "Commerce & Industry [2 of 3]," Nickerson Papers; Marvin Berkowitz, *The Conversion of Military-Oriented Research and Development to Civilian Uses* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 397-472; "Long Island Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, Save-a-Job Committee," p 2-4, Box 68, folder "Jobs," Nickerson Papers.

¹⁵⁷ "Rally: The Works, not the Workers," *Newsday*, September 8, 1970, 13.

¹⁵⁸ Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, "Economic Highlights," *Long Island Economic Trends* 7, No. 8 (August 1976): 1.

technicians, professionals, managers, or craftsmen, while only forty percent worked in service, operative, laborer positions.¹⁵⁹ This was partly thanks to Grumman's vigorous recruitment drive that began in September 1969 when the Opportunity Development Department was formerly assigned to find minority group employees for supervisory and technical positions.¹⁶⁰ But to improve their racial distribution of jobs and meet Affirmative Action requirements, Grumman looked beyond Long Island. The company had difficulty recruiting qualified black employees from local labor pools, and as David Onkst discovered in oral interviews with former Grumman recruiters, the company also faced competition for qualified black workers from defense manufacturers in California. Grumman chose to recruit directly from southern black colleges to fill its racial quota, including Morgan State, Howard University, and Bennett College, among others.¹⁶¹ Affirmative Action policy did not account for the specific manpower needs of the industry or what manpower was available. Through outside recruitment, Grumman could satisfy federal requirements while also procuring skilled workers to assist in the diversification into computer data systems and space projects. Once again, CORE's goal of procuring jobs for black Long Islander was undermined, as Affirmative Action helped the already skilled, not the unskilled. Simply put: race was too crude a category for the transformations taking place in the industry.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Lawrence Feliu, "Impact on Long Island, Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation," Table VI; OFCC Grumman Statistics, March 31, 1971, Part V, Box 1532, folder 7, NAACP Records, LoC.

¹⁶⁰ "Grumman Inter-Office Memorandum," Alphabetical files, Section A-10, cabinet "Dept. (O)," folder "Department – Equal Opport. Open Door council '68," NGHC.

¹⁶¹ See Onkst 233n24-26 for oral testimony of the difficulty in attracting qualified minority employees to Grumman; "YOU CAN'T LEARN IT ALL ON CAMPUS," *Ebony Magazine*, 1972, Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CO-OP Students," NGHC; "Co-op Students View 'Work Break' as Valuable Step on Career Path," *Grumman Plane News*, September 22, 1972, Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CO-OP Students," NGHC; "Co-op Student to Resume Studies at Bennett College," *Grumman Plane News*, July 27, 1973, Alphabetical files, Section A-12, cabinet "Com-Cu," folder "CO-OP Students," NGHC; Herbert Northrup discusses the challenges of all aerospace manufacturers in meeting black hiring quotas in the space age. See Herbert Northrup, "The Negro in Aerospace Work," *California Management Review* 11, no. 4 (Summer 1969): 12.

¹⁶² William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 109-118.

When Lynch initially targeted the defense industry, he and the rest of CORE believed they could improve black opportunity on Long Island through the largest employment sector in the region. Defense spending offered government-subsidized mass employment, and they wanted that same government-contractor arrangement which supported the suburban blue-collar middle class to include black workers within its mass employment framework. But their fight for racial equality was inextricably linked to defense spending, and by the 1960s, the new technological demands of the Cold War and the restructuring of the contract process no longer sustained mass unskilled jobs. While the Vietnam War increased demand for military goods (so much that it contributed to runaway inflation beginning in 1968), spending continued to favor high-skilled industrial workers or the South and West over Long Island.¹⁶³ Despite continued defense spending, opportunity declined for blue-collar workers, leading to ‘suburban divestment’ in Long Island’s blue-collar suburban communities that relied on the consumer spending and tax revenue from these high-paying jobs. The labor market twist included them. The one commitment the government made to civil rights, state-mandated compliance, was a narrow policy framework that failed to address the occupational dynamics of publicly-subsidized private firms.

While workers and politicians hoped to bring public spending in line with the priorities of the new decade, their calls fell on deaf ears. Federal job creation in the region declined, and defense no longer sustained a large middle class (at least until the brief defense surge of the 1980s). CORE and Big Brother managed to prod Grumman to open jobs to a privileged class of black worker, but given the higher rates of unemployment and the barriers to upward mobility that black workers faced on Long Island, this victory would not improve the plight of the black

¹⁶³ Robert M. Collins, *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 72-3.

working class and poor, who needed access to remunerative employment, a problem they increasingly shared with white citizens. The deeper challenge within Long Island's racial jobs movement was addressing the 'black' problem within the larger structural changes occurring in the economy.

Chapter 5

The Suburban War on Poverty

When Michael Harrington's *The Other America* shattered the postwar consensus of widespread prosperity, he conceived of the 'other America' as an aberration, a 'hidden' people living in 'hidden' places far from the 'affluent' society. For suburbanites removed from concentrated poverty in Appalachia or central city slums, "it is easy to assume that ours is, indeed, an affluent society."¹ In the aggregate, Long Island was indeed isolated from poverty. Politicians in Nassau County claimed that if their county was a city, it would be the nation's wealthiest on a per-capita basis and the sixth largest in population, while Suffolk's rapid growth in the 1950s placed it in close contention with its western neighbor.² With high rates of homeownership, robust job opportunities, and a massive retail market, Long Island was the exemplar of postwar prosperity. But the average Long Islander did not have to travel far to discover poverty. In 1960, nearly 55,000 families survived with annual incomes below \$4,000, over a tenth of the bi-county population. As previous chapters have shown, most of these people were non-white: while only eight percent of whites lived in poverty, over a third of non-white families in Nassau and forty percent of the minorities in Suffolk were poor.³ The "paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty" most resonated on Long Island, where the poor lived in two counties with some the highest median incomes in the nation.⁴

¹ Michael Harrington, *The Other America; Poverty in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 3-5.

² Sherwood Ross, "Nassau County Factsheet," Box 66, folder "Economy," Nickerson Papers.

³ Dieter K. Zschock, "Poverty Amid Affluence in Suburbia," in *Economic Aspects of Suburban Growth: Studies of the Nassau-Suffolk Planning Region*, ed. Dieter K. Zschock (Stony Brook, NY: Economic Research Bureau, State University at Stony Brook, 1969), 71-78; While the Social Security Administration's poverty line was close to \$3,000 for urban areas, Long Island experts argued that this poverty threshold was unrealistic in a high-cost area like Nassau and Suffolk counties. Even \$4,000 annual incomes were considered low. See Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, *U.S. Census '70: Volume 6: Income*, 56.

⁴ "Community Profile, New York, Nassau County," p. CP-008, box 254, folder 30, "Community Profiles 1967," Records of the Information Center, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Opportunity,

The ‘persistence of poverty amidst affluence’ was no paradox if judged by the dominant conception of poverty in the 1960s. During what historian Robert Collins calls the “superheated optimism” of the early 1960s, poverty was understood as problem of the poor themselves, unable to take part in the prosperity surrounding them due to personal deficiencies or spatial isolation. As Joseph A. Kershaw, Assistant Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity argued, “what we need in the longer run are ways to increase the productivity of the poor, ways to make them valuable in jobs and ways of getting them from where they are to where the jobs are.”⁵ When Lyndon Johnson launched his War on Poverty in 1964, the war’s commercial Keynesian architects planned tax cuts alongside the program, believing that injecting capital and consumer spending into a stagnating affluent economy would spur growth, and through the War on Poverty’s training and rehabilitation programs, the poor could then be absorbed.⁶ The suburbs, the geographic symbol of postwar prosperity, were the perfect laboratories to test the hypothesis. When LBJ called for “total victory” in his war against material deprivation, suburban politicians on Long Island believed that their unique fortunes could achieve that goal.⁷ Nassau County Executive Eugene Nickerson proclaimed that “Nassau will become the first county in the nation to abolish slums” and that the entire War on Poverty rested on whether suburbia could in fact

Records of the Community Service Administration, RG 381, National Archives and Record Administration II, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as RG 381, NARA II); “Community Profile, New York, Suffolk County,” p. CP-008, box 256, folder 52, “Community Profiles 1967,” Records of the Information Center, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II.

⁵ Quoted in Collins, 60-61.

⁶ Margaret Weir, *Politics and Jobs: The Boundaries of Employment Policy in the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 68-73; Judith Stein, *Running Steel, Running America Race, Economic Policy and the Decline of Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 73-76; McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 93-94; Collins, 52-53.

⁷ Lyndon B. Johnson, “Special Message to the Congress Proposing a Nationwide War on the Sources of Poverty,” March 16, 1964, Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. Accessed March 14, 2013. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26109>.

eradicate poverty because “if it cannot be done here, how can we hope that it can be done in the cities of America?”⁸

Long Island’s county governments had their own reasons to join a war on poverty. Both county budgets became strained under the diverse demands of their surging populations, especially as costs became shared between the federal, state, and county governments over the course of the postwar period. Welfare topped the list of unmanageable costs, and both Nassau and Suffolk’s executives imagined the War on Poverty could turn ‘tax-eaters’ into ‘tax-payers,’ the very same intention LBJ and his advisors had for the program.⁹ Nassau and Suffolk’s executives planned to utilize Long Island’s growing and diverse economy to accomplish this goal. County officials not only shared the same intentions as the Johnson administration, but also similar assumptions. County Executives, human rights commissions, county labor departments, and a variety of other state actors operating within federal programs or acting independently with federal funding, devised imaginative programs to improve the skills of the region’s un- and under-employed as well as their mobility within the job market. These programs included replacing migrant farm laborers with local workers, training the poor for suburban jobs, developing comprehensive job referral centers, and starting transportation services to link poor neighborhoods with industrial parks.

This confluence of interests and assumptions between local governments and the Federal War on Poverty agenda contradicts the dominant historiography of Johnson’s anti-poverty platform. A generation of historians have re-oriented our understanding of Johnson’s project, emphasizing how local government, community action programs, and grassroots activists shaped

⁸ “1968 Annual Report,” Box 58, Nickerson Papers; “A Shining Example for All America,” *Long Island Daily Review*, date unknown, Box 63, folder “Anti-Poverty,” Nickerson Papers.

⁹ Quoted in Orleck and Hazirjian, 22.

the direction and the outcome of the War on Poverty. While they have overturned the older consensus of the program's failures, Community Action Programs (CAP) remain central to their narrative. Historians argue that CAPs were a funding source for radical and civil rights oriented politics, a means to empower the poor and their communities formerly denied political power, and central to the tensions between the White House, urban Democratic machines, and poverty activists. But whether CAPs were a source of contention or a wellspring of innovation and protest during the 1960s, they did not always figure so heavily in local politics.¹⁰

If we take a broader view of the War on Poverty, one that understands Johnson's call for a 'war' on poverty as a movement that included local politicians with mutual interests and a perspective that looks beyond the Economic Opportunity Act, a different narrative emerges, one where the suburbs were central to the entire project.¹¹ On Long Island, CAPs did not upset local political arrangements and local politicians launched their own fronts in the fight against poverty, unique programs with the same goal as the national War on Poverty in the space where the war was most likely to succeed: the postwar suburb. But it was in the suburbs where the narrative of postwar suburbia met the reality of the job market, and where the failure of the War on Poverty was most apparent. The defense industry, as outlined in the previous chapter, had evolved beyond the mass unskilled employer it had once been, and suburbia's service economy either

¹⁰ See Germany, *New Orleans After the Promises*; Orleck and Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History*; Clayson, *Freedom Is Not Enough*; Phelps, *A People's War on Poverty*; Casanave, *Impossible Democracy*; Martha J. Bailey and Nicolas J. Duquette, "How Johnson Fought the War on Poverty: The Economics and Politics of Funding at the Office of Economic Opportunity," *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (June 2014): 351-388.

¹¹ Brian Steensland notes the cooperation between the Federal government and state as well as local governments to fight the social and fiscal costs of poverty, including rising welfare costs, riots, unemployment, crime, and declining property values. See Brian Steensland, *The Failed Welfare Revolution America's Struggle Over Guaranteed Income Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 40, 109; David Torstensson notes that the War on Poverty impelled the USDA to do more for the poor in rural America, and that the Economic Opportunity Act pressured "federal bureaucracies into becoming more responsive to the needs of the poor." See Torstensson, "Beyond the City: Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty in Rural America."

required advanced degrees or paid too little to sustain homeownership and the necessities of suburban life. Anti-poverty training programs were unable to breach the divide, and new transportation routes merely dropped workers off to non-existent jobs, while referral centers only offered low-wage employment. By the late 1960s, the county officials realized that the problem of poverty was not the poor themselves, but of job opportunities and the structure of the labor market. In 1970, Nassau County Executive Eugene Nickerson announced a guaranteed employment program, illustrating that the only way to promise jobs was to create them. Poor Long Islanders could not rely on the alleged affluence of postwar private enterprise.

This chapter looks at the War on Poverty from a different, but no less important perspective. Rather than the cities or rural regions where CAP funding mobilized impoverished communities and drew the ire of local government, the chapter looks at how the War on Poverty operated in what was the most widely affluent region in the nation. Rather than considering the War on Poverty within the narrow confines of the Economic Opportunity Act, this chapter investigates the flurry of local policies and programs that drew inspiration from the Johnson's administration's broader intent for this domestic 'war.' These policies looked to end poverty associated with migrant farm labor, transportation, and skill deficiencies of the poor themselves. Finally, while there are a variety of perspectives from which to assess the War on Poverty's legacy, this chapter looks at the war's efforts to incorporate the poor into the economic mainstream. To understand the War on Poverty, we need to understand why it failed in the suburbs, where it was most likely to succeed.

Statesmen of a New Society

Nassau and Suffolk's county government's welfare state, and therefore relationship with poverty, evolved in parallel with the federal government. At the turn of the twentieth century, rural interests dominated both Nassau and Suffolk counties. Both county governments were a collective of supervisors from each town, each representing local interests. Republican Party machines monopolized power in both counties, and while machines typically thrived on decentralized power that enabled patronage and stable electoral victories, the Nassau County GOP managed to centralize their government. J. Russel Sprague, Hempstead Town Supervisor and Nassau County GOP chieftain, recognized that county-wide control of police, health, welfare, and property tax assessment could be more efficient, shape the county's growth, and provide new patronage jobs. In 1936, a new county charter created the County Executive position, a powerful central figure that could veto laws of the Town Supervisors and administer county services. By 1938, Sprague handily won the County Executive position, a position he held until 1952.¹² As the first county in the United States to have such a position, Sprague pioneered a new kind of suburban government at the county level, one with municipal functions like urban systems rather than a limited rural-oriented state.¹³ Nassau now had its own budget and departments devoted to tax assessments, health, and overall planning. Welfare, once delegated to towns, now operated with four divisions for families, child welfare, medical care, and accounting. All of this accommodated the massive postwar development of Long Island, from authorizing residential housing tracts to building Salisbury Park, the county's suburban

¹² Teaford, 33-43; Smits, *Nassau, Suburbia USA*, 64-71; For an in-depth analysis of the deliberations surrounding Sprague's county government revisions, see Marjorie Freeman Harrison, "Machine Politics Suburban Style: J. Russel Sprague and the Nassau County (N.Y.) Republican Party at Midcentury" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2005), chapter 3.

¹³ Edwin J. Benton, *Counties as Service Delivery Agents Changing Expectations and Roles* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), xxv.

version of New York's Central Park (later renamed after Dwight Eisenhower). Sprague maintained a strong patronage system during this transformation, even incorporating newly arriving suburbanites into the GOP, earning Nassau "the most Republican county in the United States" moniker in the postwar period.¹⁴

As was true nationwide, the county machine faced increasing pressures during the 1950s. A. Holly Patterson, Sprague's Republican successor in 1952, confronted internal disputes as he suppressed department costs and civil service salaries. The Democratic Party, uncompetitive for most of the twentieth century, now mobilized newly registered Democrats in the County (about a third of county voters) and promised to cleanse government of the 'machine.'¹⁵ Eugene H. Nickerson, a Harvard graduate and Columbia trained lawyer, ran for the County Executive position in 1961. He campaigned in the shadow of John F. Kennedy's popularity, promising to bring the "spirit of the New Frontier" to Nassau County and promised to end the waste and mismanagement of the Sprague machine, producing efficiency and lower taxes.¹⁶ After his electoral victory in 1961, Nickerson ushered in changes similar to the 'reform' liberals shaking up urban political machines across the country. He hired experts and professionals to manage county services, and re-structured the civil service system to emphasize merit employment and advancement. This did more than 'clean-up' local politics; Nickerson re-conceptualized the very purpose of county government. Within his first five years in office, Nickerson and the county legislature produced what Douglas Rosenthal called the 'custodial state,' a local government committed to the general welfare, leisure, and safety of all county residents. This included

¹⁴ Smits, *Nassau Suburbia USA*, 71; See Harrison, chapters 4 & 5 for a detailed narrative of Sprague's political career; Quoted in Teaford, 28.

¹⁵ James Shelland, "Executive Power: A Comparison of Styles," in *Nassau County: From Rural Hinterland to Suburban Metropolis*, Joann P. Krieg and Natalie A. Naylor ed. (Interlaken, NY: Empire State Books, 2000), 109-117; See also Harrison, chapter 7.

¹⁶ Arturo F. Gonzalez, *Eugene H. Nickerson, Statesman of a New Society* (New York: J.H. Heineman, 1964), 62-65.

county departments devoted to the local economy (Commerce and Industry), consumer protection (Consumer Affairs), the elderly (Office for the Aging), strike mediation (Department of Labor), traffic regulation (Department of Traffic and Engineering), civil rights (Commission on Human Relations), and a comprehensive master plan to improve recreational facilities, police protection, education, and health care. Nickerson contended that all could be provided at lower cost by ending the patronage that bloated local government.¹⁷ Most importantly, Nassau County government was now a federal government in miniature, a liberal state committed to welfare, civil rights, mediating labor disputes, and planning.

The expansion of county power was infectious, and Nassau County served as a model for the nation. Suffolk County, whose government dated back to 1683, had also been controlled by a Republican Party machine in a decentralized government structure. In 1958, residents voted in favor of a county charter with a strong County Executive and centralized police, health, and welfare powers.¹⁸ One year later, H. Lee Dennison, a Democrat who never held any political position, became the County's first County Executive. A former engineer for the County Public Works Department, Dennison quit in 1953 after blaming the county's poor roads on the Republican machine. He ran on an anti-machine platform, and once in office, overhauled the civil service and created an office for economic development, a human relations commission, a labor and social services department, a new community college, and public works projects.¹⁹ As a former engineer, Dennison understood Suffolk's challenges as a 'planning' problem, because the county faced "unplanned, conglomerate, unrelated, speculative growth" in the 1950s. Only a

¹⁷ Shelland, 72, 170-172; Douglas E. Rosenthal, *Sometimes Wrong but Never in Doubt: The Democratic Party of Nassau County New York As a Political System* (MA Thesis, Columbia University, 1963), 124-125; "Years of Progress – The Record of the Administration of Nassau County Executive Eugene H. Nickerson – 1962-1967," p. 3-23, Box 58, folder "Record of Administration, 1962-7," Nickerson Papers.

¹⁸ Teaford, 77-81.

¹⁹ "Biographical Data – H. Lee Dennison," p. 1-3, Box 2, folder 54, Dennison Papers; Letter to Mr. Hal Levenson from H. Lee Dennison, November 30, 1965, Box 2, folder 54, Dennison Papers.

coordinated effort with education, public relations, business, and industry could make Suffolk's resources "assets, not liabilities," producing ordered growth that increased job opportunities, improved services, and lowered taxes.²⁰

Both Nickerson and Dennison were expanding the welfare state at the suburban county level in the 1960s, a process that coincided with federal state growth and even pre-dated federal conservation and environmental reform.²¹ But county growth in the postwar period was more than a parallel development because Nassau and Suffolk were increasingly tied to the federal government itself through federal grants, which permitted counties to expand and experiment with reforms without raising property taxes or requesting state funds.²² Nickerson actively pursued federal assistance, paying for his programs with aid rather than taxes. He began procuring grants in the early 1960s, eventually establishing an Office of Federal and State Aid devoted entirely to maximizing federal and state subsidies. His methods became a model for counties nationwide, and by 1967 he was pulling in over \$25 million a year from federal sources, some fifteen percent of the entire county budget, up from less than four percent ten years prior. This funded everything from elderly aid and welfare to smog prevention and nuclear shelters. Counties nation-wide adopted these practices, including neighboring Suffolk County.²³ Costs were also increasingly shared between local, state, and federal government, and public welfare illustrated this relationship. Since the depression, Albany and Washington assisted Nassau and

²⁰ Letter to Mr. Hal Levenson from H. Lee Dennison, November 30, 1965, p. 2, Box 2, folder 54, Dennison Papers; "Memo from County Executive," January 1960, Box 3, folder 104, Dennison Papers.

²¹ Historian Christopher Sellers argues that Long Island and Los Angeles, "those places touched most and earliest by postwar sprawl" were the wellsprings for the modern environmental movement. Nassau County intervened to protect the water supply. See Sellers, *Crabgrass Crucible*, 1-10, 120-123.

²² Shelland, 7.

²³ "For Immediate Release," September 8, 1967, Box 66, folder "Finance – Federal Aid," Nickerson Papers; "Years of Progress – The Record of the Administration of Nassau County Executive Eugene H. Nickerson – 1962-1967," p. 3, Box 58, folder "Record of Administration, 1962-7," Nickerson Papers; "1968 Annual Report," p. 53, Box 58, Nickerson Papers.

Suffolk counties with their increasing welfare outlays. By 1957, Nassau's federal reimbursements were between fifty and eighty percent, and Washington covered around two-thirds of Suffolk's expenditures.²⁴ Nonetheless, welfare remained the largest expense for both counties in the 1950s.

The increasing burden of welfare was a growing concern for Long Island's new county executives, especially since both Nickerson and Dennison were elected on 'efficiency' platforms. Reports revealed that the majority of welfare payments went to the aged and disabled, but a study of Nassau ADC recipients revealed a disproportionate number of recipients were African American women, and nearly two-thirds of these recipients worked. Both the racial statistic and their employment status shaped the Nickerson administration's efforts to improve efficiency and lower welfare costs for county government.²⁵ In 1962, Nickerson appointed John J. MacManus to run Nassau's Public Welfare department. MacManus announced that his sole intention was to "administer [the] department out of business." While admitting that abandoned children, the elderly, and sick would never disappear, he asserted that at least a quarter of recipients were employable, and he actively wanted to transform the purpose of welfare "from the traditional custodial attitude toward rehabilitation of welfare cases wherever possible."²⁶ This attitude, when mixed with the increased costs of welfare, the faith in bureaucratic reform, a growing local economy, and the shared governance between Long Island's counties and the federal government, made both Nassau and Suffolk eager frontline soldiers when poverty reform reached the national agenda. Once Congress ratified the Economic Opportunity Act on August

²⁴ D. Fullerton, "Original Report, Nassau County Department of Public Welfare," Box 8, folder "Department of Public Welfare," LWV of Nassau Papers; Caryl Reeve Granttham, *A History of the Government of Suffolk County, New York, 1683-1958* (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1963), 91.

²⁵ Brazier et. al, 40-41.

²⁶ Gonzalez, 132-134.

20, 1964, local government and activist could access the \$947 million reserved for education, job training, local economic development, legal aid, health initiatives, and local political participation. For Nassau and Suffolk, both rapidly growing county governments with a keen interest in fighting poverty, the new Act provided unprecedented Federal resources with relative autonomy.²⁷

Beyond financial resources, institutional capacity, and a desire to alleviate poverty, Long Island's county administrations also shared the basic assumption of affluence that undergirded the War on Poverty itself. County Executive Eugene Nickerson based his poverty agenda on the belief that Nassau County had unrivaled prosperity, but while Nassau was the "richest county in the world," accessibility and qualifications were the "root of the poverty problem." Unlike depressed areas where automation or factory relocation eviscerated job opportunities, Long Island was the destination for these factories and automation went hand-in-hand with increased wages for those working alongside new technology. High-paying jobs were plentiful but out of reach to those who needed them most. The welfare system provided survival, not skills to enter the suburban economy. The goal was to break down the barriers to jobs, be they transportation, child care, skill/motivation deficiencies, or knowledge of job opportunities, eradicating poverty through full participation in what postwar suburbia had to offer. This would not only incorporate them into the mainstream, but lower the largest expenditure in the county. As he stated to business owners and the public in 1968, "the cost of poverty is high – for everyone [while] the cost of full employment is relatively low."²⁸

²⁷ Annelise Orleck, "The War on Poverty from the Grassroots Up," in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 9-16.

²⁸ "Program Concepts and Philosophy," p. 4-5, Box 63, folder "Anti-Poverty," Nickerson Papers; "A Shining Example for all America," Box 63, folder "Anti-Poverty," Nickerson Papers; Inter-Departmental Memo, Morris H. Schneider to Eugene Nickerson, March 22, 1965, Box 58, folder "Poverty Program – Conference," Nickerson Papers.

In Suffolk, County Executive Dennison was less idealistic. Given Suffolk's dual poverty problem, on one hand suburban in its west but also rural on its east end, Dennison did not believe that "poverty is ever going to be completely or instantly eliminated." He did however argue that with proper planning "the anti-poverty program will help build a better foundation for a more stable and equitable future general economy." This meant using planning powers to enforce building codes, eliminate substandard housing, and improve education, health, and employment, all of which could benefit the poor living in the urbanized west and rural east. To Dennison, the problem of poverty was one of development, and War on Poverty funding could be used not only to help the poor directly, but in a broader fashion to develop Suffolk's rural expanse and incorporate the region into the suburbanizing process creeping eastward. If Suffolk farmers kept exploiting migrant laborers, housing conditions would remain poor, and the county would continue to subsidize those costs. Dennison's conviction was that planning could transform poor communities, and the entire farming region, ultimately lowering the burden of welfare.²⁹

Long Island's War on Poverty and its architects reflected the national aims of the project, or at least those of its leader, Lyndon Johnson. These leaders constructed a county version of LBJ's "Great Society" with devoted agencies for the aged, consumer affairs, and the environment, among others. They emphasized the costs of material deprivation, not only to those who faced it, but to the state that supported their subsistence. And like the national War on Poverty, both Nickerson and Dennison sought to alter the pathways of opportunity around the market, not to modify the market itself. This meant improving the transportation links between low-income neighborhoods and jobs, initiating job training programs, coordinating the efforts of

²⁹ "Sees Suffolk Poverty Aid of \$1 Million," *Newsday*, October 9, 1964; "Poverty Panel Gets Backing from Harwood," *Newsday*, November 9, 1964; "Suffolk County Public Information News Release," August 15, 1965, Box 3, folder 119, Dennison Papers; "Suffolk County Public Information News Release," October 17, 1965 Box 3, folder 119, Dennison Papers.

Community Action Programs to more efficiently provide services, and in Suffolk's case, stem the tide of migrant farm laborers and replacing them with indigenous workers. These unprecedented efforts developed from a conviction that Long Island could eliminate poverty, because as Nickerson put it, "if the richest county in the world, with the help of the richest state and nation in the world, can't effectively eliminate its pockets of poverty in this affluent age, then the poor are truly justified in their fatalistic desperation."³⁰ It was on Long Island where Johnson's approach to poverty would be put to the test, through both conventional Federal programs and locally-developed experiments with the same intentions.

"Bailing out the Ocean with a Spoon"

While Long Island's county executives embraced Johnson's overarching goals and threw themselves onto the frontline of the War on Poverty, Community Action (CAP), the Economic Opportunity Act's most controversial program, was not a decisive part of Long Island's poverty war. Nationally, forty-five percent of the Office of Economic Opportunity's budget (the agency in charge of administering the Federal War on Poverty) was devoted to CAPs. CAPs not only delivered social programs but also mobilized the poor so they could alleviate their own conditions, and it was these 'mobilization' efforts that were nationally controversial, since they supported competitive political factions that disrupted existing political structures in the nation's largest cities.³¹ This bothered LBJ in particular, who never committed to the community action idea and came to loathe community 'mobilization' as CAPs threatened Democratic mayors

³⁰ Guian McKee, "This Government is With Us" Lyndon Johnson and the Grassroots War on Poverty," in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 33-40; Weir, 68-69; "A Shining Example for all America," Box 63, folder "Anti-Poverty," Nickerson Papers.

³¹ Evelyn L. Forget, "A Tale of Two Communities: Fighting Poverty in the Great Society (1964-68)," *History of Political Economy* 43, no. 1 (2011): 209-211.

across the nation.³² But local CAPs proved neither controversial nor empowering on Long Island. The two county Economic Opportunity Commissions (EOC), in charge of twenty-two local CAPs, had difficulty mobilizing Long Island's poor. The CAPs themselves were largely staffed by social workers and middle class activists, and focused on efficient service provision rather than empowerment, further diminishing the role they played in transforming Long Island's poor into a political force.

CAPs were first organized on Long Island in December 1964. In Nassau, prominent volunteer organizations and the social welfare establishment managed the Nassau County Economic Opportunity Commission (Nassau EOC).³³ In Suffolk, a conglomerate of social welfare organizations developed the Economic Opportunity Commission of Suffolk, Inc. (EOC Suffolk). These two county-wide EOC's served as umbrella organizations for twenty-two community action programs across the two counties. The individual CAPs administered federal programs like Headstart, Legal Aid, and Medicaid enrollment, all while encouraging the poor to participate in CAP activities so the poor would "have a voice in determining their future."³⁴ Providing services was straightforward, but encouraging participation from the poor proved problematic.

From the outset, both the Nassau and Suffolk EOCs had difficulty determining where to establish community action centers. They defined twenty 'poverty pockets' in 1965 (ten in each County), though only six CAPs were functioning by 1967. It took nearly four years to establish the twenty-two CAPs, and by then the federal government had curtailed funding and autonomy.

³² Michael Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), chapter 3; McKee, "The Government is with Us," 31-62; Orleck, "The War on Poverty from the Grassroots Up," 14-17.

³³ Agovino, et. al., 66-69.

³⁴ "Jordan Quits Post in Poverty Group," *The Long Islander*, March 5, 1970, 3.

Nonetheless, if judged by what services these CAPs offered residents, Long Island's CAPs were mildly successful. All programs emphasized education and offered courses in a variety of fields. Some reflected the therapeutic aspects of the War on Poverty. The Westbury Community Council for Economic and Educational Opportunity (known by its acronym, the WCCEEO) offered a course on "sewing and charm" to help young women improve their appearance for job interviews. Just across the hall, the WCCEEO provided small electronics courses. In the Five Towns area, "Project ABC" tackled child and adult illiteracy, while "Project Reach-out" procured summer employment for teenagers. CAPs had the greatest impact in health and child care. Suffolk County's EOC set up health clinics and food programs within all of their CAPs, and Port Washington's CAP in Nassau County provided medical services to some 700 families. Freeport's CAP managed a highly regarded day-care center for 32 children and had to turn away some 150 others. The daycare center was especially important to female workers. Coat factory employee Dorothy Harris admitted "I don't know what I'd do without it," while domestic Mary Brown could work a full day and move off welfare.³⁵

Long Island CAPs were able to provide adequate service provision largely because they were managed by professional social workers and middle class activists. This drew criticism from those looking to "organize the people to force these institutions to respond to their needs" as North Amityville CAP Chairman Marion Ball put it.³⁶ Members of local CAPs complained of the "middle-class atmosphere," of welfare professionals more comfortable with rehabilitating the poor than political organizing. Social workers operated the EOCs central functions, though with

³⁵ "Communique from LI's Poverty Battlefield," *Newsday*, October 29, 1966, 1W; "The Designation of the Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk, Inc.," p. 7, Box 1, folder 3, Burghardt Turner Collection; "One Place where it Worked," *Newsday*, August 4, 1971, 5A; "Up Front in LI's Poverty War: What One Village Does-and Doesn't-Do for its Poor," *Newsday*, April 13, 1968, 1W.

³⁶ "Community Action: For the People but not by Them," *Newsday*, August 4, 1971, 3A.

federally mandated programs comprising nearly three-quarters of the \$28.9 million budget for Nassau and Suffolk EOC's from 1965 to 1971, the dominance of professional social workers was unsurprising.³⁷ Across the nation service provision overshadowed "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in all but the most radicalized CAPs.³⁸ But even when Long Island CAPs attempted to organize the poor, they ran into difficulty determining the target "community." This was a problem with the formulation of "community action" itself, premised on an urban conception of a united population living in concentrated poverty. Even in areas with large poor populations, like Hempstead or Glen Cove, organizers faced stiff opposition from the middle-class. Activists for TRI-CAP, formerly known as the WCCEEO, but now covering Westbury, New Cassel, and Carle Place, surveyed the three communities to determine the most pressing problems, but responses from homeowners illustrated a lack of recognition of any issues plaguing the communities. Neighborhood aides in Suffolk County's Patchogue CAP noted a distinct "middle class fear of rocking the boat and identification with the poor." And in Roosevelt, CAP Aides assisting residents with welfare faced a hostile black middle class seeking to destroy the program outright, because they "do not want the label on their town that reveals the fact that there is poverty in Roosevelt."³⁹

These CAPs might have produced local class conflict if they united the poor, but organizers had just as much difficulty mobilizing low-income residents as they did gaining middle-class approval. Aides working for CAPs in Suffolk noted that residents "don't want to

³⁷ "Community Action: For the People but not by Them," *Newsday*, August 4, 1971, 3A;

³⁸ David Torstensson, "Beyond the City: Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty in Rural America," *Journal of Policy History* 25, no. 4, (2013): 588-589.

³⁹ Gary Drakeford, "The Welfare," *Tri-Cap Reflector* 1, no. 2 (May 1971): 13, Box "New Cassel," HSW; "SEDFRE Workshop Application – Edwin R Geyer," Leadership Development Files, Part 3, Series B, reel 4, slide 715, SEDFRE records; "Interview with Glenn Moody," *The Black News/Long Island Free Press*, July 1971, Periodicals 1, Box 233, Tamiment Library Newspapers, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York.

admit they are poor,” were “satisfied with their surroundings,” or “think it’s a waste of time to become active in their community.” In Hempstead, *Newsday* reporters found that low-income apartment dwellers were not even aware of the CAP center just three blocks from their building. In Suffolk, only 667 of the 30,000 eligible residents actually voted in local board elections in 1970. An evaluation of Long Island’s programs during that same year determined that few were aware of CAP’s existence, and even fewer viewed CAPs as their advocate. Apathy was partly to blame, as was dissonance between the federal conception of ‘community’ and the suburban reality of poverty. Even in the most concentrated poverty areas, residents were spread across automobile dependent hamlets and lived amongst those above the poverty threshold.⁴⁰

The overall difficulty of mobilizing the poor on Long Island forced Suffolk EOC Executive Director Dean Harrison to quit after only four months in the position in 1968. Despite having prior experience in Newark, he was “wearied by the sprawling nature of poverty in this suburban-rural county,” compared to Newark’s dense urban wards.⁴¹ Nassau EOC Director Adrian Cabral expressed a similar disappointment after seeing how few resources were available for the challenges they faced, particularly the lack of a united and informed community. It was like “like bailing out the ocean with a spoon” as Cabral put it.⁴² Long Island’s CAPs improved service access, but did not empower, and this is partly why they rarely received much opposition from the political establishment, in contrast to the tensions between urban CAPs and municipal government. Improved service provision also did not incorporate them into Long Island’s economy; that goal would be left to county, local, and volunteer groups who designed their own

⁴⁰ “SEDFRE Workshop Application – Helen Lipowski,” Leadership Development Files, Part 3, Series B, reel 4, slide 704, SEDFRE records; “SEDFRE Workshop Application – Agnes Dozier,” Leadership Development Files, Part 3, Series B, reel 4, slide 713, SEDFRE records; “Community Action: For the People but not by Them,” *Newsday*, August 4, 1971, 3A.

⁴¹ “Shifts in Suffolk Poverty Setup Point Up a Maze of Problems,” *New York Times*, June 30, 1968, 26.

⁴² “Communique from LI’s Poverty Battlefield,” *Newsday*, October 29, 1966, 1W.

programs to train, transport, and find jobs for Long Island's poor. In fact, Long Island's CAPs were more effective after the 1967 Economic Opportunity Act amendments transferred control of community action to local government, permitting Nassau and Suffolk counties to include the twenty-two CAPs into their own locally designed war on poverty. In this way, understanding Long Island's war on poverty means going beyond the paltry efforts of the Federal community action programs, and instead analyzing how local government charted their own course with the expressed purpose of ending poverty in the suburbs, the micro version of Johnson's goal to eradicating poverty in America.

The War on Imported Poverty

Long Island's local war on poverty began with a local issue: migrant labor in Suffolk's east end. Whereas the poor were conceived of as a static population in Appalachia or urban slums, in Suffolk and across farms on the east coast, the poor chased a low-wage job market running from Florida to Maine. Suffolk farmers used some 3,600 migrants as of 1966, three quarters of Suffolk's entire agricultural workforce.⁴³ Migrants used local resources, like the county's rental assistance program and local public hospitals, but contributed nothing in taxes, subsidizing the farmer and crew chief at public expense.⁴⁴ Furthermore, this poverty became a black-eye for the county when Edward R. Murrow's 1960 CBS special *Harvest of Shame* revealed Suffolk's east end migrant labor situation. Congressional hearings in the following year exposed the harsh working routines, low pay, and appalling living conditions these laborers

⁴³"Farm Labor Annual Report, 1966," p. 21, box 511, folder "New York Clips," Records of the Director; Records of the Office of Operations; Records of the Office of Opportunity; Records of the Community Service Administration, RG 381, National Archives and Record Administration II, College Park, MD.

⁴⁴"Threat Silences Migrant Witness," *New York Times*, May 21, 1961, 1; "U.S., State Probing LI Migrant Abuses," *Newsday*, May 22, 1961; "Bare Huge Welfare Waste," *Newsday*, January 4, 1960, 1.

faced while staying in Suffolk, and New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller launched investigations into the legality of these camps. Suffolk County Executive H. Lee Dennison responded to this press at the outset of his administration, condemning the “questionable employment agencies...specializing in bringing in any kind of labor into the county at a price” and established a task force to investigate solutions.⁴⁵

Dennison’s task force began a war on migrant poverty, a local effort that coincided with a national concern for poor agricultural laborers. The migrant labor system was a complex problem, involving labor exploitation, bad housing conditions, rising government costs, and a transient population with even less unity than the suburban poor. Dennison first chose a strategy from his planning background, applying ‘slum’ clearance to rural areas. In November 1962, Dennison and the Suffolk Board of Supervisors bought the 349 acre Hollis Warner Duck Ranch, the largest in the world and whose residents testified to Congress about their working and living conditions. The ranch, which sat between the Peconic River and Meeting House Creek in the town of Riverhead, would be added to a \$4 million state-sponsored wetlands program meant to curb pollution, conserve land, and limit ‘undesirable’ development. The County would assist the migrants living in the camp with relocation services, and Dennison entertained the idea of moving those who could not find adequate dwelling west to the suburban part of Suffolk County.⁴⁶

After two years, Suffolk County acquired the ranch, and the wetlands project quickly became as controversial as the migrant camp. Long Island CORE intervened to defend the migrants against the County action, establishing a headquarters in the Hollis Warner camp and

⁴⁵ H. Lee Dennison, “Special for: Long Island Press, February 19, 1960,” p. 4, Box 3, folder 104, Dennison Papers.

⁴⁶ “Suffolk to Eliminate Slum Area as Part of the Wetlands Program,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1962, 135; “Suffolk Votes to Acquire 1,600 Acres along Peconic,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1963, 39.

forming “Operation Tinderbox,” a summer-long protest against the housing conditions, relocation plans, and work arrangements migrant laborers endured. CORE demanded the County provide decent jobs and housing, and that they do not resettle migrants in segregated housing elsewhere in the county. In June, CORE orchestrated a ‘dump-in’ to protest the lack of garbage removal since the County takeover and a seventy-person march and sit-in across Main Street in downtown Riverhead. After two protests, eleven men, including Long Island CORE chairman Lincoln Lynch, were arrested. Dennison swiftly shut CORE’s efforts down, obtaining an eviction notice for CORE to leave the County-owned camp, sending bulldozers to the site, and after a one-day standoff, leveling CORE’s protest headquarters on July 1, 1964.⁴⁷

To Dennison, CORE was disrupting an effort to eradicate slum conditions, a prerequisite to alleviating poverty in his mind. He conceded that preventing racial segregation was important, as were jobs, but would “not be meaningful until and unless the adverse conditions of a slum environment are removed...the first objective must be the elimination of the slums.”⁴⁸ Like all clearance projects, demolishing the duck farm camp scattered the poor to nearby dilapidated housing. Within two months, 150 of the 250 families fled the camp to housing nearby and nearly half continued to live in substandard conditions.⁴⁹ By the end of July 1964, it was becoming clear that another approach was necessary. On July 29, Dennison met directly with the migrants of the Warner Duck Farm, promising not only better housing, but greater employment opportunities. He outlined a plan to place a full-time social worker in the area and get local

⁴⁷ Ross, 47- 56; “CORE Dumps Garbage in Riverhead; Arrest 3,” *Newsday*, June 22, 1964, 4; “8 Arrested in Protest over Slum Farm,” *Newsday*, June 29, 1964, 4; “CORE, County in Clash,” *Newsday*, June 30, 1964; “CORE’s Shack on Slum Farm is Demolished,” *Newsday*, July 1, 1964.

⁴⁸ H. Lee Dennison, “Suffolk County Public Information News Release,” July 12, 1964, p. 1, Box 3, folder 117, Dennison Papers.

⁴⁹ ‘Substandard in this context means lacking an inside toilet, proper heating and cooking facilities, piped hot water, and/or having significant structural flaws. See “Housing Relocation in Suffolk County” p. 3-4, Box 1, folder “SCHRC Housing Committee,” Gordon Papers.

industries to offer employment. He then assured the migrants that he would apply for anti-poverty funding from Johnson's new "war on poverty."⁵⁰ Federal funding could provide better services, job training, and a political voice for migrant workers, but Dennison intended to use the money to remove this unique poverty problem from the county altogether.

Within a year, Dennison offered what amounted to a war on *imported* poverty. He claimed both laborers and the County suffered under the current migrant system, since "the cost of such importation to the rest of the County – to the overall County general economy – has been in some ways disastrous." Welfare, police, fire, and health care expenditures, not to mention the overall environment, all suffered so farmers could exploit these low-wage laborers. Removing the migrants would solve these problems, and replacing them with local workers would lower the county's unemployment rate. As he stated, "it may be time to start picking up some of our own potatoes, to initiate what might well be called useful and honest local home rule for a change."⁵¹ With local seasonal workers, the county could invest in ending slums, improve work conditions and lower welfare costs, all while preventing future slums from emerging out of new migrant streams. It was a bold plan that had to compete with several alternative approaches. Two CAPs formed to prepare migrants and seasonal workers for non-agricultural employment. The Suffolk County Human Relations Commission meanwhile advocated for labor legislation and union recognition to structure work relations in the field. These three approaches, using local labor, preparing migrants for non-agricultural employment, and regulating work conditions, offered radically different solutions to imported labor on Suffolk's east end, each anticipated divergent futures for Suffolk's agricultural economy.

⁵⁰ "Dennison Visits Slum Farm for a Talk," *Newsday*, July 30, 1964, 3.

⁵¹ H. Lee Dennison, "Suffolk County Public Information News Release," December 9, 1965, Box 3, folder 119, Dennison Papers.

Dennison's local labor plan was a compromise between the farmer's labor needs and the County's desire to lower costs. It assumed that manual farm laborers would be necessary in the foreseeable future but that the county could replace migrants with local sources of labor. However, it was unclear whether an adequate supply existed on Long Island. The County Executive claimed that there was enough year-round labor, and that it was the migrants who added significant costs to the welfare system. His Labor Department could not find local farmworkers. Suffolk's unemployed made at least as much on unemployment insurance or welfare as they would harvesting potatoes. The County could locate only twenty-four welfare recipients on the East End who could do the work at peak harvest, along with 657 able unemployed welfare recipients county-wide. These farm jobs existed in a region of affluence, and "with the present low wages in existence in the agricultural industry, most local residents are looking towards employment in the areas of Suffolk where the wages are higher, the employment more stable, and the benefits greater."⁵² County officials debated the plan for two years until a space heater set an eight room barracks ablaze and asphyxiated three of the fourteen people sleeping in a Bridgehampton camp on January 14, 1968. This high-profile fire coincided with a local public television documentary aired in February, Morton Silverstein's *What Harvest for the Reaper*, a spiritual sequel to Murrow's 1960 film that followed one crew chief's migrant gang from their homes in Arkansas to their harvest employment in Cutchogue, Long Island.⁵³ Following the fire, the Suffolk County Board of Supervisors established a Seasonal Farm Labor Commission, a nine-member body of government officials, members of the Long Island

⁵²"Migrant System is called Costly," *New York Times*, February 11, 1968, 55; "Feasibility Study of the Utilization of Local Residents versus Migrant Workers in the Agricultural Industry of Suffolk County," August 28, 1967, p. 5-9, Box 2, folder 72, Dennison Papers.

⁵³ "Three Laborers Killed in East End Blaze," *Newsday*, January 15, 1968; Rev. Arthur C. Bryant to Senate Subcommittee on Migrant Labor, "Poverty and Powerlessness USA," June 9, 1969, Box 1, folder 3, Burghardt Turner Collection; Morton Silverstein, *What Harvest the Reaper?* (National Educational Television and Radio Centre, 1968), film.

Agricultural Marketing Association (a representative body of farmers), and church officials on January 22, 1968. Following the film's debut, Dennison demanded the Commission solve the migrant problem because it had become "a matter of national advertising that I don't really care for."⁵⁴ The administration re-offered local labor once again, though knowing farmers could not afford to pay higher wages lest they "force them out of business," County Labor Commissioner Lou Tempera laid out a 'wage-subsidy plan' to maintain the agricultural industry's national competitiveness and make wages attractive to local workers. The County would assure packers received the prevailing two dollar (\$13.36 in 2013) area wage and that field workers were paid at least \$1.75 per hour. Tempera estimated a \$2,695,810 annual operating cost to subsidize the wages of 3,890 shed workers and farm hands.⁵⁵

The Seasonal Farm Labor Commission criticized the plan and Dennison's intentions. Even Tempera's calculations for a one-year operation were meant to show the high costs of such a program, and he was only willing to implement a test program. Farmers liked the idea of a local and stable workforce, though they knew in an affluent economy they could not attract local workers to stoop labor, calling Dennison's hopes of utilizing Suffolk residents 'unrealistic.' But farmers did not like the 'wage-subsidy plan' because it completely altered the labor structure from piece-work to hourly wages, made farmers wards of the state, and was so costly and controversial that it could not endure long-term political challenges.⁵⁶ Farmers also challenged Dennison's contention that these migrants were such a grave cost to the County anyway. A 1967 welfare study determined that only nine percent of all of Suffolk's welfare cases resided in the

⁵⁴ "Migrant System is called Costly," *New York Times*, February 11, 1968, 55.

⁵⁵ "Initial Cost Study for Subsidizing Agricultural Workers in Suffolk County as a Possible Method of Replacing Migrant Workers with Local Residents," Box 2, folder 72, Dennison Papers.

⁵⁶ "Final Report of the Subcommittee on "Alternatives to Migratory Labor" to the Seasonal Farm Laborer Commission," p.2-4, Box 2, folder 84, Dennison Papers.

County for less than two years, while over two-thirds lived in the County for five years or longer. For the 431 short-term (i.e. less than six months) migrants who applied for assistance in 1967, New York State reimbursed the county for all costs. The Commission also found that migrants were rarely arrested and private charity or the state absorbed most health care costs.⁵⁷ The Commission ended its investigations in May 1968, and the Marketing Association shut down the local labor idea, blaming Dennison for perpetuating the migrant system with his threats to ‘phase-out’ migrants with public money rather than improve housing, an appropriate function of government already utilized in urban areas.⁵⁸

If Dennison’s plan sought to sustain the system with local labor, CAP programs looked to do the exact opposite: pull migrants away from the farm system and prepare them for Long Island’s suburban economy, which would in turn force farmers to mechanize and end the migrant labor system altogether. In no other part of Long Island were CAPs so influential in the local debate over poverty. Three CAPs formed to provide migrants with alternatives to migrant labor, the Seasonal Employees in Agriculture (SEA), Community Action Southold Town (CAST) and the Organization for Community Action (OCA) in East Hampton. While all CAPs provided conventional War on Poverty services, including psychological counseling, adult education programs, literacy, day care, and employment assistance, SEA and CAST designed locally-oriented initiatives.⁵⁹ CAST established a short-lived fish-industry training program, designed to

⁵⁷ “Suffolk County Department of Social Services Responses to Questionnaire of the State Legislative Committee,” April 1, 1969, p. 6-9, Box 11, folder “Suffolk County Social Services Dept. 1969-1968-1967,” SCC; “Final Report of the Subcommittee on Impact of Seasonal Farm Labor on the Economy of Suffolk County to the Suffolk County Seasonal Farm Laborer Commission,” June 6, 1968, p. forward-6, Box 2, folder 84, Dennison Papers.

⁵⁸ “Submitted for the Consideration of the Joint Legislative Committee on Migratory Labor,” p. 5-6, Box 2, folder 72, Dennison Papers.

⁵⁹ Peter Kramer, “Will They Remain the Poorest of the Poor?,” *Suffolk Sun* October 1967, Box 2, folder 83, Dennison Papers; “Suffolk County, New York (Migrant),” April 15, 1966, Box 511, folder “Long Island Volunteers, New York,” Migrant Workers’ Program State Files, 1966-1972, Records of the Director, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II; “Meet 7 Activists,” Box

at once revive the dying fishing industry in Greenport, Long Island, and to help seasonal workers supplement their income beyond the planting and harvest season. Twenty men at a time were trained in marine safety, navigation, wire splicing, and fish preservation.⁶⁰ The SEA meanwhile established a self-help housing program. With funding from the Federal Farm Housing Administration, recipients received a low-interest mortgage to be partly paid off with ‘sweat equity.’ This would help former migrants develop applicable skills for the suburban economy while they built their own affordable home. These construction skills were particularly important because “farms in Suffolk County are giving way to housing developments and those that remain find mechanization the answer to the greater efficiency and production demanded by rising real estate values,” both of which would further impoverish migrants. Within a year of its founding, the program had a woodworking plant, cooperative furniture repair shop, credit union, grocery store, and day care center. Self-help housing worker James Smith built everything from the kitchen cabinets and furniture to his roof itself for his \$17,000 home in Calverton. He planned on opening a construction company with the skills he and his eight co-builders developed.⁶¹

Construction skill development was a promising alternative to the migrant system in a region just beginning to feel the effects of an expanding building boom, especially luxury home

511, folder “New York Clips,” Migrant Workers’ Program State Files, 1966-1972, Records of the Director, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II.

⁶⁰ “L.I. Hopes to Give Sea Legs to Farm Workers,” Francis X. Clines, *New York Times*, February 14, 1966; “School for Fishermen Proposed in Greenport,” *Newsday*, March 21, 1966, 27.

⁶¹ “Highlight Memorandum: Application for Grant under Title II-A,” Signed May 18, 1967, Box 511, folder “Suffolk County Economic Opportunity Commission,” Migrant Workers’ Program State Files, 1966-1972, Records of the Director, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II; “Office of Economic Opportunity – Community Action Program: Highlight Memorandum,” received May 9, 1969, p. 1-5, Box 511, folder “Suffolk County Economic Opportunity Commission,” Migrant Workers’ Program State Files, 1966-1972, Records of the Director, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II.

development in the Hamptons.⁶² Unfortunately, these programs were expensive to implement and it was difficult to attract migrants. The Self-Help Housing program included only twenty families in its initial year of funding at a cost of over \$51,000, while CAST trained a similar number of workers.⁶³ Robert Tormey of the SEA admitted that despite having over 1,600 people enrolled in training and job programs, the migrant system made retaining the trainees impossible. Tormey discovered that no matter when they scheduled a program, “no one can show up because they aren’t finished work yet...they would have more time to learn if they didn’t work. But they don’t want welfare. They want to work.”⁶⁴ Migrants and seasonal workers were too dependent on the migrant system, and these programs either offered uncertain ‘skills’ without jobs, or stingy projects with too few openings. For those still part of the inter-state migrant system, permanent residency far from home and family was not an attractive endeavor. Farm laborers did not take the alternative jobs east end CAPs could offer. Out of 115 migrants placed in jobs by the SEA in 1966, only ten still held their jobs three years later. The CAPs waged a war to induce mechanization by removing the migrants from the agricultural workforce, but farmers would not end the system if a steady supply of laborers remained.⁶⁵

Between Dennison’s unpopular war on imported poverty and the meager CAP skill development programs, local anti-poverty measures were inadequate. This was painfully

⁶² “Proposal for an East End Community Services Center and Training Institute,” p. 8-9 Box 1, folder 2, Burghardt Turner Collection.

⁶³ “Immediate Release: Suffolk County, New York, Council to Develop Migrant Worker Housing,” *News from the Office of Economic Opportunity*, Box 511, folder “Suffolk County Economic Opportunity Commission,” Migrant Workers’ Program State Files, 1966-1972, Records of the Director, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II.

⁶⁴ “Migrant Worker Poverty Program Gets Clean Bill,” Box 511, folder “Seasonal Employees in Agriculture, Inc.” Migrant Workers’ Program State Files, 1966-1972, Records of the Director, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II.

⁶⁵ Suffolk County Seasonal Farm Labor Commission, “Report on Services Available to Migrants and Resident Seasonal Workers,” Box 2, folder 84, Dennison Papers; “LI Anti-Poverty Unit Probed,” *Newsday*, February 20, 1969, Box 511, folder “Seasonal Employees in Agriculture, Inc.” Migrant Workers’ Program State Files, 1966-1972, Records of the Director, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II.

obvious to Reverend Arthur C. Bryant, Pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Greenport and vice-chairman of the Suffolk County Human Relations Commission. Bryant was one of the first to demand the creation of the Suffolk County Seasonal Labor Commission in late 1967 to eliminate the migrant farm labor system. When Dennison offered the wage subsidy, Bryant condemned it as perpetuating the system and providing the crew chief with ways to suppress wages, destroying the livable wage the subsidy was intended to provide. Bryant also contended that the CAPs did not promote worker autonomy, and "only occasionally do we find ways to help a man escape from the industry." As Bryant noted, literacy, while a personal and social good, does not guarantee a job.⁶⁶ Bryant and the Suffolk Human Relations Commission's war on poverty sought to empower migrants. In practice, this meant including migrant laborers in the 1937 New York State Labor Relations Act and extending minimum wage laws to farmworkers. These legal protections were meaningless without worker activism, and Bryant coordinated with the UAW to fund an indigenous union, while using Cesar Chavez's United Farm Worker's Organizing Committee to organize an Island-wide strike during the 1969 harvest season. The union and the strike never came to fruition, and Bryant lamented that migrant workers were "the most passive group of people I have ever met in my life."⁶⁷

Collective action may have been the only means to improve the system, but as Cindy Hahamovitch argues, labor supply determined everything in the farmworker system, and new immigrants could undermine any unionization efforts, improved housing, innovative health

⁶⁶ "Report of Arthur C. Bryant, Vice-Chairman of the SCHRC and Chairman of the Migrant Labor Committee," November 3, 1967, Box 2, folder 83, Dennison Papers; Rev. Arthur C. Bryant to the Joint Legislative Committee on Migrant Labor, December 11, 1967, Box 2, folder 72, Dennison Papers; Rev. Arthur C. Bryant to Senate Subcommittee on Migrant Labor, "Poverty and Powerlessness USA," June 9, 1969, Box 1, folder 3, Burghardt Turner Collection.

⁶⁷ Rev. Arthur C. Bryant to Senate Subcommittee on Migrant Labor, "Poverty and Powerlessness USA," June 9, 1969, Box 1, folder 3, Burghardt Turner Collection; "Migrant Worker Center Begins Raising Funds," *Newsday*, June 16, 1969; "Suffolk Migrants are Union Target," *Newsday*, June 1, 1969.

codes, or wage policies.⁶⁸ Labor organizing or even stabilizing the labor supply would have little impact if an interstate population could be imported to depress wages and working conditions. The key to altering this system lay west of Suffolk's east end, in the rapid suburbanization process making its way toward the far reaches Long Island's North and South Forks, which affected both the landscape and politics of the agricultural region. Suffolk's population almost quadrupled from 1950 to 1970, and the construction of the Long Island Expressway, began in 1955, and would reach the two forks by 1972. Planners looked forward to urban development throughout the East End's agricultural economy, and Dennison celebrated the end of "those goddam duck farms occupying priceless waterfront."⁶⁹ Speculators gobbled up farms for housing developments, and Suffolk lost 53,346 farmland acres between 1958 and 1972, cutting potato production in half. This perpetuated the migrant system because farmers would only invest in machines if they knew they could farm for years to come. When developers offered \$3,000 an acre for empty land, \$10,000 an acre after a nearby land purchase, and nearly \$20,000 an acre after houses went up next door, farmers continued using migrants while awaiting more lucrative offers. As Bryant himself claimed, "every farmer knows that the time is not too far off when the most valuable crop he can grow will be houses."⁷⁰ This meant housing and working conditions worsened for a smaller number of migrants as the number of farms dwindled.

Suffolk County preserved the remaining farms in the 1970s as part of a larger open-space planning initiative designed as a bulwark against 'sprawl,' a preservation of Suffolk's 'rural' past, and a means to re-charge the County's groundwater aquifers. These farms continued to use

⁶⁸ Cindy Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of Their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farmworkers and the Making of Migrant Poverty, 1870-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 203.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Cromarty, 158; Eric Fauss, "The Postsuburban Development of Riverhead, Long Island: 1970 – 2000" in *Long Island Historical Journal* 19, no. 1-2 (Fall 2006/Spring 2007): 149-151.

⁷⁰ Anne M. Montero, "Migratory Labor in New York State—are their alternatives?" p. 14-15, Box 2, folder 72, Dennison Papers; Cromarty, 157, 166; U.S. Congress, Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, *Who are the Migrants?* (91st Cong., 1st and 2nd sess., June 9-10, 1969), 75.

migrant workers, now increasingly imported from Puerto Rico, but jobs disappeared for the thousands of seasonal workers who relied on the agricultural economy. The old migrant system that exploited black workers died out, though over time, a new labor stream emerged exploiting Hispanic workers. Nonetheless, Dennison could claim victory against the war on migrant poverty as the east end suburbanized. But the migrants who stayed, i.e. ‘ex-migrants,’ while less likely to be agricultural laborers, nonetheless joined the ranks of the ‘suburban’ poor. The CAP drive to train the poor for construction jobs looked to the region’s suburban future, though the programs were too small to have a broad impact.⁷¹ Winning the war against poverty in Suffolk would be fought in its western half, where county government and activists sought to incorporate the poor into the affluent mainstream rather than regulate a low-wage labor system.

People – Transportation – Jobs

While the shacks that housed migrant workers were the visible markers of poverty in Suffolk’s east end, if one were to drive around western Suffolk or Nassau County, affluence abounded. One would pass shimmering office buildings and clean industrial parks along major roads. A turn onto the endless lanes, drives, and places named after pleasant flowers, fruits, or trees names revealed Long Island’s multitude of single-family homes. With 471 auto registrations for every thousand Long Island residents in 1970, the region was indeed a haven for automobiles. Postwar prosperity and automobile dependence were mutually reinforcing, as new housing developments catered to a broad middle class who could afford to use the roads tied to such housing. Beyond this, Long Island’s employment centers were constructed along highways and large state roads, and over three-fourths of all workers used cars for their commute. Less

⁷¹ Cromarty, 163-166; “L.I. Migrants Who Stay,” *New York Times*, Sep 12, 1971, A16.

than three percent of commuters relied on the bus system, divided between twenty-one private companies operating infrequent services and offering no intercompany transfers. The only significant mass transit option was the Long Island Railroad, though train service went east and west, used by commuters to reach central business districts in Brooklyn and Manhattan, not for industrial or office parks in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Long Island's postwar job market was essentially tied to the network of mobility predicated on car ownership, a reflection of the high wages offered in the region.⁷²

Those without a car were part of what *Newsday* called the "immobile society." A resident of the Spinney Hill section of Manhasset would have to ride three buses to get to Roosevelt Field at a cost of \$1.10 and an hour and a half of time. In a car, the trip clocked in at fifteen minutes. And this was only if one were to ride the bus during rush-hour. Off-hour jobs were largely out of reach. A Port Washington man had to forgo a night-shift job in Glen Cove because there was no way to return home on public transportation.⁷³ Carless workers, largely Long Island's poor, were limited to local jobs within walking distance or car-pool accommodations. Carless Long Islanders were also more likely to be jobless. A 1968 poverty area survey found that car ownership impacted employment prospects. In poverty neighborhoods where there was less than one car per household, unemployment hovered around twenty percent. In contrast, poverty neighborhoods with car ownership rates of at least one car per household had lower unemployment rates, dipping below fifteen percent. In an automobile-dependent region, a car opened a whole new world of job opportunity, while living without one

⁷² Automobile and bus ridership compiled from Nassau County Planning Commission, *Nassau County, New York Data Book* (Carle Place, New York: June 1974), 250; Pearl Kamer and the Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, *A Profile of the Nassau-Suffolk Labor Force* (Hauppauge, NY: Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, 1973), 46, 250.

⁷³ "LI Bus Story: It's Rough to Be Without a Car," *Newsday*, April 28, 1969, 10.

constrained one's reliability on the job, the distance you could travel for work, the jobs one could take, and even one's knowledge of jobs available.⁷⁴

This mobility divide between middle class suburbanites and the suburban poor was central to the 'poverty amidst plenty' paradox echoed repeatedly during the 1960s. The physical divide between 'ghettoes' and 'jobs,' be it inner city residents and outlying job centers, or strenuous commutes from one neighborhood or the next, was understood as the key obstacle to upward mobility. Activists, business owners, and government officials all decried Long Island's auto-dependent transportation network for perpetuating poverty and unemployment. Following Wyandanch's riots, African American protestors demanded County Executive Dennison build new bus routes linking their neighborhood to local industrial parks in the hopes of relieving unemployment.⁷⁵ Industrial firms also claimed that dependable public transit could fill an estimated 11,000 unskilled job vacancies across fifty-three industrial parks on Long Island.⁷⁶ Washington had its own interest in improving transportation options for the poor. Federal aid to local urban transportation projects began with the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, initially intended for traffic relief. Urban rioting in 1965 transformed public transportation projects into another front in the war on poverty. The McCone Commission, a response report to the Watts riots, cited Labor Department research that inadequate transportation deprived inner-city residents of decentralized job opportunities. Charles M. Haar, Assistant Secretary of Metropolitan Development in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD),

⁷⁴ Tri-State Transportation Commission, *People--Transportation--Jobs, Public Transport Services to non-CBD Employment Concentrations; Progress Report 5* (New York: Tri-State Transportation Commission, December 1971), 2, 4.

⁷⁵ "Selected Major Complaints and other activities of the Assistant Director, Suffolk County Human Relations Commission," August 21, 1967, p. Box 6, folder 80, Burghardt Turner Collection.

⁷⁶ Tri-State Transportation Commission, *People--Transportation--Jobs, Public Transport Services to non-CBD Employment Concentrations; Progress Report 4* (New York: Tri-State Transportation Commission, October 1969), 9-12; Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Public Transport Services to non-CBD Employment Concentrations; Progress Report 1* (New York: Tri-State Transportation Commission, September, 1967), 4, 9.

likewise believed mass transit funding could be a “strategic weapon in the anti-poverty campaign.” In 1967 HUD granted \$2 million to the Tri-State Transportation Commission to test “the effect of improved public transportation to employment concentrations which are not located in central business districts” on Long Island.⁷⁷ HUD money provided the much needed support to local demands for improved transportation, and HUD could effectively test whether bus service would ease poverty best in a broadly affluent region. This broader front of the war on poverty, funded by HUD through a regional transportation commission and administered by local government, was a war on immobility.

The bus initiative had three phases: a temporary pilot program to a single industrial park, a research phase to draw links between labor supply and demand, and lastly additional service development based on the findings. The first three bus routes went from Hempstead, Massapequa, and Hicksville, all converging on the Plainview Engineer’s Hill Industrial Park, an employment center straddling the Nassau-Suffolk border along the Long Island Expressway. The park had 134 businesses employing 9,500 people in 1967, and there were 371 job openings, including 197 entry-level positions. The Massapequa route served an auto-dependent community, while the Hicksville route linked a commuter railroad to the industrial park. Hempstead tied one of Long Island’s target poverty areas to the park, and program coordinators hoped to decrease the village’s high rate of unemployment. After heavy advertising, the bus routes attracted consumers, though not the workers Haar and other local officials envisioned. Only forty-two percent of riders used the bus shuttles for work. Most rode buses to shop

⁷⁷ “White House Aiding Urban Transit Programs to Make it Easier for Poor to Get to Jobs,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1967, 17; Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Progress Report 1*, 3, 5; “Transportation Development Project,” Box 1, folder 3, Burghardt Turner Collection; “Nassau Job Busing Encourages U.S. Try,” *Newsday*, September 26, 1967; Wendell E. Pritchett, “Which Urban Crisis? : Regionalism, Race, and Urban Policy, 1960—1974” *Journal of Urban History* 34, no. 2 (January 2008): 269; John F. Kain, “The Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis: Three Decades Later,” *Housing Policy Debate* 3, no. 2 (1992): 373.

(35.4%), travel to recreational services (6.1%), or attend personal appointments (6.1%). After four months, workers began using the buses in greater numbers, though they were not the formerly unemployed. Out of a total 148 work-related riders, only thirteen from Hempstead, eight from Massapequa, and nineteen from Hicksville, about a quarter total, found their jobs thanks to the new bus route.⁷⁸

As the Commission established new routes, workers increased as a proportion of riders. In July 1967, two routes connected Bay Shore and Central Islip to three Suffolk County Industrial Parks (Perez, Cardinal, and Vanderbilt) as well as the Pilgrim Psychiatric Center. Eleven routes were added from 1968 through June 1969, and the bus system became a full-fledged anti-poverty program, as the Tri-State Transportation Commission allied with the Nassau and Suffolk EOCs to connect poverty areas in Glen Cove, Rockville Centre, Long Beach, Wyandanch, North Amityville, Inwood, Central Islip, Oyster Bay, and even Jamaica, Queens to employment, educational, and health care centers across Long Island. The Suffolk EOC promoted the program with mobile ad campaigns, blaring music and announcements that buses “can help you to secure a job or transportation to a job.” After two years of operation, bus use for work purposes rose to seventy-two percent of all riders, and nearly forty-two percent claimed they relied on the bus system to get to work, while a third procured their jobs through the bus system itself.⁷⁹

Higher employee usage obscured the reality that most of these new bus routes were not attracting riders. A route between the Grumman plant, Hicksville industrial parks, and the

⁷⁸ Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Progress Report 1*, 5, 10; Tri-State Transportation Commission. *People--Transportation--Jobs, Public Transport Services to non-CBD Employment Concentrations; Progress Report 2* (New York: Tri-State Transportation Commission, December 1967), 3-10.

⁷⁹ Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Progress Report 4*, 20-25; “Suffolk Job Finders Make Pitch on the Road: Newsday Closeup,” *Newsday*, May 29, 1968, 15; Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Progress Report 5*, 32; Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Progress Report 1*, 21; Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk, Inc., “Manpower Committee Meeting,” June 3, 1969, Box 6, folder 12, Burghardt Turner Collection.

poverty areas of Glen Cove had on average six riders per work-day. *Newsday* reported that “everybody knows everybody” on the bus, and riders kept one another company, though the route “isn’t exactly winning the war on poverty” and was ended after a year in operation.⁸⁰ This was the reality for most poverty routes. Between 1967 and 1970, the Tri-State Transportation Commission, working with the two Long Island EOCs, contracted with eleven different carriers to develop twenty-two routes, though thirteen were terminated due to inadequate patronage and only seven routes continued after the project ended in 1970.⁸¹ The Tri-State Transportation Commission Executive Director Douglas Carroll Jr. admitted, “I doubt if [the bus program] is making any improvement in the unemployment problem.” He was right; Long Island’s poor did not utilize these routes despite heavy promotion. Glen Cove NAACP President James Davis blamed the low turnout on “basic distrust of government programs and promises,” while affluent residents of Rockville Centre protested the bus running through their neighborhood as a “waste of money” since “there just aren’t any jobs to transport people to.”⁸²

Jobs did exist in these industrial parks, and workers did not avoid the programs because of any general ‘distrust’, the problem was the value of the jobs at the end of the line. From the outset, anti-poverty activists protested the kinds of jobs offered at Plainview’s Engineer’s Hill. Nassau EOC manpower utilization coordinator Richard Ford doubted that low-income workers would make the \$1.10 roundtrip bus ride to work for \$1.50 an hour. Ford understood that “they can get that kind of poverty pay in their own neighborhoods.” The Tri-State Transportation Commission itself concluded that despite claims that transportation ‘handcuffed’ the poor, it was

⁸⁰ “Few Ride Bus, but its Fun,” *Newsday*, July 16, 1968, 10.

⁸¹ Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Progress Report* 5, 4.

⁸² “Bus Runs for Poor Facing Revamp,” *Newsday*, September 13, 1968, 13; “Industry Must Communicate with the Jobless,” *Commerce and Industry News* 2, no. 1 (October 1968), 4, Box 65, folder “Commerce & Industry,” Nickerson Papers; “RVC Group Attacks Poverty Bus Line,” *Newsday*, September 10, 1968, 15.

low pay, day-care needs, and other factors that withheld workers from procuring employment. They were not simply “ready and able to work if they could solve only their transportation problems” as the Commission originally claimed.⁸³ Furthermore, while the program conceptualized the problem as one of distance between people and employment “centers,” neither the poor nor the jobs were concentrated enough to benefit from mass transit solutions, and jobs did not necessarily exist far from these poverty ‘pockets.’ In a 1968 survey of unskilled job openings Island-wide, the village of Hempstead, with its large poverty ‘pocket,’ had nearly double the amount of openings in comparison to any other hamlet, meaning long-distance was not a single deterrent. Only a quarter of Long Island’s poor lived in the poverty pockets (though a much larger percentage of Long Island’s minority poor resided there), and industrial parks were dispersed across the Island, making the “traditional, large-vehicle, fixed-route, scheduled bus transport unfeasible both in terms of service and economy for many areas.” Linking targeted neighborhoods with limited industrial parks produced few job opportunities. Ultimately, the bus program on Long Island came to the same conclusions as those involved in the Watts project, that “bus services are not by themselves creating jobs and that there will be no potential for movement until there is a demand for the available skills and a willingness to hire.”⁸⁴

⁸³ “No Takers for Jobs at End of Line,” *Newsday*, May 16, 1967, 9; Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Progress Report 4*, 20; Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Progress Report 5*, 3.

⁸⁴ Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Progress Report 5*, 14, 33-35; Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Progress Report 4*, 3-10; The programs were widely criticized at the time on these grounds. John M. Goering remained unconvinced that suburban wages were high enough to warrant the expensive and time consuming reverse commuting trek from the inner city if workers even qualified for jobs at the other end of the bus line. See John M. Goering, “Transporting the Unemployed,” *Growth and Change* 2, no. 1 (1971): 35; Thomas Floyd contended that the above mentioned other factors, including day care, higher pay, family stability, etc. were more important than accessibility. See Thomas H. Floyd, Jr., “Using Transportation to Alleviate Poverty: A Progress Report on Experiments Under the Mass Transportation Act,” in *Conference on Transportation and Poverty*, ed. American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Brookline: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, June 7, 1968), 9-10; For an overall critique, see Sanford H. Bederman and John S. Adams, “Job Accessibility and Underemployment,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 64, no. 3 (September 1974): 378-386.

The bus program attempted the most direct means of improving employment prospects for Long Island's poor: literally bridging the gap between poverty neighborhoods and job centers. The problem at the center of higher unemployment and under-employment was not access to jobs and mobility, but jobs themselves. Widespread affluence undergirded the suburban transportation system, and jobs at the parks were either low-paying, or too advanced for entry-level unskilled workers. Therefore, low-wage jobs, even if they were more accessible, did not reduce the poverty problem. In fact, linking workers to jobs would take care of itself if workers could gain permanent, well-paying jobs to support an automobile, as the Tri-State Transportation Commission learned by 1971. Their report admitted that "if the jobs pay decent wages, people will invariably find a way to get to work" and "will purchase an automobile as soon as possible, thus eliminating the need to ride the buses."⁸⁵ No anti-poverty measure proved more idealistic than this bus program, since the initiative, from Washington to the county EOCs, assumed Long Island's affluence and its ability to absorb all if only they had the mobility. Poverty could then be eradicated with shuttles that traversed space and opened the 'ghetto' to middle-class suburbia. But shaping the commutation links between labor supply and demand proved a losing battle, and the war would be fought in the procurement of living-wage jobs, not the buses to get there.

Matching Jobs with the Jobless

While only the staunchest idealists considered transportation the silver bullet to solving poverty, the belief that Long Island's prosperity could absorb the poor remained central to the local war on poverty, and no effort reflected the assumption of affluence more than job training

⁸⁵ Tri-State Transportation Commission, *Progress Report 5*, 14-16, 32-33.

and placement programs. As Margaret Weir argues, the architects of the War on Poverty at the federal level directed labor market policy toward “changing the characteristics of workers,” i.e. improving labor supply so that the poor could take advantage of the growth unleashed from macroeconomic tax cuts.⁸⁶ A litany of programs and agencies at the local level, funded through the Economic Opportunity Act and local government revenues, directed by social workers, civil rights activists, and government bureaucrats, followed the federal lead. If the economy was prosperous, then the suburbs, the postwar poster-child of prosperity, had plentiful work. With a little skill development, a deeper knowledge of the local job market, and a few hiring pledges from local employers, the problem of poverty could be solved on Long Island, making it an example for the nation.

Manpower policy on Long Island preceded the poverty war. During the aerospace industry’s upheaval in the early 1960s, Nassau County Executive Eugene Nickerson utilized the Manpower and Development Training Act (MDTA) of 1962 to help displaced aerospace workers with educational and training needs.⁸⁷ Once the War on Poverty got underway in 1965 and 1966, the focus of manpower efforts on Long Island switched from the skilled to the most vulnerable on the Island, and black Long Islanders in particular. A bevy of programs appeared across the Island, funded locally and through federal anti-poverty programs. Job Corps operated out of Hempstead, while the two county Economic Opportunity Commissions organized federal manpower efforts, from remedial training to job placement. The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare implemented the Work Experience Program, a welfare-to-work

⁸⁶ Weir, 67-68.

⁸⁷ “A Record of Nassau County Government, Jan. 1962 – Sept. 1964,” Box 58, folder “Co Exec –Status Reports” [3 of 3], Nickerson Papers.

initiative.⁸⁸ Local organizations complemented these efforts. In 1964, the Patchogue NAACP in eastern Long Island established Help Educate for Labor Placement (HELP) to counsel and place low-income and minority group members into jobs. CORE followed suit with similar programs in Wyandanch, Huntington, and Southold, all in Suffolk County.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, the Human Relations Commissions criticized the programs for neglecting the minority poor. Farrell Jones, chairman of the Nassau County Human Rights Commission, complained that the MDTA and the Economic Opportunity Act programs were “not reaching the people [they were] designed for because [they were] geared to those who have some basic skill and thus can utilize training.”⁹⁰ The Suffolk Human Relations Commission found that locally-organized programs were not targeting minorities either. They were useful as counseling centers, but too small to make a serious dent in the employment problem, and the Commission felt only a county-wide effort could secure enough funding to provide real job opportunities.⁹¹ In response, each Commission established their own minority-focused training and referral programs. The Nassau Human Rights Commission established the Job Development Center (henceforth Nassau JDC) in 1964. The Commission dealt in a wide variety of racial issues, from fair housing to discrimination complaints and equal employment opportunity in county contracts, but it devoted over half of its county-funded budget to the Nassau JDC alone.⁹² The Nassau JDC

⁸⁸ “Guide to Public Manpower Programs Nationwide,” p. 3-22, Box 66, folder “Economic Opportunity Commission” [2 of 2], Nickerson Papers.

⁸⁹ “Application for Refunding Community Action Project – Job Counseling and Development Project,” June 1, 1968, p. 3, Box 1, folder 1, Burghardt Turner Collection; Patchogue NAACP Labor...pdf, “Patchogue Branch NAACP Labor and Industry Committee,” February 5, 1964, Box 2, folder “NAACP,” Edith Gordon Papers; “Patchogue Branch NAACP Labor and Industry Committee,” February 27, 1964, Box 2, folder “NAACP,” Edith Gordon Papers.

⁹⁰ Minutes of Workshop Program on Employment, County Executive Conference on Poverty, October 1, 1964, p. 3, Box 58, folder “Poverty Program – Conference,” Nickerson Papers.

⁹¹ “The People Industry Needs are in Nassau,” *Commerce and Industry News* 3, no. 1 (October 1968): p. 5, Box 65, folder “Commerce & Industry,” Nickerson Papers.

⁹² “Rights Groups: One Aim, Two Systems,” April 28, 1970, Box 1, folder 5, Burghardt Turner Collection.

began as a referral and consulting service for other federal and local programs, but by 1967, the Nassau JDC funded its own job training center to develop work-related skills and directly refer the unemployed to jobs. The Nassau JDC secured jobs in Long Island's growth sectors, including public utilities, clerical work, food service, and auto body repair. In addition, eighty-five percent of its clients were African American.⁹³ The Suffolk County Human Relations Commission turned to federal funding for its jobs program, the Job Counseling and Development Program (hereafter Suffolk JCDP). The Suffolk JCDP inserted itself into the CAPs across Suffolk in 1966 in order to reach out to the county's poor and "improve their aspirations and self-confidence, and place them in gainful and satisfying employment." Like the Nassau program, Sixty-five percent of all Suffolk JCDP clients were black.⁹⁴

Between federal, county, and local programs, job and training placement had impressive results on Long Island. Historians have rightly criticized the War on Poverty's poor economic foundation, but when funding was used effectively, as Guian McKee illustrates in Philadelphia, these programs could procure jobs.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, an accurate assessment of Long Island's programs is difficult since job placement records are inconsistent. Regardless, data from Nassau JDC records reveal that the commission placed over 7,066 people through 1968.⁹⁶ The Suffolk JDCP measured its ratio of applicants to placements, and forty-three percent of all who came through their doors, 3,517 of 8,114 applicants, were placed into jobs or training programs from

⁹³ "Nassau County Commission on Human Rights – 1968 Annual Report," p. 2-3, Box 67, folder "Human Rights," Nickerson Papers; "News Release," October 30, 1967, Box 67, folder "Human Rights," Nickerson Papers.

⁹⁴ "Application for Refunding Community Action Project Job Counseling and Development Project," June 1, 1968, p. 2-4, Box 1, folder 1, Burghardt Turner Collection;

"Job Counseling and Development Program, Summary: Job Program," Box 11, folder "Suffolk County Human Rights Commission," SCC; "Suffolk Job Centers Work Out," *Newsday*, February 24, 1967, 11; "Suffolk Project Places 47% of Job Applicants," *Newsday*, August 2, 1967, 9.

⁹⁵ McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 140-168.

⁹⁶ "Status Report: Commission on Human Rights," August 1, 1969, p. 15, Box 59, folder "Co Exec – Status Reports" [3 of 3], Nickerson Papers; "Nassau County Commission on Human Rights – 1968 Annual Report," Box 67, folder "Human Rights," Nickerson Papers.

Table 5.1: Nassau EOC Monthly Manpower Placement Record, December 1967

Employment Sector	Job Placement	Training Placement
Manufacturing – General	21	14
Aerospace Manufacturing	5	-
Electronics Assembly	4	6
Utilities	8	1
Retail	19	6
Clerical	5	11
Health Care	19	4
Maintenance Services	18	3
Civil Service	3	8
Total	102	53

Source: Includes calculations from six of the ten Nassau Economic Opportunity Councils, including Roosevelt, the Five Towns, Freeport, Hempstead, Rockville Centre, and Long Beach. See Economic Opportunity Commission of Nassau County, Manpower Division, “Monthly Manpower Placement Record, December 1967,” Box 68, folder “Jobs,” Nickerson Papers.

its inception in August 1966 through 1968.⁹⁷ The Nassau EOC kept the most substantial records, and in 1967, the various CAPs across the county secured around 1,300 jobs and 600 training program placements.⁹⁸ The local programs claimed at least 10,000 jobs by 1968. But we have little data on the kinds of jobs offered or the length of time workers remained employed at them. A one month sampling from five Nassau CAPs that did, shows jobs across the occupational spectrum (see Table 5.1), and nearly seventy-two percent of these jobs were above “poverty level” wages in December 1967.⁹⁹ An MDTA job training and placement survey from October 1968 tells a different story, with some success in Long Island’s growth sectors, including nursing and manufacturing, but high dropout or unemployment rates in both high-skilled jobs (like electronic technicians and stenographers) and low-wage service work (including waiting and food service preparation) (Table 5.2). The high dropout/unemployment rates in most categories (nursing and manufacturing excepted) reflect the challenge of breaching the labor market divide

⁹⁷“Job Counseling and Development Program, December 1968 Report,” Attached no. 2, Box 1, folder 2, Burghardt Turner Collection.

⁹⁸ “Status Report: Economic Opportunity Commission,” October 1968, Box 59, folder “Co Exec – Status Reports” [3 of 3], Nickerson Papers.

⁹⁹ Economic Opportunity Commission of Nassau County, Manpower Division, “Monthly Manpower Placement Record, December 1967,” Box 68, folder “Jobs,” Nickerson Papers.

in the late 1960s. Low-wage jobs were of little interest to the un- and under-employed, while significant skill training was necessary to land high-wage jobs. The former required improving wages or altering the labor market itself, the latter demanded significant investment in education and training.

Aware of the low-wages offered, program leaders openly protested the futility of their job placements despite the numerical victories. Long Island's unemployment rate was relatively low; Nassau's rate hovered around 3.3 percent, while Suffolk's did exhibit some slack at 5.7 percent in 1967. The Island did have an underemployment problem however.¹⁰⁰ Two-thirds of all the people serviced in Nassau's CAPs found jobs that did not pay enough to raise them out of poverty. The EOC could offer them plenty of work opportunities, but this only provided horizontal mobility, not upward vertical mobility.¹⁰¹ Frustrated CAP aide John Gilliard of Westbury remarked that "when I say to the people I've got a job for them for \$1.70 an hour, they look at me like I'm crazy. Some of them figure they can go out on the street and hustle or write numbers and make a better living." He minimized the transportation problem, stating that "if a man can make \$100 or more a week, he'll get to the job if he has to walk."¹⁰² Those who had minimum wage work chose to stay rather than risk an unfamiliar job, even if it had promotion opportunities.¹⁰³ As one job seeker noted:

"Everybody that I hang around with has looked for work at one time or another...and when they do get jobs they find jobs washing dishes and sweeping

¹⁰⁰ Hortense Gabel, *Report on Economic Conditions, Employment, and Housing as they affect the Residents of Nassau County* (n.p., 1968), 69; Application for Community Action Program, Suffolk County Human Relations Commission, Box 1, folder 2, Burghardt Turner Collection.

¹⁰¹ Bernie Bookbinder, "What Will Help LI's Poor," *Newsday* May 18, 1968, Box 511, folder "New York Clips," Migrant Workers' Program State Files, 1966-1972, Records of the Director, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II.

¹⁰² Gurney Williams, "Matching Jobs with the Jobless," *Newsday*, May 22, 1968.

¹⁰³ "Hard-Core Jobless Snub Low Pay: *Newsday* Closeup," *Newsday*, Mar 19, 1968.

floors and all like that. And for the salaries they pay you to do that kind of work, it's not worth it anyway.”¹⁰⁴

For those who utilized the programs, disillusionment set in after the initial consultation. Edwin Dove, a Westbury resident and former porter, hoped to take advantage of the War on Poverty to climb out of twenty-five years of low-paying and insecure work. He had worked for the WPA during the Depression, joined the Army during World War II, and held odd jobs at food shops or in elderly homes after the war. His family ran into debt, and while his wife managed to pull in fifty-two dollars per week from a job as a packer and labeler in a nearby factory, the wages barely covered their \$120 monthly rent and other bills. He walked into the Westbury Community Council office, part of the Nassau EOC in 1967, looking for better opportunities than the former porter job he left. Despite several leads and interviews, the offers were either trainee positions, which he thought was “a good way for someone to get cheap labor,” or poorly-paid positions, which led to him question whether he should just “give my labor away.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Organization for Social and Technical Innovation et al., 15.

¹⁰⁵ Gurney Williams, “Matching Jobs with the Jobless,” *Newsday*, May 22, 1968.

Table 5.2: Nassau-Suffolk M.D.T.A. Placement Record, October 25, 1968 by Occupational Grouping

	Enrollment	Dropout rate (%)	Employed	Unemployed (%)
Auto body Repair	323	21	179	30
Auto Mechanic	343	27	147	41
Baker	31	39	14	26
Cashier	11	0	8	27
Clerk Typist	79	11	45	36
Counterman	10	20	2	75
Drafting	93	23	58	19
Electric Meter Repair	22	45	0	100
Electronic Technician	23	48	3	75
Electronics Assembler	44	18	25	31
Food Service Preparation	30	33	0	100
Gas Engine Repair	22	41	4	69
Household Appliance Repair	138	16	87	25
Job Setter	35	26	17	35
Keypunch Operator	24	4	8	65
Licensed Practical Nurse	654	33	378	13
Litho Duplicating Operator	56	30	26	33
Machine Operator General	66	20	39	26
Nurse Aid	434	15	248	33
Office Machine Service	48	31	14	58
Oil Burner Installer	141	5	96	28
Oil Burner Repairman	26	19	11	48
Plumber	43	33	7	76
Plumber, Maintenance	33	21	15	42
Power Sewing	20	20	15	6
Production Machine Operator	74	23	39	32
Refrigeration Mechanic	55	27	19	53
Sales Clerk	13	23	6	40
Sales Person, General	14	0	7	50
Service Station Attendant	21	29	6	60
Service Station Mechanic	36	36	8	65
Sheet Metal Fabricator	69	29	37	24
Short Order Cook	50	16	27	36
Stenographer	104	77	58	44
TV Service and Repairman	44	32	25	17
Typist	204	28	78	47
Waiter/Waitress	35	20	10	64

Source: Organization for Social and Technical Innovation, Llewelyn-Davies Weeks, Forestier-Walker & Bor, *Poverty in Spread City: A Study of Constraints on the Poor in Nassau County* (August 1969), 23.

The long-term unemployed who avoided these programs alarmed government officials committed to reducing welfare rolls. Year after year during the War on Poverty, county budgets hit record highs, primarily because of rising welfare costs.¹⁰⁶ A 1968 study determined that a woman with three children lived better on welfare unless she earned at least \$2.04 per hour on Long Island. Nassau Executive Nickerson condemned the minimum wage jobs offered to program recipients since they “can’t get people off welfare or out of poverty...especially if the job isn’t the beginning of something more.” As Nickerson faced mounting political pressures by 1968, he declared business must do more than “create low-paying, dead-end jobs which again appears to be all they are now willing to do.”¹⁰⁷ It was a reality even his Republican opponents realized. Hempstead Town Supervisor Francis T. Purcell argued that the \$1.60 minimum wage did not make ends meet in high-cost Long Island, and private employers along with government must “upgrade these wages” to match the publicly-subsidized trained workforce coming out of job training programs.¹⁰⁸

Higher-paying work existed, and firms complained there was a massive labor shortage across the Island. In 1967, it was estimated that job openings outnumbered the unemployed by 14,000. The shortage existed in high-skill jobs though, not unskilled work. A 1969 survey determined that less than four percent of day laborer and eighteen percent of domestic positions were open for thirty or more days. On the opposite end, over half of machinist, fifty-five percent of electronic assembly, and nearly eighty percent of metal assembly positions remained unfilled for more than a month. Electronics, manufacturing, and service dominated the New York State

¹⁰⁶ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “The Crises in Welfare,” *The Public Interest* 10 (Winter 1968): 5.

¹⁰⁷ “JOBS Program,” 3 Box 68, folder “Jobs,” Nickerson Papers; “LI Poverty War Called Flop: More Reported Unemployed Now than 3 Years Ago,” *Sunday News*, June 30, 1968, Box 63, folder “Anti-Poverty,” Nickerson Papers.

¹⁰⁸ “Jobs for All,” *Newsday*, May 23, 1968, 44.

Employment Service’s job vacancy listings, and the New York State Labor Department could not fill nearly two-thirds of their job listings because applicants lacked the requisite skills.¹⁰⁹ Howard J. Gresens, personnel manager at Cutler-Hammer’s Airborne Instruments Laboratory in Deer Park admitted that “most of the job openings on Long Island are for skilled help, some of them for the highly skilled, and most of the unemployed are unskilled.”¹¹⁰ The War on Poverty was meant to solve this exact problem, to upgrade skills so that applicants *could* qualify for these better-paying positions, but firms did not trust or need the public training programs. Defense industries had internal skill development programs, and many found the workers graduating from these training programs inadequate. A canvass of eighty-three Nassau County employers revealed that over three-quarters had negative experiences with public job development programs on Long Island, overwhelmingly because the agencies did not supply workers with appropriate skills. Only fifteen of the Nassau employers made use of public jobs programs.¹¹¹

The two explanations for intransigent un- and under-employment, low-wages on one side and lack-of-skills on the other, were in direct conflict. Nassau Human Rights Commission head Farrell Jones condemned the out-of-touch employment qualifications as “unrealistic,” an excuse to keep wages low and bar low-income minority workers from the affluent workforce. He cited World War II, when Long Island industry “took men and women of every type and every mentality – and they turned them into productive workers. That’s the key word – productive. These people can produce, but industry has to give something to get something; it must train and

¹⁰⁹ Special thanks to Brian Ross for this data. See Ross, 64-65; Agis Salpukas, “LI Concerns Find a Labor Shortage,” *New York Times*, November 11, 1967, 1; Gabel, 70; June Leonard, *Changing Values in the Civil Service Commission: Merit Employment Versus Employing the Disadvantaged; The Profile of Nassau County, New York* (MA Thesis, Hunter College, 1972), 33.

¹¹⁰ “Meet 7 Activists,” “Meet 7 Activists,” Box 511, folder “New York Clips,” Migrant Workers’ Program State Files, 1966-1972, Records of the Director, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II.

¹¹¹ Organization for Social and Technical Innovation et al., 21-22.

offer opportunities.” The problem as he saw it was that “blacks will no longer accept positions from which there is no escape” and that “no matter what the job is, it must pay a wage a man can live on.” The rest of the County administration agreed. Thomas F. Greene, Commerce & Industry chairman, called the cries of businessmen “nonsense...the people are there, and they want to work-but they also want to be treated like human beings.”¹¹² Nickerson meanwhile appealed to business to improve wages and opportunity in Nassau’s official business newsletter, *Commerce & Industry News*, in October 1968. In a direct letter, Nickerson declared that “we must invoke a new spirit of cooperation between private enterprise and public programs,” and that while government must play a key role, so too must business, because

in far too many instances, industry allots jobs and often fails to fill them. And a minimum wage is not sufficient for a family to subsist in the New York metropolitan area. So when we talk about creating jobs, or of assisting the disadvantaged, let’s act realistically-and responsibly...those few extra cents an hour, and the opportunity for advancement, foster self-respect, improve abilities, and make it possible for an employee to absorb the expenses of working.

He concluded by declaring it was in business’ own self-interest “that welfare rolls be reduced, the tax share be spread more evenly, and the economy be strengthened.”¹¹³

Both government and private firms doubled down on efforts to employ the poor after 1968. Grumman initiated a National Association of Businessmen (NAB) affiliated training program in August 1968, a national program to provide on-the-job training which would develop skills relevant to aerospace work.¹¹⁴ Limited to unemployed minorities, teens, older workers, the handicapped, and welfare recipients, the NAB program recruited from the existing job programs

¹¹² “The People Industry Needs are in Nassau,” *Commerce and Industry News* 3, no. 1 (October 1968): p. 5, Box 65, folder “Commerce & Industry,” Nickerson Papers.

¹¹³ “Nassau’s Goal: A Community of Opportunity,” *Commerce and Industry News* 3, no. 1 (October 1968): 1, Box 65, folder “Commerce & Industry,” Nickerson Papers.

¹¹⁴ Onkst, 264; “NEWS RELEASE: Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation,” Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet “Com-Cu,” folder “Community Relations,” NGHC; “Grumman Has Jobs for Poor,” *Suffolk Sun*, January 29, 1968, Alphabetical Files, Section A-12, cabinet “Com-Cu,” folder “CORE,” NGHC.

and welfare services in Nassau and Suffolk counties. Recruits were then put through a gauntlet of training, including psychological counseling, habit and motivation courses, money management, and high-school equivalency programs. After passing these requirements, workers gained experience in on-the-job training sessions lasting up to four months. Federal funding subsidized support services from medical and child care to transportation. By February 1969, they had 165 positions ready for OJT recruits.¹¹⁵

Local government likewise pursued a more comprehensive approach to their job programs. The Nassau JDC and Nassau County government combined all of the county's existing anti-poverty resources in an effort to move the "the disadvantaged upward and away from dependence on government agencies for financial support."¹¹⁶ Dubbed by Nickerson the 'Cooperative Center' in 1968, they were a County-run social service program providing every possible means of assistance to tackle the structural unemployment problem, including day-care, a car service, mental and physical health aid, skills training, and income support. Residents would no longer navigate the multitude of employment and welfare services across Nassau County. A client met with a counselor who coordinated all the support services necessary as the client searched for employment. The idea was to "to remedy the conditions which prevent men and women from enjoying the dignity and material benefits of employment," and while it resembled previous attempts to combat poverty, Nickerson claimed this to be the first of its kind in the nation.¹¹⁷ The innovative rhetoric was at least partly a response to Republican attacks on

¹¹⁵ Interoffice Memorandum, February 10, 1969, Attachment 1-2, Alphabetical Files, Section A-19, cabinet "Stol-Tim," folder "Training, 1969," NGHC.

¹¹⁶ From Office of County Executive Nickerson, "Cooperative Service Centers," Box 65, folder "Cooperative Service Centers (Glen Cove & Roosevelt)," Nickerson Papers.

¹¹⁷ "For Immediate Release," March 18, 1968, Box 66, folder "Economic Opportunity Commission," Nickerson Papers; "Program Concepts and Philosophy," Box 63, folder "Anti-Poverty," Nickerson Papers; "Pilot Centers to Coordinate Unemployment Efforts" *Commerce and Industry News* 3, no. 1 (October 1968): 1, Box 65, folder "Commerce & Industry," Nickerson Papers.

the duplication of services between federal, state, and county programs, but it was unique in that it recognized both the material obstacles to skill acquisition and the limits of the existing War on Poverty apparatus.¹¹⁸ For Nickerson, the singular purpose was to remove all “barriers to a better life,” be they family obligations, poverty, health problems, or emotional issues.¹¹⁹

The Suffolk JDCP established a similar program, where a coordinator helped an applicant with supportive services, from Medicaid, family planning, and Head Start, to training and transportation assistance. The coordinator then referred the applicant to an employer, and after acquiring a job, remained in contact with both the applicant and the employer to assure the transition remained smooth. Unlike the Nassau program, the Suffolk JDCP focused on living wages and actively pursued employers who could either offer \$2.00 per hour and/or upward mobility within the firm.¹²⁰ They established their own US Labor Department-funded On-the-Job Training program in 1967 so their applicants could develop skills and advance into high-skilled positions. The median wage began at \$1.98 per hour, rising to an average \$2.10 (though high wage jobs included \$4.50) within six months, and within its first year and a half of operation, the Suffolk JDCP placed 267 people into the program.¹²¹ The JDCP also took accurate measurements of the wages offered. From January to April 1969, 493 placements averaged a \$2.31 hourly wage, ranging from \$1.60 to \$3.12, illustrating Suffolk’s commitment to a living wage.¹²²

¹¹⁸ “Purcell Blasts Poverty ‘Boondoggle,’” *Newsday*, March 16, 1967, 11.

¹¹⁹ “Pilot Centers to Coordinate Unemployment Efforts” *Commerce and Industry News* 3, no. 1 (October 1968): 1, Box 65, folder “Commerce & Industry,” Nickerson Papers.

¹²⁰ “Job Counseling and Development Program, Summary: Job Program,” Box 11, folder “Suffolk County Human Rights Commission,” SCC; “CAP 81 ‘E’ Year,” p. 4, Box 1, folder 2, Burghardt Turner Collection.

¹²¹ Application for Refunding Community Action Project – Job Counseling and Development Project,” June 1, 1968, p. 10-11, Box 1, folder 1, Burghardt Turner Collection.

¹²² Job Counseling and Development Program Office Reports, January-April 1969, Box 1, folder 3, Burghardt Turner Collection.

Despite these renewed efforts, both the private and public programs did not unravel the “paradox of unemployment” alongside “unfilled jobs” as a 1969 business report put it.¹²³ The Suffolk JDCP’s search for voluntary hiring commitments from Long Island firms failed as companies refused to recruit from public programs. Companies like Linear Electronics Laboratory, developer of communications equipment for the Apollo Missions, remarked that “our requirements always lie in a somewhat technical area and you have had very little success in matching candidates to our job openings.”¹²⁴ An electrical manufacturer claimed that the JDCP offered no clients “with the experience requirements needed for our medium-size organization.”¹²⁵ Even companies who utilized the program’s prospective employees, like Fairchild Republic, could not place these workers into skilled or semi-skilled positions, leaving them in low-wage service positions.¹²⁶ Private efforts to employ the poor, like Grumman’s NAB program, likewise ended in disappointment. Grumman retained one hundred of its 270 trainees by February 1970, and program administrators realized that the program did not serve the needs of the company, since they were cutting jobs and

skill needs vary constantly; today we need riveters or clerk-typists, tomorrow spray painters or industrial truck operators, and the following day welders or machine operators; so you recruit for a specific open job, not for a job that might be open in the indefinite future.¹²⁷

The problems encountered through these efforts revealed that there was no ‘paradox,’ that the inability to employ all Long Islanders was intrinsic to the structure of the region’s “affluent”

¹²³ “Unemployment/Underemployment versus Unfilled Jobs,” July 1969, Box 68, folder “Labor,” Nickerson Papers.

¹²⁴ Estelle Manfre to Mr. George Pettengill, July 2, 1969, Box 11, folder “Suffolk County Human Rights Commission,” SCC.

¹²⁵ Stanley R. Kase to Mr. George Pettengill, August 7, 1969, Box 11, folder “Suffolk County Human Rights Commission,” SCC.

¹²⁶ Booker T. Young to Mr. George Pettengill, July 2, 1969, Box 11, folder “Suffolk County Human Rights Commission,” SCC.

¹²⁷ “NAB-Grumman Program helps people to build, market skills,” *Grumman Plane News* 29, no. 3 (February 16, 1970), folder “1970,” NGHC.

labor market in the late 1960s. Defense contracts still flowing to Nassau and Suffolk counties subsidized technical employment and had multiplier effects on the services they used. White-collar employment was expanding, though these jobs had a divide as well, either benefitting workers with advanced education or paying too little to provide primary earners with living wages. The growth of white collar and technical employment gave the appearance of affluence and influenced the direction of Long Island's job programs and the entire War on Poverty. But any boot camp that reshaped the unemployed and relied on the private market to hire them required more than behavior modification and a few weeks or months of training. The failure of these programs was written into their design, since all were based on the assumption that the unemployed could be absorbed into Long Island's labor market. In reality, workers were precluded from the job market because of the structure of the economy, where manufacturing was no longer the mass employer and no clear alternative existed to sustain wages for working-class suburban living.

Guaranteed Employment

After five years, Long Island's War on Poverty did not produce the kind of results the bi-county region's affluence envisaged. Families living in poverty declined from more than 36,000 in 1966 to just over 25,000 by 1970, but improved social services accounted for the drop in poverty, undermining both administrations' goal of putting their respective welfare departments out of business.¹²⁸ 'Tax-eaters' consumed \$63 million of Nassau's revenue in 1968 as the

¹²⁸ "Community Profile, New York, Nassau County," p. CP-005, box 254, folder 30, "Community Profiles 1967," Records of the Information Center, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II; "Community Profile, New York, Suffolk County," p. CP-005, box 256, folder 52, "Community Profiles 1967," Records of the Information Center, Records of the Office of Operations, Records of the Office of Opportunity, RG 381, NARA II; Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board. *U.S. Census '70: Volume 6: Income*, 52.

welfare population grew over 133 percent from 1962-1967, a greater increase than any other jurisdiction in the metropolitan area, New York City included. In 1968, Nassau ran its first deficit in history thanks to a thirteen million-dollar hole in the Department of Social Services. Suffolk posted a similar 130 percent increase in the welfare population, and by the early 1970s, welfare accounted for nearly half of the county budget. Long Island's welfare recipient population was only a small fraction of New York City's, and an aging population was partly responsible for this increase, as was Suffolk's population growth. But a 1969 county analysis of Nassau welfare recipients determined that illness, loss of employment or reduction in other means of support accounted for three-quarters of cases, and these cases could be resolved with stable, well-paying jobs. The under-employed still required income maintenance to survive, and the responsibility fell on the counties to carry that burden.¹²⁹

Nassau and Suffolk's jobs problem (and the related welfare problem) was a microcosm of the broader failures of the federal War on Poverty. With unemployment among disadvantaged groups holding steady, academics and politicians questioned whether the private economy could absorb the unemployed. The Labor Department had been advocating for a public jobs program since the outset of the poverty war, and Congressional Democrats attempted two employment acts in 1967, including the Guaranteed Employment Act, though Johnson killed both in favor of 'voluntary' employment programs.¹³⁰ Public service employment nonetheless gained traction in

¹²⁹ "Suburbs Outstrip City on Welfare," *New York Times*, December 7, 1967, 1; "Study Claims 130% Rise in LI Welfare Rolls," *Newsday*, December 8, 1967, 9; "Proposal for Demonstration or Training or Research Grant," April 11, 1969, p. 9, Box 66, folder "Economic Opportunity Commission" [2 of 2], Nickerson Papers; "Editorials: Bad News," *Newsday*, September 24, 1971, 54; Eugene Nickerson, "1969 Annual Report," p. 22, Box 58, Nickerson Papers; "Nassau, in the Red, Oks Notes," *Newsday*, November 5, 1968.

¹³⁰ Weir, 117; Stein, *Running Steel, Running America*, 124; Thomas Janoski, *The Political Economy of Unemployment: Active Labor Market Policy in West Germany and the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 207; Steven Attewell, "Public At Work: Direct Job Creation Policy From The New Deal to the Rise of Reagan" (PhD diss., University of California, 2014), 211; Gary Mucciaroni, *The Political Failure of Employment Policy, 1945-1982* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 72-75.

the late 1960s and early 1970s as a means to bridge the gap in what economists Michael Piore and Peter Doeringer dubbed the ‘dual labor market,’ the divide between low-wage dead-end jobs and well-compensated work that straightforward training could not breach.¹³¹ Welfare policy likewise went in new directions as guaranteed income schemes became popular among conservatives, leftists, and libertarians, each with different stakes in redistributing income to provide basic subsistence without a work requirement.¹³² By the late 1960s, the general conversation (among reformers at least) shifted toward a realization that the private labor market was not a source for economic security, and that the state would have to do more than train, modify behavior, create jobs, or provide support services. But policy to reflect this realization remained mired in debate on the national stage from the late 1960s and into the early 1970s. Guaranteed income never came to fruition, and limited job programs, first as part of the Emergency Employment Act of 1971, and later as part of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973 failed to meet the hopes of public employment advocates.

Luckily, Long Island policymakers did not have to wait for Congress. Nixon reorganized the Office of Economic Opportunity to “serve as a laboratory for experimental programs” as Nixon’s appointed OEO head Donald Rumsfeld put it. While Rumsfeld deprived radical groups of OEO money, he simultaneously provided an opening for innovative projects.¹³³ Nickerson had drawn up plans for a large-scale county-wide jobs program in 1968, and a year later he allied with the New York University affiliated New Careers Development Center to develop a service-

¹³¹ Weir, 104-105; Steven Attewell discussed the debates over public employment within the OEO. See Attewell, 203-208.

¹³² Steensland, 4, chapters 1, 2, and 3.

¹³³ Quoted in Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 125; Clayson, 141-142; Nixon discusses the re-orientation of the OEO at a speech in San Clemente, CA. See Richard Nixon: "Statement on the Office of Economic Opportunity," August 11, 1969, Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. Accessed August 20, 2013, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2195>

oriented public jobs program.¹³⁴ The program was based on an employment opportunity concept known as “New Careers,” first devised by sociologist Frank Riessman and educator Arthur Pearl in 1965. ‘New Careers’ claimed that millions of entry-level positions could be created in the automation-proof human services field, requiring no prior training while offering long-term career advancement if private enterprise and public institutions implemented a Fordist-scheme of de-skilling professional positions. Doctors, teachers, social workers, and other professionals had a multitude of daily tasks that could be done more efficiently by aides, inspectors, or general assistants – from feeding children at schools to clerical work or recording patient vital statistics. These jobs, requiring little to no formal preparation, nonetheless provided on-the-job experience, and with built-in credentialing, they could lead to advancements and pay raises, so that the teacher’s aide could become a tutor, then a teacher, or a home health aide could become a nurse or social worker. For the state, this eliminated both the costly “secondary educational system” of federal training programs and welfare payments. For workers, this ended the dead-end nature of low-wage jobs. Professionals also benefitted, since they could handle the more complex aspects of their job and meet the rapidly expanding needs in health care, education, and social services.¹³⁵

New Careers was a flexible concept, and found support in Congress from Senator Robert F. Kennedy, who secured \$70 million for New Careers in the 1966 Economic Opportunity Act changes. It was also similar to the broader push for public service employment at the federal level in 1969 and 1970, a concept that sought to expand the quality of local public services while

¹³⁴ “Nick Asks U.S. to Back Job Plan for Relievers,” *Newsday*, August 8, 1968.

¹³⁵ Frank Riessman, “New Careers: A Basic Strategy against Poverty,” p. 3-8, Box 68, folder “Jobs,” Nickerson Papers; Frank Riessman and Hermine I. Popper, “The Evolutionary Revolution,” in *Up from Poverty: New Career Ladders for Nonprofessionals*, ed. Frank Riessman and Hermine I. Popper (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 8-10; “The New Careers Training System: An Overview,” *New Careers Newsletter*, undated, 1-2.

providing jobs to the unemployed.¹³⁶ Beyond federal legislation, Riessman's New Careers Development Center pushed municipal governments, hospitals, and unions to implement career ladders, explicit credentialing, and outreach to the unemployed.¹³⁷ For Riessman, associated with Richard Cloward, Frances Fox Piven, and the anti-poverty movement in New York generally, the program had radical implications. In the post-industrial economy, the service worker was the new working class, and 'New Careers' would empower this class without redistributing power or wealth from one class to another, instead expanding power to both those at the top (professionals), and the sub- or para-professional. As the poor found jobs and power, Riessman contended that society would no longer need to maintain a 'permanent poor,' and these workers could now organize into hybrid union/professional associations linked to the New Careers concept.¹³⁸ Debates emerged among radicals over the consequences of such a program as well as its potential to transform the nation. *Other America* author Michael Harrington lent his strong support in the hopes that this would lead to a new union movement, but others like Frances Fox Piven believed the existing political system would not pass such a program, and she continued to push to overload the existing welfare system.¹³⁹

Nassau County executive Eugene Nickerson was more interested in the practicality of New Careers rather than its radical potential. Such a program could win the war on poverty by breaching the Long Island's labor market divide and shifting the poor from welfare to

¹³⁶ Jennifer Klein and Eileen Boris, *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 83-85; Mucciaroni, 75-78.

¹³⁷ For examples, see *New Careers Newsletter* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1967).

¹³⁸ Frank Riessman, "The New Careers Movement," in *Up from Poverty; New Career Ladders for Nonprofessionals*, ed. Frank Riessman and Hermine I. Popper (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 320-322; Frank Riessman, "New Careers: A Basic Strategy against Poverty," p. 9-14, Box 68, folder "Jobs," Nickerson Papers; Frank Riessman, "New Careers: A Vehicle for Radical Social Change," *New Careers Newsletter* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1967): 18-20.

¹³⁹ Michael Harrington, "A Major Social Reform," in *Up from Poverty; New Career Ladders for Nonprofessionals*, ed. Frank Riessman and Hermine I. Popper (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 15-17; Frances Fox Piven, "Public Service Employment: Visions or Reality," in *Public Service Employment; An Analysis of Its History, Problems, and Prospects*. Ed. Alan Gartner, Russell A. Nixon, and Frank Riessman (New York: Praeger, 1973), 220-222.

participants in the region's economy. If federally funded, Nickerson could also expand public service provision without tax increases. In June 1969, Nickerson established the county Office of Manpower Development, headed by labor economist and former textile union organizer Elwood Taub, who in cooperation with the New Careers Development Corporation filed for an OEO grant to design what was considered "the nation's first guaranteed employment program."¹⁴⁰ The program proposal was an evolution of the County's Cooperative Centers. Welfare applicants were treated as job seekers first, and would have the option of receiving immediate supportive services (day care, income assistance, Medicaid, etc.) while the office coordinated a job with advancement opportunities. The manpower office had to find cooperative private employers who would design career ladders, but if they could not find a job within the private sector, the government served as the "employer of last resort." The job guarantee was the major innovation, so that "any individual who is willing to work ought to be able to work." In a suburban county with high cost human services, public tasks could be subdivided, training could be built in, and jobs could be created.¹⁴¹

The Nickerson administration contended that the job guarantee would solve many of Nassau's poverty problems, above all the soaring welfare costs strangling local government. Aside from a three percent sales tax, property taxes were the only form of county revenue and had reached "confiscatory" limits, according to the administration. The program would reduce the welfare rolls by a fifth and turn the rehabilitated into 'taxpayers' with career prospects and higher incomes in the future. It would allow the County to meet service demands, particularly for the growing elderly population without burdening taxpayers. Nickerson also understood the

¹⁴⁰ "1969 Annual Report," Box 58, Nickerson Papers; "Guaranteed Employment Plan," *New Careers Newsletter* 3, no. 3 (Summer 1969): 4; "Taub Gets Manpower Post," *New York Times*, October 24, 1971

¹⁴¹ "Proposal for Demonstration or Training or Research Grant," April 11, 1969, p. 13-16, Box 66, folder "Economic Opportunity Commission" [2 of 2], Nickerson Papers.

political value of replacing the welfare system with guaranteed jobs, reassuring taxpayers their “hard-earned dollars are not perpetuating someone’s laziness,” and instead going toward a valued public service. Furthermore, public service employment fit squarely within Nickerson’s ‘custodial’ state, both as an efficient means to provide services as well as guarantee the welfare of county residents. The Nickerson administration’s support for guaranteed employment also reflected a broader realization: that the suburban economy, understood as the affluent model of the postwar 1960s, did not have unbridled opportunity for everyone, if only they had the skills, motivation, or proper knowledge of the labor market. Suburbia, like the nation itself, had its share of low-wage jobs that mired people in poverty and placed them on the welfare rolls. A war on poverty, whether suburban or otherwise, required interventions in both the supply and demand side of the labor market. The guaranteed employment proposal recognized that “there are persons who are unemployed or underemployed who cannot be placed in the private economy,” that Long Island’s labor market had a deep divide, and that despite relative full employment, there were those who “do not show up in the very low insured unemployment statistic published and revised monthly,” and instead in other data, from welfare loads to poverty surveys.¹⁴² Direct job creation was necessary to reach full employment and raise the minimum wage private employers offered.

The guaranteed employment proposal found a receptive audience in Nassau County. At a public hearing on October 14, 1969, anti-poverty activists and residents expressed overwhelming support for the idea in a five-hour session. Emma Morning, Nassau Welfare-Tenants Coordinating Committee chairperson, endorsed the program because “it’s about time that people

¹⁴² “Proposal for Demonstration or Training or Research Grant,” April 11, 1969, p. 5, 8-10, Box 66, folder “Economic Opportunity Commission” [2 of 2], Nickerson Papers; “Nassau Plans to Find Jobs for Relievers,” *Newsday*, July 2, 1969.

realize that everybody on welfare isn't there because they are lazy and shiftless." *Newsday* journalist Martin L. Gross praised the plan as a step toward removing citizens from the "generation-to-generation dole," and likened it to New Deal work relief programs.¹⁴³ Nickerson intended the program for all county residents, publicly employing the recently laid off and returning Vietnam veterans if private employment could not be found, keeping them out of the unemployment offices and off the welfare rolls. Nickerson believed that the program was so popular that he could use it as a political weapon against his Republican opponents, who had to publicly support the program, and if they didn't, could be linked to Nixon's "failed anti-inflation measures."¹⁴⁴

For all the promise the proposal held, securing funding proved problematic. After an initial \$37,000 OEO research grant, Nickerson finally submitted a full plan in late 1969, though Manpower director Elwood Taub warned that it would be "an expensive program" and that while it would ultimately pay for itself, "society must first make the investment."¹⁴⁵ It turned out society, or at least the bureaucratic representation of society known as the OEO, was unwilling to invest. The OEO demanded a narrower demonstration project, and Nassau responded with a pared down proposal covering only 450 volunteers. In April 1970, the OEO rejected the demonstration project, claiming it could not generate data for "expanded implementation," because from a national perspective, Nassau County's poverty problems were less severe than most areas, and "a program that is successful in reducing poverty in Nassau would not be

¹⁴³ "Nick's Job Plan Backed at Hearing," *Newsday*, October 15, 1969, 15; Martin L. Gross, "Critic at Large: Horn to Solve Welfare Woes," *Newsday*, July 25, 1969.

¹⁴⁴ Horace Kramer, "A Task Force to Tackle the Unemployment Crisis Created by the Nixon Administration," July 16, 1970, Box 68, folder "Jobs," Nickerson Papers.

¹⁴⁵ "Welfare Job Assistance for Nassau Hits Delay," *Newsday*, September 18, 1969, 19.

necessarily successful elsewhere.”¹⁴⁶ The OEO, while open to experimentation, wanted larger-scale results that could be emulated nation-wide. Nassau’s ‘affluence’ disqualified the county as a laboratory for experimentation. Later that spring, the County received a much smaller \$400,000 grant to restructure their civil service system and employ 120 unemployed or underemployed residents into para-professional and blue-collar career ladders.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

The loss of OEO funding spelled the end of the local war on poverty, at least in the way it was conceived in the 1960s. As the federal purse-strings tightened, the experimentation ceased. County Executive Eugene Nickerson, who at the War on Poverty’s outset claimed Nassau County as the litmus test for the national project itself, limped through his final year in office in 1970, failing to mount his third run for state governor, facing allegations that his party received campaign contributions from architects and engineers in exchange for contracts, and continuing to run up the county debt.¹⁴⁸ The Democrats then lost the county executive seat in November, the only major county position they held, and Nickerson’s successor, Republican Ralph Caso, re-shuffled county government. He appointed a university dean to the Social Service Department, and wanted something done about the illegitimate children born to women on welfare.¹⁴⁹ In Suffolk, Dennison turned on the Suffolk County Human Relations Commission, firing its chairman George Pettengill in 1969 for favoring “low income ghetto groups” and therefore

¹⁴⁶ “Application to Office of Economic Opportunity for Funding for a Demonstration Guaranteed Employment Program,” Box 68, folder “Jobs,” Nickerson Papers; “U.S. Shifts, Rejects Nassau Job Plan,” *Newsday*, April 17, 1970.

¹⁴⁷ “County Jobs for Poor Seen in Nassau,” *Newsday*, June 30, 1970; For an analysis of the civil service reform, see June Leonard, *Changing Values in the Civil Service Commission*.

¹⁴⁸ “Signs point to no Return if Nickerson Fails Again,” *Newsday*, February 19, 1970, 5; “Nickerson, English, and others Subpoenaed in Contract Probe,” *Newsday*, October 27, 1970, 2.

¹⁴⁹ “It’s Caso for Nassau Executive,” *Newsday*, November 4, 1970, 6; “Caso Names Hofstra Dean Welfare Head,” *Newsday*, December 4, 1970, 11.

failing to improve total human relations in Suffolk County, a goal which required working with both minorities and the “great “silent majority.” The termination became mired in court, and not until June 1970 did the two sides settle on Pettengill’s resignation.¹⁵⁰ With the SCHRC sidelined, Dennison finished out his third term emphasizing his usual brick-and-mortar solutions to poverty, namely better housing and a welfare department overhaul. In June 1971, he stepped down, paving the way for a Republican capture of the County Executive office in 1972.¹⁵¹

After six years and over fifty million dollars, what did Long Island’s poverty war accomplish? Former Nassau EOC director Donald Middleton lamented that his commission only “sponsored the kinds of programs which could...merely create a new form of welfare colonialism....that is, through simple services, these programs could turn served people into kept people.”¹⁵² His diagnosis mirrored that of the war on poverty in general. If judged by the poverty programs’ ability to mitigate deprivation, the war was won, cutting poverty in half across the nation and keeping Long Islanders fed, cared for, and with a modicum of material goods, regardless of income. In terms of political mobilization, Long Island’s CAPs did not produce a new politically active poor, and the local war on poverty operated mostly through bureaucratic offices rather than in the streets and poor neighborhoods of Nassau and Suffolk counties. But if judged by the war’s broader purpose, that of increasing the earning capacities of the poor and including them into the prosperous mainstream, then it was a failure, and that failure was most apparent on Long Island.¹⁵³ The War on Poverty was predicated on the idea that the United

¹⁵⁰For information on the conflict between Suffolk County Human Rights Commission chair George Pettengill and County Executive Dennison, see Box 1, folders 4-5, Burghardt Turner Collection.

¹⁵¹ “Dennison Switches Emphasis to Social Problems in Suffolk,” *Newsday*, January 5, 1971, 2; “Dennison to Step Down; Dems Searching for Candidate,” *Newsday*, June 3, 1971, 1

¹⁵² “Community Action: For the People but not by Them,” *Newsday*, August 4, 1971, 3A.

¹⁵³ For a discussion of the legacies of the War on Poverty in economic terms, see Bruce D. Meyer and James X. Sullivan, “Winning the War: Poverty from the Great Society to the Great Recession,” NBER Working Paper 18718 (January 2013).

States had mastered the tools to promote capitalist economic growth, and the suburbs like Long Island were the geographic manifestation of that mastery. But Long Island's affluence and its economic growth, especially by the late 1960s, did not absorb all of its inhabitants.

Manufacturing, which had once been a mass employer, no longer played that role. New economic sectors, mainly in white-collar service, had a deep divide between well-compensated skilled jobs and low-wage unskilled work. Nonetheless, a structure designed with affluence in mind had been laid down. Roads had been designed for automobile use and job centers depended on them. Schools were sustained with property taxes and zoning encouraged homeownership. Poverty was not concentrated but spread across a mixed urban and rural landscape. Poverty activists focused on these barriers as the target of their programs. Buses carried the poor to job centers to break down the spatial barrier, migrant workers were to be replaced with local residents, and skills were taught to prepare the under- and un-employed for the prosperous economy. But all these efforts to employ the poor and provide adequate income attempted to alter the labor supply, and the only efforts to alter demand were voluntary commitments to hire.

Skills, residency, and transportation, while problematic, were not the barrier. The structure of the labor market that failed to provide adequate incomes stood at the center of the region's problems. By the end of the poverty war, Nassau County Eugene Nickerson had concluded that Long Island's prosperity would not absorb the poor in of itself, and that jobs had to be created to permit the poor to become participants in Long Island's affluent society through a right to work. While perhaps radical compared to the heavy reliance on the 'free market' for jobs under the War on Poverty, Long Island had long relied on public employment for its robust job market in the form of defense spending. Now that military procurement subsidized technical

employees and white collar workers, Nickerson merely sought a new source of state funding to buttress employment in the region as military Keynesianism had been doing since the 1930s. But, when the Office of Economic Opportunity closed that door, the bi-county region's war on poverty was seriously compromised. By 1971, *Newsday* claimed that Long Island's poverty war was in a 'phased withdrawal,' and former Nassau EOC director Adrian Cabral stated that regardless of the war's failures on the economic front, the anti-poverty efforts "succeeded in making many Long Islanders aware that poverty was there, and guilty that it was there, and uncomfortable with it."¹⁵⁴ Awareness did little for the poor.

¹⁵⁴ "The War on Poverty: A Phased Withdrawal," *Newsday*, August 2, 1971, 1.

Chapter 6

Fair Share

If the suburbs were the symbol of postwar American affluence, the implications of suburban prosperity dramatically changed in the late 1960s. After two decades of celebrating the suburbs as the embodiment of prosperity, the urban riots turned policy against the suburbs. The 1968 National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner Report) condemned America's "two societies, one black, and one white – separate and unequal...one, largely Negro and poor, located in the central cities; the other, predominantly white and affluent, located in the suburbs and in outlying areas."¹ The suburbs were part of the problem, beneficiaries of segregation and zoning policy to the detriment of cities. Restrictive suburban land practices not only denied African Americans and the poor free housing choice, but restricted access to jobs leaving for the suburbs and tax revenue concentrating in suburban hamlets, depriving the urban poor of necessary public funds. While the Report was not the first civil rights commission to condemn the 'white noose' for urban black problems, it publicized over a decade of activism and policy research that linked the city/suburb divide to the 'urban crisis.'² In this telling, suburban prosperity was "deeply implicated in the ghetto" because the suburbs concentrated jobs and public revenue within its borders.³ The problem of poverty and joblessness were spatially conceived, concentrated in some places and not others.

¹ United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), 22.

² Civil rights groups, the NAACP in particular, had been condemning housing segregation for decades. Even previous commissions, including the 1961 Commission on Civil Rights, which popularized the term "white noose," described the negative effects of housing segregation, and the widely-disparaged McCone Commission led to discussion about segregation. See Robert Self, 271-272; For a discussion of the Kerner Commission's impact on public discourse, see Geismer, 418-423.

³ US National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 2.

The Kerner Report gave long-standing struggles to end housing segregation a new moral imperative, because urban/suburban integration would solve joblessness, inferior schools, and poverty. It also encouraged federal administrations and state legislatures to expand housing agency powers so they could construct suburban public housing, because widely dispersed low-income housing projects would alleviate urban problems. In all, the Kerner Report and related research galvanized civil rights groups, federal bureaucracies, state housing agencies, and local governments to address integration in the wider metropolitan context. The NAACP looked to break down zoning laws and literally disperse the urban poor into the suburbs and link them to suburban jobs. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), state agencies like Nelson Rockefeller's Urban Development Corporation (UDC), and even county and local initiatives likewise hoped to enhance employment opportunity with targeted housing integration.⁴ Even modest proposals to improve housing opportunity for the suburban poor adopted the belief that the suburbs were generally affluent and owed their 'fair share' of public services to the poor. All proposed high-density housing projects to redress injustices in housing, land-use policy, and by extension, employment and public service inequalities.

This view approached the nation's problems with a binary city versus suburb, poor versus affluent, and decline versus growth framework, and it obscured the reality that the 'urban crisis' was part of a much larger shared economic transformation affecting the entire metropolitan area. Long Island's long-term labor market divide already undermined the belief that spatial mobility translated into upward mobility, and the gap between well-paying and low-wage employment only widened after 1968. Blue-collar jobs left New York City, but suburban Long Island did not gain them in proportion. From 1969 to 1974, manufacturing jobs left all but the five least

⁴ Edward G. Goetz, *Clearing the Way: Deconcentrating the Poor in Urban America* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 2003), 44-47.

populated and most remote suburban counties in New York's seventeen county metropolitan area.⁵ In contrast, white-collar employment expanded in both city and suburbs during the 1970s, though these gains did not offset the blue-collar losses, and metropolitan area employment fell seven percent from 1969 to 1976 as the New York area's population dropped by nearly half a million.⁶ The post-industrial turn in New York, Long Island, and the metropolitan area as a whole benefitted those who could transition to white-collar work, while those who relied on industry for their livelihoods suffered. The 'suburb' was not a promised land for jobs.

Long Island's suburban hamlets were not necessarily overflowing with tax revenue to share either, and the dualism obscured the diversity of suburbs too. If suburbs were to offer their 'fair share,' the question was who was 'responsible' to redistribute their resources. While some suburbanites opposed low-income housing projects on racist or class grounds, the hamlets targeted for new housing included working class, low-income, and black or integrated neighborhoods. Placing the minority poor into black or integrated suburbs would only exacerbate segregation, and working class or low-income suburbs were hardest hit by job loss. In Long Island's balkanized tax system, the fiscal costs of public services were limited to local populations. Any alteration to a community's tax base, from declining job opportunities to proposed public housing had serious consequences on yearly tax bills, neighborhood stability, and school quality. And since property taxes were based on assets owned rather than ability to pay, it became increasingly regressive as incomes stagnated and unemployment rose. In sum, Long Island's suburbs were deeply divided along race and class lines and property taxes only

⁵ Pearl M. Kamer, *Nassau-Suffolk's Changing Manufacturing Base: A Case Study of a Suburban Labor Market* (Hauppauge, N.Y.: Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, 1977), 19.

⁶ Michael N. Danielson and Jameson W. Doig, *New York, the Politics of Urban Regional Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 45-50, 64-65, 342.

exacerbated the divide. ‘Fair share’ was a question between suburbs as much as it was between city and suburb.

The following chapter describes the dissonance between the binary city/suburb formulation employed to solve urban problems and the complex reality of suburban inequality on Long Island. Historians have documented the brief moment in the late 1960s and early 1970s when housing integration reached the national stage but was fiercely (and successfully) resisted by suburban homeowners and their political allies. At the center of most accounts is white racism and the political coalitions built around segregated property and neighborhoods.⁷ But by focusing on homeowner resistance, particularly ‘white’ homeowners, historians simply reproduce the arguments of the Kerner Report, that city and suburb was the great dividing line between the haves and the have-nots in postwar America. By ignoring the massive changes occurring in the suburban labor market, both activists at the time and historians since ignore the emerging inequality among suburbanites and the links between the urban and suburban poor.

Post-Industrial Long Island

On October 23, 1972, The White House Office of Management and Budget christened Long Island a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), marking its official transformation from a bedroom of Gotham to a city comparable with Los Angeles, Chicago,

⁷ The literature on integrated housing and why it failed is voluminous. For an influential contemporary discussion, see Michael Danielson, *The Politics of Exclusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); Detailed historical accounts along this line of thought include Matthew Lassiter’s *Silent Majority*, who argues that suburbanites successfully defeated the integrationist liberal agenda by adopting a ‘color-blind’ ideology that claimed their suburban residence was a marker of market-based meritocratic success, and that integrationist policies threatened ‘freedom of choice.’ See Lassiter, *Silent Majority*; Lily Geismer makes a similar argument for postwar liberals, who supported key liberal stances on the environment, war, and civil rights nationally, but believed in the same market-based individualism with regards to suburban housing and successfully defeated housing proposals on those grounds. See Geismer, “Don’t Blame Us.” For studies of how Richard Nixon solidified support among suburbanites by prohibiting federal agencies from pressuring suburbs to accept integration, see Lamb, *Housing Segregation since 1960* and Bonastia, *Knocking on the Door*.

Detroit, and its neighbor, New York. As the first metropolitan area without an urban core, the region exemplified the 1970 census revelation that more Americans lived in suburbs than in cities or rural areas combined.⁸ Long Island was at the center of a debate over what Louis Masotti and Jeffrey Hadden called the “urbanization of the suburbs,” that suburbs were not only a distinct place to live, but home to factories and offices as well, making the ‘sub’ prefix meaningless.⁹ While recognizing the culmination of a century long process that accelerated over the last three decades, Masotti and Hadden claimed that a rapid transition had taken place, turning the suburbs into a source of economic growth independent from the urban core the suburbs once relied on, what historians Jon Teaford called ‘Post-Suburbia;’ Joel Garreau titled the ‘Edge City,’ and what Robert Fishman christened the ‘technoburb.’¹⁰

At best this was a belated recognition of suburbia’s growth and newly relevant *political* influence, which complicated the urban/rural divide that historically drove politics in the twentieth century. But discussion of suburban independence obfuscated the massive economic transformations affecting city and suburb alike in the 1960s and 1970s, part of the broader national transition from industry to services. New York City, while historically the global financial capital, became the national hub for corporate headquarters in the postwar period, largely because corporations could utilize New York’s concentration of banking institutions, professional services, and the region’s highly skilled labor force. Between 1947 and 1980,

⁸ Jackson, 283-284.

⁹ Peter O. Muller, *Contemporary Suburban America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981), x, 5-6.

¹⁰ Jon Teaford, *Post-Suburbia*; Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); This debate over whether suburbs were dependent on central cities was pronounced in the early 1990s. For a review of the literature, see Keith R. Ihlanfeldt, “The Importance of the Central City to the Regional and National Economy: A Review of the Arguments and Empirical Evidence,” *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy, Development, and Research* 1, no. 2 (August 1995): 125-150; For an excellent critique of the suburbs as a new city, see Sharpe and Wallock, “Bold New City or Built-Up ‘Burb? Redefining Contemporary Suburbia,” *American Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (March 1994): 1-30.

developers added 145 million square feet to Manhattan's office space supply. Managerial and professional occupations increased as a proportion of total employment in Manhattan, part of some nine million jobs south of 60th Street that employed half of New York City's workers and 300,000 suburban commuters as of 1980.¹¹ New York's suburbs, Long Island included, were drawn into the orbit of this growing white-collar economy. While few large corporations located to Nassau and Suffolk Counties, satellite offices for insurance and credit card companies, as well as law, advertising, accounting, and real estate firms sparked an office building boom across the Island.¹² White collar employment had been growing since World War II, but accelerated rapidly in the 1970s. In 1960, there were only thirty office buildings Island-wide, occupying 800,000 square feet. During the 1960s, developers constructed five million square feet of new office space. Builders added another nearly eight million from 1970-1973 alone. By 1980, some twenty million square feet existed throughout Long Island, forming new concentrations of service sector employment that dotted central Long Island from Lake Success to Hauppauge.¹³

Office development ushered in a new age of job growth. In Nassau County for example, finance, insurance, real estate, and more generalized 'services' accounted for about eighty percent of all job growth from 1970-1975 (see Figure 6.1). Service-sector jobs did not mean Long Island developed an "independent labor market identity, separate and distinct from that of the remainder of the New York Metropolitan region" because the wealth generated in Manhattan

¹¹ Danielson et al., *New York*, 45-7.

¹² Two prominent corporate firms, Lufthansa and American Airlines, made high profile moves to Long Island. More common however were satellite branches for insurance firms such as Metropolitan Life and Government Employees Insurance Company (GEICO), and credit card companies like MasterCard and Uni-Card. See Francis Wood, "LI Is White-Collar Vineyard," *Newsday*, April 1, 1970, 96; "LI Overstocked with Office Space," *Newsday*, April 1, 1973, 11; Nassau County Planning Commission, *Roosevelt Field Area Development Guide* (Carle Place NY: Nassau County Planning Commission, 1977), 14.

¹³ Long Island Regional Planning Board, and Arthur H. Kunz, *Commercial Development Analyses: 1982* (Hauppauge NY: Long Island Regional Planning Board, 1982), 41-2; Suffolk County Planning Commission, *Suffolk County Office Building Study* (Hauppauge NY: Suffolk County Planning Commission, 1974), 2-10.

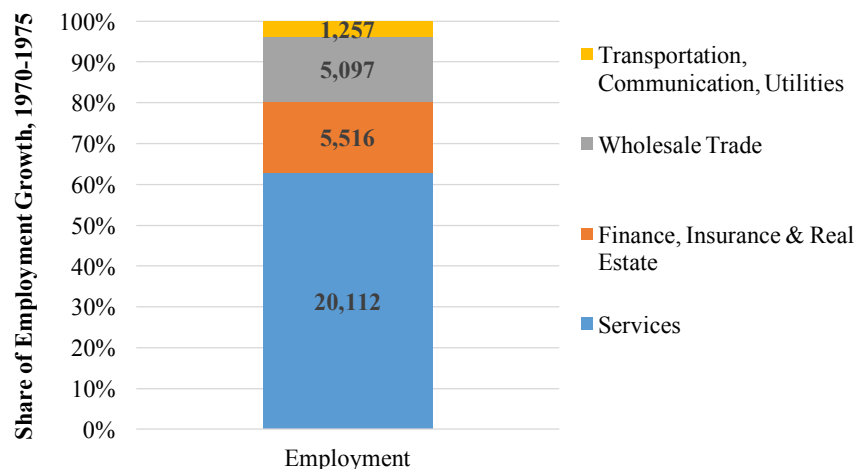


Figure 6.1. Share of Nassau County Employment Growth, 1970-1975. *Source:* Nassau County Planning Commission, *Nassau County, New York Data Book* (Mineola NY: Nassau County Planning Commission, 1985), 241-243.

drove this expansion.¹⁴ While there were fewer commuters in 1970 than 1960, those commuters contributed a disproportionate share of local spending, supporting a broad array of service workers, ranging from teachers and civil servants to health care aides and fast-food attendants. The median income of commuters was twice that of local employees, and a fifth of all locally-employed residents toiled in low-level clerical work.¹⁵

Just as Long Island's white-collar growth mirrored the structural changes occurring in New York City, Nassau and Suffolk also shared in the tristate (New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut) metropolitan area's manufacturing losses. The defense industry, already discussed in chapter 3, faced the combined threat of recessionary shocks and long-term structural change,

¹⁴ Pearl M. Kamer, "Inflation and Economic Activity: The Nassau-Suffolk SMSA," *Long Island Economic Trends Quarterly Technical Supplement* (June 1974): 6.

¹⁵ In 1960, 31.8 percent commuted to NYC. Ten years later, that number dropped to 24.6 percent. Kamer, "Inflation and Economic Activity," 7; Professionals made up the second largest contingent of workers on Long Island. See Kamer et al., *A Profile of the Nassau-Suffolk Labor Force*, 18-20; Nassau commuters accounted for forty-three percent of the aggregate earnings for the county. The median income for Nassau-Suffolk commuters was around \$12,000, compared to \$6,200 median income for local employees. See Pearl M. Kamer, "An Economic Profile of Commuter Relationships: The Nassau-Suffolk SMSA," *Long Island Economic Trends Quarterly Technical Supplement – Third Quarter 1974* (September 1974): 2-4; See also "Island is Found Still Dependent on City," *New York Times*, October 6, 1974, 103.

shedding some 11,450 jobs in just two years from 1969-1970.¹⁶ As Table 6.2 indicates, the entire New York metropolitan area lost industrial jobs in the early 1970s, an abrupt change from general growth during the 1960s. Manhattan and Brooklyn's losses were acute, but these jobs left for the South and West, not the suburbs, which despite small gains along the outer ring, collectively lost over 29,000 jobs. Academics and journalists focused on the economic decline in central cities versus the new economic role of suburbs, largely because the central cities in the metropolitan region – New York, Newark, Jersey City, or Yonkers – visibly displayed the scars of manufacturing job loss. But manufacturing was “no longer a flourishing industry even in the suburban portions of some of the nation's metropolitan areas” as Nassau-Suffolk Suffolk Regional Planning Board economist Pearl Kamer concluded in 1977.¹⁷ By 1976, over ten million square feet of industrial space was vacant on Long Island, sixty-two percent due to either contractions or plant closings, and the remainder because of out-migration to other states or foreign countries.¹⁸ Industrial job loss was a regional shift rather than local migration within the metropolitan area.¹⁹

Long Island's vacant industrial space was less visible because of the nature of suburban industry, where highly flexible and decentralized industrial parks seamlessly made the transition from industry to services. No employment center better exemplified this physical transformation than Roosevelt Field in Nassau County. The former airfield and home to the Island's largest mall was a major industrial hub from World War II through the 1960s. Over three-quarters of its land was zoned for industry, home to defense contractors Reeves Instrument and American

¹⁶ “Long Island Recession: A Fact Sheet,” Box 65, folder “Commerce and Industry,” Nickerson Papers.

¹⁷ Kamer, *Nassau-Suffolk's Changing Manufacturing Base*, 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹ Harrison, *Urban Economic Development*, 32.

Table 6.1. Net Change in Manufacturing Employment, 1964-1974, New York/New Jersey Metropolitan Area.

	1964-69	1969-74
Core		
Manhattan	6,427	-119,558
Kings	-5,147	-55,786
Bronx	1,832	-13,995
Queens	11,571	-22,079
Hudson	3,009	-24,091
Essex	974	-22,575
Inner Ring		
Richmond	-1,388	-1,789
Nassau	17,198	-19,685
Westchester	8,651	-7,880
Bergen	19,220	6,524
Passaic	7,435	-14,052
Union	15,546	-15,190
Outer Ring		
Middlesex	12,232	3,703
Somerset	4,339	5,952
Morris	11,426	3,771
Rockland	1,682	-195
Suffolk	9,843	7,747
Putnam	133	-120
Net Change	124,983	-289,298

Source: Pearl M. Kamer, *Nassau-Suffolk's Changing Manufacturing Base*, 19.

Bosch Arma. By the 1970s, industry accounted for less than half of Roosevelt Field's land use and only forty-seven of the 542 establishments in the area. Vacant factories became furniture stores and office complexes sprouted from industrially zoned land. Finance, insurance, and service firms employed five thousand workers in the area. Another quarter of Roosevelt Field's twenty thousand jobs were in retail, the new source of "job opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled people" as a local land use study noted. Manufacturing still remained, though increasingly in low-wage and footloose textiles and plastics. Roosevelt Field, a planned industrial center that once housed makers of missile guidance systems and spacecraft computer

components was now a regional center for furniture, clothing stores, and life insurance branch offices.²⁰

Roosevelt Field's transformation from industrial to service hub highlighted the cosmetic differences between city and suburbs, but while idle smokestacks and weed-infested warehouses did not scar Long Island's landscape, the effects of the transition were no less traumatic for Long Island's industrial workers. Suburban manufacturing employees already faced financial hardship in the 1960s. Increasing property, income, and social security taxes along with inflation ate up all but 94 cents of increased purchasing power in Nassau and Suffolk Counties from 1965 to 1968.²¹ Long Island's average weekly manufacturing wage was \$125 in 1967, just nine dollars over the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' lowest budgetary threshold above poverty for a New York family of four.²² Cutbacks in the aerospace industry pushed Long Island's rising unemployment rates ahead of the national average in the late 1960s, and when national recession hit in the early 1970s, manufacturing employees along with construction, retail, and low-level service workers made up the bulk of the region's unemployed. The jobless rate climbed to five percent in Nassau and nine percent in Suffolk in 1971, and after a slight drop, returned to over seven percent in Nassau and nine percent in Suffolk in 1975.²³

Long Island's working class, who *Newsday* journalist Bill Moyers called the "not-so-poor who earn too much to go on welfare and too little to live securely," took lower paying jobs, second jobs, or sent another family member to work, forgoing movies and vacations to adjust to

²⁰ Nassau County Planning Commission, *Roosevelt Field Area Development Guide*, vi-17, 99.

²¹ Nicholas Kisburg, *Suburban Affluence: For Whom?* (New York, NY: International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen, and Helpers of America, Joint Council No. 16, 1969), 69-4.1.

²² *Ibid.*, 69-4C.

²³ "Labor Demand and Supply Fact Sheet: Nassau," February 1971, Part V, Box 1526, folder 3, NAACP Records, LoC; "Labor Demand and Supply Fact Sheet: Suffolk," February 1971, Part V, Box 1526, folder 3, NAACP Records, LoC; Pearl M. Kamer, "Income Levels and Purchasing Power: The Nassau-Suffolk SMSA," *Long Island Economic Trends Quarterly Technical Supplement – First Quarter, 1975* (March 1975): 14.

their lower standards of living. The *Newsday* editorial staff viewed Long Island's workers through the 'silent majority' lens, interviewing the 'white working class' and their feelings toward minorities, student activists, and elite liberals, though these workers had much in common with Long Island's black working class, who likewise fit *Newsday's* description of the 'not-so-poor.'²⁴ Black workers were half as likely to hold white-collar jobs, nine percent more likely to work in the blue-collar sector, and were unemployed at rates exceeding their proportion of the population.²⁵ The increasing hardship of both black and white blue-collar workers illustrated a growing inequality emerging during the decade in America's cities and its suburbs, an inequality based on the loss of productive jobs for millions of Americans. The focus on suburbia's new dominance obscured what suburbs and cities shared, even if the transition in cities dwarfed that of suburbs. Those suburbanites who possessed higher education and skills, like their urban counterparts, thrived in the post-industrial economy. Those who could not easily transition into white-collar work faced an uncertain future, regardless of their urban or suburban residency.²⁶

²⁴ "The Plight of the Not-So-Poor," *Newsday*, May 24, 1969, 1W; "Survival in the Working Class: They Gripe but they Manage," *Newsday*, May 24, 1969, 6W; "Life with Cappelli on \$101 a Week," *Newsday*, May 24, 1969, 11W; "How they Get Away from it All," *Newsday*, May 24, 1969, 13W.

²⁵ "LI Rides a White-Collar Trend," *Newsday*, July 21, 1972, 3; While blacks were around 4.6 percent of Long Island's 1970 population, their unemployment rate ranged from 5.7 to 6.5 percent in spring 1971. See "Labor Demand and Supply Fact Sheet: Nassau," March 1971, Part V, Box 1526, folder 3, NAACP Records, LoC; "Labor Demand and Supply Fact Sheet: Suffolk," March 1971, Part V, Box 1526, folder 3, NAACP Records, LoC; "Labor Demand and Supply Fact Sheet: Nassau," April 1971, Part V, Box 1526, folder 3, NAACP Records, LoC; "Labor Demand and Supply Fact Sheet: Suffolk," April 1971, Part V, Box 1526, folder 3, NAACP Records, LoC; For long-term black unemployment see "Black Jobs: Not so Bad but still Bad," *Newsday*, March 27, 1975, 39.

²⁶ This growing labor market segmentation amidst overall growth was occurring in other North-eastern regions, New England in particular. After World War II and accelerating into the 1970s, the region lost its semi-skilled blue-collar textile and shoe industries, though held onto transportation equipment while gaining high-tech and white-collar work. See Bennett Harrison, "Regional Restructuring and "Good Business Climates:" The Economic Transformation of New England since World War II," in *Sunbelt/Snowbelt: Urban Development and Regional Restructuring*, eds. Larry Sawers and William K. Tabb (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984): 48-96.

The Lily-White Suburb

While manufacturing jobs left city and suburbs, the nation's urban problems were viewed, thanks to the Kerner Report, as a uniquely 'urban crisis,' the consequence of a divided and racist society. The Commission set the terms of the debate in its sixteenth chapter, presenting statistics that proved segregation of low-income African Americans had accelerated, while jobs and the middle class had moved outward to the suburbs, a process that excluded minorities. The Commission offered two possible solutions: 'enriching' the ghetto through public expenditure, or 'integrating' ghetto residents into suburbs, and in its conclusion advocated that both were necessary.²⁷ 'The Enrichment Choice' or what policymakers and activists called the 'place-based' approach to urban problems, was an extension of slum clearance, urban renewal, and anti-poverty policy, though sensitive to local community needs. 'Place-based' advocates conceived of the inner city as an underdeveloped region, similar to that of former colonies in the Third World. These advocates, which included Black Power radicals, aspiring black capitalists, and the AFL-CIO, supported public or private investment to stimulate the local economy, train the poor for new jobs, and improve the local quality of life from within the ghetto itself. This call for a domestic urban 'Marshall Plan' eventually became the Model Cities program in 1966, a massive endeavor to revitalize cities headed by the newly minted Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and its head, Robert C. Weaver.²⁸ The Kerner Commission and those promoting enrichment after 1968 called for an expansion of Model Cities and similar initiatives to encourage inner-city institution building.

²⁷ US National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 389-408.

²⁸ Pritchett, "Which Urban Crisis?" 266; Hylan Lewis, "Pursuing fieldwork in African American communities," in *Against the Odds: Scholars Who Challenged Racism in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Benjamin P. Bowser, and Louis Kushnick (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 135; For Black Power and Model Cities, see Self, 242-246.

The Kerner Commission also urged the ‘Integration Choice,’ which aimed to integrate the poor into the suburbs and ‘disperse the ghetto’ (known as the ‘people-based’ approach to the urban crisis). It was the product of the same economic and racial statistics as the ‘place-based’ approach to inner-city development, but was based on different assumptions about the cause of urban decay and supported by distinct interest groups from those proposing inner-city ‘enrichment.’ The ‘people-based’ approach implicated the suburbs in the plight of the inner city, arguing that the urban crisis was a product of the broader metropolitan redistribution of resources away from the city and toward the suburbs. Exclusionary policies, including zoning and real estate practices, deprived the minority poor of vital tax revenue and job opportunities available in the suburbs, not to mention housing choice. It was a zero-sum game, and the suburbs won as cities and their residents lost out. These conclusions were drawn from researchers studying the link between race, the spatial layout of metropolitan areas, and employment, and few academics were as influential as Harvard economist John F. Kain, who produced studies that linked housing segregation and black unemployment. Kain’s theory, a contribution to urban policy literature known as the ‘spatial mismatch hypothesis,’ were cited in the McCone Commission Report, a response to the 1965 LA riots, and the Kerner report.²⁹ Kain was a vociferous critic of ‘place-based’ policies, arguing such policies ‘gilded the ghetto,’ hardening the problems associated with inner-city poverty and encouraging further migration of poor blacks to northern ghettos. He wanted to break down housing segregation to open the expanding suburban job market to inner city African Americans, i.e. ‘dispersing the ghetto.’³⁰ For Kain and the people-based approach

²⁹ Edward L. Glaeser, Eric A. Hanushek, and John M. Quigley, “Opportunities, Race, and Urban Location: The Influence of John Kain,” *NBER Working Paper* No. 10312 (February 2004): 7; Kain, “Housing Segregation, Negro Employment, and Metropolitan Decentralization,” 175-197; For Kain’s ideas in the Kerner Commission Report, see US National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 392; See also Kain, “the Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis: Three Decades Later,” 373-374.

³⁰ John F. Kain and Joseph J. Persky, “Alternatives to the Gilded Ghetto,” *Public Interest* 14 (Winter 1969): 74-87.

generally, the city was not to achieve parity with the suburbs; the suburbs had to be opened up to make their plenty available to urban dwellers.

The link between jobs and housing segregation was appealing because it tied the most profound problems of the urban north together: housing segregation, minority unemployment, and the fiscal challenges of cities. The ‘spatial mismatch hypothesis’ provided activists and academics a powerful argument for the plight of the minority poor and a renewed impetus to end housing segregation. Civil rights groups, particularly the NAACP, who had previously challenged racist housing policy at the federal and local levels, applied these conclusions to their existing struggles against segregation. The logic also fit well with the emerging consensus of the ‘urbanization of the suburbs’ and the alleged suburban dominance in the economy, politics, and social life of the nation. Popular academic books, including Richard Babcock and Fred Bosselman’s *Exclusionary Zoning*, Michael Danielson’s *The Politics of Exclusion*, and Anthony Downs’ *Opening up the Suburbs* attacked zoning for constructing the divide between declining minority dominated cities and white suburbs.³¹ Policy organizations like the Regional Plan Association (RPA) and the National Committee against Discrimination (NCDH) incorporated Kain’s ideas into their own efforts to integrate housing and ease the urban crisis. The NCDH conducted research into the “relationship between access to housing and job opportunities” and warned that housing segregation forced black workers into an employment situation “previously experienced by no other group in the history of this nation: denial of the opportunity to live in areas reasonably proximate to available jobs.”³² The Regional Plan Association published their

³¹ Two earlier examples include: Jeanne R. Lowe, *Cities in a Race for Time* (New York: Random House, 1967); Mitchell Gordon, *Sick Cities* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965); For more information, See Bruegmann, 47; For a discussion on the long history of anti-suburban academic literature, see Sharpe and Wallock, “Bold New City or Built-Up 'Burb? Redefining Contemporary Suburbia.”

³² National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, *The Impact of Housing Patterns on Job Opportunities; An Interim Report of a Study on Where People Live and Where the Jobs Are* (New York: National Committee

own findings in 1969, illustrating the “widening “geographic gap” between the location of unskilled jobs and the location of housing for people who hold (or could hold) these jobs.”³³

The NCDH, RPA, and other reports formulated their conclusions from three basic statistical categories: the racial demographics of cities and suburbs, the disparity between high black and low white unemployment, and finally, the long-term movement of jobs (namely manufacturing) to the suburbs. The existence of suburban housing segregation was widely accepted by the late 1960s, but the suburbs were only recently recognized as the new dynamic job growth centers compared to jobless inner-cities.³⁴ Expanding commutation links between city and suburb would help around the margins; building affordable housing, which required re-zoning single-family suburban districts for high-density housing complexes, was necessary to give the inner-city minority poor the ability to relocate to the suburbs and take suburban jobs. Anthony Downs, economist and member of Johnson’s National Commission on Urban Problems in 1967 (and contributor to the Kerner Commission), best exemplified this view in his 1973 book, *Opening the Suburbs*. Job growth was understood spatially, and the suburbs were currently producing the most employment opportunities and were expected to for the future as well. Fostering ‘ghetto industries’ would never provide enough jobs for all those in need, and suburban employment centers were too dispersed for new commuting links to be beneficial. As a result, “the only way to establish the required linkages is to provide suburban housing

Against Discrimination in Housing, 1968), iii, 21; See also National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, *Jobs and Housing – A Study of Employment and Housing Opportunities for Racial Minorities in the Suburban Areas of the New York Metropolitan Region* (New York: National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, 1970).

³³ Regional Plan Association, “Housing Opportunities: An Analysis and Presentation for the New York Urban Development Corporation,” June 5, 1969, p. 14, Box 67, folder “Housing,” Nickerson Papers.

³⁴ National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, *The Impact of Housing Patterns on Job Opportunities*; Regional Plan Association, “Housing Opportunities: An Analysis and Presentation for the New York Urban Development Corporation,” June 5, 1969, Box 67, folder “Housing,” Nickerson Papers; Chris Kristensen, John Levy, and Tamar Savir, “The Suburban Lockout Effect,” Part V, Box 1526, folder 3, NAACP Records, LoC.

opportunities near new job openings.”³⁵ Publicly-funded or privately-financed high-density housing would be affordable, and would shorten the *distance* between people and jobs. For these policymakers, researchers, and activists, labor market barriers were rooted in the housing market. By making housing available in the suburbs, the poor could escape ‘poor places’ for the ‘right places.’

This framework developed into a ‘dispersal consensus,’ a common belief that dispersing the poor into the suburbs could improve their job prospects, educational outcomes, and quality of life. This consensus was convincing enough to inform the strategies of housing agencies from local governments to Washington.³⁶ In 1969, Housing and Urban Development Secretary George Romney launched a nationwide attack on housing segregation, fearing that the nation itself could not survive with “a run-down, festering black core, surrounded by a well-to-do, indifferent white ring.” Romney’s HUD designed the Open Communities Program to “provide an opportunity for individuals to live within a reasonable distance of their job and daily activities by increasing housing options for low-income and minority families” in the suburbs. “To solve problems of the ‘real city’” Romney contended, “only metropolitan-wide solutions will do.”³⁷ In New York State, Governor Nelson Rockefeller empowered his new Urban Development Corporation in 1969 with the legal ability to override local zoning ordinances state-wide. The UDC, under the command of planner Edward Logue, had unprecedented powers to construct low and middle-income units in the suburbs, and Logue set out to build suburban housing for the poor because he

³⁵ Downs, *Opening the Suburbs*, 28; For a complete understanding of Downs’ perspective, see chapter 4 of this book.

³⁶ David Imbroscio refers to the ‘dispersal consensus’ as having emerged in the 1990s and twenty-first century though recognizes its longer history dating to the 1960s and 1970s. For an incisive critique of the ‘dispersal consensus’ see Imbroscio, *Urban America Reconsidered*, chapter 4.

³⁷ Bonastia, 103; Florence Wagman Roisman, “George Romney, Richard Nixon, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968,” *Poverty and Race Research Action Council*, accessed December 30, 2014
<http://www.prrac.org/pdf/RoismanHistoryExcerpt.pdf>

believed that New York's urban problems could only be solved "within the wider metropolitan context."³⁸ Agencies did not limit dispersal advocacy to the city/suburb divide; even dispersal within suburbs was understood as critical to breaking down barriers to employment and education. On Long Island, the Civil Rights Coordinating Council of Suffolk County formed the Suffolk County Development Corporation (SCDC) in 1969 to build public or publicly-assisted housing across the county. The goal was to free "black and other minorities from the deteriorating ghetto housing in which they had been locked by a combination of discrimination, poverty and powerlessness." The Corporation associated inadequate housing in the suburbs with "unemployment, inferior education, inadequate transportation for access to jobs and the debilitating effects of successive generations of welfare dependency."³⁹

Public agencies embraced the 'dispersal consensus,' but civil rights groups were the first to act on this theory, largely because it added urgency to long-standing fights against housing segregation, and no organization had been as committed over the long-term to ending housing segregation as the NAACP. Since its inception, the organization addressed residential racial segregation, invalidating racial residential ordinances in *Buchanan v. Warley* in 1917 and restrictive covenants in *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948. It was during local housing campaigns and the *Shelley* case that the NAACP first incorporated economic data and sociological research into lawsuits, a tactic they adapted to other suits, most prominently *Brown v. Board of Education*.⁴⁰

³⁸ Peter Siskind, "Growth and its discontents : localism, protest and the politics of development on the postwar northeast corridor" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2002), 244-245; New York State Urban Development Corporation, *New York State Urban Development Corporation Annual Report 1969* (New York: Urban Development Corp, 1970), 1-2; New York State Urban Development Corporation, *New York State Urban Development Corporation Annual Report 1968* (New York: Urban Development Corp, 1969), 28-31.

³⁹ "A Housing Development Corporation for Suffolk," p. 4 Box 2, folder "housing," Edith Gordon Papers.

⁴⁰ Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New Press, 2009), 24-27; Wendell Pritchett, *Robert Clifton Weaver and the American City: The Life and Times of an Urban Reformer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 141.

Despite these victories, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, and hundreds of state and local laws banning discrimination in housing, segregation remained. Selective enforcement was partly to blame, but so too was the other key component of spatial segregation: zoning. A land-use power widely used across America's suburbs since the 1920s, zoning barred unwanted land-use and 'undesirable' development in order to balance the need for revenue-generating property with the protection of property values. While not explicitly racial, suburban zoning was overtly class-exclusive, favoring single-family large-lot homes and banning high-density housing. This, when combined with a racially segmented mortgage market, produced racially segregated and class-exclusive suburbs, as David M.P. Freund argues.⁴¹ But the color-blind intent of zoning, obscured in the language of professional planners, made it difficult to challenge on racially discriminatory grounds. The 'spatial mismatch' of jobs and housing offered a new framework to challenge zoning policy, since denying housing opportunity to low-income people in effect nullified equal employment opportunity, and by extension, the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

For the NAACP, the claims of the 'dispersal consensus' linked all of the major inequities facing non-whites, from unequal housing opportunity to unemployment and concentrated inner-city poverty. In 1969, the NAACP challenged zoning on these grounds. A trove of economic data was required to prove such a complex claim, and the NAACP coordinated with the Suburban Action Institute (SAI), a Westchester based planning think-tank founded by planner Paul Davidoff. Considered a father of 'advocacy' planning, a subfield devoted to addressing racial and class inequality, Davidoff wanted SAI to be the research and litigation foundation for

⁴¹ Freund, chapter 5.

the ‘clientless.’⁴² SAI represented the millions of poor and non-white urban residents, and they promised to secure ‘locational choice’ for all, a privilege reserved for industry and white Americans in the postwar period. Spatial mobility, and therefore increased employment opportunity, required breaking down those “exclusionary practices of the suburbs themselves that help create the poverty and ugliness of the slums,” and forcing suburbanites to assume their social responsibility “by opening up their land, job markets, and tax resources to [the poor and working class].”⁴³ The NAACP received SAI’s expertise in this relationship, while SAI gained a prestigious activist organization with unparalleled legal clout, what one planner called “organized pressure from the people who are being done in.”⁴⁴ All they needed was a case, and in 1969, SAI and the NAACP found their first opportunity in the nearly all-white town of Oyster Bay, Long Island.

Fair Housing Development Fund Corp. v. Burke, the case challenging zoning in Oyster Bay, had its origins in a local housing fight. The Glen Cove NAACP branch wanted to secure adequate housing for a small black population in the Town of Oyster Bay in the mid-1960s. Glen Cove branch President James Davis established a non-profit housing corporation in 1969, the Fair Housing Development Fund Corporation, and applied for federal housing loans to build moderate and low-income apartments.⁴⁵ High-density housing required a zoning variance from the Town of Oyster Bay’s zoning authority, the most local government unit in charge of land-

⁴² Matthew V. Rao, “Paul Davidoff and Planning Education: A Study of the Origin of the Urban Planning Program at Hunter College,” *Journal of Planning History* 11, no. 3 (August 2012): 227-232; Tom Angotti, *New York for Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008), 14–16.

⁴³ Quoted in Paul Davidoff, Linda Davidoff, and Neil Gold, “The Suburbs Have to Open their Gates,” *Suburbia in Transition*, eds. Louis H. Masotti and Jeffrey K. Hadden (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), 134; For more on SAI’s philosophy, see “Pro: The Davidoff View,” *New York Times*, November 4, 1973, 525.

⁴⁴ “Team Confronts Suburbs,” *Newsday*, December 31, 1969, 4; “Blacks Seek Share of Suburbs,” *Newsday*, December 9, 1969, 5.

⁴⁵ “NAACP May Start Building Houses,” *Newsday*, October 23, 1968, 8.

use. The authority excluded almost everything except single-family large-lot housing, and variances provided zoning boards flexibility and gave local residents discretion over what to permit or deny.⁴⁶ The Town did not approve the variance, which attracted the attention of the NAACP national office. From the NAACP's perspective, the Town of Oyster Bay was a perfect example of the spatial mismatch hypothesis and how housing barriers denied employment opportunity. Oyster Bay was located on Long Island, the national suburban exemplar just twelve miles from the New York City border. The Town enforced strict zoning laws that favored higher standards for building construction and minimum lot acreage in the two decades after 1950. The majority of vacant land was already zoned for two-acre plots, and in the 1950s, smallest residential zoning category, similar to Levittown's plots, was erased altogether. Apartments were likewise removed from zoning categories, and variances were required for any multi-unit developments.⁴⁷ Increasing minimum lot size rose property values and tax revenues, as did attracting industrial property. Already home to Grumman, Oyster Bay vigorously lured firms to its borders in the 1950s and 1960s. Between 1963 and 1969, over half of all Nassau County job growth occurred within the Town's borders, largely in industrial fields including electronic components, machinery, aircraft parts, and plastics.⁴⁸ In addition, office building construction attracted insurance companies, brokerage houses, and various business firms to the area, boosting white-collar employment.⁴⁹ Lastly, Oyster Bay did nothing to racially integrate housing, typical of most suburban jurisdictions. In 1970, the Town's 333,000 residents were 99.2 percent white, and among the thirty-six villages and hamlets over which the Town of Oyster

⁴⁶ Freund, 215-229.

⁴⁷ "Points in our Favor," Part V, Box 1527, folder 1, NAACP Records, LoC.

⁴⁸ Untitled NAACP Oyster Bay Study, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 9, slides 473, 476, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁴⁹ "L.I. Commercial Review," February 1969, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 9, slide 310, *Papers of the NAACP*.

Bay had zoning powers, half of the 2,700 African American residents lived in three segregated areas: East Massapequa, Oyster Bay village, and Locust Valley.⁵⁰ The Town's white dominance, in combination with its economic boom, made it a good illustration of the poor city/affluent suburb formulation. Oyster Bay was a white fortress, using zoning to block non-whites from both housing *and* job opportunity.

As the zoning variance languished at Town Hall in December 1969, NAACP national housing director William Morris ordered the Town to downzone a fifth of its vacant residential land for multi-family dwellings and affordable single-family homes, or face legal action.⁵¹ The goal was to open Oyster Bay to New York's poor, and according to SAI estimates, the re-zoning proposal would add about 18,000 people to the Town's population (an increase of five percent) and would raise property taxes by 2.3 percent.⁵² The Town and its residents refused to comply. Newly elected Oyster Bay Town Supervisor John Burke promised to defend 'home rule' against the NAACP, claiming that "Oyster Bay doesn't have any fences around it."⁵³ Residents interpreted the demand within the context of the racial and class inequality inscribed into property and neighborhoods. At NAACP/SAI sponsored meetings across Oyster Bay, residents expressed concern that taxes would rise while public service quality would diminish. In addition, residents associated the decay occurring in city centers with race, and public housing in Oyster Bay would introduce those problems to the suburbs.⁵⁴ As one resident proclaimed, "nobody

⁵⁰ "Population," Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 8, slides 87, 101, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁵¹ "History of the Case," Part V, Box 1526, folder 3, NAACP Records, LoC.

⁵² "NAACP Official Defends Figures in O. Bay Study," *Newsday*, December 27, 1969, 8.

⁵³ "Planners Back NAACP in O. Bay," *Newsday*, January 28, 1970, 4.

⁵⁴ David M.P. Freund discusses how the relationship between racist housing policy and zoning influenced the white racial ideology about property in the twentieth century. He argues that whites came to understand property and neighborhoods in terms of their racial makeup, associating inner city decay with the presence of African Americans and suburban stability with whites rather than the structural forces under-developing cities and over-developing suburbs. See Freund, *Colored Property*.

wants a Negro project to spring up on the land they've cherished. We moved to this area because of the way it is."⁵⁵ Just as the NAACP understood the problem as one of housing, Burke and the majority of residents resisted the plan in terms of housing, that it threatened their own neighborhoods and the sanctity of local zoning powers.

A few residents and politicians went beyond the housing framework and questioned the NAACP's broader claim that dispersing the poor would transform employment opportunity. The outgoing Town Supervisor Michael Petito argued that the NAACP was "making a serious mistake playing with 50,000 human beings, moving them from a ghetto in New York to another ghetto in Oyster Bay."⁵⁶ While an exaggeration of numbers, Petito doubted whether a spatial move would improve their quality of life. The Town of Oyster Bay Conservative Party likewise condemned the NAACP's proposal as a project of activists, who "have apparently despaired of eliminating city slums, and who now propose to transplant them to Oyster Bay...without providing anything of value for the slum dwellers themselves."⁵⁷ Local resident and city planning student Jerry Katz elaborated on these criticisms. For the residents to benefit from the move, jobs would be necessary, but Katz doubted the local job market could employ thousands of new low-skilled residents. Without employment, poor residents would be worse off in suburbia, far from public transportation and social services. As Katz argued, the project increased costs to local and future residents without much benefit to the relocated.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ "At Issue: A Quiet Corner of Town," *Newsday*, December 12, 1969, 7; "Zoning Fears Aired," *Newsday*, January 8, 1970, 17.

⁵⁶ "NAACP Presses Oyster Bay Fight," *New York Times*, December 26, 1969, 14.

⁵⁷ "Letters to the Editor," *Farmingdale Observer*, Jan 22, 1970, 6.

⁵⁸ "Bad Judgement," *Newsday*, December 19, 1969, 5B

After over a year of deliberation, the NAACP took legal action, submitting their suit on March 24, 1971 to the U.S. District Court.⁵⁹ It was an ambitious class-action lawsuit, accusing the Town of Oyster Bay Town Supervisor (John W. Burke), the Town Board, and the Town Housing Authority of supporting a land-use policy that discriminated in three ways. First, zoning policy segregated existing non-white residents. Second, zoning excluded non-whites and other disadvantaged low-income citizens from living in Oyster Bay. And finally, those same zoning laws excluded non-white and low-income workers from jobs they could otherwise attain. Therefore, zoning effectively nullified equal housing and employment laws, and since the courts permitted local zoning powers only if land-use policy promoted the ‘general welfare,’ Oyster Bay’s zoning codes were unconstitutional.⁶⁰ The NAACP went further, demanding affirmative action to end segregation, that the Town set aside land for new dwelling units that “meet the needs of the Plaintiffs and the members of the classes they represent,” disadvantaged minority residents from outside Oyster Bay.⁶¹ The NAACP assembled a diverse group of plaintiffs to represent New York’s disadvantaged non-white population. Six plaintiffs were black Town residents occupying ‘substandard’ dwellings, including a temporary county-subsidized motel room, a shack on a golf course, and a variety of dilapidated apartments. Another plaintiff worked for Grumman but could not find suitable housing within the Town. Finally, the suit also included an unemployed Bronx man who did not take a job in the Town of Oyster Bay because

⁵⁹ “NAACP to Sue O. Bay Over Zoning,” *Newsday*, November 24, 1970, 10; “NAACP Sues to Annul Zoning, Integrate Oyster Bay Housing,” *Newsday*, March 25, 1971, 14.

⁶⁰ “NAACP Sues to Annul Zoning, Integrate Oyster Bay Housing,” *Newsday*, March 25, 1971, 14; R. Stephen Browning to Nathaniel R. Jones, December 14, 1970, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 13, slides 893-895, *Papers of the NAACP*; “Why Oyster Bay?” p. 7, Part V, Box 1526, folder 3, NAACP Records, LoC; Nathaniel R. Jones to William Morris, January 9, 1970, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 13, slides 821-822, *Papers of the NAACP*; David M.P. Freund discusses the limited judicial sanction of zoning in the 1926 Supreme Court Case, *Euclid v. Amber*. See Freund, 81-87.

⁶¹ From the complaint of Plaintiff, *Fair Housing Development Fund v. Burke*, quoted in Danielson, *Politics of Exclusion*, 192.

he was denied housing.⁶² Since the NAACP sought a broad Court decree rather than redressing narrow plaintiff grievances, they had to amass census data, housing statistics, employment figures, and expert testimony to convince the court that land-use policy, while not explicitly biased, was in effect discriminatory because it had disparate impacts on housing choice and job opportunity.⁶³

The NAACP faced formidable obstacles to their claims. The defense refuted the first claim that poor housing conditions and limited housing choice for Oyster Bay's non-white residents was contrary to zoning's 'general welfare' purpose by arguing that income, rather than race, accounted for such outcomes.⁶⁴ This line of defense, that economic segregation was the outcome of pure market forces and lawful efforts to stabilize communities, had been woven into the logic of 'property rights' and land-use policy since the early twentieth century. By the 1970s, homeowners, Supreme Court justices, and President Richard Nixon himself followed this logic. One year prior, the Supreme Court upheld color-blind bans on low-income housing in *James v. Valtierra* (1971), and by 1975, the Supreme Court fully defended the constitutionality of economic exclusion. This required a narrow interpretation of the fourteenth amendment's equal

⁶² Plaintiff Affidavits, January 1971, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 16, slides 877-885, *Papers of the NAACP*; "NAACP Sues to Annul Zoning, Integrate Oyster Bay Housing," *Newsday*, March 25, 1971, 14.

⁶³ R. Stephen Browning to Nathaniel R. Jones, December 14, 1970, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 13, slides 893-895, *Papers of the NAACP*; Nathaniel R. Jones to William Morris, January 9, 1970, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 13, slides 821-822, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁶⁴ "Defendant's First Interrogatories," August 20, 1971, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 16, slides 402-407, *Papers of the NAACP*; "Defendant's Second Interrogatories," March 27, 1972, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 16, slide 486, *Papers of the NAACP*.

protection clause, but was nonetheless emerging as a defensive strategy against open-housing cases.⁶⁵

The same logic could be applied to out-of-town black residents. The NAACP alleged that the Town's zoning prohibited black employees of Grumman Aerospace Corporation (located in Bethpage) from living in its hamlets. To prove this, the NAACP illustrated that only thirty-one of a total 1,100 black employees lived within Oyster Bay's borders in 1971. Nearly a fifth commuted from New York City, compared to just four percent of white workers. This was not a factor of occupational differences between white and black workers either. Operatives, who were paid the same rate regardless of race (seniority, however, affected wages), were five times more likely to be city residents if they were African American. Black workers, even in the same positions, did not share communities with their white co-workers.⁶⁶ Housing segregation, as both general population statistics and Grumman employee residence proved, was clear. Whether Town zoning played a role in this segregation was less apparent, and whether workers or employers suffered as a result was unclear. The NAACP contended that the racial residential divide existed because of exclusionary zoning. Edward Underwood, the plaintiff's representative Grumman employee, resided in Westbury, a village two miles west of Oyster Bay's town border. He desired to live within the Town of Oyster Bay, but did not waste time looking because he knew of friends who "claimed that [prices] were so high that they couldn't buy one over there."⁶⁷ The defense questioned whether Underwood faced undue hardship because he could not live within the Town. From Westbury, he made an eight-mile trek to and

⁶⁵ See Lassiter, 307-308; See also Danielson, *Politics of Exclusion*, 180-186; For a detailed discussion of court responses to housing integration cases, see Freund, chapter 6.

⁶⁶ Place of Residence survey for Grumman Employees, by Occupation, as of March 31, 1971, Part V, Box 1532, folder 7, NAACP Records, LoC.

⁶⁷ Deposition of Plaintiff Edward Louis Underwood, August 5, 1971, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 13, slides 672, 688, *Papers of the NAACP*.

from work each day, which took on average twenty-five minutes. His commute, while originating outside the Town's borders, was substantially less than trips from nearly half of Oyster Bay's neighborhoods.⁶⁸ As Underwood's case revealed, the Town's borders were porous, and out-of-town workers were not necessarily burdened because they lived outside Oyster Bay. This was the reality for African American Grummanites living in North Amityville, Wyandanch, and New Cassel, all less than ten miles from the Grumman plant in Bethpage, and for over half of Grumman's white workforce in Suffolk County. The defense meanwhile challenged the claim that zoning played a pivotal role in the Town's housing segregation, and Edward Underwood admitted that "because I'm black and if I go to the bank, they're not going to loan me the money to buy a house."⁶⁹ Aside from loan discrimination, depositions revealed a myriad of widespread private discriminatory practices, from racial steering to outright realtor refusal to sell to non-whites.⁷⁰ This did not implicate zoning directly, which was color-blind but legally class-exclusive.

The NAACP had the most difficulty proving that exclusionary zoning increased black unemployment. They amassed hundreds of pages of data from the 1950s and 1960s, substantiating the fact that industry had shifted from cities to suburbs, and that between 1963 and 1969, the Town of Oyster Bay enjoyed factory growth. They then projected this data forward to prove that job opportunities (especially in blue-collar sectors) would increase in the Town, using Regional Plan Association estimates for metropolitan job growth to 1985 and their own appraisal

⁶⁸ Ibid, slides 675, 726-727.

⁶⁹ Ibid, slide 727.

⁷⁰ Deposition of Plaintiff William Joseph Johnson, August 5, 1971, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 13, slides 87-97, *Papers of the NAACP*.

of future plant growth based on vacant industrial land in Oyster Bay.⁷¹ As the NAACP claimed in January 1972,

Regional trends indicate that in the coming decades, increasing numbers of blue-collar workers will be migrating to the New York Metropolitan region to work and live. Many will look to the suburbs for jobs and housing, as the city's ability to provide blue-collar employment continues to decrease. Trends indicate that the Nassau-Suffolk County area will contain...about 20 percent of the Region's total employment growth and more than 50 percent of the manufacturing growth between 1959 and 1985....the Town of Oyster Bay in particular contains the bulk of the bi-county area's major employment centers, a relationship which is expected to continue in the future.⁷²

The plaintiffs warned that this growth was dependent on “future changes in the Town’s Building Zone Ordinance” to accommodate the workforce for these plants. Without affordable housing, black job-seekers would not find work, leading to higher levels of unemployment and labor shortages. According to the NAACP, zoning undermined the Town’s economic future, because industrial growth required a ‘diversified’ workforce.⁷³ This was contrary to the ‘general welfare’ purpose of zoning for the broader metropolitan population, Town employers and the Town’s economy.

These claims were based on past data from the 1960s projected forward, not considering present conditions. The NAACP did recognize the short-term cutbacks in the defense industry, though were confident that over the long-term, blue-collar employment would continue to grow.⁷⁴ The defense was unconvinced. The NAACP provided no concrete data that blue-collar demand existed within Oyster Bay, and according to the Town attorneys, the NAACP “merely

⁷¹ Untitled NAACP Oyster Bay Study, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 9, slides 408-426, 473-476, 488, *Papers of the NAACP*; “Industry,” Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 8, slides 146-157, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁷² “Defendant’s First Interrogatories,” August 20, 1971, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 16, slides 405-406, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁷³ Untitled NAACP Oyster Bay Study, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 9, slides 466-467, 489, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁷⁴ Untitled NAACP Oyster Bay Study, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 9, slides 423-424, *Papers of the NAACP*.

state the conclusion that there are job opportunities in Oyster Bay.”⁷⁵ Employment data contradicted the NAACP’s claims (see Table 6.1), as did a 1971 HUD report, which found “no reason to believe that employment will expand...salaries are on the decline and unemployment is on the increase.”⁷⁶ The defense repeatedly asked for numbers proving there were jobs for the urban unemployed, and in the depositions, they questioned each plaintiff about whether the local economy was actually expanding.⁷⁷ Grummanite Edward Underwood agreed that his employer shed jobs in the early 1970s, and that industry in general had been contracting in the area.⁷⁸ When Fair Housing Development Corporation chairman and Glen Cove NAACP member William Joseph Johnson was asked where they amassed their job data, he admitted it was from a 1965 Nassau County Planning Commission report. Defense Attorney Albert Bader then inquired about employment growth after 1969, to which Johnson replied, “we are in unusual times right now. We are in a recession. And I think that has affected the whole structure, the whole picture.”⁷⁹

The NAACP and the Suburban Action Institute believed spatial mobility, i.e. opening up the suburbs for the urban poor, would translate into jobs and upward mobility. The plaintiffs based their case on the alleged city/suburb divide, where suburbs were an affluent space with plentiful jobs, and city was a poor space with declining employment. Housing segregation

⁷⁵ “Memorandum in Support of Defendants Motion for an Order Compelling Plaintiffs to Provide Further Answers to Interrogatories,” Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 16, slides 692-693, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁷⁶ “Supporting Data for Application for Low-Rent Housing Program,” p. 5, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 16, slide 282, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁷⁷ Deposition of Plaintiff Quill Chandler, August 5, 1971, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 12, slide 978, *Papers of the NAACP*; Deposition of Plaintiff James Arthur Miller, August 5, 1971, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 13, slide 435, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁷⁸ Deposition of Plaintiff Edward Louis Underwood, August 5, 1971, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 13, slide 712, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁷⁹ Deposition of Plaintiff William Joseph Johnson, August 5, 1971, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 13, slides 173-174, *Papers of the NAACP*.

denied the urban poor access to suburban plenty. But the ‘two societies’ trope assumed the economy was prosperous, that job opportunities were widely available and what mattered was the location of economic growth. This was the basic premise behind the dispersal consensus generally, as outlined in the Kerner Report and promoted by policy-makers, academics, and activist groups. All operated within a liberal framework that wanted to use the state to enhance economic opportunity for individuals within the private ‘free market’ of jobs. Like the dominant strain of the War on Poverty, the problem for the poor and unemployed was supply – in this case housing supply in the right places, limited by racism.⁸⁰

Meanwhile, the Town and Long Island generally were shedding blue-collar work, both due to a short-term recession and the broader transformation occurring in the region. Suburban plenty was available to those with the skillset and credentials to participate. In response to the dispersal consensus and this case, Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board Chief Economist Pearl Kamer contended neither “Nassau or even Suffolk can provide substantial numbers of blue collar jobs for central city residents whose blue-collar jobs have moved elsewhere.”⁸¹ Without jobs, the urban poor would compete with the suburban poor for low-wage work in a high-cost area. MIT Economist Bennett Harrison warned in 1974 that “there may be jobs in the [suburban] ring, but they are not necessarily jobs that will raise the ghetto dweller’s standard of living.”⁸² The two tiers of the labor market, which long-existed on Long Island, were diverging further as high-paying unskilled industrial work contracted and white-collar jobs flourished.

⁸⁰ I rely on David Imbroscio’s incisive critique of the dispersal consensus for this analysis. See David Imbroscio, “Shaming the Inside Game: A Critique of the Liberal Expansionist Approach to Addressing Urban Problems,” *Urban Affairs Review* 42, no. 2 (November 2006): 224-248; Imbroscio, “Beyond Mobility;” Imbroscio, *Urban America Reconsidered*.

⁸¹ Kamer, “An Economic Profile of Commuter Relationships,” 7.

⁸² Harrison, *Urban Economic Development*, 87.

Suburbanizing the urban poor would not improve the skills of the current generation nor break down the discriminatory barriers to higher-paying employment.⁸³

On the brink of losing the case, the plaintiffs changed their argument in March 1973, demanding Affirmative Action based on the ‘fair share’ concept. They argued that the Town of Oyster Bay should house some 34,000 new residents, composed of people whose racial demographics were the same as those of New York City.⁸⁴ This was necessary because

The Town of Oyster Bay has a duty to provide housing for some of the black economically disadvantaged persons who currently live in the ghettos of New York. Considering the fact that the New York City Housing Authority operates approximately 154,000 units of public housing, it seems reasonable to suggest that Oyster Bay build 10,000 units by 1985 as its fair share of public housing needs of the New York Metropolitan Region.⁸⁵

The NAACP was now in effect demanding a spatial redistribution of poverty across the metropolitan landscape, for suburbs to share in the burden of urban poverty and unemployment. Suburban opportunity would not lift the poor out of poverty, but the suburbs had a responsibility to house them. The weakened case limped on for another two years before the NAACP withdrew the suit in October 1975. A recently settled case in Rochester, New York destroyed their class action strategy when the court limited petitioners to those who were “personally...injured.”⁸⁶ And since the Town of Oyster Bay was in the process of building low-income housing, both parties admitted land-use controls were ‘color-blind,’ and the Town Board

⁸³ Bernard J. Frieden, “Blacks in Suburbia: The Myth of Better Opportunities,” In *Minority Perspectives*, eds. Dale Rogers Marshall, Bernard J. Frieden, and Daniel William Fessler (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 38-39.

⁸⁴ They calculated that 9,656 whites, 16,490 African Americans, and 7,854 Puerto Ricans should occupy the Town’s new housing units. See Additional Responses of Plaintiffs, March 16, 1973, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 16, slides 586-587, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁸⁵ Additional Responses of Plaintiffs, March 16, 1973, Legal Department Case Files, 1960-1972, Supplement to Part 23, Series B, Section 2, reel 16, slide 587, *Papers of the NAACP*.

⁸⁶ “NAACP Drops LI Zoning Suit,” *New York Times*, October 9, 1975, 37; Danielson, *Politics of Exclusion*, 168.

never outright rejected the zoning variance, the plaintiffs had little chance of winning.⁸⁷ But the case also failed on the logic of linking fair housing and employment opportunity, assuming suburban affluence without considering the particular economic processes occurring in specific places. When the logic no longer held up, the NAACP turned to a redistributive strategy, that suburbanites should have their ‘fair share’ of the metropolitan area’s poor.

“More than the Average Homeowner Can Sustain”⁸⁸

The NAACP case illustrated the flaws of the dispersal thesis, and while the NAACP ultimately failed to resettle New York’s poor into the Town of Oyster Bay, they were but one organization attempting to solve urban problems through space. HUD, under the leadership of George Romney, New York’s Urban Development Corporation, led by planner Edward Logue, and county agencies initiated their own high-density housing integration plans on Long Island. They were not as ambitious as the NAACP’s dispersal plans, instead draped in the discourse of ‘fair share,’ that the suburbs held of surplus of tax revenue that could be redistributed to the poor. The benefits for the poor were improved housing and better access to suburban services, but jobs were not paramount. Instead, ‘fair share’ focused on the costs, namely the costs suburbs could afford to bear. It also implied responsibility, that suburbanites owed the poor access to their resources.

Advocates of these housing projects, including HUD, the UDC, and local agencies, faced virulent resistance. Suburban opposition partly stemmed from the racial and class views formed

⁸⁷ “Burke Cites Zoning Battle Victory,” *Bethpage Tribune*, October 16, 1975, 6; “Zoning Bias Suit dropped,” *Newsday*, October 9, 1975, 6.

⁸⁸ Matthew Bonora, “Recycling to stem the Exodus,” *Newsday*, October 19, 1976, 43.

through segregationist policy and ideas coalescing around crime, urban protest, and public housing in the 1960s. For many white suburbanites, decades of exclusionary housing policy had obscured the structures of segregation, and whites believed that suburban homogeneity was a consequence of market forces. Intrusion into the natural workings of the housing market was a threat to property rights and freedom of choice, and asking that they ‘take responsibility’ for their achievement in the marketplace was a threat to basic freedom. This was the basis for resisting integration since the 1940s.⁸⁹ These long-held ideas mixed with more recent developments, including ‘culture of poverty’ theory, the rise in crime, urban protest, and public housing. As African Americans increasingly inhabited public housing projects in the nation’s cities, public housing itself became associated with black Americans.⁹⁰ The riots, originating as protest against police brutality, were interpreted as the actions of criminals and civil rights protest was successfully linked to the steadily rising crime rates, as Vesla Weaver argues.⁹¹ Finally, ‘culture of poverty’ academic theory, which drew links between the poor’s behaviors, attitudes, and values and their poverty, gained academic and public legitimacy.⁹² These racialized ideas about

⁸⁹ Starting with Thomas Sugrue, suburban historians have written about this postwar homeowner-oriented ‘spatial’ racial ideology that was distinct from the fading biological forms of racism but no less influential in the maintenance of a racially unequal society. See Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Lassiter, *Silent Majority*; Kevin Kruse, *White Flight*; See Freund, *Colored Property* for the most complete analysis of this thesis.

⁹⁰ In New York, about 40 percent of all public housing was occupied by African Americans in 1960. Despite the fact that crime within public housing units was lower than surrounding neighborhoods through the 1980s, public housing nonetheless became symbolic both with African Americans and with the crime of African American neighborhoods, of which public housing was a part, in the postwar period. See Andres Torres, “Labor Market Segmentation: African American and Puerto Rican Labor in New York City, 1960-1980,” *African Americans and Post-Industrial Labor Markets*, ed. James Benjamin Steward (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1997), 209; Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn*, 159; Fritz Umbach, *The Last Neighborhood Cops The Rise and Fall of Community Policing in New York Public Housing* (Piscataway NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 138-142;

⁹¹ Vesla M. Weaver, “Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy,” *Studies in American Political Development* 21 (Fall 2007), 230–265; See also Michael F. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

⁹² The conservative ‘culture of poverty’ was first laid out in Edward Banfield’s *Unheavenly City: The Nature and Future of Our Urban Crisis*; See Edward C. Banfield, *The Unheavenly City: The Nature and Future of Our Urban Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970); See also Katz, *The Undeserving Poor*, 23-29; See also Greg M. Shaw, *The Welfare Debate* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 80; For the academic debates surrounding the ‘culture of poverty,’ see O’Connor, chapter 8.

the source of urban poverty were a conservative counter-narrative to the Kerner Report's conclusions. Rather than segregation causing urban deprivation, it was the behavior of the poor and government appeasement through generous welfare, lax arrests, and a search for 'root causes' that enabled such conditions. Responsibility, in the minds of any suburbanite who subscribed to these ideas, began with the poor themselves and with a government that should enforce 'law and order' rather than abetting the violence. Relocating the poor into the suburbs would only disperse these problems into their neighborhoods, and segregating the poor was the only recourse suburbanites had to keep suburbs 'free' of the perceived threat of the poor. This form of resistance was politically potent and had powerful allies, including President Richard Nixon, who played a key role in diluting housing integration efforts at the national level in the early 1970s.⁹³

Though powerful, this conservative counter-narrative was expected; these ideas, and the policies that fostered such ideas, were exactly what dispersal advocates were challenging. But this was not the only criticism of suburban housing projects. Contrary to the assumptions of the dispersal consensus, suburbs were diverse, and suburbanites from working class and low-income hamlets challenged the rationale behind 'fair share' itself, namely the idea that the suburban labor and housing markets benefitted all suburbanites equally and consistently, and that the 'suburbs' were a space of generalized affluence, unlike the city. For one, 'white' did not accurately describe Long Island's suburbs, and black residents felt especially wronged when their neighborhoods were targeted for public housing because they already shared space with poor people and adding more non-whites would exacerbate segregation. Just as importantly, the consequences of low-income housing projects were not borne by the 'suburbs' as a whole; the

⁹³ Lamb, *Housing Segregation since 1960*; Bonastia, *Knocking on the Door*.

affected local community would disproportionately accept the costs of such housing. As described previously, Long Island's suburban hamlets were highly fragmented, placing the costs of key public services on local neighbors. For working class suburbs, the problem of property taxes and the quality of public services became more acute in the 1970s in the face of stagnating incomes, inflation, and rising unemployment. This was a 'suburban crisis,' fiscal challenges that hit particular hamlets in a divided suburban landscape, unlike the deeper 'urban crisis' shared broadly by cities with unified taxing districts.

As stated in chapter 3, property taxes were one of the most contentious issues in suburban politics, linked to residents' pocketbooks, quality of local services, and the stability of a community itself. On Long Island, the property tax was not levied evenly across suburbia. A homeowner's tax bill was ideally based on the market 'value' of the property, though houses were rarely assessed at market prices. In Suffolk, each of the ten towns had different assessment practices and did not reassess properties on a yearly basis. Islip calculated assessments on five-year old market values, while the Town of Babylon assessed levies according to 1954 construction costs. Nassau County likewise assessed based on 1938 construction costs minus depreciation. In Nassau and the Suffolk's Town of Babylon, property taxes were determined by the quality of construction, not the market value of one's home. Even if two cape cods in completely separate hamlets had vastly different market values, their *assessed* value would be the same if construction standards were similar. This became a problem as the value of homes and the incomes of residents between suburbs diverged over time, particularly in the 1970s. By 1984, residents of majority-black Roosevelt, the most over-assessed hamlet in Nassau County (based on the market value of their home compared to what they paid in taxes), paid over four

percent of their property's value in taxes, while New Hyde Park, the most under-assessed, paid only 1.5 percent.⁹⁴

Since Long Island's government structure was divided into tiny taxing districts, a small group of homeowners had to fund public infrastructure, which further added a burden on property-poor and lower-income districts that had to raise tax rates to maintain schools and other public services. Basically, uneven assessments forced lower-income homeowners to pay higher taxes compared to their home's market value, while balkanized tax districts placed the costs of public services on these homeowners alone (save state funding), all while incomes stagnated, unemployment rose, public expenses grew, and poverty concentrated in these communities. These combined factors unleashed the property tax's regressivity. As Table 6.2 indicates, the tax rate for each one thousand dollars of assessed valuation in 1971 was highest in neighborhoods with family incomes below the County median. By 1984, tax inequities were skewed further. *Newsday* conducted an award-winning study illustrating how Long Island's assessment practices disproportionately affected lower-income homeowners. Property owners in the affluent suburbs of Manhasset and Garden City paid between 0.9 and 1.2 percent of their homes' value in property taxes, while residents of the two lowest valued communities, Roosevelt and Wyandanch, paid over four percent of their homes' value in taxes each year. In some instances, residents in poorer neighborhoods actually paid more in taxes than affluent homeowners. In Nassau, a \$41,000 home in Roosevelt owed \$2,144 in taxes in 1984, while a \$175,000 home in

⁹⁴ Horace Z. Kramer, "The Too Taxing Real Property Tax," *Newsday*, September 28, 1976, 45.

Manhasset owed only \$2,091. In Suffolk, a two-story Wyandanch home worth one-third of a West Babylon ranch received tax bills only two dollars apart.⁹⁵

Discussions of over-assessment and property wealth may seem abstract, but homeowners felt such inequities directly. As the *Newsday* report contended, “over-assessment affects the way a family lives – the way people eat and dress and furnish their homes... whether they can plant grass, or paint the kitchen or pay the phone bill.”⁹⁶ Individual stories illustrate this point.

Elizabeth Milton had purchased a \$36,500 home in Wyandanch across from a vacant lot, which came with a \$2,233.64 yearly tax bill, about \$960 more than she should be paying based on the value of her home. This tax burden contributed to her \$616 combined monthly mortgage and tax payments, a bill she failed to pay when she fell ill and missed workdays at her \$5.45-an-hour packer job at a local plumbing supply company. To catch up, Milton had to end Friday pizza nights with her daughters and avoid purchasing needed clothing. Such sacrifices were small compared to that of the Holman family of Amityville. Glenda and William Holman fell behind on their monthly mortgage and tax payments, a combined \$724 (including a \$223 monthly tax bill, double the county’s median tax burden). To catch up, William worked double maintenance shifts at a hospital while his wife asked relatives for money and braided hair for extra income. Nonetheless, the mortgage company had begun the foreclosure process, and Glenda admitted “we’re just buying time.”⁹⁷ Such outcomes affected not only individual families, but entire communities. Foreclosed and boarded-up homes depressed property values, encouraging a cycle of further inequality between thriving and declining suburbs.

⁹⁵ Lawrence C. Levy and Robert Fresco, “Property Taxes: The Unbalanced Burden,” *Newsday* May 12, 1985, 4-5, 30, 34; Irene Virag, “Penalties for Those Who Struggle: Making the Struggle Harder,” *Newsday*, May 13, 1985, 4, 21-22; Paul Vitello, “Overassessment Hits New Homes Hardest,” *Newsday*, May 14, 1985, 5, 26-28.

⁹⁶ Irene Virag, “Penalties for Those Who Struggle: Making the Struggle Harder,” *Newsday*, May 13, 1985, 22.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Table 6.2: Total Tax Burden of Selected Nassau County Communities, 1970-1971

	Median Income (1969)	Total Tax Burden, 1970-1971 (per \$1,000 of assessed valuation)
Lawrence	27,413	159.12
East Williston	22,671	174.99
Garden City	21,221	154.12
Manhasset	19,864	130.69
Jericho	19,311	149.43
Great Neck	18,167	178.20
Merrick	17,518	167.10
Plainview	16,198	181.56
Nassau County Median	14,632	
Uniondale	13,356	149.70
Levittown	13,083	181.64
East Massapequa	12,728	151.04
Farmingdale	12,585	195.07
New Cassel	12,013	196.16
Hempstead	11,504	179.72
Roosevelt	11,122	183.50
Inwood	9,444	152.30

Source: Income Data from *Nassau County Data Book*, 1974, 152-154; Tax data from New York State Department of Audit And Control, Division Of Municipal Affairs, Bureau Of Municipal Research And Statistics, *Overall Real Property Tax Rates: Local Government In New York State: Fiscal Years Ended In 1971* (Albany: Bureau Of Research And Statistics), 22, 63-64.

Note: Total Tax Burden Included County, Town, City/Village (Where Applicable), And School District Taxes.

This was the context to public housing opposition in working class and low-income suburban neighborhoods in the 1970s. Since the costs of such projects would be borne at the most local level in a regressive tax structure, public housing had material consequences for those living within its taxing districts. Nevertheless, policymakers continued to embrace the notion of suburban affluence and sited their integration projects in these struggling suburbs. These neighborhoods fit their conception of suburbs that should take their ‘fair share’ of the metropolitan region’s poor. Just as ‘inner city’ and ‘urban’ became euphemisms for ‘black’ and ‘poor’, ‘fair share’ advocates viewed ‘suburb’ as a surrogate for middle class and white. This obfuscation meant that the integrationist solution, low-income housing schemes, were not social justice projects but an unfair burden weary governments placed on a small segment of the

suburban population in an attempt to alleviate poverty through relocation. The fights that ensued, including the three examples below that originated from the county, state, and federal levels, illustrate the spatial battles over the poor that spatial solutions to poverty created.

HUD's Open Communities program, intended to incentivize suburbs to build affordable housing for the minority poor with grants and urban renewal funds when it was initially conceived in 1969, targeted the Town of Oyster Bay on Long Island because it fit the 'spatial mismatch hypothesis,' the same reason the NAACP chose Oyster Bay. Long Island, along with twenty-five other SMSAs with similar conditions, had employment facilities under construction, a projected labor shortage, and a lack of nearby housing for new workers. Though Nixon curtailed the ambitious Open Communities program in 1970, the ideals of Open Communities remained, and HUD continued to favor suburban applicants to further housing integration and employment opportunity.⁹⁸ The Town of Oyster Bay applied for HUD funding in the early 1970s to house its small but growing poverty population, most likely to counter the claims of the NAACP. In 1973, the Town unveiled a 172-unit public housing project (30 units were for low-income families) to be built in the small hamlet of East Massapequa, tucked into the very southeast of the town. The location met all of HUD's suburban objectives as initially outlined in Open Communities. East Massapequa was majority white (sixteen percent of its residents were black), had open space, lacked environmental hazards, and was situated in a Town with "employment positions available to all types of applicants."⁹⁹ From the broad formulation of suburban affluence, East Massapequa fit.

⁹⁸ Lamb, 69-84, chapter 4.

⁹⁹ "U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: Applicant's Environmental Information," p. 3, Series 10, subseries 3, Box 14, folder "Housing, Oyster Bay 1974," Javits Papers.

But environmental data, the suburban location of the project, general census numbers and Town-wide labor market statistics belied the more complex socioeconomic dynamics of East Massapequa. The hamlet was the most diverse in the entire Town, and children attended the half-black Amityville school district in neighboring Suffolk County. Nearly a fifth of the district's students were enrolled in Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), while thirteen percent of school district families survived on incomes below \$5,000, around the 1970 Federal poverty line for a family of five. Lastly, the claim of employment opportunities did not ring true at the local level. The Sunrise Mall, currently cutting retail jobs, was the only local employment center, and project residents would otherwise have to travel over a mile for the nearest public bus or expend between ten and fifteen percent of their yearly income to drive to any nearby large employment hub.¹⁰⁰

East Massapequa residents and Amityville school officials opposed the project from its outset in 1974. Some residents expressed fear of crime and their rhetoric was steeped in assumed behaviors of the poor. One resident warned that “someone is going to get mugged,” if the project were built, engulfing the entire community in criminal activity. The West Amityville Civic Association took out a full page ad in the *Massapequa Post*, sarcastically remarking that “free trouble” came complimentary with low-income housing. Another resident countered the Town's claim that eighty-eight children would enter the school district since “sterilization is not a requirement,” invoking the belief of the poor's promiscuity.¹⁰¹ But residents also had concrete reasons beyond their fears of the poor. As the official opposition report noted, the project

¹⁰⁰ “Report of the United Massapequa Civic Council on Proposed Downzoning for Construction of Public Housing in Massapequa, New York,” p. II-6, IV-25-IV-27, Series 10, subseries 3, Box 14, folder “Housing, Oyster Bay 1974,” Javits Papers; In 1970, Nassau County median family income was \$14,632. Suffolk's median family income was \$12,084.

¹⁰¹ “War Declared on housing project,” *Massapequa Post*, February 28, 1974; Advertisement, *Massapequa Post*, March 21, 1974.

contradicted HUD's goals of integrating suburbs and increasing opportunity, and would instead exacerbate segregation and isolation. By re-housing a proportion of Oyster Bay's low-income population (estimated to be sixty-five percent black) in this project, HUD would be lowering the racial balance of other hamlets while tipping the black school population over fifty percent, requiring an already burdened school district to now educate Oyster Bay's low-income population. The potential for neighborhood change already motivated blockbusters to scare homeowners into moving, tipping the racial balance further. As both the school district and residents made clear, the project contradicted the ideals of the Civil Rights Acts rather than upholding them. The project would also isolate the poor from public amenities and job sites, accomplishing little aside from offering improved and stable housing.¹⁰²

If the project did little to integrate or improve opportunity, it nonetheless imposed costs upon existing residents that would not be shared Town-wide. East Massapequa (parts of which were also called 'West Amityville' prior to 1974), had the lowest median income in the entire Town of Oyster Bay, but residents paid a yearly school tax around the median for school districts in the area.¹⁰³ HUD estimated that the project would add fifty children to the district at an additional cost of \$75,000, a conservative estimate given their low-income status. The Town promised \$10,000 from rents paid by residents, and project opponents calculated HUD would only cover \$8,700. The rest would be covered by existing residents, all while the Town removed

¹⁰² "Report of the United Massapequa Civic Council on Proposed Downzoning for Construction of Public Housing in Massapequa, New York," p. VII-3-VII-4, XII-5, Series 10, subseries 3, Box 14, folder "Housing, Oyster Bay 1974," Javits Papers.

¹⁰³ West Amityville was the western part of the Amityville school district in Nassau County. In 1974, residents petitioned to be serviced by the Massapequa Post Office, and the entire area became known as 'East Massapequa.' West Amityville median family income was \$12,728 in 1970, while 'East Massapequa' had a median income of \$16,217. See *Nassau County Data Book* 1985, 218-219; For school property tax rates, see New York State Department of Audit and Control, Division of Municipal Affairs, Bureau of Municipal Research and Statistics, *Overall Real Property Tax Rates: Local Government in New York State: Fiscal Years Ended in 1974* (Albany: Bureau of Research and Statistics, 1975), 64.

taxable property that could provide \$165,000 a year if privately developed.¹⁰⁴ In light of the fiscal costs imposed on the hamlet and school district, the projected increase in segregation, and the isolation from jobs, residents basically wanted to know why East Massapequa was targeted. If the Town and HUD were both committed to providing affordable housing to increase integration and opportunity, as a Town-sponsored planning report claimed, why not place the project in the “restrictive and exclusionary zoning of the north shore of the Town of Oyster Bay”? Why not nearer to the larger employment centers in the center of Oyster Bay, in Plainview, Hicksville, Bethpage, or Farmingdale, where public transportation could provide mobility and schools were overwhelmingly segregated?¹⁰⁵ Placing public housing in the suburbs was no panacea to limited opportunity and segregation, as the housing debate in East Massapequa made clear, but it would nonetheless add a fiscal burden to local residents.

A similar conflict occurred when Nassau County tried to build a public housing project in Uniondale to house the county’s homeless population. The County had long avoided public housing, but as the costs of welfare motels and private rentals strained the budget, and as recipients caused friction within affected neighborhoods, Nassau County opted for public housing. In 1968, the County unveiled a massive hotel, sports arena, and office/retail complex for the former Mitchel Field air force base in Uniondale, once part of Long Island’s cradle of aviation. The proposal included an eight building, 1,200-unit low and middle income housing project. Norman Blankman, real estate developer from Sands Point on Long Island’s north shore, was the chief advocate of the housing proposal. He argued that such housing was

¹⁰⁴ “Report of the United Massapequa Civic Council on Proposed Downzoning for Construction of Public Housing in Massapequa, New York,” p. II-8, IV-28-IV-29, VII-9-VII-10, Series 10, subseries 3, Box 14, folder “Housing, Oyster Bay 1974,” Javits Papers; “In E. Massapequa, ‘We Don’t Want it,’ *Newsday*, March 13, 1974, 19.

¹⁰⁵ “Report of the United Massapequa Civic Council on Proposed Downzoning for Construction of Public Housing in Massapequa, New York,” p. VII-3-VII-4, XII-5, Series 10, subseries 3, Box 14, folder “Housing, Oyster Bay 1974,” Javits Papers.

necessary to stem both the motel crisis and subsidized rentals “starting to decay whole neighborhoods into eventual slums.”¹⁰⁶ Blankman believed that the same process that created inner city ghettos was at work in the suburbs, namely that racism and the dynamics of the housing market were producing concentrated poverty. In a 1972 meeting with the Nassau County Board of Supervisors, he presented each board member a copy of the foundational study of ‘ghetto formation,’ Gilbert Osofsky’s *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto*. If housing was left to the market, concentrated slums of poor people in decrepit conditions would ensue. Only planned housing that met needs on a county-wide basis could reverse this ghetto-formation.¹⁰⁷

This ‘County-wide’ solution actually concentrated the welfare population into Uniondale, a lower-middle class hamlet with a nine percent black population. Blankman argued that the housing would prevent a ghetto; a black Uniondale resident responded that “slums are made; they don’t just occur, and the politicians are trying to make another Roosevelt in Uniondale.”¹⁰⁸ To Uniondale residents, the County was forcing them to sacrifice their neighborhood so that other hamlets would not become slums. Residents opposed the project for similar reasons as East Massapequans, including race and class-based assumptions about property values, the perceived behavioral deficiencies of welfare recipients, but also the fiscal concerns of the Uniondale school district. Residents voted down the school budget three years in a row in the late 1960s, and the school system operated with temporary classrooms to accommodate increasing enrollment. The project would add over one hundred children to the district, and

¹⁰⁶ “Suit Planned to Compel Housing at Mitchel Field,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1971, A3; For details regarding the project, see “Report & Recommendations, Phase 1, Nassau Center,” July 1969, Box 69, folder “Mitchel Field” [1 of 2], Nickerson Papers.

¹⁰⁷ “A Personal Defeat on Mitchel Field,” *Newsday*, August 29, 1972, 17.

¹⁰⁸ “Why Uniondale Finally Said No to a Social Welfare Project,” *Newsday*, June 22, 1970, 9; For population and income statistics, see Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, *U.S. Census '70: Volume 2: Race* (Hauppauge, New York: 1972), 32-47; Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board, *U.S. Census '70: Volume 6: Income*, 65-70.

residents were unconvinced that Mitchel Field's commercial space would increase tax revenues by fifty percent as project advocates claimed.¹⁰⁹

Deliberations over the housing proposal continued into 1970, and the fight reached a fevered pitch when welfare activists staged a "move in," inhabiting vacant military housing on former air force base property. Sixteen families with twenty-seven children, all former residents of a welfare motel, squatted in the homes, growing vegetables, cooking, and organizing into a small-scale protest movement intent on securing adequate housing.¹¹⁰ The County did not remove the squatters, but Uniondale homeowners and the school district blocked the twenty-seven students from enrolling during the 1970-1971 school year. Uniondale was heavily condemned for their actions, and a state judge ordered the school district to enroll the students shortly after the start of the school year.¹¹¹ *Newsday* columnist Martin Buskin called Uniondale's decision "one of the more sickening examples of the rotting civic conscience of suburbia... [a] selfish, narrow demonstration of local control."¹¹² Residents did not feel this was merely an issue of 'local control,' but a response to the costs the County was imposing upon them, so that other hamlets, especially wealthier communities, did not have to bear any of the costs associated with low-income residents. They framed their fight in spatial terms, rallying around State Assemblyman and Uniondale resident Joseph Margiotta, who demanded that the

¹⁰⁹ "Mitchel Neighbors Rap Housing Plan," *Newsday*, May 27, 1970, 4; "Why Uniondale Finally Said No to a Social Welfare Project," *Newsday*, June 22, 1970, 8-9; "Suit Planned to Compel Housing at Mitchel Field," *New York Times*, November 7, 1971, A3; For details regarding the project, see "Report & Recommendations, Phase 1, Nassau Center," July 1969, p. 10-12, Box 69, folder "Mitchel Field" [1 of 2], Nickerson Papers; See also "Two Views of Mitchel Field," *The Carman Chronicle Community Association Newsletter*, no. 18 (September 1969): 1-3, Box 69, folder "Mitchel Field" [1 of 2], Nickerson Papers; "Overcrowded Uniondale," *Newsday*, May 22, 1970, 5B; "Mitchel Plan Spotlights School Tax Pool," *Newsday*, April 5, 1969, 7.

¹¹⁰ "Welfare Activists Move 3 Families into Mitchel Housing," *Newsday*, May 25, 1970, p. 1; "Mitchel Gardens..." *L.I. Black News*, September 1971, B2, Periodicals 1, Box 233, Tamiment Library Newspapers, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York; "At Center of Dispute: Mitchel School Rift Doesn't Ring a Bell," *Newsday*, September 3, 1970, 1.

¹¹¹ "Uniondale District is Ordered to Enroll Mitchel Students," *Newsday*, September 4, 1970, 1.

¹¹² Martin Buskin, "Fighting the Welfare Children," *Newsday*, August 29, 1970, 3A.

welfare families be placed “on the North Shore,” the former Gold Coast and still home to Long Island’s more affluent residents. Hempstead Town Supervisor Francis Purcell put it in blunter terms: “why doesn’t Blankman go over to Sands Point, where he lives, and the density is about 1.1 persons per acre, and do this in his backyard?”¹¹³ The sentiment that the County was only creating a ‘welfare ghetto’ to the detriment of the poor and the Uniondale community was echoed repeatedly by residents, who believed scattering the poor across Long Island was a fairer solution to both Uniondale and the recipients.¹¹⁴

The uproar (and political connections of Uniondale politician Joe Margiotta) pushed incoming Republican County Executive Ralph Caso to remove any housing plans from Mitchel Field’s future in 1970.¹¹⁵ Blankman, along with the Suburban Action Institute and Long Island NAACP sued the County for denying racial minorities and low-income residents affordable housing in 1972. Blankman demanded that “countywide interests...take precedence over those of communities.”¹¹⁶ District Court Judge Mark Constantino disagreed and sided with Uniondale residents. He admitted racial sentiments were a factor in the opposition, but so too was the “the loss of revenue [public housing] causes and the increased burdens it places on the community’s resources.”¹¹⁷ Constantino judged this burden unfair “considering the availability of land throughout Nassau County that could be used to construct multifamily housing.”¹¹⁸ In addition, Judge Constantino recognized that low-income housing in Uniondale would exacerbate segregation and not alleviate it. Mitchel Field was zoned within integrated Uniondale school

¹¹³ Quoted in “Mitchel Field: New Foes, New Tactics,” *Newsday*, February 3, 1972, 23.

¹¹⁴ “Apts. For Mitchel Field Draw Margiotta’s Ire,” *Newsday*, March 22, 1969, 7; “Welfare Children,” *Newsday*, September 10, 1969, 5B; “Letters,” *Newsday*, June 2, 1970, 5B.

¹¹⁵ “Caso to Take Reins at Mitchel Field, Rules out Housing,” *Newsday*, November 24, 1970, 1.

¹¹⁶ “LIA Urges New Plans for Mitchel,” *Newsday*, November 18, 1970, 3; “Letters,” *Newsday*, June 2, 1970, 5B; Lamb, 234; “A Suit for Housing at Mitchel Field,” *Newsday*, March 7, 1972, 17.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Lamb, 235.

¹¹⁸ *Acevedo v. Nassau County*, 369 F. Supp. 1384 (E.D.N.Y. 1974), 1390.

district, and bordered the Village of Hempstead, the largest black village in Nassau County.¹¹⁹

As both Uniondale residents and Judge Constantino made clear, ‘integration’ was more complex than a suburban location and county funds. Balkanized and sensitive tax structures made such housing projects costly for school districts, and if the goal was to redistribute resources to the poor, Uniondale residents wondered why they were the ones sacrificing their tax bases when Long Island’s affluent, some of the wealthiest homeowners in the nation, were not sharing their school and local service resources.

The question of who should give their ‘fair share’ was especially acute in Long Island’s most impoverished suburbs like Wyandanch. The community already faced illegal tenancies, the highest concentration of welfare recipients in the county, deteriorating housing stock, and a majority of its student population were dependent on ADC.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, local taxpayers bore the costs of such change, paying the eleventh highest school property tax rate in Suffolk County (of seventy six total districts) in a hamlet with a poverty rate of ten percent.¹²¹ While black and white homeowners organized into civic associations and were active on the school board, these were ineffective tools, as chapter three illustrates. In contrast, low-income residents had new avenues to shape Wyandanch in their interests. In 1970, over 100 residents and local clergy established the Wyandanch Task Force in 1970, who wanted to ease the hamlet’s housing and jobs crisis by “increasing industry, constructing low and moderate income housing, and

¹¹⁹ “Federal Supplement, Acevedo v. Nassau County, New York,” p. 1390, Part V, Box 1375, folder 5, NAACP Records, LoC.

¹²⁰ Anonymous letter, 1973, folder 2, Joint Council of Civic and Taxpayer Associations Papers, Town of Babylon History Collection, Office of Historic Services, Town of Babylon, Babylon, New York; New York State Urban Development Corporation, *New York State Urban Development Corporation Annual Report 1973*, 53; Koubek, 30-32, 80.

¹²¹ New York State Department of Audit and Control, *Overall Real Property Tax Rates: Local Government in New York State: Fiscal Years Ended in 1971*, 81-82; Wyandanch was “Babylon District #9.” There were a total of seventy-six school districts in Suffolk County in 1971.

strengthening Negro owned businesses in Wyandanch.”¹²² The Task Force, “firmly committed to the concept of a separate black controlled community,” tied itself to the New York State Urban Development Corporation (UDC).¹²³ Formed in 1968 and empowered with the legal ability to override local zoning ordinances across the state, the UDC, under the command of planner Edward Logue, had unprecedented powers to construct low and middle-income housing in the suburbs. Logue believed the UDC capable of taking a ‘metropolitan’ approach to urban problems, executing “broad-gauged programs to deal with the urban crisis.”¹²⁴ The UDC was to take a ‘fair share’ approach, where no single community or school district bore a disproportionate burden. Wyandanch’s suburban location and grassroots support fit within these guidelines.¹²⁵

The UDC proposed a 182-unit garden apartment complex for a vacant lot near Wyandanch’s main thoroughfare, and while Reverend David Rooks, a central figure in the campaign for the project, celebrated the effort as Wyandanch’s poor “trying to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps,” project opponents gathered 4,931 signatures against the apartments.¹²⁶ Reverend Rooks blamed “outside whites” who “come into Wyandanch to stymie the efforts Blacks were making,” but in reality black homeowners were central to the opposition.¹²⁷ With

¹²² New York State Urban Development Corporation, *New York State Urban Development Corporation Annual Report 1973*, 54; Koubek, 93; “Wyandanch Task Force – Proposal Form,” folder 4, Wheatley Heights – Civic Associations: Wheatley Heights Community Association, Inc. Papers, Town of Babylon History Collection, Office of Historic Services, Town of Babylon, Babylon, New York.

¹²³ New York State Urban Development Corporation, *New York State Urban Development Corporation Annual Report 1973*, 54.

¹²⁴ New York State Urban Development Corporation. *New York State Urban Development Corporation Annual Report 1969*, 3.

¹²⁵ New York State Urban Development Corporation. *New York State Urban Development Corporation Annual Report 1971* (New York: Urban Development Corp, 1972), 10.

¹²⁶ “New Housing Plan Rouses Wyandanch,” *New York Times*, July 26, 1973; “1,000 in Wyandanch Turn Out To Debate U.D.C. Housing Plan,” *New York Times*, July 27, 1973; “Five Whites to Decide Wyandanch Housing,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 4, 1973.

¹²⁷ “Wyandanch residents fight for housing projects,” *New York Amsterdam News*, October 14, 1972.

no guarantees from the Town or County that the existing dilapidated housing would be refurbished, homeowners feared the project would only attract more low-income residents, and as African American civic association member Bernice Bostic put it, “we’ve already have enough [welfare] recipients already.”¹²⁸ Like residents in Uniondale and East Massapequa, homeowners in Wyandanch and the surrounding communities wondered why Wyandanch was targeted. Black homeowner Ella Williams exclaimed that “we are being asked to support something when we are not able to. We are not elite. We have to work hard for what we have now.”¹²⁹ White homeowner Ann San Pedro of neighboring Deer Park likewise didn’t understand “why they took Wyandanch in the first place. It’s a poor, low-income community.”¹³⁰ Resident opposition linked them to a broader state-wide protest centered in Westchester County against the UDC zoning override powers, also concerned over property taxes, community stability, and the overreaching power of state government.¹³¹

In response to the protests on Long Island and Westchester County, the New York State Legislature stripped the UDC of its zoning override powers in 1973, and the Town of Babylon, the most local land-use governing body, rejected the Wyandanch project by a 3-2 vote in August of that same year.¹³² Reverend Rooks interpreted the decision along racial lines, citing ‘racial attitudes’ for its defeat, and UDC President Edward J. Logue remarked, “I know of no other instance where there has been such clearly demonstrated support for a development in a

¹²⁸ “New Housing Plan Rouses Wyandanch,” *New York Times*, July 26, 1973; “Once Again the Wyandanch Housing Debate,” *Newsday*, August 8, 1973, 31.

¹²⁹ “Two Groups Fear Project to Hike Taxes,” *Newsday*, July 24, 1973, 18.

¹³⁰ “Ammunition on Both Sides,” *Newsday*, July 26, 1973, 4.

¹³¹ Siskind, 246-251.

¹³² “Baby Officials Reject Wyandanch Housing Plan,” *New York Times*, August 17, 1973.

community...it is sad that the will of that community was disregarded.”¹³³ A reporter for the *New York Amsterdam News* decried the “death a miniature civil rights movement in Wyandanch,” further proof that white suburbanites “do not intend to allow Blacks, and other minorities to break out of the ghetto walls which the whites have built around them and spill over into neatly manicured lawns and tree-lined avenues which such whites have designated as belonging to them alone.”¹³⁴ This binary black versus white narrative did not exist. Black resident Bernice Bostic celebrated the Board’s decision, proclaiming “finally the taxpayers of Wyandanch have been heard.”¹³⁵ Black homeowners like Bostic were either ignored or written off as white accomplices. In another smaller battle over a HUD-sponsored project in New Cassel, black opponents of the project were accused of “thinking like whites” and being “Oreos...Black on the outside but white inside,” all to stop “black people from getting their share of housing.”¹³⁶ But as Fred Meeks, one of those opponents remarked, it was unfair to be “expected that [we] accept what can be considered as the accommodating, or compromise type of measures with the pretense that these are in [our] best interest.”¹³⁷

That African Americans should enable other African Americans of lower income to reside in their communities to the detriment of school quality and taxes was a demand linked to the logic of white suburban affluence, that ‘fair share’ should be imposed on the ‘suburbs’ without taking into account the complex reality of racial segregation in the suburbs or the fiscal costs of such projects on communities whose collective incomes varied. In Wyandanch and

¹³³ New York State Urban Development Corporation, *New York State Urban Development Corporation Annual Report 1973*, 60; “Wyandanch Vote Robs Blacks of New Housing,” *Amsterdam News*, August 17, 1973; “Baby Officials Reject Wyandanch Housing Plan,” *New York Times*, August 17, 1973.

¹³⁴ “A Dark Victory,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 1, 1973.

¹³⁵ “Wyandanch Vote Robs Blacks of New Housing,” *Amsterdam News*, August 17, 1973.

¹³⁶ “Blacks on L.I. Kill Plan to House Poor Blacks,” *New York Times*, July 24, 1970; Harold Russell, “Alu...,” *Westbury Times*, July 23, 1970.

¹³⁷ “The Realm of Reason,” *Westbury Times*, July 30, 1970; Fred Meeks, “A Just Solution,” *Westbury Times*, July 30, 1970.

Uniondale, homeowners were able to resist these housing demands, but East Massapequa's project was eventually built, largely because as one local resident argued, "the town fathers do not fear the power of the East Massapequa vote" versus the electoral power of wealthier hamlets in Oyster Bay.¹³⁸ Thus, the logic of "fair share" led to an unanticipated result: racially mixed and working class suburbs demanding that wealthy suburbs accept their own 'fair share.' HUD, the UDC, and County housing efforts tried to solve a real housing need by demanding suburbia redistribute their resources to the poor. But with only a superficial understanding of the communities they targeted, advocates only offered added costs and little benefit to the communities affected. Essentially, they were asking suburbanites to share their public resources without offering proposals to grow the local economy or increase the incomes of the new inhabitants so they could contribute to the hamlet's tax base. And since all of this was imposed upon suburbs within a balkanized tax structure and upon suburbanites already paying high taxes for services in a period of rising unemployment and inflation, residents opposed these attacks on their communities, incomes, property values, and public resources, namely schools. Opponents deployed "fair share" logic, arguing that *other* affluent suburban hamlets could easily share their resources. This was as much an outcome of the framing of 'fair share' itself as it was the 'backlash' against housing policy, framed in binary and spatial terms. Of course, though Wyandanch and Uniondale homeowners defeated the projects, the challenge of lowering taxes and poverty remained. Just as housing advocates looked for new ways to promote spatial equity, project opponents would still "have to take upon themselves the unwelcome burden of coming up with something better."¹³⁹

¹³⁸ "Editorial: Unwanted Project," *Massapequa Post*, February 28, 1974.

¹³⁹ "Housing for Wyandanch," *New York Times*, August 17, 1973.

Conclusion

In 1975, the UDC went bankrupt, and its mission re-oriented towards economic development projects. That same year, the NAACP dropped its suit against the Town of Oyster Bay and prioritized a ‘fair share’ lawsuit in New Jersey.¹⁴⁰ Two years later, HUD’s focus on suburban integration was sidelined in favor of urban revitalization.¹⁴¹ Interpreted on its own terms, dispersing the poor and integrating the suburbs was a noble effort to break down an injustice inscribed into the very fabric of America’s urban and suburban neighborhoods. And suburban determination to thwart integration, along with the politicians who chose to secure the suburban vote, defeated these efforts in the 1970s. But the dispersal approach was flawed because it gave primacy to race and operated within the dualisms of suburb and city, white and black, affluent and poor. None of these fit the realities of suburban Long Island. The dispersal advocates assumed the suburbs offered jobs that could lift the poor out of unemployment and poverty. They ignored job loss occurring in the suburbs, and more importantly the metropolitan shift from industry to services. Though Long Island successfully transitioned to a service economy, the change benefitted skilled workers. Unskilled workers, and by the 1970s, industrial laborers more broadly, faced a labor market of low wage jobs or joblessness. Even the modest integration projects that sought to alleviate local suburban housing problems ignored the fiscal crisis tied to this rising inequality between suburbanites and between suburbs, as the property tax-based structure was overwhelmed by stagnating incomes, rising poverty, and growing service demands in fragmented local jurisdictions. As Manuel Pastor argues, “suburbs were never

¹⁴⁰ Bonastia, 150; *Southern Burlington County N.A.A.C.P. v. Township of Mount Laurel*, was the first of two cases that eventually led to New Jersey’s Fair Housing Act of 1985, which required that the state’s 556 municipalities provide low and moderate-housing within their borders. As Christopher Bonastia contends, the legislation has nominally integrated New Jersey municipalities socioeconomically, but not racially.

¹⁴¹ Lamb, 179.

constructed to deal with such overwhelming poverty and economic challenges – they were meant to be symbols of success, not markers of distress.”¹⁴² The dualist approach ignored the labor market and thus undermined the moral demand that suburbs take their ‘fair share’ of poverty.

Like the War on Poverty, the Kerner Commission’s diagnosis of America’s social ills, a reflection of academic research and the impetus for activism, was predicated on an assumption of suburban affluence. The urban/suburban dualism framed the nation’s problems in spatial terms. It was about where jobs and prosperity went, not what undergirded postwar growth. And racist housing practices were the obstacle to overcome, not joblessness and low-wages. The challenges that Long Island’s working class population faced were disregarded in this formulation. But cities and suburbs shared in regional economic trends, if unequally, and all experienced the national transformation from industrial to post-industrial services with its concomitant growth of inequality. Both the urban and suburban poor needed remunerative employment, regardless of their metropolitan residence.

¹⁴² Pastor, 150.

Conclusion

Though christened an ‘affluent’ suburb, Long Island’s economy resembled the rest of the nation in the 1970s, a decade plagued with three recessions where the average American ended up poorer than they began.¹ Productivity outpaced wages by two-thirds, real wages declined for the poorest third of families, and the proportion of Long Islanders living near poverty grew by a fifth despite falling national and elderly poverty rates during the decade.² Though Nassau was the fastest growing county in the 1950s, and Suffolk the fastest in the 1960s, from 1970-1980, Long Island recorded the smallest population increase in census history (one percent), and for the first time, Nassau County’s population actually dropped (eight percent).³ It was the end of an era. A local union official admitted in 1978, “I was a lot like other people who felt because of our growth through the ‘50s that Long Island would always prosper and grow, but our economic expansion has come to a halt. Considering our present unemployment figures and high costs, I have very little optimism for the immediate future of Long Island.”⁴

The bleak figures illustrate the unravelling of the ‘Great Compression’ that Long Island embodied in the two decades after World War II. Before the war, Long Island was dependent on the service needs of New York City’s middle class and industrial elite. The region offered mainly low-wage and precarious employment to its working class population, who were housed in sub-standard dwellings. The war introduced military contracts that transformed the region’s

¹ Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 8.

² Tom Morris, “The Poor Among Us: In a Region of Prosperity, 200,000 Struggle against Poverty,” *Newsday*, December 12, 1982, 5, 26; Pearl M. Kamer, “The 1977 Economic Censuses: Update on Manufacturing,” *Long Island Economic Trends* (November-December 1979).

³ Long Island Regional Planning Board, *Population - 1980: Race and Spanish Origin, Data from the 1980 Census of Population and Housing* (Hauppauge NY: Long Island Regional Planning Board, 1982), 13.

⁴ Quoted in “Economy: Job losses, cost increases, signal end of boom years,” *Newsday*, March 19, 1978, A88.

small aviation manufacturers into massive employers and turned Long Island into a haven for the working class. Military spending continued during the Cold War, and along with federal housing subsidies, made mass suburbanization possible. Defense contracts not only provided jobs, but raised wages in competing sectors, not to mention the multiplier effects that reverberated through the private economy. Federal defense outlays nevertheless served military ends, not unskilled workers. Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, contracts favored skilled technicians and engineers, and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's budget changes in the 1960s further limited the employment benefits of defense spending on Long Island. As a result, highly trained and educated residents enjoyed robust job opportunities while the unskilled faced declining prospects. By the 1970s, Long Island's working class relied on low-wage jobs in services or footloose factories. The consequences were felt among families and the communities where they lived.

Predictably, African Americans' fortunes on Long Island were tied to the same developments. Southern migrants of the Great Migration struggled in the precarious labor market of the Roaring Twenties and Depression. Wartime contracts, which included fair employment provisions, and tight employment conditions benefitted black workers, who briefly entered the industrial working class. But in the fifteen years following the war, minority hiring commitments and federal enforcement were weak, and the Long Island's aircraft manufacturers did not hire black workers in large numbers. Few unskilled black Long Islanders could use the region's defense manufacturers for upward mobility. Left to the region's private economy, African Americans were the first to be exposed to the labor market twist occurring on Long Island and nation-wide. While activists dismantled the racial barriers in defense by the 1960s, 'aerospace' manufacturers were hiring engineers, not operatives. Black suburbanites with

degrees and impressive resumes used defense or the region's budding service sector to climb into the middle class, and they narrowed Long Island's racial income disparity.⁵ But an equally large cohort of African Americans had insufficient educational credentials and less skilled backgrounds, and they were disproportionately on the losing side of the employment divide. In the postwar period, race declined in significance, while skills became more important. This was a consequence of policy, including federal policy affecting manufacturing. And out of this, the median black/white wage gap closed while intra-race inequality increased between the black haves and the black have-nots.

If the significance of race declined in the labor market, it still mattered in housing. Discriminatory policy and prejudicial practice produced racially disparate suburbs, with fewer choices for black than white homebuyers. This did not mean racially unequal suburbs were inevitable however, particularly in the short-term. When a rising black middle class inhabited black suburbia, neighborhoods thrived in spite of segregation. Limited supply inflated housing prices and the discriminatory mortgage market pushed black homebuyers to accept inferior loans, but progress was possible. As poor enclaves were demolished and low-income housing opportunity narrowed, segregation provided a wedge to house the poor in middle class hamlets, making 'black' suburbia distinct from 'white' beyond the skin color of residents, including socioeconomic makeup, school quality, and community tensions. And as intra-race inequality rose in the 1970s, segregation's negative consequences intensified. While Long Island experienced little overall population growth, its black population expanded by a third. New middle-class migrants closed the racial income gap further, while segregation forced them into the same communities established three decades prior. With them arrived a new cohort of the

⁵ From 1960 to 1970, the racial median family income gap closed in both counties. In Nassau, the divide narrowed from 58 percent to 64 percent. In Suffolk, the gap went from 68 percent to 72 percent.

poor, and they concentrated in the same neighborhoods, in Roosevelt, New Cassel, Freeport and Hempstead in Nassau County, or Central Islip, Mastic-Shirley, and Bay Shore in Suffolk.⁶ And both middle-class and poor moved next to downwardly mobile black families in the 1970s, “those losing their jobs and those not being able to find ones.” These were the neighbors who “replaced the once stable homeowners” as North Amityville resident Lenny Canton recalled.⁷

These conditions, in the context of Long Island’s fragmented local jurisdictions, produced a ‘suburban crisis’ in Long Island’s largest black suburbs by the 1980s. Though black hamlets never lost their ‘middle-class’ buffer, ‘role model’ neighbors couldn’t prevent fiscally-starved school districts or desperate individuals from entering the underground economy.⁸ Local property taxes no longer adequately funded school districts, limiting educational quality across black suburbia. While Roosevelt’s district was desegregated in 1964, housing segregation and the county’s second highest poverty rate turned Roosevelt’s schools 99.7 percent minority with the highest proportion of costs devoted to non-operational and special education needs by the 1990s. Only four of 130 graduates obtained a New York State Regent’s diploma in 1990. The state put the district under close supervision, and in 2002, the legislature passed a law permitting state takeover of the district, the first and so far only instance where Albany took direct control over a local school.⁹ Drugs and crime likewise stalked these hamlets. The heroin trade reached

⁶ Long Island Regional Planning Board, *Population - 1980: Race and Spanish Origin*, 7, 14; Long Island Regional Planning Board, *Population - 1980: Income* (Hauppauge, NY: Long Island Regional Planning Board, 1983), 19-21.

⁷ Lenny Canton, personal interview conducted by Martin R. Cantor, May 18, 2001 and updated August 27, 2006 in Martin R. Cantor, *Long Island, the Global Economy, and Race: The Aging of America's First Suburb* (New York]: Long Island Development Corp, 2006), 3.

⁸ Wilson, *Truly Disadvantaged*, 55-57.

⁹ Alan Singer, “American Apartheid: Race and the Politics of School Finance on Long Island, NY,” *Equity & Excellence in Education* 32, no. 3 (1999): 28; “Takeover Looms: Roosevelt Board Faces State Regents,” *Newsday*, December 31, 1995, L11; Alan Singer, “Roosevelt Schools Need Radical Aid,” *Newsday*, August 2, 1995, A23; “Homeowners in Nassau Threaten Suit over Taxes,” *New York Times*, December 4, 1996, B6; Diane Ravitch, “New York’s Last District Takeover,” *Diane Ravitch’s Blog*, July 21, 2015, accessed December 20, 2015 <http://dianeravitch.net/2015/07/21/new-yorks-last-district-takeover/>

Long Island in the early 1970s, and by the 1980s local police and homeowners were fighting open-air drug markets.¹⁰ Roosevelt had Nassau Road, Wyandanch's dealers peddled their wares on the corner of Straight Path and Booker Avenue, New Cassel's market operated along Prospect Avenue, and a strip mall at the corner of Albany Avenue and Great Neck Road in North Amityville was regionally known as "the corner." These enclaves, abutting single-family homes and neighborhood shopping centers, became the distribution centers for the drug needs of two million suburbanites.¹¹

By the 1980s, these communities experienced the cumulative effects of housing segregation's long-term costs: decreased property values, inferior schools, and concentrated poverty. The hardship originated in the simple reality that despite suburban residence, the black poor and working class did not find greater job prospects or opportunity for upward mobility. The suburbs were not the land of opportunity scholars, activists, and the public purported them to be. The dominant view of metropolitan problems and that of the black poor, the urban/suburban divide and the assumption of affluence, could not solve the problems of black suburbanites. Anti-poverty warriors and housing integrationists of the 1960s and early 1970s both believed suburbia's prosperity would absorb the poor and viewed housing segregation as the great obstacle to racial equality. As this dissertation contends, the benefits of the suburban job market and housing integration were dubious without confronting the labor market that crossed municipal boundaries or the federal abandonment of full employment policy. Housing integration would surely expand spatial mobility to those already able to live in suburbia; solving

¹⁰ Eric C. Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 156-157.

¹¹ "Race: Blacks Suffer Double Toll of Great Danger, Fear," *Newsday*, May 25, 1983, 7; Michael H. Cottman, "An Open-Air Crack Market," *Newsday*, June 23, 1986; "On the Corner: Reign of Crack and Violence," *New York Times*, October 13, 1987.

black poverty and unemployment, whose effect reverberated through communities, was a question of jobs.

Historians continue to present the postwar suburb as an exclusive affluent ‘space’ and the urban/suburban divide, the metropolitan and spatial redistribution of jobs, people, and tax dollars, as the critical factor in urban decay and broader inequality after World War II.¹² Segregation was the major barrier, a ‘New American Dilemma,’ distinct from explicit Jim Crow laws because segregation was supported by “structures...imbedded in the built environment” according to Matthew Lassiter.¹³ And therefore the failure to integrate housing and open the suburbs to the poor during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the pivotal years when integration reached the national agenda, was a ‘lost goal’ to combat inequality in the twentieth century. Charles Lamb contends that “no point in American history was as vital” as the years following the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968.¹⁴ The failure of integration, from the White House down to local activists, closed the door on racial equality for the century, with dire consequences. This interpretation falls into the same narrow understanding of metropolitan problems as activists of the time, which obscures the North Amityvilles, Wyandanches, Roosevelts, and New Cassels, whose challenges had more in common with urban neighborhoods than their suburban location might suggest. There is limited analytical utility to viewing postwar problems in terms of housing segregation, which favors the economy’s spatial transformations over its broader temporal and structural changes, and uses racial disparities as the “the default frame for characterizing inequality.”¹⁵ This is especially true for the black suburban poor, because even if

¹² See Self, *American Babylon*; Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Andrew Highsmith, “Demolition Means Progress;” Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* among others.

¹³ Lassiter, 4.

¹⁴ Lamb, 249-250.

¹⁵ Adolph Reed and Merlin Chowkwanyun, “Race, Class, Crisis: The Discourse of Racial Disparity and its Analytical Discontents,” *Socialist Register* 48 (2012): 153.

suburbia was thriving or weathering recessions, they did not necessarily benefit despite their physical proximity.

This points to a different ‘lost goal’ from the 1960s and early 1970s, apparent in Long Island’s history when defense workers demanded peacetime spending, when War on Poverty activists called for jobs with living wages, when civil rights organizations urged fair hiring, or when a county executive proposed a right to a job. All of this was inflected through Long Island’s particular job landscape, with over a hundred-thousand state-subsidized positions in aerospace. But they were nonetheless microcosms of national debates, including those over deindustrialization, automation, the widening chasm between highly paid service jobs versus low-wage fleeting jobs, racial disparities in employment, and anti-poverty policy. Most importantly, these were suburbanites who viewed these as suburban issues. Urban historians would benefit from incorporating these suburban concerns and the suburban economy into their studies, integrating the suburbs into the broader transition from the ‘Age of Compression’ to the ‘Age of Inequality’ in a unified way the urban/suburban framework cannot.¹⁶

Now that most of the nation’s poor live in the suburbs as of the 2010 census, this history is more relevant than ever.¹⁷ Contemporary policy proscriptions, including renewed calls for urban-suburban regional governments, dispersed public housing, reformed welfare policies that consider specifically ‘suburban’ problems, and inner-city development programs to implement in suburbs, while laudable, are still premised in spatial terms.¹⁸ As David Imbroscio argues, with

¹⁶ Terms borrowed from Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, xii.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Kneebone and Alan Berube of the Brookings Institution compiled data to reveal that suburban poverty had been accelerating since the 1980s, but grew sharply since 2000. Between rising housing costs within city borders, low-wage job opportunities along the urban fringe, and the consequences of the 2001 and 2008 recessions, the poor have moved to the suburbs and suburbanites themselves have become poorer. See Kneebone and Berube, 18-19, chapter 3.

¹⁸ Examples of these proscriptions include David Rusk, *Cities Without Suburbs: A Census 2000 Update* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Peter Dreier, John H. Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty-First Century* (Lawrence, KY: University Press of Kansas, 2001); Clarissa Rile

fewer ‘good’ suburbs available, the benefits of greater spatial mobility are less clear than they were fifty years ago.¹⁹ State support for jobs, including public jobs, is an alternative that does not require moving people to the current ‘right place’ in an ever-changing economy. It *creates* a stronger job market, as it did decades ago on Long Island. The suburb’s postwar history illustrates that broad upward mobility was built on mass job opportunity, including publicly-subsidized employment. Of course, this was war spending, a controversial budget necessitated by the unique circumstances of the Cold War. Nevertheless, defense spending was also infused by the nation’s commitment to full employment. It is not so much a question of finding a substitute for defense jobs as rediscovering this responsibility, one that infused the nation’s ‘Age of Compression’ and of its physical embodiment, Long Island.

Hayward and Todd Swanstrom, *Justice and the American Metropolis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Joanna Mitchell-Brown, “First Suburbs and Nonprofit Housing: How do Urban CDC’s Develop Affordable Housing in Suburban Communities?” *Social Justice in Diverse Suburbs: History, Politics, and Prospects*, ed. Christopher Niedt, 185-212 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013); John A. Powell and Jason Reece, “The Future of Fair Housing in a Diverse Suburbia,” *Social Justice in Diverse Suburbs: History, Politics, and Prospects*, ed. Christopher Niedt, 213-228 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013).

¹⁹ Imbroscio, “Beyond Mobility,” 9-11.

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