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Envisioning Progressive Communities: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Liberalism,
Berkeley, California and Montclair, New Jersey, 1920-1970

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
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This dissertation examines women’s role in racial politics and metropolitan development in Montclair, New Jersey and Berkeley, California between 1920 and 1970. It employs a variety of primary sources including oral history interviews, organization records, personal records, U.S. census data, newspaper articles, memoirs, and minutes from city council and board of education meetings. The dissertation finds that women transformed Montclair and Berkeley from racially segregated into politically liberal communities that residents declared provided models of racial integration as they worked to implement their community visions. Moreover, women’s community investment forestalled the possibility of white flight, ensuring that Berkeley and Montclair remained multi-racial and differentiating Berkeley and Montclair’s racial politics from those of large cities or racially homogeneous suburbs.

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“Envisioning Progressive Communities: Race, Gender and the Politics of Liberalism in Berkeley, California and Montclair, New Jersey, 1920-1970”

In April of 1971, more than 250 people attended a banquet honoring Carol Sibley’s ten years of service from 1961 until 1971 on the Berkeley Board of Education. During that period she spearheaded school integration as president of the school board and leader in an interracial liberal coalition. Banquet attendees declared that her steadfast support for school integration illustrated her seemingly unselfish civic devotion. They claimed that she bridged Berkeley’s racial and economic divisions by placing the greater public good above her personal interests. Richard Foster, superintendent of Berkeley Unified School District, exclaimed that Sibley was, “amazingly prophetic about what needed to be done...she has the rare ability to forgive.”¹ Likewise, Mary Jane Johnson, president of the Berkeley NAACP, hailed Sibley as “a woman who stands by her convictions” and presented Sibley with a resolution acknowledging Sibley’s civic contributions and, most especially, her pivotal role in school integration.² The Board of Education read a resolution that connected Sibley’s support for school integration to her commitment to seek the entire community’s interests, stating that, “her service to the children of Berkeley and her commitment to desegregated, quality education for all students was matched only by her compassion, her understanding and her patience...the Board of Education gratefully thanks Carol R. Sibley for her outstanding public service to

¹ “Her City Honors Carol Sibley.” *Berkeley Gazette*. April 1971. Berkeley Historical Society. Carol Sibley Vertical File. Berkeley, California.

² Ibid.

Berkeley.”³ By shepherding the implementation of school integration, Sibley shaped Berkeley’s development and politics.

Sibley also emphasized her commitment to civic improvement and bridging Berkeley’s racial and economic divisions when she took the microphone at the end of the evening. With tears in her eyes, she declared that her service on the board of education gave her, “a richness that has been mine for the past ten years and will be mine forever.”⁴ According to the *Berkeley Gazette*, banquet attendees uniformly declared that her remarks “reflected her legacy to the city that she loves.”⁵

Sibley and other banquet attendees’ remarks illustrate not only Sibley’s investment in Berkeley’s development, but how she connected integration to her vision of Berkeley as a vibrant, multi-racial community that offered all children regardless of their race an excellent education. Although she couched her support for integration in terms of the greater public good, self-interest also underlay Sibley’s remarks. She watched as school integration sparked violent protests throughout the country and as a homeowner, a clear financial interest in Berkeley. She likely recognized that white elites could prevent racial violence and a decline in Berkeley’s desirability to prospective white upper and middle-class residents by voluntarily integrating its public schools.

Carol Sibley is one of many African American, Japanese, European immigrant and white women who shaped Berkeley’s development and politics as they attempted to realize their community visions. In Montclair, New Jersey, African American, Italian, and white women likewise struggled to realize their community visions. Comparing

³ Carol Sibley Papers. Box 1, Folder 18. Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. April 20, 1971. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁴ “Her City Honors Carol Sibley.” April 1971. Berkeley Historical Society. Carol Sibley Vertical File. Berkeley, California.

⁵ Ibid.

Montclair and Berkeley's politics reveals important new insights about the centrality of women's activism to suburban development. Women seldom described their goals as political, yet their persistent advocacy for additional municipal resources for their communities, creation of community programs, and vigorous protest against government actions they deemed harmful to their neighborhoods transformed Berkeley and Montclair's physical environment and reshaped local politics. Their motivations for civic activism differed, yet white, African American, and European immigrant women sought to create communities that offered their families a morally and physically salubrious environment, quality housing and schools, and equal access to municipal resources. Female activists not only transformed Berkeley and Montclair into attractive residential communities, they also re-envisioned Berkeley and Montclair as multi-racial communities where all residents enjoyed quality schools, adequate housing, and a healthy environment regardless of their race or class. During the postwar era, women's new vision and civic pride forestalled wholesale white flight such as befell most racially integrated communities, ensuring that Montclair and Berkeley remained racially diverse residential communities with a vibrant African American and white middle and upper-class communities.

The comparative approach reveals that the suburbs were a key incubator for women's political activism in the mid-century U.S. Home to a growing proportion of the white middle-class, the significance of American suburbs for women's collective agency should be obvious. Women marshaled their collective agency to demand that the local government that dedicate most municipal resources to the local schools and neighborhoods rather than fostering commercial and industrial development. This

dissertation focuses on female activists who advocated for progressive causes because they were the dominant force for social and political change in Berkeley and Montclair. Undoubtedly the collective agency of conservative suburban women was stronger than progressive women in many suburbs during the interwar and postwar periods and is an important story waiting for another scholar to explore. Even in Montclair and Berkeley, a significant minority of women who hailed from all social classes and racial backgrounds opposed progressive causes such as school integration and housing reform and viewed their goals and interests differently than progressive female activists. For example, refusing to accept liberals' claim that school integration would benefit the entire community by improving the public schools, conservative women led opposition to school integration.

The comparative approach reveals that many white women formerly active in the woman suffrage and other progressive movements in cities moved to the suburbs and leveraged their citizenship, organizations, and networks to realize their community visions. Many scholars, including Sharon E. Wood, Victoria Wolcott, Daphne Spain, Georgina Hickey, Sarah Deutsch, and Nancy Hewitt, have demonstrated that women responded to the broad social changes that immigration, urbanization, and industrialization created by reshaping urban life in cities across the country during the Progressive Era.⁶ Indeed, new suburban historians have documented that suburbanization

⁶ Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940*. (New York: Oxford University Press), 2000); Nancy Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Sharon E Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Daphne Spain, *How Women Saved the City*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Georgina Hickey, *Hope and Danger in the New South City: Working-class women and urban development in Atlanta, 1890-1940* (Athens, G.A.: University of Georgia Press, 2003); Victoria Wolcott. *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

was one such response to these changes.⁷ An important growing body of scholarship also exists on suburban women's activism. Gwendolyn Wright and Mary Corbin Sies have demonstrated how white middle and upper-class suburban women shaped public policy by helping low-income residents during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Similar to white upper and middle-class suburban women in Berkeley and Montclair, Sies and Wright document how these women's desire to create a safe and uplifting environment for their families spurred their activism.⁸ Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen have explored how women were the primary organizers and arrangers of community and often led political organizing in Levittown, New York during the 1950s and 1960s.⁹ Similarly, Lisa McGirr and Sylvie Murray's studies of Orange County, California and Queens, New York have documented how middle and upper-class white women's networks and organizations were central to suburban politics and that women often performed most of the behind the scenes political organizing even though men controlled the local government.¹⁰ Joanne Meyerowitz has discredited the cultural myth of the 1950s politically apathetic suburban housewife, demonstrating that suburban white

⁷ Becky M. Nicolaides and Andrew Wiese eds., *Suburb Reader* (New York: Routledge Press, 2006), chapter 6.

⁸ Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Modern Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) and Mary Corbin Sies, "The Domestic Mission of the Privileged American Suburban Homemaker, 1877-1917: A Reassessment," Ed. by Marilyn Ferris Motz and Pat Browne, *Making the American Home: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Material Culture, 1840-1940* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988).

⁹ Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

¹⁰ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Sylvie Murray, *The Progressive Housewife: Women's Suburban Activism in Suburban Queens, 1945-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

women participated in a myriad of progressive causes including the civil rights, labor, and pacifist movements.¹¹

Similarly, the new suburban history and recent scholarship on the civil rights movement has explored Black suburban women's activism. African Americans moved to the suburbs for educational and economic opportunities, the rural environment, and the promise of social and political autonomy. Early twentieth century Black suburbs were often service suburbs where most residents worked as gardeners, cooks, nannies, butlers, chauffeurs, laundresses, and housecleaners for affluent white residents who lived nearby. Since more service sector jobs existed for women than men, women formed more than fifty percent of residents in early twentieth century Black suburbs and were less likely to face unemployment. Thus, they were critical to the Black community's economic well-being.¹² When the suburbs failed to deliver better housing, schools, and jobs, Black women rallied their networks and organizations to demand more municipal resources and worked at the micro-level to create their own community institutions.¹³

Montclair and Berkeley's unique position as socially and racially diverse suburbs led to the emergence of a specific type of racial politics and unique opportunities for women's activism. I argue that minority and white women had a larger role in Montclair and Berkeley's development and politics than in large cities or homogeneous suburbs. The tight, interwoven social networks and relative absence of large businesses and

¹¹ Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: American Women in the 1950s* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

¹² Leslie Wilson, *Dark Spaces: An Account of Afro-American Suburbanization, 1890-1950* (PhD Diss.: City University of New York, 1992) and Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African Americans and Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

¹³ Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998); Wiese, *Places of their Own*, and Bruce Haynes, *Red Lines, Black Spaces: The Politics of Race and Space in a Black Middle-Class Suburb* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 2001).

established political parties provided an opening for women to claim a stronger civic voice. Women used this opening to ensure that quality of life issues dominated local politics. Berkeley and Montclair's environment also created a different type of racial politics than existed in racially homogeneous suburbs or large cities. While most white suburbanites attempted to remove or exclude minority residents, in Berkeley and Montclair white residents accepted that African American, Japanese, and European immigrant residents were members of the community yet attempted to control and contain them. White and minority progressive female activists' advocacy of more resources for minority residents disrupted this racial hierarchy even when they did not directly fight racial segregation or discrimination.

Few scholars have either explored suburban women's activism during the 1920s and 1930s or connected postwar politics to this earlier suburban context. This dissertation is the first detailed examination of this topic. The interwar period was a pivotal era for both women's political activism and metropolitan development. The advent of woman suffrage empowered women as citizens. Indeed, Nancy F. Cott has demonstrated that women's activism flourished during the interwar period.¹⁴

At the same time, the locus of white women's activism shifted from urban to suburban communities during the 1920s and 1930s as upper and middle-class white women who held leadership positions in the progressive movement in cities migrated to rapidly expanding suburbs. Progressive white female activists in Berkeley and Montclair illuminate this trend. Before World War I, Lena Robbins was an active member and officer in several women's clubs in Newark and participated in the woman suffrage movement. She assumed leadership roles in the Montclair League of Women Voters

¹⁴Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

(LWV) after moving to Montclair from Newark with her son and husband in 1920.

Similarly, Anna Saylor moved to Berkeley from Terre Haute, Indiana, a small city that was a booming industrial and mining center.¹⁵ She was active in Indiana's woman suffrage movement as well as other progressive causes and even served as vice president of the Indiana Federation of Women's Clubs. Once she arrived in Berkeley, she continued to mobilize women's clubs and networks in support of progressive causes such as improved public schools, prison reform, and the enforcement of Prohibition. She even represented Berkeley in the California State Assembly.¹⁶ Of course, many progressive female activists relocated from cities to segregated suburbs including Scarsdale, New York, Shaker and Cleveland Heights, Ohio, and Beverly Hills, California. They manifested a very different type of racial politics than progressive female activists in Berkeley and Montclair, yet also built up or founded local chapters of progressive organizations such as the Parent-Teachers Association, General Federation of Women's Clubs, League of Women Voters, and Junior League.

This flowering of women's activism is directly linked to suburbanization. White progressive women in Berkeley and Montclair leveraged their identification with the home and neighborhood to obtain greater civic influence in interwar suburbs than they had enjoyed in cities during the Progressive Era. Daphne Spain argues in *Gendered Spaces* that all spaces are gendered masculine or feminine. Workplaces or spaces of production are gendered masculine while kitchens, bedrooms, and other spaces of social

¹⁵Tom Roznowski, *An American Hometown: Terre Haute, Indiana, 1927* (Bloomington, I.N.: University of Indiana Press, 2009).

¹⁶"Mrs. Anna Saylor Rites Tomorrow." Oakland Tribune. September 21, 1956.

reproduction are gendered feminine.¹⁷ Dolores Hayden similarly posits that early twentieth century residential suburbs such as Montclair and Berkeley are gendered feminine because homes and other domestic spaces dominate the landscape.¹⁸

Hayden and Spain suggest that this gendering of space usually isolated women from knowledge and power.¹⁹ However, feminist geographers have argued that the social and spatial geography of residential suburbs actually facilitated women's civic participation.²⁰ These communities have few spaces of production and homes and other spaces gendered feminine dominate the physical environment.²¹ Because of this unique spatial geography, the quality of the schools, housing, and other issues such as sufficient recreational spaces and municipal garbage service that affected family life dominate local politics. Women often parlayed their leadership in the home into an expanded political role in the community. Indeed, scholars have noted that female activists often used their identity as mothers to justify their political activism, declaring that their desire to secure resources and improve their families' quality of life motivated their activism rather than political gain. In these protests, women lobbied for improved housing, additional health

¹⁷ Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina press, Chapel Hill, 1992).

¹⁸ Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York: Vintage Press, 2004) and *Redesigning the American Dream: Gender, Housing, and Family Life*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984).

¹⁹ Hayden, *Building Suburbia*, pp. 152-3 and Spain, *Gendered Spaces*, introduction.

²⁰ *Mapping Women, Making Politics: Feminist Perspectives on Political Geography*, eds. Lynn A. Staeheli, Eleonore Kofman, and Linda J. Peake (New York: Routledge, 2004), chapter five.

²¹ As Daphne Spain points out, this does not mean that the home was not a space of production and suburban women's housework raised their family's material condition. Rather, it means that suburbanites did not perceive of the home as a place of production and gendered it feminine. Spain, *Gendered Spaces*, introduction.

services, food stamps, and other material resources for their families and fought environmental hazards that they perceived as a threat to their children's health.²²

The unique spatial environment empowered white women to assume an expanded civic role and implement their community vision in Berkeley and Montclair. The relative absence of large businesses, factories, and other institutions, especially in Montclair, ensured that quality of life issues dominated local politics. Indeed, upper and middle-class men's daily absence because of commuting to the city for work created a civic leadership vacuum. The presence of domestic servants also expanded upper and middle-class white women's capacity for political participation by releasing them from their domestic responsibilities.²³ This spatial environment coupled with the issue of male commuting and the economic security of upper middle-class families ensured that white women's leadership in the neighborhood and family was largely accepted during the interwar period.

Women's suburban "home sphere" politics created a connection between women and their communities imbued with political and social meaning that proved more enduring than the biological connection between women and motherhood. Women's civic leadership in suburban communities thus emerged during the early twentieth century and continued into the 1970s even after second wave feminism challenged the

²² See Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Felicia Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights: Politics and Poverty in Modern America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Joseph Heathcott, "The City Quietly Remade: National Programs and Local Agendas in the Movement to Clear the Slums, 1942 to 1952," *Journal of Urban History*, January 2008, pp. 221-242.; Temma Kaplan, *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements* (New York: Routledge Press, 1997; and Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement Without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

²³ Evelyn Navano Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor." Autumn 1992. *Signs*.

biological essentialism that defined all women as current or potential mothers and women's increased participation in the workforce also challenged gender roles.

Linking the pre and post WWII eras and placing women at the center of suburban politics impacts how politics look and function and identifies important continuities in suburban women's activism. The impulse to improve the community by helping minority residents is a consistent theme in white women's activism in Berkeley and Montclair from 1920 until 1970 and is strikingly different than the politics of most white U.S. suburban residents. White middle and upper-class women consistently tied improving Montclair and Berkeley to raising the material standard of life for racial and ethnic minorities even though the issues they focused on changed to reflect what was at the forefront of public debate. White women established social welfare programs for minorities during the interwar period, advocated for housing reform through Montclair and Berkeley's LWV chapters during the 1940s and 1950s, and worked in support of school integration through PTA chapters during the 1960s. They justified such reforms by contending that they would ensure that Montclair and Berkeley remained residential communities offering all residents a high quality of life.

The dissertation's comparative approach and broad scope reveal that Japanese American, European immigrant, and African American women also shaped community development as they created vibrant communities that reflected their cultural and ethnic beliefs, provided a physically and morally safe environment, and offered opportunities for educational and economic advancement. Unlike middle and upper-class white women, they migrated to Montclair and Berkeley in search of economic opportunity and political and social autonomy and envisioned their neighborhood as a residential

community that featured quality housing, schools that opened avenues for economic mobility for their children, and strong community organizations that reflected their culture. At key moments, these suburban women led formal protests, but even more often, they developed parochial schools, childcare programs, charity programs, and other programs that they leveraged to gradually eliminate their community's reliance on Berkeley and Montclair's white elites. Since discrimination in the housing market and a lack financial resources barred African American, Japanese, and, to a lesser extent, European immigrants from most other suburbs, they had more at stake than white women in their community's development. The suburban environment provided minority women with the opportunity to shape their community's development and overcome their political exclusion, social subordination, and lack of financial resources to realize their community goals.

White women's vision of Montclair and Berkeley conflicted with African American and European immigrant women's vision at times because they positioned themselves as civic leaders and claimed to understand and act in the best interests of racial and ethnic minorities even while upholding a complex racial hierarchy. African Americans purposefully sought economic opportunity and political and social freedom in the North, fleeing racially-motivated violence and segregation in the South.²⁴ To them, migration was a political statement as they voted with their feet and elected to escape the

²⁴ James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Joe Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1914-1945* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1988); *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender*, ed. Joe Trotter (Bloomington, I.N.: Indiana University Press, 1991); Kimberley L. Phillips, *AlabamaNorth: African American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-1945* (Urbana, I.L.: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Jack S. Blocker, *A Little More Freedom: African Americans Enter the Urban Midwest, 1860-1930* (Columbus, O.H.: Ohio State University Press, 2008); and Steven Hanh, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

South's grinding poverty and racism.²⁵ Similarly, European immigrants also sought economic opportunity and social autonomy. African Americans and European immigrants rebuffed white elites' attempts to control and subordinate them.

Linking the post and pre WWII eras also further contextualizes white working-class women's resistance to school and housing integration. Matthew Lassiter, Thomas Sugrue, Robert O. Self, Arnold Hirsch, David Freund, John McGreevey, Amanda Seligman, and other scholars have linked working-class residents' opposition to integration to their civic disenfranchisement and vested interest in their communities.²⁶ John McGreevey, for example, illustrates that in the northeast, the Catholic parish system encouraged a strong connection between white working-class Catholics and their neighborhood.²⁷ Scholars have also noted that working-class women were at the vanguard of grassroots campaigns against school integration and housing integration.²⁸

My research on Montclair and Berkeley builds on these insights by connecting white working-class women's efforts to transform their neighborhoods into their visions during the interwar period to their opposition to school integration during the 1960s. Lacking civic representation in Montclair or Berkeley, they viewed school and housing

²⁵ Leslie E. Wilson, *Dark Spaces: An Account of Afro-American Suburbanization, 1890-1950* (New York: City University of New York, PhD Diss., 1992).

²⁶ Arnold Hirsch, *Making the second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Amanda I. Segliman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); David Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007).

²⁷ John T. McGreevey, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

²⁸ Self, *American Babylon*; Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Segliman, *Block by Block*; Kruse, *White Flight*; and Lassiter, *Silent Majority*.

integration as unwelcome encroachments white elites foisted on them that would destroy the communities they had struggled to create. In fact, while working-class whites usually enjoyed political representation or even controlled municipal politics in cities such as Detroit, Oakland, Charlotte, and Chicago, in Berkeley and Montclair they lacked political representation as upper middle-class white residents had solidified political control. This political exclusion magnified the importance of working-class white women's activism to their communities and the development of Berkeley and Montclair's white working-class neighborhoods.

In addition to providing insights about women's centrality to suburban politics and development, the comparative approach builds on scholars' recent insights about the importance of local control and individual actors rather than federal policies and other macroeconomic forces to suburban development. John Stigloe points out that early suburbs differed in their demographic and physical characteristics, but a common utopian identity of their communities as a country area set apart from urban life bound suburbanites together and led them to employ a variety of municipal policies and civic organizations to enact this utopian vision.²⁹ Kenneth Jackson and Robert Fishman's major synthetic works on early suburban development also emphasize how white upper and middle-class residents viewed the suburbs as a quiet retreat from the chaos, noise, and confusion of urban life and leveraged variety of tools such as restrictive zoning and building codes, racial covenants, and racial restrictions on housing deeds to ensure the

²⁹ John Stigloe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1990).

racial and social homogeneity of their communities.³⁰ At the same time, suburban life had a variety of meanings to white upper and middle-class residents. Margaret Marsh finds that during the late nineteenth century, suburban life in New Jersey's Philadelphia suburbs revolved around the female-centered household. By the Progressive Era, however, residents' conceptualization of suburban life had expanded to encompass male and female household members and an active civic life.³¹

Scholars have found that early affluent white suburbanites worked at the local level to realize a vision of the suburbs as a utopian community lacking vice, noise, crime, and pollution and, most importantly, linked these "urban problems" to racial and social diversity. Michael Birkner and Carol A. O'Connor argue that Bergenfield, New Jersey and Scarsdale, New York's affluent white residents used municipal policies to ensure the social and racial homogeneity of their community during the early twentieth century.³² Mary Corbin Sies also documents how upper and middle-class white suburbanites effectively excluded working-class and racial and ethnic minorities from many early twentieth century suburbs including Roland Park, Maryland, Scarsdale, New York, and Riverside, Illinois.³³ Similarly, Ann Durkin Keating explores how affluent white middle and upper-class residents moved from to residential suburbs far enough from Chicago's urban core to escape immigration and industrialization, yet lived close enough to

³⁰ Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987) and Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

³¹ Margaret Marsh, *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

³² Michael Birkner, *A Country Place no More: The Transformation of Bergenfield, New Jersey, 1894-1994* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1994) and Carol A. O'Connor, *A Sort of Utopia: Scarsdale, 1891-1981* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1983).

³³ Mary Corbin Sies, "Paradise Retained: an Analysis of persistence in planned, exclusive suburbs, 1889-1918," *Planning Perspectives* 12 (1997), pp. 165-191.

convince the city government to pay for municipal services.³⁴ David R. Contosta's book on Chestnut Hill, an early twentieth century Philadelphia suburb, also points to the importance of affluent white residents' grassroots efforts to exclude Black, European immigrant, and working-class white residents from the community. These efforts, he notes, largely failed even though affluent white residents controlled civic life. He also points to white women's importance to early suburban development, noting that they led community improvement efforts.³⁵ Similarly, Michael Ebner argues that residents of Chicago's white, affluent, North Shore articulated and implemented a utopian vision of their communities during the early twentieth century. The absence of racial and ethnic minorities was a key component of this vision.³⁶

Even though affluent white suburbanites sought to exclude working-class and minorities from their communities, the suburbs were important destinations for white working-class, European immigrants, and African American migrants before WWII. James and Susan Borchert and Becky Nicolaides have pointed out the diversity of early suburban development as white working-class residents migrated to the suburbs alongside factories and blue-collar jobs during the early twentieth century.³⁷ Andrew Wiese and Leslie Wilson have demonstrated that the availability of service sector positions, semi-rural environment, and promise of political and social autonomy attracted

³⁴ Ann Durkin Keating, *Chicagoland: Cities and Suburbs in the Railroad Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

³⁵ David Contosta, *Suburb in the City: Chestnut Hill Philadelphia* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992).

³⁶ Michael H. Ebner, *Creating Chicago's North Shore: A Suburban History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

³⁷ James and Susan Borchert, "Residential City Suburbs." *Journal of Urban History* (March 1996) Vol. 22, 3: pp. 283-307 and Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

African American migrants from the South.³⁸ Henry Taylor's research on Cincinnati also illuminates the long history of Black suburbanization.³⁹ Indeed, residential suburbs often had a higher percentage of African American residents than small, large, or mid-sized cities in the North during the interwar period. Montclair and Berkeley, for example, had a higher percentage of Black residents than Newark, New York, Oakland, or San Francisco.⁴⁰

The large Black migration to affluent white suburbs sparked racial tension as affluent whites sought to exclude Blacks from their communities. Indeed, the growing scholarship on the civil rights movement in the North has uncovered stories of Black resistance to discrimination in suburbs during the interwar period.⁴¹ Scholars have found that early twentieth century suburbs remained hotbeds of activism during the post civil rights era because they remained among the few interracial suburbs.⁴²

³⁸ Wilson, *Dark Spaces* and Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African-American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

³⁹ Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., *The Building of a Black Industrial Suburb: The Lincoln Heights, Ohio Story* (PhD. Diss.: State University of New York at Buffalo, 1980).

⁴⁰ In the 1920 US Census, Montclair was 11.5 percent African American, East Orange 4.7 percent, the Oranges, 10.9 percent, Plainfield 8.8 percent, and Englewood 7.8 percent. United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C. In 1930, African-Americans composed 4.7 percent of residents in East Orange, 14.7 percent in Englewood, 14.2 percent in Orange City, 10.6 percent in Plainfield, and 13.6 percent in Montclair. By 1940, African-Americans formed 8.6 percent of residents in East Orange, 15.8 percent in Englewood, 17 percent in Montclair, 15.7 percent in Orange City, and 12.2 percent in Plainfield. In sharp contrast, in 1920 Blacks formed only 2.1 percent of the population in Elizabeth, .3 percent in Hoboken, 2.7 percent in Jersey City, 4.1 percent in Newark, and 1.1 percent in Paterson. By 1940, Blacks were .5 percent of Hoboken's population, 4.9 percent of Elizabeth's, 4.6 percent of Jersey City's, 11.6 percent of Newark's, and 3.3 percent of Paterson's. 1920, 1930, and 1940 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C.

⁴¹ Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House Press, 2008), pp. 175-9; Sherman Beverly, Jr., *The Emergence of Black Political Power in Evanston: The Public Career of Edwin B. Jourdain, Jr., 1931-1947* (Evanston, I.L.L.: Northwestern University, PhD Diss., 1973); Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005) and Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

⁴² Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998); Bruce Haynes, *Red Lines, Black Spaces: The Politics of Race and Space in a Black Middle-Class Suburb* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 2001); Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California*,

Important new research in the field of suburban history has demonstrated that importance of grassroots suburban politics to metropolitan development and racial segregation.⁴³ Matthew Lassiter, David Freund, Kevin Kruse, Lisa McGirr, and Robert Self have revealed that white middle and working-class residents migrated to newly developed, racially and economically homogeneous suburbs in metropolitan regions across the country after WWII and mobilized federal, state, and municipal government policies, violence, and social pressure to exclude African Americans from their communities.⁴⁴

This dissertation builds on the scholarship on early suburban development, grassroots suburban politics, and the civil rights movement in the North, demonstrating that some metropolitan communities laid the groundwork for a type of racial liberalism during the postwar era. Berkeley and Montclair provide a strong point of comparison as racially and economically diverse yet affluent suburbs, a specific type of early twentieth century suburb that deserves additional research. At the same time, Berkeley and Montclair were located in sections of the U.S. in metropolitan regions that experienced vastly different development patterns. The New York metropolitan region and northern New Jersey developed gradually while the Bay Area experienced explosive growth during the Second World War. Still, the similarities between Montclair and Berkeley's politics demonstrate that socio-spatial geography is as important to community development as broader macroeconomic forces and federal policies.

1910-1963 (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 2000); and Elisa Carol Diller, *The Broken Mirror: Reflections in Narcissism, Mimesis and Racism in Plainfield, NJ* (Princeton, N.J.: PhD Diss., 1996).

⁴³ Michael Birkner, *A Country Place no More: The Transformation of Bergenfield, New Jersey, 1894-1994* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1994) and Carol A. O'Connor, *A Sort of Utopia: Scarsdale, 1891-1981* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1983).

⁴⁴ Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, Kruse, *White Flight*, Hirsch, *Making of the Second Ghetto*, Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Self, *American Babylon*, and Freund, *Colored Property*.

In 1939, Edward Lee Thorndike, a progressive pioneering American psychologist who taught at Columbia University, ranked Montclair and Berkeley as offering the second and fourth best quality of life of any metropolitan community in the U.S. Believing that a science of values could support social decision making by providing a quantitative way to assess the quality of life in communities, he ranked towns and cities in the U.S accordingly.⁴⁵ Other residential suburbs earned high rankings and emerged as the type of metropolitan community that, according to Thorndike's calculations, offered the highest quality of life. High-ranking residential suburbs included New Rochelle and White Plains, New York, Shaker Heights, Ohio, Pasadena, California, East Orange and Bloomfield, New Jersey, and Evanston, Illinois.⁴⁶

Thorndike's study illustrates how residential suburbs shared common traits despite being located in different metropolitan regions. Compared to cities or industrial suburbs, these affluent communities enjoyed lower infant mortality rates, higher levels of educational attainment, lower levels of extreme poverty, and more recreational opportunities, lower crime rates, and more spacious residential homes that were more likely to have electricity and indoor plumbing.⁴⁷ He consistently ranked residential suburbs ahead of cities and industrial suburbs, including Elizabeth, Passaic, Jersey City, and Newark, New Jersey, suggesting that the socio-spatial environment affected the quality of life more than the metropolitan region's development.⁴⁸

Examining racial politics during the interwar and post WWII eras also reveals how Berkeley and Montclair's racial and social diversity engendered a different type of

⁴⁵ Thinking Education: Fifty Major Thinkers on Education: From Confucius to Dewey, ed. Joy A. Palmer, Liora Bresler, and David E. Cooper (London: Routledge Press, 2001), pp. 233-39.

⁴⁶ E.L. Thorndike, *Your City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1939).

⁴⁷ Thorndike, *Your City*, pp. 135-6.

⁴⁸ Thorndike, *Your City*, pp. 135-6.

racial politics than in either more homogenous suburbs or large cities. Affluent white residents controlled both local governments, lived in the most desirable neighborhoods, and held the best paid, most prestigious jobs. However, unlike what scholars have found in nearly all early twentieth century and post WWII suburbs, white elites did not use violence, government policies, or social pressure to exclude Blacks from the community. Instead, Berkeley and Montclair's elite white residents attempted to socially, politically, economically, and geographically control and contain minorities. They acknowledged that minority residents were members of the community entitled to municipal resources, but subordinated the interests of minority residents to their own and used daily interactions to reinforce the racial hierarchy.

This study's broad scope and comparative approach also highlight the inherent complexity of metropolitan space as well as the categories urban and suburban. These categories often reveal more the symbolic value and perception of metropolitan space than how social relations, spatial segregation, and local, state, and federal policies shape metropolitan development.⁴⁹ The new suburban history has destroyed the image of metropolitan regions as composed of white affluent suburbs and a predominantly Black urban center.⁵⁰ Mary Corbin Sies and Andrew Wiese have argued that this recent scholarship has dismantled the trope of the impoverished center city and affluent suburbs, yet more work is needed to better understand how residential patterns, grassroots

⁴⁹ Greg Hise, "Border City: Race and Social Distance in Los Angeles," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 3, pp. 545,558.

⁵⁰ Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African-American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Richard Harris and Robert Lewis, "Constructing a Fault(y) Zone: Misrepresentations of North American Cities and Suburbs, 1900-1950." *Annals, Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 4, 1988, pp. 622-639; and Sylvie Murray, *The Progressive Housewife: Community Activism in Suburban Queens, 1945-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

organizations, perceptions of space, and government policies impact metropolitan politics and development.⁵¹

Berkeley and Montclair defied easy categorization as either suburban or urban. Both had considerable racial and economic diversity, suggesting that they were urban, but residents usually identified as suburbanites. Berkeley's white residents, for instance, viewed their community as a progressive community that was an international center of culture and knowledge from 1920 until 1970. Despite this persistent image, most residents described Berkeley as a suburb well into the 1930s. By 1970, however, Berkeley's population had more than doubled and many residents characterized Berkeley as a city. Undoubtedly Berkeley's population growth partially explains this shift. However, residents' changing definition of their community also reflects how the meaning of the terms urban and suburban had changed rather than their community vision. Moreover, unlike most postwar cities such as nearby Oakland, Berkeley remained a primarily white, middle-class community and, unlike most cities, was never isolated from the region's economic resources or experienced a significant population decline. Including grassroots actors, dynamism and complexity of metropolitan space and public perceptions of metropolitan development reveals how the bifurcation of metropolitan space conceals the historical context of the terms urban and suburban.

In addition to providing new insights about suburban women's activism and metropolitan racial politics and development, the comparative approach reveals how Montclair and Berkeley's different demographics, history, and geographic location nuanced racial politics. Indeed, as Robert Self has pointed out, place and politics are

⁵¹ Mary Corbin Sies, "North American Suburbs, 1880-1950: Cultural and Social Reconsiderations," *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 313-346.

intertwined and shape each other.⁵² Montclair and Berkeley were particular kinds of places that produced a unique political culture where white residents accepted that minorities were members of the community. Rather than attempt to remove racial and ethnic minorities from the community, white female progressives sought to improve the quality of life all residents enjoyed.

Montclair provides an excellent case study of an early twentieth century residential suburb. During the middle nineteenth century, Montclair was a quiet farm village located only thirteen miles from New York City and ten miles from Newark, New Jersey. In 1856, it started transforming into a residential suburb after a rail link with Newark opened. The train allowed white male professionals to commute to Newark, a thriving commercial center yet live in a picturesque community. Newark, expanding rapidly at the time, was awash in the effects of immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. Newark's growth created job opportunities white male professionals, but also meant confusion, noise, pollution, and crime. Located on the slope of the Watchung Mountains at 850 feet above sea level with natural, unpolluted streams, Montclair offered a healthy environment where residents lived above smog and pollution and breathtaking views of New York City.⁵³ By moving to Montclair, white upper and upper-middle class residents profited from Newark's economic growth without experiencing its negative effects.

⁵² Self, *American Babylon*.

⁵³ Townswomen of Montclair. *Our Town and the Old Townsmen of Montclair*. (Montclair, N.J., Townswomen of Montclair, 1952). Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

Still, the town grew slowly. In 1866, Montclair's main street, Bloomfield Avenue, had a straggling appearance, and only three trains left Montclair for New York each day.⁵⁴ The New Montclair Railroad opened in 1873, providing more frequently and quicker service to both Newark and New York City. This accelerated Montclair's growth as upper-class white residents migrated to the town during the 1880s and 1890s. These early migrants constructed large, customized, multi-story estates in the town's west section and founded other private social, civic, and religious organizations.⁵⁵ Reflecting the early residents' preference for private civic organizations and minimal local government, private schools and churches were among Montclair's earliest community institutions. Residents founded Montclair Academy, a private school for boys and the town's oldest school, in 1887. Although St. Luke's Episcopal Church was founded in 1860, it expanded rapidly during the 1880s.⁵⁶ Affluent white migrants also founded First Congregational Church in 1870. By 1890, it was the town's largest church with 900 members.⁵⁷ Early residents also founded private social organizations such as the Montclair Athletic Club, an exclusive organization that sponsored dances, athletic teams, and social events.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Amory H. Bradford, *A Silver Jubilee: First Congregational Church, Montclair, New Jersey* (New York: Fords, Howard and Hulbert, 1905).

⁵⁵ Montclair Chapter, New Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. *The Story of Montclair: Its People in Peace and War Times*. (Montclair, N.J.: Montclair Chapter of the New Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, 1930).

⁵⁶ *Saint Luke's Church, Montclair, New Jersey, 1860-1935*. Rutgers University Special Collections. Rutgers University. New Brunswick, New Jersey.

⁵⁷ *Historical Record, 1870-1945, First Congregational Church, Montclair, New Jersey* (Montclair, N.J.: First Congregational Church, 1948).

⁵⁸ Frank W. Herriott, *Scope and Relationship of Character Building Agencies Dealing with High School Students, Montclair, New Jersey* (PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1930).



Image 0.1: Montclair during the Early 20th Century, Photo Courtesy of Montclair Public Library

By 1900 the population had swelled to 7,500 as upper middle-class and upper-class white residents settled in Montclair's west section. As the image above illustrates, large estates dotted the slope of the Watchung Mountains while more modest homes constructed during the town's period as a farming village were scattered throughout Montclair's low-lying sections. Montclair's population continued expanding during the early twentieth century, but middle-class white migration now propelled this growth. These new migrants settled close to downtown Montclair and in the northeast section called "upper" Montclair in smaller yet still spacious two and three story single-family homes and apartment buildings constructed during the 1920s. By 1930, the population had reached 42,107 residents.⁵⁹ Montclair was established as northern New Jersey's most desirable residential suburb and home to the region's economic and cultural elite.⁶⁰ As evidence of its elite status, the town was locally known as the millionaire belt and in 1922 had the third highest assessed property

⁵⁹ Montclair League of Women Voters, *Know Your Town: A Survey of Montclair, New Jersey* (Montclair, N.J.: League of Women's Voters of Montclair, 1947). 1920 and 1930 US Census. US Census Bureau.

⁶⁰ "Montclair Claims Second Largest Number of Famous Living Men and Women in State." Montclair Times. November 16, 1934.

valuation in the entire country.⁶¹ Montclair's housing stock reflected its social diversity and included tiny single-family, row homes, and multi-family apartment buildings in the southernmost section that housed private service sector workers, picturesque homes in the west section home to upper-class residents, and modest multi-story homes in the central and east sections.

Imbedded within the community were African Americans and Italian immigrants who were crucial to Montclair's emergence as an elite suburb.⁶² They maintained the idyllic environment through their labors as garbage collectors, gardeners, domestic servants, cooks, butlers, chauffeurs, nurses, and other service workers.⁶³ Attracted by opportunities for work, they migrated to Montclair alongside white upper and middle-class residents. While white residents usually migrated to Montclair from cities, Black residents arrived primarily from rural Virginia or North Carolina and quickly established their own organizations. Union Baptist Church emerged as one of the Montclair's earliest and most important centers of Black community life. Founded in 1899, John C. Love served as pastor for almost fifty years. He preached about the important of thriftiness, temperance in all things, and economic independence and sought to live out these values in his own life by sending his children to college, building comfortable single-family home for his family, and saving money.⁶⁴ Although Love lived in a comfortable house with his wife and children, most Black families lived in small single-

⁶¹ Montclair had an assessed property valuation of \$60,000,000 in 1922. "In the Eyes of Contemporaries." *Montclair Then and Now*. Unpublished Manuscript. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁶² Townswomen of Montclair. *Our Town and the Old Townsmen of Montclair*. (Montclair, N.J., Townswomen of Montclair, 1952). Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁶³ Wells, Richard G. *Study of a Modern Suburban Community, Montclair, N.J.* Dartmouth College Honors Thesis. (Dartmouth, N.H., 1934), pg. 13. 1930 United States Census Data. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Publication, 1930).

⁶⁴ Townswomen of Montclair. *Our Town and the Old Townsmen of Montclair*. (Montclair, N.J., Townswomen of Montclair, 1952). Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

family homes and doubled up with extended family members or friends to save money. This often cramped living arrangement allowed them to afford housing and save money despite their relatively low wages.

The Black and Italian communities' expansion continued into the early twentieth century. Blacks comprised 3,457 residents or approximately 12 percent of the population in 1920 and by 1930 comprised 15 percent of population or 6,300 residents. Montclair had the fifth highest percentage of Black residents of any New Jersey town with more than ten thousand residents. Italian immigrants, on the other hand, comprised one-sixth of the population.⁶⁵

A stark economic gap existed between Montclair's white community on one hand and African American and Italian communities on the other hand. Accepted as neither Black nor white, Italians had more economic, political, and social rights than African Americans yet also faced discrimination in housing, employment, and education.⁶⁶ White residents comprised most of the 50 percent of residents who held white-collar and professional positions as well as the approximately 14,000 residents who commuted to New York and Newark.⁶⁷ Most white men held well-paid managerial positions or professional positions as lawyers, bankers, engineers, or accountants. Further indicative of the white community's affluence, even young, single white women usually did not hold paid employment. Rather than hold paid employment, white women ran their

⁶⁵ 1920 and 1930 US Census. US Census Bureau.

⁶⁶ For works that discuss Italians as non-white, see Jennifer Guglielmo, "Introduction," in Jennifer Guglielmo; Salvatore Salerno, *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America* (New York; London: Routledge, 2003); Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); David R. Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005); and Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁶⁷ "Planning Board Submits Report." *Montclair Times*. December 29, 1931. 7,500 traveled via train to New York and 6,500 traveled via bus and trolley to Newark.

households and were the primary organizations of community life.⁶⁸ Barred from white-collar and professional jobs, most Italian immigrants and African Americans worked either in service sector positions or as unskilled laborers, maintaining the white community's attractive, spacious estates. Most Italian men worked as unskilled laborers in the construction industry in Montclair or other rapidly growing interwar suburbs in Essex County or as gardeners while domestic service was the economic lifeline for African Americans.⁶⁹ In 1935, approximately 90 percent of Blacks employed in Montclair held service sector positions.⁷⁰

Montclair's desirability as an elite white suburb peaked during the 1920s and declined during the postwar period relative to rapidly expanding, racially homogeneous Morris and Bergen Counties whose residents had a higher mean income and population more than doubled by 1950. In sharp contrast to the rapid growth of Bergen and Morris Counties, Montclair's population only increased by 3,000 and this growth reflects Black rather than white migration. Bergen and Morris Counties' higher mean income and rapid growth reflects how white middle and upper-class residents gradually left Montclair for more socially and racially homogeneous suburbs. Bergen and Morris Counties' suburbs offered a more modern, smaller housing stock where white women could manage housework without full-time domestic servants.⁷¹ Transportation developments also

⁶⁸ Fourteenth Census of the United States. Volume IV. Occupations. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1920), pp. 292-3. *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005).

⁶⁹ "Italians in Montclair." Unpublished Paper in Vertical File. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey. Nearly 1,216 of Montclair's 11,930 employed male residents in 1930 worked in the building industry. Italian men composed the majority of this number. 1930 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C.

⁷⁰ New Jersey Conference of Social Work, *the Negro in Montclair*, (Newark, N.J.: New Jersey Conference of Social Work, 1935).

⁷¹ Bergen County's population exploded during the 1940s and 1950s from 409,646 residents in 1940 to 780,255 residents in 1960. Moreover, only three percent of Bergen County's residents were back

accelerated this population shift. The George Washington Bridge opened, but, since little housing construction occurred until after WWII. Upper and upper-middle-class men who lived in Morris and Bergen Counties and worked in professional jobs could now drive into Manhattan as an alternative to the train or ferry.⁷²

Moreover, unlike most suburbs in Bergen and Morris Counties, Montclair became more racially diverse during the postwar period. Ethnic Italians emigrated from Montclair while the African American community expanded from 15 to 25 percent of the population. In 1942, 42 percent of residents had at least one foreign-born parent. This included Italian-Americans as well as the children of Irish, German, and Black West Indian immigrations who also worked in service sector jobs.⁷³ By 1960, this number had dropped to 30 percent and four thousand fewer ethnic Italian lived in Montclair. The decline in the Italian-American population partially reflects how third generation Italian-Americans would not show up on the census. At the same time, many second and third-generation Italian-Americans relocated to Belleville, Nutley, and other middle and working-class white suburbs in Essex County.⁷⁴

Montclair was home to more economically diverse white and Black communities during the postwar than interwar period. Most of Montclair's residents were still middle-class. For example, in 1960, approximately 91 percent of residents were high school

in the 1960 US Census. See Michael Birkner, *A Country Place No More: The Transformation of Bergenfield, New Jersey, 1894-1994* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994), pg. 115. In stark contrast, Essex County's population only increased from 837, 340 residents to 923, 545 residents between 1940 and 1960. 1940 United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C. 1960 United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.

⁷² Hugh W. Ransom. *The Neighborhood Center Experiment in Montclair, New Jersey: An Evaluation*. (New York: The New York School of Social Work, Columbia University, 1942), pp. 2-3. Birkner, *A Country Place No More*, pg. 115.

⁷³ Ibid, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁴ Table 78. 1960 United States Census Data. 32-272. United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.

graduates and 56 percent held white-collar jobs. At the same time, 24 percent worked in manufacturing and fewer white residents held senior managerial or executive positions. Reflecting this shift as well as a national decline in private service sector employment, fewer white residents employed Black residents in private service sector positions.⁷⁵ In 1940, 385 employed men and 2,435 employed women who lived in Montclair worked as domestic servants.⁷⁶ By 1960, this number had declined 67 percent to 28 men and 896 women.⁷⁷ Many Black residents found employment outside of private household work and many Black migrants were members of the Black middle-class. They moved to Montclair because they perceived it as most desirable community in northern New Jersey open to Blacks.⁷⁸

The history of domestic service created paternalistic overtones to the politics of Montclair's white civic leaders that lasted into the 1960s. Given the economic diversification of Montclair's white and Black communities, this incited overt racial conflict during the postwar period. White elites who still unilaterally controlled civic affairs claimed to understand and act in the interests of African American residents. They insisted that white upper middle-class residents who were leaders in their respective professional fields should lead the town's government and still ignored the need for political representation from outside the white upper-middle class. They sought to contain the Black community's growth, viewing as critical to maintaining the town's desirability as a residential suburb to potential white residents. This resulted in

⁷⁶ 1940 United States Census Data. Pg. 896. Table 33. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C. In 1950, only 162 employed men and 1,571 employed women worked as household workers. 1950 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Table 35, pg. 30. Washington, D.C.

⁷⁷ Table 78. 1960 United States Census Data. 32-272. United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.

⁷⁸ See Lake, *New Suburbanites*, chapter five.

overcrowded conditions in Black neighborhoods and a frustrated Black community that, despite its increased size and affluence, lacked meaningful political representation.⁷⁹

White elite women's racial politics also reflected these paternalistic overtones. They supported school integration in the 1960s and housing reform during the 1940s and 1950s, for example, because they viewed it as beneficial for the entire town and African American residents. They never articulated support for racial justice nor acknowledged how the public schools discrimination against African American children during the prewar and postwar periods. Although their proposed reforms had real benefits for Black residents, they ignored the need for Black leadership in civic affairs and perceived themselves as civic leaders.

Berkeley was also a rapidly growing racially and economically diverse residential community composed of migrants during the interwar period, but the University of California's presence as well as the different racial demographics and history of Black migration resulted in differences Berkeley and Montclair's racial politics. Berkeley's migrants, including African Americans, were more geographically diverse and hailed from nearby cities such as San Francisco and Oakland, the South, the Northeast, the Midwest, and overseas countries. Berkeley was a geographically diverse community divided into a tidelands area that bordered the San Francisco Bay on the West and downtown Berkeley on the east and a hilly area that provided views of San Francisco. Buffeted from the fog and chilly winds that plagued San Francisco, Berkeley enjoyed a mild climate. In 1847, U.S. Naval and Army officers and civilian settlers arrived in

⁷⁹ "No Fiery Crosses: But Housing is His Big Problem." The Bernardsville News. April 24, 1956.

Berkeley, displacing the Spanish rancheros who were the first European settlers.⁸⁰

Berkeley was a small military post until the devastating 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Many San Francisco residents, businesses, and factories relocated to the East Bay, which had relatively little damage and offered a milder climate. Berkeley's population exploded from 13,214 to 56,036 between 1900 and 1930 as displaced earthquake survivors relocated to Berkeley.⁸¹

While Montclair developed as a residential community, West Berkeley was home to a small but growing number of factories located along the San Francisco Bay shoreline that produced printing ink, canned food, speedboats, automobile motors, road-building machinery, cookies, chocolates, soap, and pharmaceutical products. Berkeley was an ideal location for manufacturing because of its proximity to Oakland's railroad terminus and the San Francisco Bay's shipping channel.

West Berkeley's industrial growth attracted working-class white and European immigrants who sought to live in a residential community in proximity to nearby factory employment. Builders and residents constructed tiny single story bungalows in the West Berkeley "flats" adjacent to Berkeley's growing industrial district. Working-class European immigrants from Italy, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Finland, and Portugal moved to Berkeley from San Francisco and Oakland. Most had lived in the Bay Area for several years until they had saved enough money and enjoyed enough economic security

⁸⁰ Charles Wollenberg, *Berkeley: A City in History*, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2008), pp.4-5.

⁸¹ Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pg. 47.

to purchase a home.⁸² West Berkeley offered the opportunity for working-class families to own a home in a single-family neighborhood.

East Berkeley developed as a middle and upper-class white residential area separate from West Berkeley. Middle-class single-family homes were located in the Berkeley foothills near the University of California while grand, palatial estates with stunning views of San Francisco that offered privacy dotted the Berkeley Hills. White upper middle-class residents relocated to Berkeley from San Francisco and Oakland, the Bay Area's urban centers while middle-class migrants usually hailed from cities and rural areas in the Midwest and East. East Berkeley's proximity to San Francisco via ferry allowed white male professionals to commute while living in attractive homes in a quiet, residential area surrounded by a breathtaking landscape.⁸³ On the other hand, the Bay Area's seemingly endless economic opportunities coupled with the mild climate drew less affluent migrants from the Midwest and East.

⁸² 1920 United States Census. United States Government Publication. Berkeley's entire community included 56,036 residents in 1920. Foreign-born Europeans composed 23.2 percent of residents with whites of mixed foreign-born parentage comprising an additional 35.1 percent. West Berkeley's immigrant community included 3,815 English, 1,214 Scottish, 2,651 Irish, 1,497 Swedish, 3,776 German, 1,428 Italian, and 1,167 Finnish immigrants in 1920. 1920 United States Census. United States Government Publication.

⁸³ Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pp. 48-75.

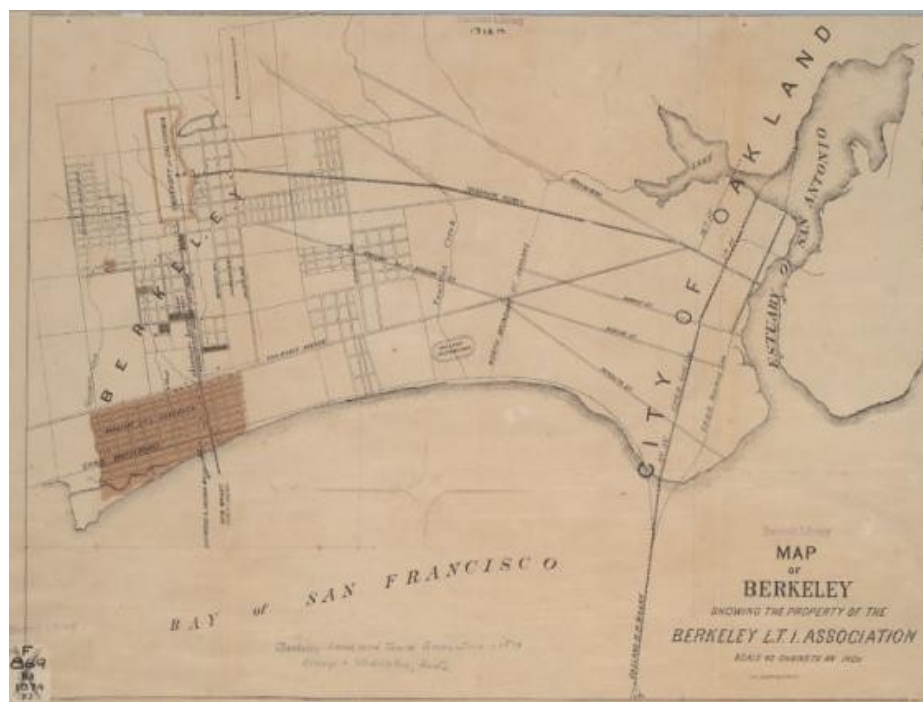


Image 0.2: Map of Berkeley, 1906, Courtesy of the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley

By 1920, Berkeley emerged as an important residential and industrial center in the Bay Area with 56,036 residents. Close interactions occurred between Montclair's white and Black communities, yet Berkeley's residents seldom interacted across racial lines and formed geographically and socially distinct communities. East Berkeley's white upper and middle-class residents comprised approximately 75 percent of the population while European immigrants who predominantly lived in West Berkeley and comprised 23 percent. Southwest Berkeley's growing Black and Japanese communities comprised .5 and 1.5 percent of the population respectively.⁸⁴ Berkeley's white residents, like Montclair's usually held managerial and professional positions in San Francisco, Oakland, or Berkeley, yet was slightly less affluent.⁸⁵ A higher percentage of white

⁸⁴1920 United States Census. United States Government Publication.

⁸⁵1930 United States Census. United States Government Publication. In 1920, nearly 3,000 of Berkeley's 16,248 employed male residents worked in trade, 2,376 in professional jobs, and 2,050 in clerical positions 1920 United States Census Data. 24,582 men were employed in 1930. Of this number, 5,244 worked in trade, 3,826 in professional service and 3,138 in clerical positions.

women, who were primarily single, worked in Berkeley than Montclair, albeit in white-collar positions as teachers, social workers, clerks, and saleswomen. Moreover, fewer male residents held senior managerial or executive-level positions.⁸⁶

Ethnic minorities enjoyed greater economic autonomy from the white community in Berkeley than Montclair. Some Japanese residents worked in the private service sector as gardeners and household workers, but others operated family-owned businesses including flower shops and laundry stores in Berkeley, or owned professional offices serving San Francisco's Japanese community. European immigrant men and women worked in manufacturing positions in West Berkeley or nearby Oakland or Richmond. Altogether manufacturing employed one-third of all male residents as well as a significant number of women.⁸⁷

The demographic differences between Montclair and Berkeley's Black communities shaped racial politics during the interwar period and beyond. While more than 50 percent of Montclair's Black residents worked directly for the white community in private service sector positions, Berkeley's Black community enjoyed greater economic and social autonomy because many worked as Pullman maids and porters. The economic security and autonomy Pullman porter and maid positions offered made them among the best occupations open to Blacks at the time in the Bay Area's racially stratified labor market. Indeed, many Black college graduates worked as Pullman porters and maids during the interwar period because white-collar and professional jobs in the

⁸⁶ 1930 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. US Census Bureau. Washington, D.C. In 1930, 1,324 worked as teachers, the largest employed of women, 1,198 as domestic servants, 1,128 as clerks, and 608 as saleswomen.

⁸⁷ 1920 and 1930 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. US Government Bureau. Washington, D.C. In 1920, 5,817 male residents worked in manufacturing and another 1,324 in transportation. In 1930, 7,703 of 24,582 employed male residents worked in manufacturing.

Bay Area were closed to them.⁸⁸ Further illustrative the middle-class status of Berkeley's Black community compared with Oakland, Richmond, and San Francisco's Black populations, many other Black residents owned professional service or commercial businesses that served the region's Black community. Indeed, Shirley Ann Wilson Moore describe Richmond's Black community as working-class and Berkeley's as the Bay Area's elite before WWII.⁸⁹

Widespread home ownership in Berkeley further illustrates the Black community's position as the Bay Area's Black elite. During the 1920s almost 95 percent of Berkeley's African American families owned their home. While homeownership is not always linked to class status, African Americans throughout the Bay Area often equated home ownership in southwest Berkeley as a step into the Black middle-class.⁹⁰ Berkeley's high Black ownership rate suggests that most Black residents enjoyed a fair amount of economic security. Indeed, most moved to Berkeley after migrating from the South and living in Oakland, San Francisco, or Richmond for a few years and saving enough money to buy a home. They enjoyed enough economic security to purchase homes in southwest Berkeley, a neighborhood dotted with tiny bungalows owned by Black, Japanese and European immigrant families near West Oakland's Pullman terminal where many worked. Black residents lived in one of the few single-family neighborhoods in the Bay Area open to Blacks. Although their homes were tiny, home

⁸⁸ Melinda Chateauvert, *Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters* (Urbana, I.L.L.: University of Illinois Press, 1998) and Beth Tompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), chapter one.

⁸⁹ Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963* (Berkeley, Calif.: university of California press, 2000).

⁹⁰ Douglas Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco* (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 162-4.

ownership provided Blacks with a bulwark against economic downturns and engendered community pride.⁹¹

Finally, Berkeley's Black community's small size and spatial and economic isolation from the rest of the city meant that the white community's social welfare programs focused on the larger European immigrant and, to a lesser extent, Japanese communities rather than African Americans. Furthermore, the upper middle-class white residents who controlled the city government also largely ignored the Black population. While this resulted in fewer municipal resources for African Americans, it also allowed them to develop their own institutions and created opportunities for civic leadership earlier than in Montclair. This contributed to the emergence of greater political radicalism during the late 1960s and into the early 1970s than in Berkeley.

The migration of thousands of Blacks migrated to the Bay Area to work in defense industries during WWII is crucial to differences between Berkeley and Montclair's racial politics. Berkeley's Black population increased more than 400 percent between 1930 and 1950 and its social composition changed. Although many of Berkeley's Black residents had worked in blue-collar jobs for the Pullman Railroad Company during the interwar period, they enjoyed higher levels of education than the new Black migrants who often had a rudimentary education. Additionally, the existing Black residents were well-acclimated to metropolitan life while the newcomers moved to Berkeley directly from poor, rural areas of Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas where they often lived without heat, running water and electricity.⁹² Many of these Black

⁹¹ Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites*, pg. 164.

⁹² Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), introduction and chapter one.

migrants had never visited a large city before arriving in the Bay Area. Berkeley's established middle-class Black population often looked down upon these poor migrants, creating a divide between the migrants and established Black community.⁹³ This divide had political consequences. During the 1950s and 1960s, middle-class Blacks partnered with upper-middle class white residents to form a liberal coalition that challenged school segregation. Working-class African Americans, however, were absent from this coalition and challenged its political control during the late 1960s and 1970s.

The University of California's role in Berkeley's development further differentiates Berkeley and Montclair's racial politics. In both postwar Berkeley and Montclair, Black migrants replaced European immigrants who moved to suburban developments on the metropolitan periphery. In Berkeley, European immigrants comprised 23 of the population in 1930, but only 10 percent by 1950 while the Black population increased from 5 to 25 percent of the community.⁹⁴ The University of California attracted economic development and white migration to postwar Berkeley in addition to the Black community's growth. While Montclair's population stagnated between 1940 and 1950, Berkeley's population increased 33 percent, propelled partially by the university's increased number of university students, faculty, and staff as well as the Black community's growth.⁹⁵ Montclair was home to Montclair College at the time, a small teacher's college, but the tiny school only enrolled hundreds of students who usually commuted from nearby towns and cities while the University of California enrolled tens of thousands of students. This percent students comprised of Berkeley's

⁹³ Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage*.

⁹⁴ Census of Population: 1950. Volume II, Part 5, California. United States Government Printing Office, 1952. Schedule 5-179.

⁹⁵ Census of Population: 1950. Volume II, Part 5, California. United States Government Printing Office, 1952. Pg. 5-55.

population increased from 4 percent in 1940 to 20 percent or nearly 22,000 residents in 1950 when the total population was 115,000.⁹⁶ Moreover, the university was became Berkeley's primary economic engine while Montclair College's employees primarily lived in other communities and the college. Federal research dollars flowing to the university as well as the expansion of undergraduate education created new jobs. By 1960, the university was Berkeley's largest employer and more than twenty percent of residents worked for the university in professional faculty, research, and administrative roles and pink-collar jobs as secretaries and typists.⁹⁷

White residents fashioned distinctive civic identities that reflected Berkeley and Montclair's different demographics and development. Montclair's white community continued to envision the town as an attractive residential suburb. White liberals tied their rationale for supporting school integration to this vision. They asserted that school integration was in the entire town's best interests. Stonewalling, white liberals claimed, would only incite racial tension and violence, ultimately harming the town's desirability to prospective affluent white residents. White liberals in Berkeley, on the other hand, viewed Berkeley as a progressive city that led social change. By integrating the schools without a court order, they declared that Berkeley could model positive race relations.

The image of Berkeley of a progressive city provided an opening for a strong coalition of liberal white and Black residents to emerge and implement school integration earlier than in Montclair. Indeed, Berkeley implemented school integration by 1968, almost a decade earlier than Montclair. Moreover, in Berkeley a radical coalition comprised of working-class Blacks and white residents provided the primary opposition

⁹⁶ Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pg. 121.

⁹⁷ Census of Population: 1960. Volume I, Part 6, California. United States Government Printing office, 1961. Schedule 6-737.

to the liberal coalition's political control and shifted local politics leftward during the late 1960s the 1970s. In Montclair, on the other hand, liberals surrendered control of the town government in 1972 to white conservatives who effectively blocked school integration until the late 1970s.

Circumstances in Berkeley and Montclair led white liberals to articulate different reasons for supporting school integration and civic equality for African Americans. At the same time, in both communities they replaced the long history of the Black community's fight against discrimination in all aspects of public life with a new narrative that focused on the white community's leadership in spearheading racial change. White liberals declared that Berkeley was a progressive city that not only was an international center of culture and knowledge production, but also implemented forward-thinking policies that improved the quality of life for all residents. In Montclair, white liberals declared that white civic leaders had always worked for the interests of the entire community, including Black residents, rather than just middle and upper-class white residents. White liberals applauded themselves for engendering a racially inclusive civic culture, ignoring that racial change occurred because the Black community demanded it and that previously they and other white residents had discriminated against Black, European immigrant, and, in Berkeley, Japanese residents in all aspects of public life.

Equally as important, differences in Montclair and Berkeley's demographics, spatial organization, and political structure provided different opportunities for Black political participation during the late 1950s and 1960s. Until the 1950s, white upper middle-class residents in both communities controlled municipal politics without input from the African American, Japanese, or European immigrant and white working-class

communities. African American gained a significant voice in Berkeley during the 1960s as partners in a coalition with white upper middle-class liberals and demanded additional municipal resources for Black schools and neighborhoods and school integration. In Montclair, on the other hand, white residents dominated local politics well into the 1970s and Blacks remained junior partners in a hierarchal coalition with white upper and middle-class liberals. The Black community's weaker political voice delayed school integration in Montclair until the mid 1970s.

Despite these differences, a similar transformation had occurred in Berkeley and Montclair's civic identity and racial politics by 1970. White elites accepted middle-class African Americans as members of the community and articulated a multi-racial civic identity. This transformation allowed both communities to implement school integration without racial violence or significant white flight which remains so unusual that scholars and the media still cite Berkeley and Montclair as models of school integration.⁹⁸ White elites' embrace of a multi-racial civic identity differentiates Berkeley and Montclair's political culture from those of most predominantly white suburbs during the postwar period whose residents attempted to remove and exclude African Americans from the community.

Although broad economic and political forces impacted Berkeley and Montclair's development, women were pivotal to the transformation in racial politics and civic identity. Indeed, Kevin Mumford eloquently argues, individual actors rather than broad

⁹⁸ David L. Kirp, *Just Schools: The Idea of Racial Equality in American Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); *The School Leader: Official Publication of the New Jersey School Boards Association*, 1992; Nancy Ann Spiller, *Racial Segregation in New Jersey's Public Schools: Progressive Public Policy at a Crossroads* (PhD Diss.: Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, 2001); Kenneth Fish, *Conflict and Dissent in the High Schools*, (New York: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1970); and Neil V. Sullivan, *Now is the Time: Desegregation in the Berkeley Schools* (Bloomington, I.N.: Indiana University Press, 1969).

economic forces or government policies shape metropolitan development.⁹⁹ African American, white, and Japanese, and ethnic European immigrant women's strong community investment forestalled the possibility of white flight during the postwar era. Moreover, their attempts to implement their community visions by improving the quality of housing, fighting commercial and industrial development, creating social welfare programs, and demanding strong public schools shaped Berkeley and Montclair's physical fabric. White women enjoyed more success in realizing their vision, yet European immigrant, Japanese, and African American women also mobilized their more limited resources and civic voice to improve their neighborhoods. By working to improve the quality of life for all residents regardless of their race, white women implied that Black, European immigrant, and Japanese residents were also members of the community entitled to municipal resources and re-envisioned Montclair and Berkeley as racially diverse communities. Women's successful implementation of their visions hints at the tenacious ability of individuals to resist the state policies and broad economic forces that shape metropolitan development.

Chapters one and two discuss interwar Montclair and Berkeley. White women formerly active in Progressive Era urban reform movements shifted their activism to suburbs. They gained a role as civic leaders and ensured that all residents, including racial and ethnic minorities, enjoyed a high quality of life by creating social welfare programs. In Berkeley, their efforts focused on working-class European immigrants compared with Italian immigrants and African Americans in Montclair. White women reinforced a hierarchal, helping relationship between racial and ethnic minorities and

⁹⁹ See Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), introduction.

themselves by assuming that they rather than minority residents should lead civic affairs, yet their efforts also improved the quality of life for minority residents. African American, Japanese, and European immigrant women also struggled with less success to realize their vision of autonomous residential communities that reflected their culture and offered economic opportunities. Working to implement this vision, they created their own community resources that provided autonomy from the white community and challenged Montclair and Berkeley's governments' attempts to allow garbage incinerators, oil tanks, and other developments in their neighborhoods that they perceived as harmful to their communities.

Chapters three and four focus on wartime and postwar housing politics. Black migration to Montclair and Berkeley created dangerously overcrowded conditions in West Berkeley and South Montclair, yet both local governments refused to address the crisis by either securing federal funds for low-income public housing or blocking the conversion of single-family homes into overcrowded apartments. Berkeley's government allowed the demolition of Codornices Village, a predominantly Black wartime housing project, while Montclair's government, linking, low-income public housing to additional Black migration, blocked the Montclair LWV's persistent attempts to secure federal funds for it. White women blamed their governments' inaction for the deteriorating physical condition of their communities and urged the construction of low-income public housing and adoption of stronger building codes. They started to articulate images of Montclair and Berkeley as multi-racial communities where all residents enjoyed modern, adequate housing irrespective of their race or class. Recognizing that racial discrimination in the Bay Area and northern New Jersey's housing market created

overcrowding in their neighborhoods, African American women remained reluctant to support public housing and instead focus on renovating their homes and demanding more municipal funding for local schools. By the mid 1950s, in Berkeley an interracial liberal coalition where middle-class Blacks partnered with white women and other liberal men emerged that advocated for housing reform and additional municipal resources for Black neighborhoods in West Berkeley. In Montclair, white conservatives still controlled the local government and, linking the Black community's expansion to the town's decline as an elite residential suburb, treated Blacks with hostility during the late 1950s.

The final chapter examines the politics surrounding school integration in Berkeley and Montclair during the 1960s. Black and white women were the prime movers and shakers in the implementation of school integration, yet their rationale for supporting it differed. African American women provided the impetus, recognizing that Black children would only have access to equal educational resources in integrated schools. White women, on the other hand, contended that school integration would improve the entire school system and eventually benefit the entire community. They never articulate support for racial equality per se and school integration emerges out of their long history of efforts to improve the quality of life for minority residents. Despite this key difference in Black and white women's motivations, their shared community investment and white women's acknowledgement that Blacks were members of the community entitled to municipal resources allowed them to work together for school integration.

Finally, Berkeley and Montclair illustrate the complexities of the racial politics of interracial metropolitan communities and women's centrality to grassroots suburban progressive coalitions. African American, European immigrant and white women's

community investment provided a context in which they could work together across racial boundaries to improve Montclair and Berkeley despite different motivations, backgrounds, and community visions. The fact that white residents accepted Blacks as community members differentiates Berkeley and Montclair's racial politics from nearly all other post and prewar suburbs. This multi-racial community vision opened the door for the possibility of a type of progressive racial politics where Blacks obtained greater access to civic power and municipal resources. On the other hand, white liberals in Berkeley and Montclair used school integration to replace long histories of racial discrimination with an overly simplistic, celebratory narrative of Montclair and Berkeley as racially progressive communities where the government and broader community respected the rights of all residents regardless of their race. More importantly, this narrative largely erases the political agency of African Americans and obfuscates the need for broad community participation in civic organizations and local politics in diverse communities.

Chapter One: Montclair: Mutual Dependency in an Idyllic Suburb, 1920-1941

Jane Garey Barus, Janet V. Zangrilli, and Mary Rice Hayes Allen migrated to Montclair during the 1920s, attracted by the availability of spacious homes with modern plumbing and heating in a bucolic residential community. These women had different social backgrounds: Barus was a member of the white upper-middle class, Allen belonged to the Black middle-class, and Zangrilli was a member of Montclair's ethnic Italian community. Still, despite their different backgrounds, they sought to transform Montclair into an attractive residential community that offered economic and educational opportunities and a high quality of life. Women's link to the home and family as well as the absence of factories and large businesses provided an opening for them to mobilize their networks and organizations to implement their community visions in Montclair.

At the same time, Barus, Allen, and Zangrilli's starkly different backgrounds shaped the meaning of their visions and ability to implement them. Jane belonged to the upper-middle class like most white residents. She had graduated from Wellesley College, one the finest colleges open to women at the time, and her husband, Maxwell, was a partner at a well-known New York City law firm.¹ The Barus' wealth allowed them to purchase a three-story mansion in Montclair and employ a live-in maid.² They arrived in 1928 as part of a wave of upper and middle-class white migration to Montclair. Fueling this migration was technological advancements in automobile and train transportation

¹ "Mrs. Maxwell Barus, Fifty Year Resident." *Montclair Times*. August 17, 1977.

² "Mrs. Maxwell Barus, Fifty Year Resident." *Montclair Times*. August 17, 1977. 1920 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C. Only Princeton had more residents listed in New Jersey's social register. *New Jersey Social Register*. (Newark, N.J.: New Jersey Social Register, 1927). Newark Evening News Morgue File. Newark Public Library. Newark, New Jersey. Biographical File. Mrs. Maxwell Barus.

that allowed suburbanites to easily commute to Newark or New York City as well as the availability of attractive homes in a bucolic community.³

Barus belonged to a group of women who had been active in the woman suffrage and progressive movements in cities during the early twentieth century, but relocated to the suburbs during the 1920s. Once she arrived in Montclair, Jane used her new citizenship that ratification of woman suffrage granted and the absence of an established political system to realize her community goals. Upper middle-class men who held full-time jobs in New York City controlled the town's government rather than professional politicians. Montclair's male civic leaders welcomed Jane's civic involvement as an upper middle-class white woman and citizen. Barus joined the Montclair Women's Club and League of Women Voters (LWV), sat on the advisory board for the Montclair's "colored" YWCA, and spearheaded the Women's Workroom, which provided jobs for unemployed seamstresses during the Great Depression.⁴ Like the other early twentieth century white suburban club women, she viewed her civic activism as a way to help less fortunate Black and Italian immigrant residents. However, while most upper middle-class women left their racially and socially homogeneous suburbs to "uplift" less fortunate members of nearby cities, Barus focused on members of her community⁵

³Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*. (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and Robert M. Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870-1930* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁴"Mrs. Maxwell Barus, Fifty Year Resident." *Montclair Times*. August 17, 1977. "Find Wings for the Work of Jailbirds." *Newark Evening News*. July 30, 1961.

⁵Mary Corbin Sies, "The Domestic Mission of the Privileged American Suburban Homemaker, 1877-1917: A Reassessment," *Making the American Home: Middle-Class Women & Domestic Material Culture, 1840-1940*, eds. Marilyn Ferris Motz and Pat Browne (Bowling Green, O.H.: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988), pp. 193-210.



Image 1.1: Undated Portrait of Jane Barus, Photo Courtesy of Montclair Public Library

Janet Zangrilli immigrated to New Jersey from Italy with her parents at the age of five. She grew up in Hoboken, but moved to Montclair in 1920 as a newlywed in search of improved living conditions. She and her husband initially rented a small two-story detached home in Montclair's Italian neighborhood on a block with other Italians. Located in southeast Montclair, the neighborhood was comprised of small single-family and detached homes, row homes, and apartment buildings. The Italian ethnic community's geographic center, the neighborhood was home to the Italian ethnic parish, Mt. Carmel, Italian grocery stores, political and social clubs, and other ethnic organizations. Nearly all of Montclair's Italian residents lived in neighborhood alongside some Black and other European immigrant residents. Eventually, Zangrilli's husband's commercial success as a photographer allowed them to move a half a mile north to the

Italian neighborhood's outskirts, and rent a-story single-family home on a block with native-born white residents and German and Scottish immigrants.⁶

Like Barus, Janet Zangrilli sought a strong civic voice to implement her vision, but had fewer resources because her ethnic community lacked representation in Montclair's government. Nevertheless, she created resources and networks that supported her goals. She was active many Italian community organizations including Mount Carmel Church, George Washington School's PTA chapter, and the Minnie A. Lucey Club and founded the T.M.T.M. Club for Italian women.⁷ She and other women leveraged these networks and organizations to convince Montclair's government to improve drainage in Italian sections of town, create a music program at George Washington School, and fund other improvements in the Italian neighborhood.

Mary Rice Hayes Allen, on the other hand, fled economic hardship and a rising tide of politically-motivated racial violence in Lynchburg, Virginia. She was part of thousands of Black migrants to Montclair from rural Virginia during the interwar period. These migrants were attracted by the promise of political and social autonomy, opportunities for work, and the availability of single-family housing in a rural environment.⁸ The daughter of a Black domestic servant and a former Confederate Army general, Mary belonged to the tiny Black professional class. She was one of the few college educated African American women during the late nineteenth century because her wealthy father paid for her to attend Hartshorn Memorial College. She excelled

⁶ 1930 United States Census Data. U.S. Government Publication. Washington, D.C.

⁷ "Mrs. Zangrilli Passes Here." Montclair Times. May 3, 1938.

⁸ Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, chapter 3.

academically, but withdrew in 1895 before graduating in order to marry.⁹ After her first husband died, Mary married William Allen, an attorney who had graduated from the University of Michigan law school and practiced law in Danville, Virginia.¹⁰



Image 1.2: Portrait of Mary Rice Hayes Allen, Photo Courtesy of Montclair Public Library

William and Mary Allen's decision to leave the South was a political statement. They and other Black migrants escaped grinding poverty and politically-motivated violence and purposefully sought political and social autonomy and improved living conditions in the North.¹¹ Despite his professional qualifications, William was unable to support the couple's children in Virginia. Most African Americans could not afford to

⁹ 1900 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C. McCray, *Freedom's Child*, pp. 63-79.

¹⁰ 1900 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C. Carrie Allen McCray, *Freedom's Child: The Life of a Confederate General's Black Daughter* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books, 1998), pp. 105-11.

¹¹ McCray, *Freedom's Child: The Life of a Confederate General's Black Daughter* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books, 1998), pp. 22-30.

hire a lawyer because the sharecropping system trapped them in abject poverty. Additionally, white supremacists threatened Mary and William's lives after they spearhead the formation of a Lynchburg NAACP chapter in an effort to improve the Black community's deplorable living conditions.

Most Black migrants to North during the interwar period created vibrant Black communities settled in cities such as Newark and New York.¹² At the same time, the availability of single-family homes, semi-rural environment, and existing Black enclaves convinced the Allens and other migrants to settle in residential suburbs.¹³ Like Zangrilli and Barus, Mary Allen moved to Montclair in search of improved living conditions. Montclair was one of the communities in northern New Jersey with both spacious single-family houses with modern heating and plumbing as well as an existing Black community. This attracted thousands of Black migrants who learned about Montclair via family connections and word of mouth, including Mary Allen whose brother-in-law lived in Montclair and praised the town's economic opportunities and living conditions.¹⁴ Before Mary even arrived, William had already purchased a spacious two-story Victorian home with a wraparound porch, yard, and modern kitchen and bathroom located on a

¹² James Gregory *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Joe Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1914-1945* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1988); *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender*, ed. Joe Trotter (Bloomington, I.N.: Indiana University Press, 1991); Kimberley L. Phillips, *AlabamaNorth: African American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-1945* (Urbana, I.L.: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Jack S. Blocker, *A Little More Freedom: African Americans Enter the Urban Midwest, 1860-1930* (Columbus, O.H.: Ohio State University Press, 2008); and Steven Hanh, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹³ Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African-American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), chapter 3, and Leslie E. Wilson, *Dark Spaces: An Account of Afro-American Suburbanization, 1890-1950* (New York: City University of New York, PhD. Diss., 1992).

¹⁴ Trotter, *Black Milwaukee* and Grossman, *Land of Hope*.

quiet residential street. The Allen's home was unusually large for a Black family and was located in a white middle-class neighborhood north of the Black neighborhood. William's income as a lawyer as well as money Mary inherited from her deceased husband provided enough money to purchase the home.¹⁵

Although racially-motivated violence was absent from Montclair, unspoken racial barriers existed and Black migrants faced racial discrimination in all aspects of community life. The Allens could purchase a home on an otherwise all-white street without receiving death threats like they had in Virginia.¹⁶ Still, their white neighbors refused to speak with them for one year after they moved into the home because they had transgressed the unofficial color line.¹⁷ African American residents enjoyed greater social autonomy and economic opportunity in Montclair than in the South, yet still encountered racism if they disrupted the established racial hierarchy.

Mary Allen, like Barus and Zangrilli, used community organizations to realize her goals. Allen joined the Montclair YWCA, Montclair NAACP, and Glenfield School's PTA chapter. She improve the quality of life in the Black neighborhood by investing in neighborhood schools, creating recreational programs for Black children, and providing needy Black families with economic assistance. Unlike Barus or Zangrilli, however, Allen often clashed with Montclair's government because she that it treat Black residents as equal citizens.

The lives of these three Montclair activists help us trace important themes in the early 20th century history of this emerging suburb. First, they demonstrate the interconnectedness of Montclair's social and racial heterogeneity to its position as an elite

¹⁵ McCray, *Freedom's Child*, pp. 142-3.

¹⁶ McCray, *Freedom's Child*, pp. 142-3.

¹⁷ McCray, *Freedom's Child*, pp. 143-4.

residential suburb. Second, these three women allow us to analyze African American, Italian, and white women's efforts to fight the government's approval of dense residential, industrial, and commercial developments. Their experiences illuminate how women mobilized their networks and organizations to implement their visions of Montclair.

During the 1920s and 1930s, a complex web of mutually dependent yet unequal social relations differentiated Montclair's racial politics from nearby cities. African Americans and Italian immigrants had unequal access to housing, employment, commercial spaces such as retail stores, restaurants, and movie theatres, churches, civic organizations, and other aspects of public life. At the same time, wealthy whites' social status depended on predominantly African American and, to a lesser extent, Italian service workers who maintained the idyllic environment. Upper and middle-class white residents recognized the economic and social importance of this labor and thus viewed their presence as desirable. Still, the white elites who dominated political and civic life attempted to control and subordinate racial and ethnic minorities.

African American, Italian immigrant and white women's community activism made them central to the contestation and perpetuation of a complex racial hierarchy predicated on the subordination and control of minorities. The chapter also discusses male civic and community leaders who shaped the environment in which women operated and responded to during the interwar period. Women often needed the cooperation of male civic leaders to gain the resources needed to realize their community goals. Still, this chapter focuses on women as the pivotal actors.

This chapter also explores of dynamics of interethnic and interracial relations among suburban women. Women's and gender historians have analyzed women's interethnic and interracial activism in urban settings, but have ignored the suburbs as a site for interracial and interethnic activism.¹⁸ Italian, African American, and white women's shared community investment opened the door for cooperation across racial and class lines, yet an unequal relationship emerged.

White women's activism perpetuated a hierarchal, helping relationship between white, African American, and Italian women. White women provided African American and Italian immigrant residents with important educational and material resources including adult education classes, a nursery school, health clinics, recreational programs, and vocational training programs. The existence of an economic safety net for the Black community was especially important since cities in the Midwest and North usually excluded Blacks from social welfare programs. Blacks only gained widespread access to public social welfare and charity programs after the federal government expanded its role in the administration of economic relief during the New Deal.¹⁹

On the other hand, white upper and middle-class women assumed that they knew what was best for and acted in the interests of minority residents. Reflecting these patronizing assumptions, they assumed a teacher/pupil relationship with African American and Italian residents and declined to partner with them in initiatives designed to improve the quality of life for Black and Italian residents. Moreover, the labor of

¹⁸ See Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Nancy Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); and Sharon E. Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

¹⁹ Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Black domestic workers released middle and upper-class white women from their domestic responsibilities, providing them with time for community activism.²⁰

Italian and African American women ignored the white community's condescending, paternalistic assumptions and worked to realize their community visions.²¹ African American women challenged the racial hierarchy by asserting their right to advocate for their communities' needs, to shape their neighborhoods' development and live in residential communities.²²

Scholars have documented how many working-class suburban residents, especially blue-collar men, embraced industrial development because of provided jobs nearby, allowing residents to save money on commuting expenses.²³ In contrast, in Montclair Italian residents, led by women, successfully fought industrial and commercial development. Recognizing the hostility of Montclair's white upper and middle-class Protestant residents towards Catholicism and their regional Italian culture, they sought greater control over their community. They also created a vibrant community that reflected their culture and offered opportunities for upward mobility.

A World of Women: Montclair during the 1920s and 1930s

²⁰ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor." Autumn 1992. *Signs*.

²¹ Victoria Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African-American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: the Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

²² Eileen Boris, "The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the 'Political'," In *Mothers of a New World*, pp. 213-45 and Jacqueline Jones. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrows: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

²³ Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 14-35 and Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto's American Tragedy, 1900 to 1950* (Baltimore, M.D.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

English settlers arrived in Montclair from Connecticut in 1666 and founded Cranetown, a farming village inhabited by a few thousand people for almost 200 years. Nestled along the eastern slope of the Watchung Mountains and between 250 and almost 900 feet above sea level, Montclair's geography isolated it from Newark and New York City, which were only nine and fourteen miles away. During the mid-eighteenth century, the Newark-Pompton Turnpike opened. The road allowed Cranetown's residents to transport agricultural products to Newark, but more importantly ended the town's isolation from Newark.²⁴

The first rail link between Newark and West Bloomfield, the town adjacent to Montclair, opened in 1856, gradually transforming Montclair from an isolated farming community into a commuter suburb. Reflective of this shift, white civic leaders renamed the community Montclair during the early 1860s.²⁵ The bucolic setting initially attracted upper-class residents who constructed spacious mansions in southwest Montclair, which was adjacent to South Orange, an affluent white suburban enclave. Other affluent white residents constructed large estates alongside the ridge of the Watchung Mountains. African Americans also arrived in Montclair alongside the upper middle-class and upper-class migration during the late nineteenth century, drawn by opportunities for service sector work in a semi-rural environment. The Black community expanded from only 36 residents in 1870 to 1,344 by 1900 when they comprised approximately ten percent of the 14,000 total residents.²⁶

²⁴ Henry Whittemore. *History of Montclair Township*. 1894.

²⁵ League of Women Voters of Montclair, New Jersey. *Know Your Town: A Survey of Montclair, New Jersey*. (Montclair, N.J.: League of Women's Voters of Montclair, 1947).

²⁶ 1870 and 1900 US Census. US Census Bureau. League of Women Voters of Montclair, New Jersey. *Know Your Town: A Survey of Montclair, New Jersey*. (Montclair, N.J.: League of Women's Voters of Montclair, 1947).

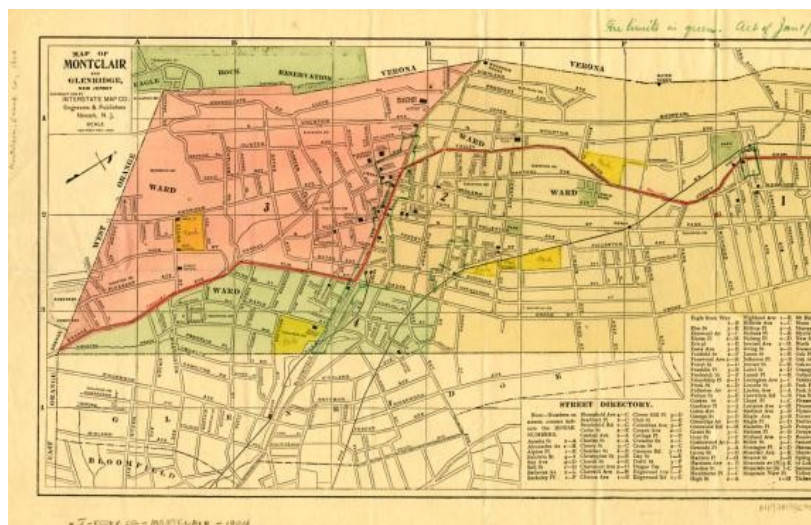


Image 1.3: Map of Montclair circa 1904. Photograph courtesy of Rutgers University Special Collections.

During the first two decades of the century, Montclair continued to grow rapidly. The population expanded more than 100 percent from 14,000 to 28,810 residents and 44 percent between 1920 and 1930 until it reach 42,107 residents.²⁷ While the town's earliest residents were primarily Black or affluent white residents, members of the middle-class comprised most of these new migrants. Indeed, Montclair grew more rapidly than Essex County, which only experienced a 14 percent population increase.²⁸ Builders constructed modest two story colonial houses in north and east Montclair and mid-rise apartment buildings near downtown Montclair that target single white-collar workers. The increased affordability of automobile transportation and diversity in the housing stock made suburban living more affordable for the middle-class who migrated to Montclair during the 1910s and 1920s.

The Black population also expanded during the first three decades of the twentieth century, indeed faster than the white community and nearby Black enclaves in Essex

²⁷ 1920 and 1930 US Census. US Census Bureau.

²⁸ Montclair League of Women Voters, *Know Your Town: A Survey of Montclair, New Jersey* (Montclair, N.J.: League of Women's Voters of Montclair, 1947).

County.²⁹ Montclair had developed a reputation as an attractive destination for upwardly mobile African Americans seeking economic opportunity, social autonomy, and improved housing. Hundreds of white-collar and professional African Americans joined the thousands of Black migrations who sought service sector jobs.

As Montclair's population expanded, residents founded churches, schools, social clubs, and other embryonic community institutions.³⁰ White elites founded private institutions during the late-nineteenth century, a few decades earlier than African Americans. These institutions included First Congregational Church in 1870, St. Luke's Episcopal Church in 1860, and First Baptist Church in 1886 as well as Brookside School, Montclair Academy, Kimberley School, and Lacordaire, private schools that enrolled the children of wealthy residents.³¹ In 199, white civic elites founded the town's primary cultural institution, the Montclair Art Museum.³² Union Baptist Church and St. Mark's Methodist Church were the only Black institutions founded during the late-nineteenth century.³³ During the early twentieth century, African Americans founded St. Paul Baptist Church in 1902, Trinity Temple Episcopal Church in 1916, and Trinity United Presbyterian Church in 1914. A "colored" YMCA and YWCA, important Black community institutions, were also founded between 1910 and 1920.³⁴

²⁹ 1910, 1920, and 1930 US Census. US Census Bureau.

³⁰ Montclair League of Women Voters, *Know Your Town: A Survey of Montclair, New Jersey* (Montclair, N.J.: League of Women's Voters of Montclair, 1947).

³¹ *Historical Record, 1870-1945, First Congregational Church, Montclair, New Jersey*, (Montclair, NJ.: First Congregational Church, 1948).

³² Montclair League of Women Voters, *Know Your Town: A Survey of Montclair, New Jersey* (Montclair, N.J.: League of Women's Voters of Montclair, 1947).

³³ Montclair Black Churches Collection. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

³⁴ Montclair League of Women Voters, *Know Your Town: A Survey of Montclair, New Jersey* (Montclair, N.J.: League of Women's Voters of Montclair, 1947).



Image 1.4: Contemporary picture of 30 North Mountain Avenue, the home of Charles S. Shultz (1839-1924), President of the Hoboken Bank for Savings, and his family. This home was located in west Montclair alongside other spacious homes. Photo courtesy of Montclair Historical Society.

By 1930 Montclair had emerged as an elite residential suburb in northern New Jersey with multiple neighborhoods. Large estates that commanded spectacular views of the New York skyline filled west Montclair, comfortable Dutch colonial and English Tudor homes inhabited by the middle-class homes characterized east Montclair, and tiny detached and row homes dominated south Montclair, the Black and Italian ethnic section. A number of apartment buildings existed near the downtown commercial district and in south Montclair.³⁵ Illustrating the considerable diversity among the housing stock, just over 50 percent or 5,830 of 10,902 dwelling units were single family detached houses.³⁶

³⁵ Preservation Montclair, *Montclair Inventory of Historic, Cultural, and Architectural Resources*, vol.1 (Montclair, N.J.: Project of the Junior League Montclair-Newark, 1982).

³⁶ Montclair League of Women Voters, *Know Your Town: A Survey of Montclair, New Jersey* (Montclair, N.J.: League of Women's Voters of Montclair, 1947).

A trolley line connected the south and north sections with each other and Newark while two railroad lines transported commuters to New York City.³⁷

Employment patterns further illustrate the town's social and racial diversity. Illustrating the town's status as an elite residential suburb, more than twice as many residents of Montclair had graduated from college compared with Essex County and over 50 percent of employed men held white-collar jobs. Employed white men formed most of the 7,500 residents who traveled daily to New York via train and 6,500 who traveled via trolley to Newark.³⁸ Employed white women often worked in white-collar positions as clerks, teachers, and bookkeepers.³⁹ Montclair had the second most residents out of any municipality in New Jersey listed as national leaders in their professional fields in the 1934 edition of "Who's Who in America." Residents listed included authors, editors, chemists, engineers, economists, bankers, lawyers, ministers, theologians, publishers, professors, psychologists, educators, manufacturers, writers, and doctors. Only Princeton, another affluent town, had more residents listed.⁴⁰ Furthermore, in 1922 the town had the third highest assessed property valuation per capita in the entire country. Throughout the region, Montclair was colloquially called the millionaire belt.⁴¹

³⁷ Montclair League of Women Voters, *Know Your Town: A Survey of Montclair, New Jersey* (Montclair, N.J.: League of Women's Voters of Montclair, 1947).

³⁸ "Montclairits Report." Montclair Times, December 29, 1931. Montclair League of Women Voters, *Know Your Town: A Survey of Montclair, New Jersey* (Montclair, N.J.: League of Women's Voters of Montclair, 1947).

³⁹ Fourteenth Census of the United States. Volume IV. Occupations. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1920), pp. 292-3. In 1920, 4,525 male residents were employed. Of this number, 384 worked as salesmen, 352 as bankers, 433 as retail dealers, 272 as technical engineers, and 150 as lawyers. An additional 558 women worked as clerks, 252 as teachers, 382 as retail clerks, and 293 as bookkeepers.

⁴⁰ "Montclair Claims Second Largest Number of Famous Living Men and Women in State." Montclair Times, November 16, 1934.

⁴¹ Montclair had an assessed property valuation of \$60,000,000 in 1922. "In the Eyes of Contemporaries." *Montclair Then and Now*. Unpublished Manuscript. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

African American migrants were drawn to Montclair by opportunities for service sector work. Indeed, several African American enclaves emerged in “service suburbs” in northern New Jersey during the early twentieth century, including Englewood, Plainfield, South Orange, Orange, and West Orange.⁴² By 1920, African Americans comprised 3,457 of Montclair’s almost 29,000 residents or 12 percent of the population. By 1930, 6,300 Blacks lived in Montclair and 15 percent of 42,000 residents, the fifth highest percentage of any New Jersey municipality with more than 10,000 residents.⁴³

Domestic service was the economic lifeline for African Americans. Indeed, African American women were attracted to Montclair rather than small cities such as Hoboken or Elizabeth because domestic service was perceived as the foundation of rather than a barrier to economic mobility because it offered steady wages.⁴⁴ In 1930, more than 50 percent of Montclair’s African American adult residents worked in the service sector, compared to only 5 percent of all residents.⁴⁵ The Townswomen of Montclair, a Black women’s club, noted both the importance of domestic service to Montclair’s early Black migrants’ economic prospects. The club’s history of the Black Community described them as, “Young, vigorous, intelligent Negroes who sought to improve their lot by working in the North. Their relatives and friends had found jobs for them in the homes of the rich.”⁴⁶ Illustrating how domestic service was the foundation of the Black

⁴² Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, pp. 50-5

⁴³ 1920 and 1930 US Census. US Census Bureau. Fourteenth Census of the United States. Volume IV. Occupations. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1920), pp. 292-3. In 1920, 234 men worked as personal servants and an additional 70 as janitors. Domestic service employed 1,468 women as servants, 172 as nurses, and 189 as private laundresses.

⁴⁴ Wiese, *Places of Their Own*.

⁴⁵ Fourteenth Census of the United States. Volume IV. Occupations. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1920), pp. 292-3.

⁴⁶ Townswomen of Montclair, *Our Town*.

community's economic security, in 1935 approximately 90 percent of African Americans who worked in Montclair held service sector positions.⁴⁷

During the 1920s, a small number of African American professionals also settled in Montclair and by 1932 the town had more per capita than any other municipality in New Jersey. The Black professional community included twenty-six teachers, seven physicians, six dentists, six ministers, six social workers, two pharmacists, and two lawyers.⁴⁸ These 55 professionals comprised approximately 1 percent of the Black community, yet their presence established Montclair as a magnet for Black white-collar and professional workers and they often led political protests. At the same time, Montclair's job market remained racially stratified. The local government and white-owned businesses refused to hire African Americans for non-service jobs regardless of their qualifications. Most Black professionals who lived in Montclair either commuted to Newark or New York City or owned a local business with a Black clientele.⁴⁹

Accepted as neither Black nor white by Montclair's white elite, Italians had more economic, political, and social rights than African Americans yet also faced discrimination in housing, employment, education, and access to other municipal resources.⁵⁰ Foreign-born Italians comprised approximately one-sixth of Montclair's

⁴⁷ New Jersey Conference of Social Work, *the Negro in Montclair*, (Newark, N.J.: New Jersey Conference of Social Work, 1935).

⁴⁸ Interracial Committee, New Jersey Conference of Social work. *Survey of Negro Life in New Jersey: Community Report No. II.* (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Conference of Social Work, 1932), pp. 12.

⁴⁹ Interracial Committee, New Jersey Conference of Social work. *Survey of Negro Life in New Jersey: Community Report No. II.* (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Conference of Social Work, 1932), pp. 12.

⁵⁰ For works that discuss Italians as non-white, see Jennifer Guglielmo, "Introduction," in Jennifer Guglielmo; Salvatore Salerno, *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America* (New York; London: Routledge, 2003); Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); David R. Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005); and Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1998).

population between 1920 and 1940. Discrimination forced most Italians and African Americans to live in the fourth ward, south Montclair, in proximity to one another. Italians nearly always lived in east of the Lackawanna Railroad Station while African Americans usually lived west of it. At the same time, the station was not an impenetrable boundary and more well-off Black residents lived in the Italian section on the same block as foreign-born Italians.

Italians also were unrepresented in government. Still, unlike Black residents, upwardly mobile first and second generation Italian immigrants such as Orestes and Janet Zangrilli could obtain housing outside south Montclair in a white middle-class section of town.⁵¹ Additionally, even first generation Italian immigrants had access to jobs other than personal service as garbage collectors, construction workers, and other unskilled laborers.⁵² These jobs offered comparable wages to higher paid personal service positions as chauffeurs and gardeners, but Italian immigrants preferred them because the positions provided economic and social autonomy from white elites.

Both the presence and containment of African Americans and Italians was crucial to Montclair's position as a residential suburb. John Nolen, a well-known planner and landscape architect who had studied under Frederick Law Olmstead at Harvard University, was hired by the Montclair Town Commission in 1909 to draft a town plan. He acknowledged the link between suburbanization and African American and Italian

⁵¹ Richard G Wells, *Study of a Modern Suburban Community, Montclair, N.J.* (Dartmouth, N.H., B.A. Honors Thesis, 1934), and pg. 13. 1930 United States Census Data. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Publication, 1930).

⁵² "Italians in Montclair." Unpublished Paper in Vertical File. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey. Nearly 1,216 of Montclair's 11,930 employed male residents worked in the building industry, 348 male residents in the iron and steel industries, 371 in unspecified manufacturing industries, 235 in electrical machinery and supply factories, and 248 in printing factories. Italian men composed the majority of these male residents. 1930 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C.

migration, yet proposed confining them to a clearly defined section of Montclair.⁵³ He recommended that private companies construct housing for African Americans and Italians “on the outskirts of town where there is cheaper land.”⁵⁴ The town followed his advance and limited cheaper housing to Montclair’s south section. By confining African Americans and Italians to the fourth ward, the outskirts of town, minorities provided a nearby low-cost labor source without harming the desirability of white upper and middle-class neighborhoods. Twenty-five years after Nolen’s report, white residents had successfully restricted the Italian and Black communities to the fourth ward.

The white civic elite’s toleration for a Black community within Montclair, even in a clearly defined section on the outskirts of town, is different than most white communities outside the South and new suburban developments during the 1920s everywhere. In 1934, Richard Wells, a lifelong white middle-class resident, noted how housing was starkly segregated along racial and class lines, stating that “very wealthy people live on the mountains, the middle classes on the foot of the mountain, and poorer whites, Negroes, Italians and other foreign population in the ‘lower’ part.”⁵⁵

Despite the centrality of African Americans and Italians to Montclair’s development, white residents omitted any mention of them when extolling Montclair’s virtues as a suburb.⁵⁶ For example, the Montclair chapter of the New Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, an organization comprised of white men, praised

⁵³ Bruce Stephenson, “The Roots of New Urbanism,” *Journal of Planning History*, vol. 1, May 2002, pp. 99-123.

⁵⁴ John Nolen, *Montclair, The Preservation of Its Natural Beauty and its Improvement as a Residence Town*. (Montclair, N.J.: A report of John Nolen to the Municipal Art Commission, 1909).

⁵⁵ Wells, *Study of a Modern Suburban Community*, pg. 13.

⁵⁶ Montclair Chapter, New Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. *The Story of Montclair: Its People in Peace and War Times* (Montclair, N.J.: Montclair Chapter of the new Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, 1930).

Montclair's idyllic environment in its 1930 history of Montclair. The organization noted that, "Montclair is a community of homes...there are almost no factories, and the local stores and shops cater only to neighborhood needs. As of yet, there are but few apartment houses and these have been kept within limited zones. As a consequence, the visitor is impressed by the symmetry and uniform beauty of the residential development." The organization acknowledged the town's rapid growth, noting that, "the federal census of 1930 shows a population of over 42,000...this would give Montclair the rank of a city," yet insisted that "Montclair is not seeking mere increase of population. It would like to maintain its integrity and traditions as a community of homes, where family life is emphasized and the ideals of education, recreation, and social intercourse fulfilled and every creature comfort abundantly supplied."⁵⁷ While praising Montclair's high quality of life, the booklet conspicuously omitted any mention of the town's African American and Italian residents.

Montclair's social geography provided an opportunity for white women to assume an expanded civic role. In Montclair, homes and other spaces gendered feminine and comprised the physical landscape and few large factories or businesses existed. In his 1925 publication *The Suburban Trend*, Harland Douglass, a sociologist at Columbia University, posited that a leadership vacuum existed in residential suburbs such as Montclair. Douglass noted that white middle and upper-class men who usually assumed positions of civic leadership left residential suburbs everyday and commuted to cities in northern New Jersey and New York. In Montclair, almost 25 percent of male residents

⁵⁷ Montclair Chapter, New Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. *The Story of Montclair: Its People in Peace and War Times* (Montclair, N.J.: Montclair Chapter of the new Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, 1930).

commuted to New York City compared to only 5 percent of female residents.⁵⁸ This, Douglass stated, created a leadership vacuum that white clubwomen women filled.⁵⁹

Lena Anthony Robbins, a leader in the Montclair LWV recognized that the unique socio-spatial environment of residential suburbs like Montclair provided an opportunity for white women to exercise civic leadership. She declared in 1940 that there is, “A great opportunity for New Jersey’s women to take the leadership in running their government...more so than in any other part of the United States.” Like Douglass, she linked this opportunity to white middle and upper class men’s daily absence from the community, noting that, “every business day large numbers of Northern New Jersey males cross the Hudson River to their jobs in New York. Every business day large numbers of New Jersey males cross the Delaware into their jobs in Philadelphia...they pay probably less attention to their own state’s affairs than men of any other state in the union.”⁶⁰ For Robbins, women could and should fill the political leadership vacuum that existed in residential suburbs such as Montclair.

Residential development issues such as adequate housing, recreational space for children, education, and environmental factors impacting the physical health of residents dominated the political agenda in residential suburbs.⁶¹ Douglass, in *Suburban Trend*, commented that education, which directly impacted children and which was an area in which women were especially active players, was often the most important political issue in suburbs. Since white middle and upper-class residents demanded quality schools,

⁵⁸ Harlan Paul Douglass, *The Suburban Trend* (New York: The Century Co., 1925), pg. 176.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ *New Jersey Voter*. Mrs. Leonard H. Robbins. “Could Women Rule New Jersey?” June, 1940.

⁶¹ Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, Eds. *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pg. 2 and Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

middle and upper-class suburbs allocated more tax dollars to public education per capita than they allocated in city budgets and public schools were the largest portion of municipal budgets in suburbs. In Montclair, the local government received 36 percent of property taxes, the school system 48 percent, and the county the remainder and spent more per pupil on education than any other municipality in Essex County.⁶² At the same time, the ideology of domesticity enshrined women as the leaders of the family and encouraged them to assume leadership roles in community issues affecting family life such as the public schools.⁶³ Louise Steelman, a leader in the Montclair LWV, tied women's civic involvement to their efforts to improve family life, insisting that "women tend to be more interested in social welfare measures and now see that this goes hand in hand with other government reforms and political education."⁶⁴ When women volunteered in the Parent-Teachers Association or advocated for more resources for the local schools, they were involved in a central issue to suburban politics.⁶⁵

Taking advantage of the unique environment of residential suburbs, women aggressively carved out an expanded civic role for themselves. Douglass recognized the purposefulness of the women's actions, claiming that they, "are often highly educated and possess great executive ability... having the suburb so much to themselves during the daytime, it is not to be supposed that aggressive and self-conscious women will not do

⁶² Montclair League of Women Voters, *Know Your Town: A Survey of Montclair, New Jersey* (Montclair, N.J.: League of Women's Voters of Montclair, 1947).

⁶³ Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1935* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1977); Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1973).

⁶⁴ "Looking Forward to 1931 Legislation." *Quest*. December, 1930. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁶⁵ Douglass, *The Suburban Trend*, pg. 201.

anything with it.”⁶⁶ Most residential suburbs, he noted, included, “women’s clubs of spectacular size with palatial buildings that often go far beyond the traditional dilettante character of the average women’s club in places of like size.”⁶⁷ Douglass cited the overzealous creation of social welfare programs in Montclair as another example of women’s expanded civic role in residential suburbs. He noted that Montclair had the highest charity expenditures per capita out of any New Jersey municipality, yet according to him lacked extreme poverty when compared cities such as Newark, Elizabeth, and Paterson.⁶⁸ Of course, poverty existed in Montclair. At the same time, the statistic points to the greater eagerness and success of Montclair’s white middle and upper-class female residents than other municipalities to create social welfare programs for their community.

White women used their expanded civic role to implement their vision of Montclair as an attractive residential community. Florence W. Laber, a member of the Montclair LWV, extolled that, “it is a wonderful hope for the future when the Upper Montclair Woman’s Club, Montclair Women’s Club, the College Women’s Club, the League of Women Voters, and the Montclair Junior League band together to lend their aid towards ultimate good government.” Her comments implied that good government would transform Montclair for the betterment of all residents, rhetorically asking in 1920, “What should the women not be able to accomplish?”⁶⁹ Lillian Gilbreth, a renowned industrial engineer active in the Montclair Women’s Club, likewise urged women to mobilize their skills and knowledge to improve Montclair. She stated that, “there is a greater need than ever for volunteer work...a clubwoman has more to offer than many

⁶⁶ Douglass, pg. 193.

⁶⁷ Douglass, pg. 194.

⁶⁸ Douglass, *Suburban Trend*, pg. 196.

⁶⁹ “Our November Meeting.” *The League Bulletin*. October 1920. League of Women Voters of the Greater Montclair Area Archives. Montclair, New Jersey.

people.”⁷⁰ Gilbreth listed women’s numerous skills as including “a willingness to take and give and knowledge of the tecnics of handling affairs.” Clubwomen, she claimed, had “a duty to take responsibilities in parents group, her Church, her welfare and civic work.”⁷¹

Upper and middle-class white women took up Gilbreth’s charge and worked to implement their vision of Montclair as an attractive residential community. Reflective of women’s desire for civic influence, the Montclair LWV was New Jersey’s first and largest LWV chapter. One member described the organization as “over-zealous to make friends and influence people” when it first organized in 1920 with the stated goal of transforming women into “an active, informed, participating electorate.”⁷² Ten years later more than 1,000 women had joined. Montclair served as the headquarters for the New Jersey LWV because so many local women held leadership positions at the state level.⁷³

For the Good of the Community

Despite women’s expanded civic role, white upper and middle-class men controlled the official political channels throughout the interwar period. In the Northeast, West, and Midwest, political machines dominated urban politics during the early twentieth century. Although they often employed bribes, kickbacks, and other unsavory tactics to consolidate their political base, they also provided immigrants with political

⁷⁰ “A Challenging Job for the Clubwoman.” Quest. October 1937. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁷¹ “A Challenging Job for the Clubwoman.” Quest. October 1937. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁷² “Recollections of the Montclair Equal Suffrage League by an Old Timer.” June 1950. League of Women Voters of the Greater Montclair Area Archives. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁷³ “Non-Partisan Political Education Object of Montclair League of Women Voters.” Montclair Times. Undated Article. League of Women Voters of the Greater Montclair Area Archives. Montclair, New Jersey.

representation and white middle and upper-class reformers usually gained election only after scandals erupted.

In Montclair, white upper middle-class men governed without input from Italian or African American residents and with only scant input from white women.⁷⁴ In the South whites mobilized violence to politically disenfranchise Blacks and political machines comprised of European immigrants controlled early twentieth century urban politics. On the other hand, Robert Fairbanks and John Teaford have documented how white upper-middle class suburbanites created nonpartisan governments that allowed them to consolidate political control.⁷⁵ Montclair's male civic leaders created a non-partisan political system that disempowered minority and working-class residents by linking civic power to merit and professional expertise. Like Progressives nationwide, they purported that their education and professional accomplishments justified their political control.⁷⁶ Furthermore, they contended that their ability to act in the interests of the entire community obviated any need for broader community representation.

Montclair's government prioritized commercial development and low taxes and government spending during the 1920s. They supported some commercial development and dense residential development because it promised additional tax revenue and refused to fund improvements to the infrastructure of neighborhoods unless residents themselves funded the project. African American, white upper and middle-class, and Italian women articulated different political priorities, claiming that commercial and

⁷⁴ Robert Fairbanks, *For the City as a Whole: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest in Dallas, Texas, 1900-1965* (Columbus, O.H.: Ohio State University Press, 1998) and Carol A. O'Connor, *A Sort of Utopia: Scarsdale, 1891-1981* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1983).

⁷⁵ John Teaford, *Postsuburbia: Government and Politics in the Edge Cities* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), chapters two and three and Robert Fairbanks, *For the City as a Whole: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest in Dallas, Texas, 1900-1965* (Columbus, O.H.: Ohio State University Press, 1998)

⁷⁶ Teaford, *Postsuburbia*, chapters two and three.

dense residential development threatened the quality of life for existing residents. African American and Italian women sought improved conditions in their neighborhood. Ignoring their lack of political representation, they demanded equal access to the municipal services needed to attain these goals. Like African American and Italian women, white women were also excluded from formal representation in the local government and opposed commercial development and dense residential development in Montclair. Still, they held a higher social status and enjoyed greater access to the economic resources needed to realize their community goals as the wives and daughters of Montclair's civic leaders.

Montclair's political system locked minority residents out of government representation despite their participation in local elections. Incorporated in 1895, Montclair's government consisted of a non-partisan board of five town commissioners who had jurisdiction over all town affairs. White residents contended that independent political wards represented by a specific town commissioner encouraged residents to seek neighborhood interests instead of the good of the entire community. The absence of neighborhood representation blocked African Americans and Italians from government representation until the 1950s. Since upper and middle-class white residents comprised two-thirds of the population, successful candidates for Montclair Town Commission needed some white support. Additionally, town commissioners appointed Montclair's mayor who functioned as an administrative head rather than a political leader.⁷⁷

Upper and middle-class white men used the Citizens' League, a clandestine, socially exclusive, non-partisan organization, to solidify their political control. White

⁷⁷ Montclair Chapter, New Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. *The Story of Montclair: Its People in Peace and War Times* (Montclair, N.J.: The Montclair Chapter of the new Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, 1930).

professionals and business executives comprised the organization's membership and before each municipal election, nominated slate of five candidates for town commission. The Citizens' League labeled its slate the "citizens' ticket," declaring that its candidates' superior civic involvement and professional accomplishments made them qualified to serve as town commissioner.⁷⁸ Current league members nominated new members, ensuring that the membership remained racially and socially homogeneous.

The Citizens' Leagues' emphasis on professional qualifications and refusal to acknowledge a need for broad community representation prevented African Americans, Italian immigrants, and women from obtaining formal political power during the interwar period. The Citizens' League had a Women's Committee, but declined to nominate women for town commissioner, and African Americans and Italian immigrants were excluded entirely.⁷⁹ The New Deal ushered in Democratic control of the federal government and broader ethnic and racial political representation in many New Jersey municipalities, yet white upper and middle-class men retained control of Montclair's government.⁸⁰ Montclair elected its first Italian-American town commissioner, Angelo Fortunato in 1956, its first Black town commissioner, Matthew Carter, in 1964, and its first female town commissioner, Betty Evans, in 1976.

In addition to the exclusion of female and minority residents from elected government positions was the fact that white middle and upper class men held most appointed government positions. The town commission emphatically denied the need for either female or minority representation on appointed government bodies such as on the

⁷⁸ "Citizens Ticket." Montclair History Vertical File. Montclair Public Library. Local History Room. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁷⁹ *Montclair, 1868-1993*. Government Vertical File. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁸⁰ *Montclair: 1869 to 1993*. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

Montclair Board of Education. Instead, commissioners insisted on appointing white professional men who worked as engineers, lawyers, educators, and accountants, claiming that their professional expertise would increase their effectiveness as a civic leader. Oscar Carlson, a manager at an engineering firm and Montclair's mayor, articulated this perspective, stating that whenever the town commission appointed a new board of education member, "it is of paramount importance that the commission appoints the individuals who are the most qualified."⁸¹

Composed only of white middle and upper-class men, Montclair's government ignored African American, white, and Italian women's preference for Montclair to remain strictly a residential community and permitted commercial and dense residential development during the 1920s. This was a pivotal decade in Montclair's development as the decade of significant population growth and building construction. Robert Fogelson argues that during the early twentieth century, the bourgeoisie feared any suburban development that was not single-family homes. In Montclair, however, white men actually supported limited industrial and commercial development, viewing it as a source of government revenue. Only white women rejected all nonresidential development.⁸² The 1,175 building permits the town commission approved in 1923 included permits for three theatres and several apartment complexes. The commission also approved the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family apartments in Italian and African

⁸¹ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. September 6, 1924. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁸² Robert Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870-1930* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 2005).

American neighborhoods. This increased Montclair's population density and denied African Americans and Italians the right to live in a single-family neighborhood.⁸³

The town commission's corporate model of town affairs also blocked African American and Italian women from securing additional municipal resources for their neighborhoods. The commission provided municipal services on the basis of residents' ability to pay rather than need and viewed taxpayers as stockholders who deserved a return on their tax dollars. In accordance with this model, the commission evaluated the financial costs and benefits of any new municipal service before approving it and steadfastly refused to spend more money on a neighborhood than the residents contributed in taxes. Before installing a new sewer system, for example, the commission first calculated the financial benefits and costs. If the benefits proved higher than the costs, residents directly serviced by it received issued tax assessments to fund the project. Finally, commissioners entertained complaints from residents, and, if the commissioners determined that their complaints had merit, canceled the project. Snow, garbage, and rainwater often spilled into streets in African American and Italian neighborhoods because the commission claimed that residents could not afford snow and garbage removal and improved drainage sewers.

⁸³ Montclair Chapter, New Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, *The Story of Montclair: Its People in Peace and War Times* (Montclair, N.J.: The Montclair Chapter of the new Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, 1930).



Image 1.5: The Fourth Ward Flooded during a Rainstorm, Undated Photo circa 1920s
Courtesy of Italians of Montclair. Poor drainage and proximity to Toney's Brook caused frequently
in Montclair's Italian neighborhood.

White upper and middle-class women and African American and Italian women challenged the town government's approval of dense residential and commercial development since it conflicted with their visions of Montclair. White women demanded that Montclair remain a community of single-family homes and sought to prohibit commercial development near their neighborhoods, arguing that apartment buildings and commerce harmed the quality of life. African American and Italian immigrant women fought the town commission's placement of oil tanks and a garbage incinerator in their neighborhoods, demanding that the commission recognize their right to live in a community without potential health hazards and undesirable smells.

The Federation of Women's Organizations strongly opposed the town commission's decision to pay for upgraded lighting along Bloomfield Avenue, Montclair's primary commercial thoroughfare, in 1921. The organization, an umbrella group of middle and upper-class white women's organizations, accused the commission of, "acting in the interest of a few business owners" and circulated a petition signed by

more than 2,000 women that demanded the town commission rescind the funds.⁸⁴ The town commission ignored their objections and installed the upgraded lighting. The conflict demonstrates how the Federation of Women's Organizations prioritized maintaining a high quality of residential life while the town commission prioritized commercial development.

The Montclair Town Commission again prioritized commercial rather than residential development in 1925 when it elected to create a commercial zone in the center of a white middle-class neighborhood. Florence Chapman presented a petition at a town meeting on behalf of the Women's Welfare Association, another organization composed of white middle-class women. She claimed that commercial development harmed the quality of family and residential life and demanded that the town commission reconsider their decision, stating that the neighborhood, "is zoned residential and people have for four years lived in feeling of peace and security regarding their home...the wish of the people to keep stores out of section is based on the fundamental principle of zoning-the welfare of people." Commercial businesses, she further alleged, incited, "noise, confusion and mental and moral and physical dangers not in best interests of welfare of homes."⁸⁵ Chapman implied that low-density residential development provided the most advantageous environment for raising a family. Moreover, she lived in a spacious three-story home in proximity to the proposed commercial zone. She and other white women had a clear interest in halting what they perceived as harmful development.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. November 10, 1921. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁸⁵ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. February 10, 1925. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁸⁶ 1920 United States Census Data. From Ancestry.com. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C.

Town commissioners rejected Chapmen's assertion that commercial development harmed the quality of life and claimed that women were unqualified to decide zoning issues. At a town meeting, Mayor Phillips declared that, "Montclair is not a small little village but flourishing city of 42,000 inhabitants...questions of zoning are "best left to commission."⁸⁷ He not only rebuffed white women's attempts to influence the town's development, he also rejected their vision of Montclair as a residential community. Instead, he portrayed Montclair as a city with both commercial and residential areas and reaffirmed his support for a commercial zone near a white middle-class neighborhood.

White women's organizations also opposed the town commission's decision in 1932 to end municipal garbage collection and hire a private company instead.⁸⁸ Desperate to cut costs at the nadir of the Great Depression, the town commission created the Citizens Investigating Committee charged with recommending cuts in municipal expenditures. White middle and upper-class men comprised all committee members and recommended ending municipal collection and hiring a private company to collect the town's garbage.⁸⁹

White women, however, claimed that the commission's decision would harm the quality of life because municipal garbage service provided far superior service. Demonstrating how strongly they felt about the issue, Margery Fifield, president of the LWV, declared that garbage collection was "a critical matter affecting the health of the

⁸⁷ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. June 4, 1931. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁸⁸ *Reports of Investigations*, Conducted by: The Citizens Investigating Committee, Appointed by the Board of Commission, September 8, 1932.

⁸⁹ *Reports of Investigations*, Conducted by: The Citizens Investigating Committee, Appointed by the Board of Commission, September 8, 1932.

entire community” and the Montclair LWV conducted an in-depth analysis of the issue.⁹⁰ *The Montclair Times* published the findings on September 9, 1932.⁹¹ The LWV reported that, “residents of the Town of Montclair are served by retaining the present system of municipal collection and that a possible financial gain will not compensate for the loss in efficiency.”⁹² Service, the LWV recommended, rather than cost should be the primary consideration in the decision whether to switch from municipal to private garbage collection. Barbara Walther, another LWV member, reiterated the findings at a town meeting, stating that the LWV “objects to granting any company a five-year contract because the private company would lack any incentive for service.”⁹³

Disputing the LWV’s report, the town commissioners maintained that private garbage collection’s lower costs were more important than any potential decline in service. Town commission terminated municipal collection and hired Egan & Sons to collect Montclair’s garbage. Members of the LWV responded angrily to the decision, claiming that the decision required women to work harder to ensure that Montclair remained an attractive residential community. Since the commissioners often held full-time professional jobs in New York City, they were absent from the town on weekdays. Although white men formally controlled the government, members of the LWV claimed that women maintained the idyllic environment. Walther acrimoniously asserted that the commission failed appreciate white women’s efforts to improve the quality of life, asserting that, “organized women’s clubs of town have made possible all of the fine and liberal things you [the town men] have, the board of education, shorter hours, police and

⁹⁰ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. September 8, 1932. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁹¹ “Garbage Removal Survey Completed.” *The Montclair Times*. September 9, 1932.

⁹² “Garbage Removal Survey Completed.” *The Montclair Times*. September 9, 1932.

⁹³ Ibid.

fireman, and playgrounds. Montclair is a home town; men go to New York to business and are glad to leave town affairs to the women.” Walther alleged that the commission’s decision to terminate municipal garbage collection disregarded their viewpoint and efforts at community improvement.

Italian women similarly strove to implement their vision of their neighborhood as an attractive residential community and thus fought the town commission’s decision to place a garbage incinerator and hazardous chemicals in their neighborhood. The commission’s decision to place toxic chemicals and garbage incinerators in the Italian neighborhood threatened residents’ investment in their homes and Italian women’s efforts to transform the fourth ward into a vibrant community.⁹⁴ During the early twentieth century, working-class European immigrants and African Americans placed greater importance on home ownership than white middle and upper class families. European immigrants eagerly used their entire savings to purchase homes. They viewed home ownership as a bulwark against economic downturns, layoffs, illness, and other financial hardships as well as a way to obtain greater control over their community. Italian men thus also protested the town commission. However, women were key leaders and, as other scholars have found, viewed their activism as an extension of their role as mothers.⁹⁵

In 1929, Italian women fought the town commission’s decision to allow a private company to place two 50,000 gallon oil tanks in the fourth ward, angrily asserting their

⁹⁴ Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*; John Bodnar, “Changing Risks, Changing Adaptations: American Families in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Kin and Communities: Families in America*, eds. Allan J. Litchman and Joan R. Challinor (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979); Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*, pp. 26-30; and Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, pp. 80-87.

⁹⁵ Temma Kaplan, *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements* (New York: Routledge Press, 1996).

right to live in a neighborhood free of toxic chemicals. At a town commission meeting discussing the oil tanks, Mrs. Canio Cestone, an Italian who lived in the fourth ward, declared that, “their homes are very pretty and attractive,” implying that the tanks would harm the desirability of their homes. She also informed the commission about the deleterious effects of oil tanks on children’s recreational opportunities in other cities, noting that oil tanks “made the air such in Chicago that children were unable to play.”⁹⁶ She viewed children’s right to play freely as important to the Italian community. More importantly, she demanded that the town commission protect the homes and community that Italian residents had struggled to build from hazardous developments and asked the commission to place the tanks one of Montclair’s middle or upper-class neighborhoods. Cestone remarked at the town commission meeting that she “didn’t see why the tanks could not be placed outside of the fourth ward.”⁹⁷

Speaking at the same town commission meeting as Cestone, Mary Rubino demanded that the town commission recognize the Italian community’s right to control their neighborhood’s development. She complained that, “the gentlemen on this commission are treating us more or less as children...the people are not given any rights.”⁹⁸ Asserting a right to self-determination, Rubino implied that the presence of oil tanks conflicted with the Italian community’s vision of their neighborhood.

Italian women enlisted the support of networks at Mount Carmel Church, Montclair’s Italian national parish, to stop the proposed oil tanks. Attended by more than 4,000 and located in the Italian neighborhood’s center, the parish was a center of

⁹⁶ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. September 23, 1929. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. December 2, 1929. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

community life.⁹⁹ Mount Carmel Church was central to Italian women's community networks and activism. Unlike Italian men, they seldom worked outside the home after marriage or joined Italian political clubs. Church became the primary site for interactions with members of their ethnic community outside of their family. Italian women joined numerous parish groups, including the Mount Carmel Church Choir, Society of Christian Mothers, Little Flower Club, Sacred Heart League for Women, and Unione Cattolica Italiana.



Image 1.6: Italian community in front of Mt. Carmel Church, 1926 before the Feast of St. Sebastian. The church held many ethnic events and clubs that solidified ethnic community ties. Photo Courtesy of Italians of Montclair

Italian women mobilized their church networks fight the oil tanks.¹⁰⁰ They convinced the pastor, Reverend Francis Castellano, to protest the commission's decision.

⁹⁹ *History of Mount Carmel Church*. Privately Published by Mount Carmel Church. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁰⁰ "Mount Carmel Church Choir to Sponsor Dance." *Montclair Times*, December 15, 1931. *Origins. History of Mount Carmel Church*. Privately Published by Mount Carmel Church. Montclair, New Jersey.

At the town commission meeting discussing the proposed oil tanks, Castellano presented a petition signed by seventy-one property owners and he lambasted the commission's decision. He asserted that the oil tanks would "endanger the lives of people surrounding locality and cause depreciation of the value of real estate."¹⁰¹ At its next meeting approximately six weeks later, the Montclair Town Commission rescinded its approval of the oil tanks.¹⁰²

The Woman's Club of Upper Montclair, an organization comprised of middle and upper-class white women, also opposed the town commission's decision to place oil tanks in the Italian neighborhood. At the town commission meeting discussing the oil tanks, the club advocated for the Italian community's interests. Club members asked the town commission to protect Italian residents' financial investment in their homes, declaring that, "the houses in that section [near the proposed oil tanks] have been acquired by hard work, great thrift, and in some cases great sacrifice."

The Woman's Club of Upper Montclair and Italian women both opposed the oil tanks; however, affluent white women overlooked Italian women's ability to affect community change. Instead, they credited town commissioners for reversing the commission's initial decision. At a town commission meeting held three weeks after the commission rescinded approval for the oil tanks, the Woman's Club of Upper Montclair praised the decision, declaring that commissioners had "acted in the best interests of residents."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. September 23, 1929. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁰² Montclair Town Commission Minutes. November 12, 1929. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁰³ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. December 2, 1929. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

Like white and Italian immigrant women, African American women also clashed with the town government as they strove to realize their goal of a vibrant residential community. African American women spearheaded the struggle against segregation and racial discrimination in Montclair's public schools. They viewed access to educational resources as key to their community goals and children's perspectives for economic advancement.¹⁰⁴ Rampant discrimination in Montclair's schools infuriated them and, like Thomas Sugrue has found in other cities in the Northeast, Midwest, and West, Black women vigorously challenged school discrimination in Montclair during the interwar period.¹⁰⁵ They employed extralegal methods in their battle similar to those Black women mobilized in interwar Chicago, including lobbying the board of education and boycotting the public schools.¹⁰⁶

Non-legal tools proved more effective at combating racial discrimination in public schools in the North. Since New Jersey's state law barred school segregation, the Montclair Town Commission and Board of Education used different mechanisms than the legal tools municipalities employed in the Jim Crow South.¹⁰⁷ In 1925, Montclair's school system started to employ a tracking system that placed children on academic tracks according to their intellectual abilities in junior high school. Frank Pickell, superintendent, claimed that Montclair's standard curriculum focused too heavily on college preparatory subjects to the detriment of Italian and African American students.

¹⁰⁴ Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1981), chapter six.

¹⁰⁵ Davison M. Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North: The Battle over Northern School Segregation, 1865-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House Press, 2008), chapter 6.

¹⁰⁶ Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women's Activism* (Urbana, I.L.: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁷ Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, pg. 7 and Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*.

Pickell maintained that tracking would make children's coursework more applicable to their eventual career. He stated that tracking "makes the curriculum more useful to the students who are not pursuing a college course by providing boys with manual arts training and girls with home economics."¹⁰⁸ Under his leadership, Montclair's school system determined the educational quotient of seventh graders and then placed them on either a college preparatory, domestic science, or manual arts academic track.

Although Pickell claimed that tracking used scientific principles to evaluate students, African American and Italian students were placed on the vocational or domestic science tracks and white upper and middle-class children on the college preparatory track.¹⁰⁹ This persistent segregation suggests that the racial prejudice was also a significant factor in children's academic placement. Moreover, the vocational and domestic science tracks failed to adequately prepare minority children for college and created an additional obstacle to Black and Italian women's hopes for their children's economic advancement.

The Montclair Board of Education also effectively segregated Montclair's schools by gerrymandering school districts to follow racial boundaries in housing. The board also allowed white children who lived within a predominantly Black school's district to transfer, yet denied Black or Italian children to same opportunity if unsatisfied with their districted school.

¹⁰⁸ 1925 Report. Montclair Board of Education. Box AI, Township of Montclair Collection. Montclair Public Library, Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁰⁹ 1925 Report. Montclair Board of Education. Box AI, Township of Montclair Collection. Montclair Public Library, Montclair, New Jersey.



**Image 1.7: African American and Italian Students at Glenfield School in 1925,
Photo Courtesy of Italians of Montclair**

The Montclair Board of Education's boldest attempt at school segregation was its transformation of Glenfield in 1933 into a Black and Italian school that only offered a vocational education. That pivotal year for school segregation in Montclair, the board of education revised school district lines to more closely follow racial patterns in housing, opened an expansion to Glenfield School that transformed it from a grammar school into a k-9th grade school with a revised curriculum. After the board implemented the new curriculum, Glenfield only offered the domestic science and vocational tracks while Hillside and Northeast Junior High Schools, predominantly white junior high schools, offered the college preparatory track. The board of education also eliminated French, Latin, and Ancient History from Glenfield's course offerings, all of which were required at Hillside and Northeast. Since Montclair High School required these courses for placement onto the college preparatory track, Glenfield's curriculum severely disadvantaged Black and Italian students with college aspirations.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Montclair Board of Education Minutes. October 3, 1933. Montclair Board of Education. Montclair, New Jersey

African American women asserted that Black children could and should pursue a college education and professional careers and vigorously fought the new district lines and implementation of a vocational curriculum at Glenfield. On July 26, 1933, Mary Allen spoke before the board of education on behalf of several Black women, asserting that the board's actions discriminated against Black students. The board, however, rebuffed her complaint and maintained that Black students received equal treatment in Montclair's schools.¹¹¹ After the board ignored the initial protest, the Montclair NAACP filed a formal complaint with the Montclair Board of Education in September of 1933 on behalf of four Black children.¹¹² At a hearing held on September 18th, Freda Kenney, wife of renowned African American physician John Kenney, angrily accused the board of education of racial discrimination. As evidence of the board's intention to segregate Black children, she noted that all African American children from her daughter's former class at Nishuane Grammar School now attended Glenfield Junior High while all white students attended Hillside Junior High.¹¹³ Kenney had a personal stake in the struggle: under the revised school boundaries her daughter, Elizabeth, attend Glenfield instead of Hillside.

Frank Pickell, the superintendent, admitted that the new district lines increased school segregation, yet denied that their complaints had merit. Instead, Pickell acted patronizingly towards Allen and the Montclair NAACP's leaders. He maintained that since Glenfield offered a better education than the South's Jim Crow schools, African Americans should accept the new district lines and resulting segregation. He declared

¹¹¹ Montclair Board of Education Minutes. July 26, 1933. Montclair Board of Education. Montclair, New Jersey

¹¹² "School Districts Cause Objections." Montclair Times. September 15, 1933.

¹¹³ "School Officials Under Fire for Jim Crow Rule." The Chicago Defender. May 5, 1934.

that, “Negroes should be satisfied with arrangements for separating Negro school children...in the South Negroes had to take the crumbs and were glad to get them.”¹¹⁴ Pickell justified Montclair’s segregation and tracking of Black children by comparing it favorably to conditions in the South’s Black schools.

Although the superintendent admitted to the separation of Black children, the board of education refused to acknowledge that school segregation existed and acted in a condescending manner towards the Black women. Insisting that its policies were in best interests of all children, the board of education blamed African Americans for sparking unnecessary conflict. Richard Greene, president of the board of education, declared that, “Glenfield is one of finest school buildings in Montclair and Mr. Prose one of the ablest administrations. The curriculum and school are financially sound.”¹¹⁵ Greene even suggested that working-class Black residents accepted the district lines and that “the agitation arises from a few leaders of colored people.”¹¹⁶ Moreover, he asserted that the board of education treated Black residents fairly, stating that, “Negros are treated as citizens not only in the letter but also the spirit of the laws and of people.”¹¹⁷ Greene even threatened legal action against leaders of the boycott for purportedly violating their children’s right to an education. He implied that the boycott’s leaders valued their political goals more than their children’s welfare; lamenting out of a false sense of

¹¹⁴ Montclair Board of Education Minutes. September 18, 1933. Montclair Board of Education. Montclair, New Jersey

¹¹⁵ Montclair Board of Education Minutes. October 3, 1933. Montclair Board of Education. Montclair, New Jersey

¹¹⁶ Montclair Board of Education Minutes. October 3, 1933. Montclair Board of Education. Montclair, New Jersey

¹¹⁷ Montclair Board of Education Minutes. October 3, 1933. Montclair Board of Education. Montclair, New Jersey.

paternalism that “some children have not attended a single school session and are neglected and not getting attention.”¹¹⁸

Aggrieved African American parents organized a school boycott when the 1933 school year started. On October 3rd, 1933, however, the boycott ended after Greene threatened legal action against the leaders¹¹⁹ Unwilling to risk a lawsuit, Mary Allen, Freda Kenney, and other leaders of the boycott sent a letter to the Montclair Board of Education stating that they would pursue their grievances through legal channels. They maintained that the new district lines discriminated against African American children, citing that, “white children who should have attended Glenfield now go to Hillside, but all of the 21 colored children who applied for transfers from Glenside to Hillside were denied and a large number of colored children requested now to go to school at distance greater than white children residing in the same neighborhood.”¹²⁰ At the same time, they signed the letter stating that, “We beg to remain your obedient citizens.”¹²¹

Reflecting Montclair's complex racial politics and the importance of educational equality to Black women's community goals, they professed a desire to cooperate with the board of education yet continued to fight the revised school district lines. The Montclair NAACP filed a complaint about the new school boundaries with the New Jersey Education Commission, but in August of 1934, the commission dismissed the appeal. Undeterred, the Montclair NAACP appealed to the New Jersey State Board of

¹¹⁸ Montclair Board of Education Minutes. September 18, 1933. Montclair Board of Education. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹¹⁹ Montclair Board of Education Minutes. September 18, 1933. Montclair Board of Education. Montclair, New Jersey

¹²⁰ Montclair Board of Education Minutes. October 3, 1933. Montclair Board of Education. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹²¹ Montclair Board of Education Minutes. October 3, 1933. Montclair Board of Education. Montclair, New Jersey.

Education. In February of 1935, the state board ruled that new school boundaries did not discriminate against Black children and expressed satisfaction “that there is no general policy to segregate colored children.”¹²²

The African American community’s struggle for educational equality in Montclair during the 1930s ended unsuccessfully. At the same time, African American women’s leadership in the fight reveals the centrality of educational equality to their community vision and Montclair’s complex racial politics. The Montclair Board of Education’s policies discriminated against Black children, yet board members insisted that they acted in the best interests of all children. Black women challenged the board of education’s policies, but at the same time expressed a desire for cooperation and conciliation. White civic elites acknowledged that African Americans as members of the town while clearly subordinating their interests to those of white residents.

Entangled Relationships and Hierarchies

White upper and middle-class women’s leadership of social welfare programs further illuminates Montclair’s complex racial politics. Indeed, white women’s civic voice was predicated on the existed of a minority population they could claim to help. Upper and middle-class white men insisted that their education and professional experiences qualified them to control civic affairs. At the same time, they encouraged white women to create social welfare programs that helped African American and Italian residents. White male civic leaders did not perceive elite white women’s leadership of social welfare programs as a threat to their political leadership because they viewed it as an expansion of women’s domestic role. In fact, they hoped that private social welfare

¹²² Montclair Board of Education Minutes. August 3, 1934. Montclair Board of Education Minutes. February 19, 1935. Montclair Board of Education. Montclair, New Jersey. “School Bias Held Legal.” The New York Amsterdam News. February 15, 1935.

programs would decrease municipal expenditures on economic relief and supported white women's efforts.

White women used social welfare programs to implement their vision of an attractive residential community by improving the quality of life for African American and Italian immigrant residents. White women's programs provided African Americans and Italian residents with important municipal resources in the absence of a strong local government.¹²³ For example, the Junior League of Montclair established a community house in the fourth ward that offered African American and Italian residents numerous recreational programs, a preschool, childcare, food, and clothing.

White women also had a clear interest in sustaining rather than challenging the underlying social and economic conditions that engendered a hierarchal yet dependent relationship between the African American, Italian, and white communities. Montclair's small size and demographics engendered this mutual dependence. White men clearly held the most economic and civic power, yet relied on white women, Italians, and African Americans to maintain the idyllic environment in their daily absence. The labor of Black service workers freed white women from their domestic responsibilities and provided them with the time to volunteer. White women relied on white men to support and fund their social welfare programs. White women's civic voice was predicated on the existence of a minority population they could claim to help. Like the board of education, they condescendingly treated African Americans and Italian immigrants: ignoring the need for a minority voice in their programs and claiming to know and act the best interests of minorities.

¹²³ Theda Skocpol, "Unraveling from Above: Civic Associations in American Democracy." *American Prospect* (January 1996).

African American and Italian women rejected the unequal helping relationship embedded within white women's social welfare programs and created meaningful alternative resources. More importantly, however, their creation of community resources and organizations was part of their broader efforts to transform the fourth ward as a neighborhood that celebrated their culture and offered resources for their community. Rather than simply respond to white women, minority women worked to realize the hopes and aspirations they held when they migrated to Montclair.

Illustrating the complex hierarchal, helping relationship between women, the Montclair LWV's white middle and upper-class female membership recruited African American and Italian members, but considered placing them in separate auxiliaries that operated under the main branch's supervision. Janet Zangrilli, an upwardly mobile Italian woman who lived on the outskirts of the Italian neighborhood, spearheaded the recruitment effort as a member of the League.¹²⁴ She had joined the LWV in 1920 and canvassed Montclair's Italian neighborhood that year as part of a membership drive.¹²⁵ As part its continued recruitment of Italian women, February of 1925 the LWV translated fliers advertising the League into Italian and placed them in the Italian neighborhood.¹²⁶

At the same time it recruited Black and Italian members, the Montclair LWV considered creating separate auxiliaries for them. The all-white Montclair LWV chapter would act in an advisory capacity and guide these auxiliary units. Mrs. Cook, a leader in the Orange LWV, spoke at the Montclair LWV in November of 1924 about how the

¹²⁴ Meeting Minutes. League of Women Voters Organizational Archives. League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area.

¹²⁵ Meeting Minutes. League of Women Voters Organizational Archives. League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area.

¹²⁶ Meeting Minutes. League of Women Voters Organizational Archives. League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area.

Orange LWV had created an auxiliary for African American women, but few had joined. Although Cook declined to specify what caused the lack of interest, African American women likely refused to join an organization that made them subservient to white women.¹²⁷

Since the Orange LWV's attempt to create separate auxiliaries for African American women had failed, the Montclair LWV voted to admit African American and Italian women as regular members. At the meeting held in November of 1924, members passed a motion affirming the principle that, "every woman in every household who is a citizen be asked to become a member of the League." Auxiliaries remained a possibility, but only if African American or Italian women initiated the formation of one.¹²⁸ The Montclair LWV admitted Black and Italian women as regular members, yet still few joined. Although the precise reasons are unclear, Black and Italian women likely preferred to spend their limited time and resources building up their own organizations.

Black women's lack of representation in the Montclair LWV and white women's assumption that they understood the best interests of Black and Italian residents led the League to support policies that controlled rather than helped Italian and Black residents. The Montclair LWV attempted to implement mandatory syphilis testing for all domestic servants as part of an effort to protect the health of predominantly Black domestic servants as well as the white families who employed them. Perceived of as a progressive measure at the time, the League and Associated Physicians of Montclair and Vicinity co-sponsored a public health campaign in 1938 that offered free testing and treatment for

¹²⁷ Meeting Minutes. League of Women Voters Organizational Archives. League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area.

¹²⁸ Meeting Minutes. League of Women Voters Organizational Archives. League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area.

syphilis. Although the campaign improved the health of the Black women who received treatment and testing, LWV also sought to protect the health of their family members by testing Black residents for syphilis. In one newsletter, the LWV urged members to encourage their own domestic servants to receive the test, reminding them that, “it is safer to have a food handler in the home who has syphilis and is under treatment than one who has never been tested.”¹²⁹ After the campaign, the LWV proposed a town ordinance requiring all household employees to receive routine physical examines.¹³⁰ Although the town commission refused to pass the measure, citing excessive costs, the LWV lobbied for a measure that subjected African American women’s bodies to medical examiners.

Despite the LWV’s interest in stopping the spread of syphilis, it did not challenge or discuss how non-consensual sexual relationships between Black domestic workers and white men spread the disease. Moreover, the League’s proposals ignored the need to test men as well. These were serious omissions. White women helped African American women receive testing and treatment for syphilis but failed to advocate for equality in sexual or gender relations. White women’s proposals would have ensured that Black domestic workers did not “contaminate” their own family members with syphilis or other diseases while still benefiting from their labor. Finally, the LWV’s proposed ordinance, if implemented, would allow male medical professionals to control and survey Black women’s bodies without subjecting men to the same humiliation.

The exclusion of minority women from the Montclair Women’s Club and Woman’s Club of Upper Montclair also reinforced a hierarchal, helping relationship

¹²⁹ “Anti-Syphilis Campaign.” The League Bulletin, January 1939.

¹³⁰ New Jersey League of Women Voters. Box 19, Folder 40, Departments and Committee Files, Social Hygiene Committee, Reports, 1930, 1936-1939. Rutgers University Special Collections. Rutgers University. Montclair, New Jersey.

between white and minority women. Unlike the Montclair LWV, these racially exclusive organizations did not recruit minority women and social barriers and the high cost of membership prevented African American and Italian women from joining. With approximately 1,000 members in each during the 1920s and 1930s, white women mobilized these club networks to efforts to realize their vision of Montclair.

By excluding non-white women from membership, the two clubs implied that white women rather than all women should serve as civic leaders on issues related to the family and community. The Woman's Club of Upper Montclair's mission reflected this belief, stating that the club's purpose was, "to bring together women for mental stimulus and for cooperation in working out the problems of the day; to consider and provide measures of social welfare, and to furnish educational and other entertainment for the benefit of the organization and the general public."¹³¹ The club boldly declared that members sought the greater public good despite its homogeneous membership. Additionally, both clubs had active civic departments that sponsored small discussion groups and lectures by town government officials on local issues.¹³² The club excluded minority women from these discussions, yet still claimed that club members understood and worked for the entire town's interests.

White women also reinforced the helping, hierarchal relationship between white, Black, and Italian residents through mission projects. Propelled by the Social Gospel Movement, a Protestant intellectual movement that offered a theological rationale for eradicating poverty, illiteracy, crime, alcoholism, and other social ills, white Protestant

¹³¹ "Upper Montclair Club is Center for Civic Interests." Montclair Times. April 25, 1931. The Woman's Club of Upper Montclair had 1,214 members in 1930 and the Montclair Women's Club 800 members in 1930.

¹³² "Women's Club Formed in 1915." Montclair Times. February 26, 1937. "We Glance Back." The Bulletin. March 1939. The Bulletin. May 1930.

churches created missionary projects that attempted to instill Protestant, middle-class values into Black and Italian residents.¹³³ White women insisted that religious values translated into moral values and family practices that directly impacted the physical and social environment. Assuming that their moral values were superior, white women viewed mission projects as a way to improve Montclair's quality of life.¹³⁴ While white women could not assume leadership or teaching roles over white men within their own churches, they assumed a leadership role in local mission projects where they taught to Italians and African Americans religious and moral values. White women's ability to assume a leadership role in their church was predicated on the establishment of a teaching relationship with minority residents and assumption of the superiority of their own religious and moral values.

Female members of Central Presbyterian Church, a large white middle and upper class church in Montclair, attempted to convert Catholic Italian immigrants to Presbyterianism. Their actions implied that most Italians lacked a strong religious faith and, moreover, that the Italian community's lack of piety harmed Montclair. Madeline French, a middle-class resident who led the Italian mission church, articulated this perspective. She surmised that, "there are 6,000 Italians in Montclair. One half of these have hardly any church connection worthy to call the name. This is unfortunate for themselves and equally so for the town."¹³⁵

¹³³ Ronald C. White, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976).

¹³⁴ *Gender and the Social Gospel*, Wendy J. Deichman Edwards and Carolyn de Swarte Gifford, Eds. (Urbana, I.L.: University of Chicago Press, 2003) and Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West: 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹³⁵ J. Walker McSpadden. *The Central Presbyterian Church: The Story of a Hundred Years*.

White women also reinforced a helping, hierarchal relationship with minority residents as they worked to realize their vision of Montclair by organizing a community Protestant Vacation Bible School. Female members of Central Presbyterian, St. Luke's Episcopal, and First Congregational Churches organized the summer school, which enrolled 155 African-American children and 61 Italian children in 1930. The school offered free daycare, religious instruction, and educational activities, important benefits for African American and Italian mothers lacking a caregiver for their school-aged children during the summer. At the same time, the white women who operated the school claimed that minority parents had abnegated their responsibility to provide religious training for their children. White women sought to fill this void, declaring that the goal was, "to reach out into the community to those children who may not have a church connection."¹³⁶ Moreover, the Vacation Bible School's leaders declined to partner with African American or Catholic churches.¹³⁷ African American and Italian mothers remained clients rather than partners in the school.

White women also realized their vision of Montclair by creating social welfare programs targeting African American and Italian residents. They linked their vision of Montclair as an attractive residential community to the quality of life all residents, including racial and ethnic minorities, enjoyed. White women improved the quality of life for minority residents by providing them with important educational and material resources. Still, limitations existed on their progressivism as they assumed to know and work in the best interests of Italian or African American residents, yet ignored the need to obtain input from them.

¹³⁶ "Missionary Work in Local Project." The Montclair Times. May 31, 1930.

¹³⁷ "Missionary Work in Local Project." Montclair Times. May 31, 1930.

The Junior League of Montclair was arguably the most important women's organization in Montclair during the interwar period. Emerging from New York's settlement house movement, the national Junior League encouraged well-to-do women to help working-class immigrants and minorities. Sarba Bradlee founded the Montclair chapter in 1921 with the goal "to develop the ability of its members in the interests of good citizenship and to relate this ability to the community."¹³⁸ Bradlee recalled that she sought "to change the concept of women's charitable endeavor from a mere social gesture to a role of real service to the community."¹³⁹ When she founded the Junior League, upper and middle-class men initially viewed the Junior League with skepticism and many local organizations such as Mountainside Hospital refused to accept League members as volunteers.¹⁴⁰ The Junior League created a volunteer training program that convinced white male business and civic leaders of the effectiveness of women's social welfare work. The provided the League with credibility when it decided to create its own social welfare programs rather than simply place members in existing organizations.

The Junior League eventually created a community house in the fourth ward which became the nerve center for its social welfare programs and educational classes.¹⁴¹ The League aimed to improve community and family life for Black and Italian residents by, "helping to solve one of Montclair's greatest social problems and have a definite

¹³⁸ *The Montclair Junior League 1937 Yearbook*. Pg. 55. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹³⁹ "Montclair Junior League to Mark Anniversary." Newark Evening News. December 16, 1970.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ "The Junior League Community House." Elizabeth Cochran. Quest. September, 1931. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey. "Broad Area Covered by Activities of Junior League Community House. Montclair Times. December 13, 1935.

bearing on many phases of community and neighborhood.”¹⁴² Approximately one hundred League volunteers and one full-time professional social worker led the cultural clubs, girl and boy scouts, baby and adult health care clinics, adult education, job training, and English language classes, nursery school, and senior civic club held at the community house.¹⁴³



Image 1.8: Neighborhood Children and Women inside the Junior League’s Community House. The Junior League created a domestic environment partially to demonstrate proper housekeeping to Italian and Black women. Photo Courtesy of the Junior League.

The community house’s governing structure reflects how the Junior League attempted to help rather than empower African American and Italian residents and controlled the community house with little input from minority residents despite claiming

¹⁴² “The Junior League Community House.” Elizabeth Cochran. *Quest*. September, 1931. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey. “Broad Area Covered by Activities of Junior League Community House. *Montclair Times*. December 13, 1935.

¹⁴³ “The Junior League Community House.” Elizabeth Cochran. *Quest*. September, 1931. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

to seek their best interests. An administrative board composed exclusively of Junior League members was the community house's primary governing board. While the administrative board met biweekly, African American and Italian residents, on the other hand, served on a separate advisory committee that only met annually. The infrequent meetings meant that they likely enjoyed little influence over the community house's daily operations and programs.¹⁴⁴

Moreover, the League's programs also reinforced a hierarchal, helping relationship between white upper-class women and African American and Italian residents. The Junior League's programs were based on the premise that white women could improve family life in the fourth ward by teaching Italians and African Americans middle-class standards of housekeeping, hygiene, and child care. The League described the community house as an "educational and character-building unit in the social welfare field and its educational mission is largely a preventive one."¹⁴⁵ For example, instead of distributing food or clothing to new mothers, the League held baby care classes at the community house and provided African American and Italian residents with individual instructions inside their homes.¹⁴⁶ Illustrating the League's deliberate intent to create a teaching relationship with Italian and African American mothers, the League preferred to enroll first time mothers in its nursery school and baby care classes, stating that, "the inexperienced mother is more teachable." Additionally, the League only enrolled women

¹⁴⁴ Hugh W. Ransom. *The Neighborhood Center Experiment in Montclair, New Jersey: An Evaluation*. (New York: The New York School of Social Work, Columbia University, 1941), pp. 11-2.

¹⁴⁵ *Montclair Junior League Yearbook, 1937* (Montclair, N.J.: Montclair Junior League, 1937), pg. 83. Montclair Historical Society, Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁴⁶ "45 years of Service." *Montclair Times*. January 20, 1966.

who demonstrated a desire to co-operate with League volunteers to increase the likelihood that they enacted recommendations about childcare.¹⁴⁷



Image 1.9: A Junior League Volunteer supervising Black and Italian girls in a crafts project inside of the community house. An unnamed League volunteer took the photograph to publicize and raise money for the League's activities.

The Junior League acted in an advisory capacity by attempting to mitigate feelings of racial prejudice that African Americans and Italians felt towards each other. African Americans and Italians lived in proximity to each other in the fourth ward, but seldom interacted, had different community networks, and often competed for the same jobs.¹⁴⁸ The League purposefully placed the community house in a racially mixed section of the fourth ward and enrolled an equal number of Italian and Black residents in programs to instill sense of cooperation and commonality into Black and Italian

¹⁴⁷ *The Montclair Junior League 1937 Yearbook*. Pp. 83. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁴⁸ "Stabs Boy to Death With Knife He Made." *The New York Times*. November 19, 1927. "His Schoolmates Attend Funeral of Montclair Boy." *The New York Amsterdam*. November 23, 1927.

residents.¹⁴⁹ The League declared that, “the Italian had caught the American prejudice against the Negro. The Negro looked upon the Italian as a foreigner, whose ways were un-American. Each feared being associated with each other.”¹⁵⁰

The Junior League proudly claimed credit for engendering a spirit of cooperation, and positive connections between the two communities. When Francisco Franco invaded Ethiopia in 1935, violent riots occurred between Blacks and Italian Americans in nearby New York City and other metropolitan communities around the country. Italian Americans supported Franco while African Americans viewed Franco’s invasion of Ethiopia as a naked act of aggression against Africans.¹⁵¹ In contrast to many cities, relations between African Americans and Italians in Montclair remained peaceful. The Junior League applauded itself for the absence of violence or even tension, exclaiming that African Americans and Italians “acted as Americans working toward a common goal of political and economic democracy fortified in the community not only by inter-racial but also by inter-class co-operation.”¹⁵²

Despite attempting to create a sense of community and equality between African American and Italian residents, Junior League members did not apply the same ideals to themselves and excluded Italian and African American women as well as white middle-class women from the League. No formal social or racial bar existed, but current members invited all new members. This perpetuated the organization’s social

¹⁴⁹ “The Junior League Community House.” Elizabeth Cochran. *Quest*. September, 1931. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁵⁰ *The Montclair Junior League 1937 Yearbook*. Pg. 87. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁵¹ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), chapter 2.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, pg. 91.

exclusivity.¹⁵³ Nancy Knoerzer, a white middle-class resident, bitterly recalled neither she nor her mother was invited to join because, as members of the middle rather than upper-class, they lacked “the right sort of background.” Knoerzer’s mother had studied classical piano at Julliard, her father was a visual artist, and the family employed a live-in domestic servant.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the family was significantly less affluent than the majority of Junior League members who were the daughters of industrialists, Wall Street financiers and business executives.

Additionally, Montclair’s small size and tight, interwoven social relations meant that Junior League members’ social welfare programs often attempted to help the same African Americans that they employed in their homes as domestic servants. Domestic service created an economic link between the African American and white communities. African American service workers freed Junior League members from their domestic labor. Sarba Bradlee, the Junior League’s founder, recalled that, “it was easier in those days to find time for volunteer work because most members had help in the house and someone to mind the children.”¹⁵⁵ White women’s ability to implement their vision of Montclair depended partially on the labor of African American service workers.¹⁵⁶ African Americans maintained the idyllic environment while elite white women used

¹⁵³ Junior League of Montclair. Local History Collection, Box A27. Montclair Public Library, Montclair, New Jersey. Margaret French served as clerical chairman of the Junior League’s Community House Committee from 1935 through 1936.

¹⁵⁴ Nancy Knoerzer Oral History Interview. Interviewed by Patricia Hampson, November 29, 2007 inside the interviewee’s home. Junior League of Montclair. Local History Collection, Box A27. Montclair Public Library, Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁵⁵ “The Junior League Community House.” Elizabeth Cochran. *Quest*. September, 1931. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey. “Broad Area Covered by Activities of Junior League Community House. *Montclair Times*. December 13, 1935.

¹⁵⁶ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor.” Autumn 1992. *Signs*.

their free time and economic resources to improve living conditions for Black and Italian residents.

The Junior League emphasized the close, helping relationship it engendered when it asked white middle and upper class men to fund its endeavors. Rather than justify the how its budget or demonstrate the effectiveness of its programs, the majority of the fundraising letters extolled the close helping relationship League members formed with ethnic minorities. In the 1931 fundraising letter, Elizabeth Cochran, a League member, declared that, “owing to its intimate association with the neighborhood families, the community house is often able to obtain effective cooperation with families where a more formalized agency may work in vain.”¹⁵⁷ She also emphasized that the Montclair Junior League received national awards for its work because of the close relationship between the League and local residents, noting that, “the community house commands the respect of the other Leagues in the country, having won first prize as the outstanding welfare work in 1930 of the Association Junior Leagues of America...we are therefore justly proud of our organization which occupies such a vital position in the recreation activities of the Glenfield section.”¹⁵⁸ Cochran viewed a hierarchal helping relationship as critical to the success of the Junior League’s programs.

White women’s response to the Great Depression further illustrates the connection of their community activism to the mutual dependence yet hierarchal relationship between Montclair’s white, Italian, and Black communities. A severe unemployment crisis occurred during the early 1930s among African Americans after

¹⁵⁷ “The Junior League Community House.” Elizabeth Cochran. Quest. September, 1931. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁵⁸ “The Junior League Community House.” Elizabeth Cochran. Quest. September, 1931. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

elite white residents fired their predominantly Black private service workers with little warning. The Montclair Bureau of Public Welfare's 1932 report stated that, "Montclair's problem of relief is bound up with the welfare of Negroes who during the era of prosperity were engaged in personal and domestic service in the well to do homes of the city. With the collapse of the stock market the luxury services they were speedily eliminated with consequent unemployment of a large group of Negroes, a considerable number of Italians and other racial groups. This group is therefore left without resources and with no possibility of finding employment because of the drying up of the resources of those who heretofore have provided employment for them."¹⁵⁹ Illustrating the economic crisis for Black and Italian service workers, Montclair Public Welfare Bureau's caseload increased between June and Sept 1932 from 200 to 900 families. Fully 56 percent of cases were African Americans even though they comprised 15 percent of the population.¹⁶⁰ The Montclair Town Commission spent as little on relief as possible in an effort to retain a low tax rate. Between October of 1931 and July of 1932, Montclair spent only \$2.18 per inhabitant on relief compared with \$4.67 in Essex County and \$3.39 in New Jersey.¹⁶¹

In response to the employment crisis, white upper and middle-class women created relief programs that offered economic assistance yet reinforced Black and Italian residents' economic dependence on the white community. In 1931, Jane Newell Amerman, the Montclair Women's Club's former president, queried in the club's

¹⁵⁹ Department of Institutions and Agencies of the State of New Jersey. 1932 Survey to Evaluate the Activities of the Montclair Bureau of Public Welfare. (Trenton, N.J.: State of New Jersey, 1932).

¹⁶⁰ Department of Institutions and Agencies of the State of New Jersey. 1932 Survey to Evaluate the Activities of the Montclair Bureau of Public Welfare. (Trenton, N.J.: State of New Jersey, 1932). Rutgers Special Collections. Rutgers University. New Brunswick, New Jersey.

¹⁶¹ Department of Institutions and Agencies of the State of New Jersey. 1932 Survey to Evaluate the Activities of the Montclair Bureau of Public Welfare. (Trenton, N.J.: State of New Jersey, 1932).

magazine, “Are we, the mothers of the generation, ready to do our part? Do we have in our Club any more worthy ‘Quest’ for the New Year of 1931 than to make a contribution in many directions?”¹⁶² In response to Amerman’s charge, the Montclair Women’s Club co-sponsored a give-a-job campaign with Woman’s Club of Upper Montclair. The campaign encouraged members to hire domestic servants on a temporary basis.¹⁶³ According to the *Montclair Times*, the local paper, Mrs. Herbert Ellis, president of the Montclair Women’s Club who headed the campaign, “made an urgent plea that members [of the club] provide a day’s work each month for three months to one unemployed person.”¹⁶⁴ The campaign likely provided some African Americans with economic relief. Not surprisingly, club members ignored how they had created the employment crisis by firing their full-time domestic help.

White women also founded the woman’s work room in south Montclair in response to the unemployment crisis. Founded at the urging of town officials who relied on white women’s private relief programs to keep municipal relief costs low, the project provided more than 500 Italian and Black seamstresses with much-needed jobs.¹⁶⁵ At the same time, it underscored African American and Italian women’s economic dependence on the white community. For instance, Jane Barus, who lead the program, solicited donations of materials and sewing jobs from the Montclair Women’s Club for the project. In the club’s magazine Barus declared that, “there is no limit to the women who may be given work if enough material is offered. The committee asks for your mending and

¹⁶² “The President’s New Year Message.” *Quest*. January, 1931. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁶³ “Women’s Club Aids Give-A-Job Drive.” *Montclair Times*. March 4, 1932.

¹⁶⁴ “Women’s Club Aids Give-A-Job Drive.” *Montclair Times*. March 4, 1932.

¹⁶⁵ “The Woman’s Work Room.” *Quest*. February 1932. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

sewing jobs-your napkins to be hemmed, your curtains to be made, your darning and general sewing to be done...we can use nearly anything.”¹⁶⁶ Women’s donations, Barus claimed, were critical to the project, allowing it “to operate with no overhead expense so that each dollar may go directly into wages of needed women.”¹⁶⁷

Barus credited white women with the woman’s workroom success, praising them for unselfishly seeking the interests of unemployed seamstresses. She declared that the project “provided unemployed women with the difference between absolute destitution and some degree of independence and security. Not only have they been able to buy food for their families, but their confidence and hope has been built up by the prospect of steady work.”¹⁶⁸ She credited white women with the success, exclaiming that, “the committee is most grateful to the women of Montclair who have supported this undertaking, and who have increased their own budgets in order to give work to others. Only through this support has the program of the workroom been made possible.”¹⁶⁹ Barus praised white women for the woman’s work room’s unequivocal success, declaring that they had improved the quality of life for countless unemployed women. At the same time, the program reinforced the economic dependence of Black and Italian residents on the white community.

White women’s efforts at civic improvement provided Black and Italian residents with material assistance, yet also perpetuated minority residents’ economic dependence on the white community as well as a hierarchal relationship. White women attempted to

¹⁶⁶ “The Woman’s Work Room.” Quest. March 1932. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁶⁷ “The Woman’s Work Room.” Quest. March 1932. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁶⁸ “Women’s Workroom Ends First Year with 3,195 Days’ Work Provided.” Montclair Times. February 7, 1933.

¹⁶⁹ “Woman’s Work Room.” Quest. May 1932. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

help rather than partner with minority residents and assumed that they acted in the best interests of minority residents, ignoring the sometimes harmful effects of their actions.

African American and Italian women also sought to implement their vision of Montclair as a vibrant, residential community. However, while white women focused on helping racial and ethnic minorities, they focused on improving the quality of life in their own communities. Minority women rejected the hierarchal helping relationship imbedded in white women's social welfare programs, but, more importantly, worked to implement their own community goals. Lacking economic resources and a political voice, they still struggled to realize their goals and hopes for their communities.

Italian women realized their vision of a vibrant residential community that reflected their culture by organizing events at Mount Carmel Church, Montclair's Italian national parish. The Archdiocese of Newark established national parishes such as Mount Carmel as part of an effort to ensure that European immigrants remained Catholic. Mt. Carmel was officially separate from Immaculate Conception, Montclair's territorial parish whose membership was comprised of white middle-class parishioners. Over 4,000 Italians attended the church, which was located in the fourth ward and was an important community center.¹⁷⁰ Italian women carved out autonomous space within Mount Carmel to implement their community vision. The Catholic Church prohibited women from leading religious worship, yet they organized annual parish festivals, musicals, dances,

¹⁷⁰ Mary A. Ward. *A Mission for Justice: The History of the First African-American Catholic Church in Newark, New Jersey* (Knoxville, T.N.: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), introduction and chapter one. 1930 United States Census Data. U.S. Government Publication. United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C. Record Group #10, Parish Files. Box 77, Folder 1. Msgr. William Noe Field Archives and Special Collections Center. Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey. Jan. 3. 1933 letter from Reverend Gaetano Ruggiero to the Archbishop of Newark.

and other events that built a strong community that celebrated the Italian culture.¹⁷¹

Italian women created other parish organizations that celebrated their faith and culture, including the Society of Christian Mothers, Little Flower Club, Sacred Heart League for Women, and Unione Cattolica Italiana.¹⁷²

Italian women also realized their vision of vibrant community reflective of their faith and culture by teaching their children the Catholic faith, an important component of their identity. The parish lacked a parochial school, the most common source of religious instruction for Catholic children since the Archdiocese viewed it as too small to support a school. To fill the need for religious education, in 1918 Italian women organized catechism classes that prepared more than 500 Italian children for first communion and confirmation during the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁷³ Recognizing the importance of these classes to the Italian community, Mt. Carmel's pastor exclaimed that Italian women had, "labored faithfully and well for many years."¹⁷⁴

Italian women also realized their community goals by teaching Italian children about their culture at Baldwin Street Grammar School, a neighborhood k-6th grade school. Most Italian children attended Baldwin before moving into Glenfield Junior High School. Italian women transformed the segregated school into a community center that sponsored, social clubs, dancing, music lessons, movies, and musical concerts for the

¹⁷¹ Henry J. Browne, "The Italian Problem and the Catholic Church of the United States, 1880-1900," *United States Catholic Historical Society: Historical Records and Studies* 35 (1946), pp. 46-72; Silvo M. Tomasi, *Piety and Power: The Role of Italian Parishes in the New York Metropolitan Area, 1880-1930* (Staten Island, N.Y.: Center for Migration Studies, 1975) and Silvo M. Tomasi, ed., *The Religious Experience of Italian-Americans* (South Orange, N.J.: Seton Hall University, 1975).

¹⁷² "Mount Carmel Church Choir to Sponsor Dance." *Montclair Times*, December 15, 1931. *Origins. History of Mount Carmel Church*. Privately Published by Mount Carmel Church. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁷³ "Religious Training: Our First Seventy-Five Years." Parish Files. Special Collections and Archives. Seton Hall University. South Orange, New Jersey.

¹⁷⁴ "Religious Training: Our First Seventy-Five Years." Parish Files. Special Collections and Archives. Seton Hall University. South Orange, New Jersey.

entire neighborhood.¹⁷⁵ Janet Zangrilli created a Mothers' Club at the school that infused the Italian culture into celebrations of American holidays.¹⁷⁶ For the school's annual Christmas party, Zangrilli and other women cooked traditional Italian foods and organized a play depicting Christmas Eve in an Italian home.¹⁷⁷ Such a celebration of Italian culture was absent from Montclair's community-wide high school or other integrated schools. When Baldwin was renovated in 1931, Italians even convinced the Montclair Board of Education to model the building after an Italian villa.¹⁷⁸

Similar to Italian women, African American women mobilized their church networks to implement their vision of the fourth ward as an attractive residential community. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has demonstrated that Black women used their churches to push for their own interests and goals.¹⁷⁹ In Montclair, Black women used churches to create community resources. During the 1930s, Black women led summer vacation Bible schools at St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal and Union Baptist Churches. These schools consisted of recreational and religious education programs.¹⁸⁰ Since many working Black mothers lacked childcare options for their school-aged children during the summer, these schools filled an important community need and provided alternatives to the community-wide Bible school that white female members at First Congregational, St. Luke's Episcopal, and First Presbyterian Churches organized.

¹⁷⁵ Baldwin Street Community House Vertical File. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁷⁶ "Mrs. Zangrilli Passes Here." Montclair Times. May 3, 1938. 1923 Montclair City Directory. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁷⁷ "Minnie A. Lucey Club Christmas Party Attended by School and Town Officials." Montclair Times. January 14, 1938.

¹⁷⁸ "Renamed for Late Welfare Worker." Montclair Times. November 13, 1931.

¹⁷⁹ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, second edition).

¹⁸⁰ "Union Baptist Church of Montclair Started in '87." New York Amsterdam News. July 15, 1939. "Montclair." New York Amsterdam News. September 28, 1927.

African American women also used St. Peter Claver Church, a Black national parish in Montclair, to implement their community vision by creating community resources. Located only half a mile from Mount Carmel Church and a mile from Immaculate Conception, Montclair's territorial parish, the Archdiocese of Newark founded St. Peter Claver as a Black mission project in 1931. White Catholics at Immaculate Conception had forced African Americans to sit behind a screen in the rear of church during Mass, sparking tension.¹⁸¹ The Archdiocese also founded St. Peter's as part of a broader effort to convert African American migrants from the South who were predominantly Protestant to Catholicism. Although racial discrimination precipitated the parish's founding, African American women created a free employment bureau at the parish. During the Great Depression, more than 150 African Americans used the bureau each month to locate work.¹⁸² Once employed, Black residents could support their families and maintain their homes, contributing to the fourth ward's desirability as a residential community.

The only organization Black women controlled during the interwar period, the Montclair YWCA was also critical to Black women's implementation of their vision of a vibrant Black residential community. The Montclair YWCA was one of the only "colored" branches in the entire country that operated independent of a main white YWCA branch.¹⁸³ The Montclair Y was a hub of activism during the interwar period.

¹⁸¹ Elizabeth Milliken, "St. Peter Claver: Race and Catholicism in the Formation of an African-American Parish" *New Jersey History* vol. 117, n.3-4. Winter 1999, pg. 7 and Mary A. Ward. *A Mission for Justice: The History of the First African-American Catholic Church in Newark, New Jersey* (Knoxville, T.N.: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), introduction and chapter one.

¹⁸² "Open Free Employment Bureau at Mission House." *Montclair Times*. December 16, 1932.

¹⁸³ See Janine Marie Denomme, "To End This Day of Strife" Churchwomen and the campaign for Integration, 1920-1970" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2001); Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-1946* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Judith Weisenfeld, *African-American Women and Christian Activism: New York's Black YWCA*,

For instance, the Y's Black female leadership often belonged to the Montclair NAACP and other community organizations.

At the same time, the Montclair YWCA also illustrates the hierarchal, helping relationship between white and Black women and the Black community's economic reliance on elite white residents. In March of 1912, Alice Hoe Foster, a member of the Black professional class, approached a group of wealthy white women who attended St. Luke's Episcopal Church about creating a colored YWCA in Montclair. She recognized a need for a local organization that assisted African American girls who migrated to Montclair seeking employment as domestic servants. The white women had recently attended an Episcopal bishop's lecture emphasizing the importance of civic duty and readily agreed to help Foster.¹⁸⁴ White women served on an advisory board that supervised and raised funds for the branch while African American women led the daily activities. The acquisition of the Y's permanent building exemplifies the advisory board's role. The advisory board approved the Black leadership's request to acquire a permanent facility and then persuaded Israel Crane, a wealthy white resident from the town's period as a farming village, to donate his old house which was located on the outskirts of the Black neighborhood at no cost at the Y. While the advisory board secured the building, African American women raised \$4,000 for furnishings.

1905-1945 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); Jodi Vandenberg-Daves, "The Manly Pursuit of a Partnership between the Sexes: The Debate over YMCA Programs for Women and Girls, 1914-1933," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (March 1992), pp. 1324-1346; and Jessica I. Elfenbein, *The Making of a Modern City: Philanthropy, Civic Culture, and the Baltimore YMCA* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001).

¹⁸⁴ Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA. YWCA of the USA Records, 1860-2002, MS 324, Reel 190.



Image 1.10: YWCA Building, which was originally an 18th century farmstead. The YWCA renovated the structure for its programs. Photo Courtesy of Montclair Public Library

In addition to their fundraising activities, advisory board members attempted to supervise the Black female leaders.¹⁸⁵ The advisory board's members claimed that their supervision and assistance was so important to the Black branch that they could not even consider forming a white community branch until Black female leaders emerged. During the 1920s, the advisory board rebuffed the national YWCA's repeated attempts to create a white branch in Montclair, insisting that the African American branch required their full attention. In its 1932 report to the national branch, the advisory board claimed that, "there is not very much developed leadership among Negro women and the advisory board performs a great service."¹⁸⁶

Despite the perception of advisory board members that no leadership existed among Black women, African American women carved spaces of autonomy within the YWCA that they used to implement their vision of a vibrant Black community. In fact,

¹⁸⁵Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA. YWCA of the USA Records, 1860-2002, MS 324, Reel 190.

¹⁸⁶Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA. YWCA of the USA Records, 1860-2002, MS 324, Reel 190. June 24, 1932 Report, National YWCA.

Black women viewed the YWCA as a space of empowerment. Hortense Ridley Tate served as Secretary of the Girl Reserves for the Montclair YWCA. She had moved to Montclair from Kansas in 1921 to work for the Y after graduating from college and usually persuaded the advisory board to follow her recommendations when conflict emerged. Tate, for instance, asked the advisory board for permission to hold a senior prom at the YWCA's building. Black students were barred from attending Montclair High School's prom and commercial dance halls refused to rent space to African American students for a dance, making the Y the only place in town willing to hold a dance for African American high school students. Tate thus approached the advisory board about the possibility of holding a prom at the YWCA for all Black high school students in Essex County. The advisory board initially denied her request, stating their belief that dancing was sinful.¹⁸⁷ Tate, however, persisted. She eventually convinced the board not only to allow her to organize an annual prom for high school seniors but also several other high school dances.

Tate also transformed the Y into a space of empowerment by promoting educational achievement and leadership among Black women. Reflective of her desire to encourage Black culture pride and educational achievement, Tate started every meeting with the Black national anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," organized an annual exhibit for Negro History Week, and introduced Black girls to poets and writers in nearby Harlem such as Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson. Tate also provided young Black women with opportunities to develop leadership skills. Barred from participation in extracurricular activities at Montclair High School other than the Negro Spiritual

¹⁸⁷ Biography of Hortense Ridley Tate." Montclair Public Library. YWCA Collection. Montclair, New Jersey.

Choir, young Black women lead activities and programs at the Y. Ironically, Tate provided Black women with opportunities to exercise leadership despite the advisory board's insistence that Montclair's Black community lacked female leadership.

Tate, McCray, and other African American women used space the YWCA provided to implement their vision of a vibrant Black community with economic and educational opportunities for Black residents by strengthening the economic position of domestic servants.¹⁸⁸ Tate created a professional credential in domestic service offered by the YWCA.¹⁸⁹ After graduating from the course, Black women used their professional credential as a bargaining chip for better wages and working conditions. Tate likely also responded to the need to protect African American domestic servants from sexual and physical abuse by professionalizing domestic service. Such incidents were seldom publicized yet likely occurred.

Black women's strong emotional investment in the Y further demonstrates how it functioned as a space of empowerment within Montclair's predominantly white community. Tate recalled that the Y provided "a home away from home" for young African American female migrants from the South and now lived in a strange town and region with different racial norms. According to Tate, these women were "excluded from the breadth of society," a minority in Montclair, and were not acclimated to life in the Northeast.¹⁹⁰ Tate declared that the branch's sign, "For Colored Girls and Women," stated its mission of helping Black girls and young women.¹⁹¹ Similarly, Mary Allen's

¹⁸⁸ "Recognition Services to Start Y.W. Program." The New York Amsterdam News. March 28, 1936.

¹⁸⁹ "Y.W.C.A. Notes." The New York Amsterdam News. January 13, 1932.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Biography of Hortense Ridley Tate." Montclair Public Library. YWCA Collection. Montclair, New Jersey.

daughter, Carrie Allen McCray, expressed a strong attachment to the YWCA, recalling that, “the YWCA had a much deeper meaning for us colored girls. It was a safe gathering place, a nurturing place. We were barred from so many other things in those days and the YWCA was the young colored girls’ haven from prejudice.”¹⁹²

Although the Y was a space of empowerment for most Black girls and women, professional Black women comprised its leadership. The parents of Alice Hoe Foster, the initial force behind the Y, were among Montclair’s first Black migrants. Foster was a New Jersey native and Montclair High School’s first Black graduate. A member of the Black middle-class, she married a Walter Foster, a Black insurance agent. The Fosters were far less affluent than Montclair’s white residents, but had more education and enjoyed more economic prosperity than recent Black migrants.¹⁹³ They owned a home on an all-white block. Their neighbors hailed from England, Scotland, and other European countries who worked as teachers, salesmen, druggists, doctors, and furniture upholsters.¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Hortense Ridley Tate, the Y’s primary leader, migrated to Montclair from Kansas after graduating from Washburn University. She later married Montclair’s first Black postal worker, one of the few well-paid jobs open to Black men.

Tate and Foster used the YWCA to instill the politics of respectability into working-class Black domestic servants. Stephanie Shaw has demonstrated that Black professional women who lived in the South purposefully challenged racial stereotypes by displaying middle-class values. In Montclair, African American professional women similarly challenged negative racial stereotypes by instilling middle-class values into recent Black migrants. The Y, for instance, provided respectable lodging for single Black

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ 1920 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C.

female domestic servants. By living under Tate's supervision, they could live independent of their white employers and retain their respectability.¹⁹⁵ Tate recalled that she attempted "build their characters" of Black girls and young women who lived at the Y by forcing them to adhere to rules that emphasized cleanliness, sobriety, and industriousness. These were qualities central to the politics of respectability.¹⁹⁶ She prohibited residents from allowing men in their bedrooms, enforced a lights out rule at 11:30 pm, banned lounging on the beds during the day, and mandated that all girls clean their rooms and make their beds before 9 am each morning.¹⁹⁷ Tate also organized etiquette classes that taught Black girls how to set a table, walk, and speak properly. These skills, she claimed, allowed them to become, "gracious in manner and impartial in judgment."¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Stephanie Shaw, *What a Woman ought To Be and To Do: Black Women Professional Workers during the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹⁹⁶ McCray, *Freedom's Child*, pp. 234-5.

¹⁹⁷ YWCA Papers. Unsorted Collection, Temporary Box 1A, Historical Pamphlets and Articles, 1912-1926. Montclair Public Library, Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁹⁸ YWCA Video. YWCA Papers. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey. Unsorted Collection. McCray, *Freedom's Child*, pp. 234-5.



Image 1.11: Young Girls Decorating a Cake at the YWCA. Cake Making was one way that the YWCA's leadership instilled middle-class values into young Black Girls. Photo courtesy of the Montclair Public Library.

Professional Black women presumed the superiority of their values over working-class Black values and culture. At the same time, they recognized that the politics of respectability challenged the negative stereotypes white residents held about African Americans and thus viewed it as a way to empower working-class Black girls. Carrie Allen McCray recalled that, “Mrs. Foster and Mrs. Tate were like our ‘other mothers,’ watching over us, correcting us, and caring about our development into proper young ladies.”¹⁹⁹ Because of Foster and Tate’s efforts, McCray surmised that the YWCA became, “a colored girls’ finishing school...we learned our manners, how to dress, how to set a proper table, how to make a proper bed with hospital corners, and all the things we needed to know.”²⁰⁰ By instilling middle-class values such as chastity, industriousness, temperance, and self-control into Black domestic servants and other

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

young girls, Tate, Foster, and the Y's leadership taught them how to navigate Montclair's complex web of social relations and retain their respectability as women.

Finally, Montclair's racial hierarchy ensured that the relationship between the YWCA's leaders and the working-class Black women they taught remained more fluid than the hierarchal, helping relationship between white and African American women. Regardless of their education and social background, Black residents encountered racial discrimination in housing, employment, and other aspects of public life.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1930s, African American, Italian, and white women transformed Montclair into an attractive community as they worked to realize their community visions. Rather than idly watch suburbanization occur, these women migrated to Montclair with specific goals and marshaled their networks, organizations, and economic resources to realize their hopes, visions, and dreams for their families and communities.

A hierarchal, helping relationship emerged between African American, Italian, and white women that reflected Montclair's demographics and development. Italians and African Americans gained important economic, educational, and cultural resources from women's social welfare programs. At the same time, white women presumed to know and act in the best interests of minority residents and often created programs that controlled rather than helped Italian and African American residents. Moreover, African American and Italian service workers maintained the idyllic environment and freed white women from domestic labor, affording white women time for civic activism.

In 1940, Montclair remained a predominantly white, middle-class residential suburb, but its demographics slowly changed. Montclair's desirability to prospective upper and middle-class white homeowners started to decline during the 1930s. Upper-class white residents could no longer afford to employ the large number of service workers needed to maintain Montclair's spacious mansions.²⁰¹ Electric appliances such as the stove and vacuum revolutionized domestic labor, allowing white middle-class households to function without service workers. Montclair's white middle and upper-class residents started to view the presence of African Americans as undesirable.²⁰² By the advent of the Great Depressions, they no longer recruited Black migrants to fill service sector positions. Nevertheless, the presence of an established Black community attracted African American migrants who increased from 12 percent of the population in 1920 to more than 15 percent by 1935.

The Italian population gradually decreased between 1920 and 1940 from one-sixth to only 10 percent of the population. After the passage of the 1924 National Origins Act, the influx of Italian immigrants into the U.S. slowed to a trickle. Some second generation Italian-Americans left Montclair and moved to other suburbs in northern New Jersey. African Americans moved into sections of the fourth ward vacated by Italian-Americans.

The Black community's increased ability to find employment outside of private household work coupled with the decreasing number of Italian immigrants gradually transformed Montclair's racial politics during the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Montclair's residents started to understand race relations as a white and Black issue

²⁰¹ 1930 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, DC. In 1930, 1,812 of 11,930 employed male residents worked in the wholesale and retail trade, 1,139 in professional positions, and 987 in banking and brokerage.

²⁰² Ruth Schwartz Cohan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

rather than a white, Black, and Italian issue. Employment as a domestic servant perceived as only half a step away from slavery because Black women were the direct employees of white women.²⁰³ Black residents enjoyed more economic and social autonomy when they obtained manufacturing and professional positions.

Despite these changes, Montclair's white male civic leaders still viewed African Americans as a subordinate class. They denied the need for a Black voice in Montclair's government, claiming that they understood and acted in the Black community's best interests. This patronizing assumption cast a long shadow over racial politics in the decades to come.

Additionally, women remained central to local politics as they strove to implement their community visions. During the 1940s, white women continued to help African American residents, but focused on improving housing in the fourth ward. African American women's activism transformed the fourth ward into the most desirable Black residential community in the New York metropolitan region, yet housing discrimination created overcrowded conditions. The Italian women who remained in Montclair's fourth ward strove to transform the neighborhood into an attractive community with economic and educational resources for their families.

²⁰³ See Davis, *Women Race, and Class*, chapter 5.

Chapter Two: Berkeley: Divisions and Competing Visions, 1920-1940

Like women in Montclair, Anna Saylor, Frances Albrier, and Rose Curran used their networks, organizations, and resources to realize their vision of Berkeley as an attractive residential community that offered opportunities for educational and economic advancement. Elite white women focused on creating social welfare programs that Americanized European immigrants while African American women and European immigrant women, on the other hand, focused on assisting their own racial and ethnic community. All of their activism, however, reveals their shared investment in Berkeley.

Saylor's biography illustrates how upper middle and middle-class white women who were active in the Progressive Movement migrated from cities to rapidly expanding suburbs during the interwar period.¹ Indeed, many progressive women embraced suburbanization because it promised to create healthy, well-educated children by providing families with spacious, modern housing in family-centered environment.²

Anna Saylor was active in the progressive movement in Terre Haute, Indiana, a booming industrial and mining city. She and other white upper and middle-class women responded to the effects of immigration, industrialization, and urbanization on the city.³

Saylor poured her energy into club work while living in Terre Haute, serving as president

¹ For the discredited view that women's activism declined after the 1920s, see Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Refined, 1868-1914* (New York: Homes and Meier Publishers, 1980); Estelle B. Freedman, "Separatism Revisited: Women's Institutions, Social Reform, and the Career of Miriam Van Waters," *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays*, ed. Linda Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 170-88; Kristi Anderson, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics before the New Deal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

² Wiese and Nicolaidis, *The Suburban Reader*, pp. 164-5.

³ Tom Roznowski, *An American Hometown: Terre Haute, Indiana, 1927* (Bloomington, I.N.: University of Indiana Press, 2009).

of the Indiana Union of Literary Clubs and second vice president of Indiana Federation of Clubs, but in 1911 relocated to Berkeley alongside her husband, Frank, and two children. Her husband's University of Michigan classmates had convinced the family to move, praising Berkeley's seemingly boundless educational and economic opportunities. The family purchased a home two blocks from Sather Gate, the University of California's unofficial campus entrance. Frank, a druggist and doctor, quickly established a thriving pharmaceutical practice.⁴ Anna immediately immersed herself in Berkeley's cultural and social scene. She joined the Twentieth Century Club, Mobilized Women of Berkeley, League of Women Voters (LWV), and College Women's Club and was also a founding member of the Berkeley Women's City Club.

Scholars have demonstrated that the Progressive Movement fractured in cities after World War I both because the war's outcome disillusioned many progressives and woman suffrage no longer united women.⁵ As part of the splintering, middle and upper-class white women such as Saylor continued to advocate for progressive causes in the suburbs after migrating there from cities.⁶ Indeed, the interwar period was Saylor's most intense period of civic involvement. The first woman elected to the California State

⁴ 1910 United States Census. United States Government Publication. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of US Census, 1910). 1930 United States Census. United States Government Publication. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of US Census, 1930).

⁵ Nancy Hewitt, *Forging Activist Identities: Latin, African American and Anglo Women in Tampa, Florida, 1870s-1920s* (Urbana, I.L.: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Glenda E. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966); John W. Chambers II, *The Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2nd Ed., 2000); and Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR* (New York: Knopf Press, 1955). Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁶ *We have come to stay: American Women and Political Parties, 1890-1960*, eds. Melanie Gustafson, Kristie Miller, and Elisabeth I. Perry (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1999).

Legislature, she served as Berkeley and North Oakland's state representative from 1919 until she resigned in 1927 to become director of the State Department of Social Welfare. Her political platform reflected her ideological ties to Progressivism. She promised to serve the broad public good, declaring that, "after careful consideration, I will vote for every measure that represents the highest ideals of government, education, justice and right...I expect to represent all the people of my district."⁷ Moreover, once elected Saylor advocated for numerous Progressive causes including state legislation restricting the hours that children could work, the enforcement of Prohibition, and the creation of a juvenile justice system in California.

Although Saylor served as a state legislator, her activism focused on realizing her vision of Berkeley as an attractive residential community. Dolores Hayden and Margaret Marsh have demonstrated that upper and middle-class residential suburbs embodied Victorian middle-class ideals of domesticity, although what constituted these ideals expanded during the Progressive Era.⁸ During the Progressive Era, suburban women leveraged the Victorian middle-class idea of domesticity to justify their efforts to improve community life. Gwendolyn Wright and Mary Corbin Sies have argued that white middle and upper-class suburban women in Chicago and Boston improved the quality of life in their community and eventually also working-class and minority residents in

⁷ Saylor 1919 Statement. Undated Newspaper Clipping. Box 1874, Folder 1. Ethel L. Bornefeld research material for book on California's first Women Legislators, 1978-1981. California State Library, Sacramento, C.A

⁸ Margaret Marsh. *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990) and Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York: Vintage Press, 2004).

nearby cities. The desire to create a safe and uplifting environment for their families spurred their suburban activism during the Progressive Era.⁹

At the same time, Saylor's suburban vision differed from the women that Marsh, Sies, and Wright because she focused in improving material condition of working-class and minority residents who lived in Berkeley rather than a nearby city or members of her socio-economic class. As a founding member and leader of Mobilized Women of Berkeley, Saylor created programs that provided European immigrants with economic, cultural, and educational resources.¹⁰ Similar to the Montclair Junior League's community house, Mobilized Women's improved the quality of life for European immigrants by offering child care, language classes, vocational training and recreational programs. At the same time, the organization also reinforced an unequal, helping relationship between white women and European immigrants. As a leader in Mobilized Women, Saylor supported Americanization programs that tied the adoption of middle-class child rearing and hygienic practice to material assistance and presumed the superiority of her culture. Illustrating this assumption, she even stated that the goal of social welfare work was, "to reclaim human wreckage and fit derelict human beings back into decent citizenship."¹¹ While she acknowledged the possibility of reform, Saylor viewed European immigrants as people who needed education and assistance rather than equal citizens who should have an equal voice in Berkeley's development.¹²

⁹ Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Modern Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) and Mary Corbin Sies, "The Domestic Mission of the Privileged American Suburban Homemaker, 1877-1917: A Reassessment," Ed. by Marilyn Ferris Motz and Pat Browne, *Making the American Home: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Material Culture, 1840-1940* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988).

¹⁰ "Mrs. Anna Saylor Rites Tomorrow. *Oakland Tribune*, September 21, 1956.

¹¹ "Hear Welfare Bureau Head" *Berkeley Gazette*, January 11, 1928.

¹² Gay Gullet, *Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880-911* (Urbana, I.L.L.: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

Like Italian women in Montclair, European immigrant women from Ireland, Portugal, Italy, and other countries also lived in Berkeley and mobilized their networks and church organizations to realize their own vision of a neighborhood that offered avenues for educational and economic mobility and reflected their culture. Rose Curran, the daughter of working-class Irish immigrants, grew up in a bungalow just west of East and West Berkeley's unofficial dividing line.¹³ Her parents never graduated from high school: father worked as an unskilled laborer and her mother cared for the children at home, yet they had aspirations for their children's economic mobility. Her parents sent Rose and her sister, Marie, to St. Joseph Grammar School and Presentation High School, neighborhood parochial schools. These schools provided a college preparatory education that reflected their religious and cultural values.¹⁴ Illustrating the importance of economic mobility and Catholic faith to them, both sisters obtained professional positions with Catholic organizations: Rose as a nurse at nearby Providence Hospital and Marie as a teacher at St. Joseph Grammar School.¹⁵ They clearly valued parochial education, supporting parochial schools through contributing financial donations and by volunteering their time to organize fundraisers.

Despite European immigrant and other white working-class women's exclusion from religious leadership, St. Joseph's parish provided a space for them to develop organizations and programs that not only reflected their cultural and religious values, but also improved West Berkeley. Rose Curran served as treasurer of the Catholic Ladies

¹³ 1930 United States Census Data. From Ancestry.com. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C.

¹⁴ Eds. Sister Stephanie Still, Sister Joan Rioran, Sister Marion Loretta Carr, Sister Thomas Magee, Christine Doan, *A Legacy of Vision, Faith and Service: Presentation Women* (San Francisco, C.A.: Sisters of the Presentation, 2004).

¹⁵ 1930 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C.

Aid Society, which provided poor Catholic families with economic assistance, and joined Catholic Daughters, a benevolent organization that organized parish socials.¹⁶ Curran used these organizations to improve the quality of life for Catholic families and provide them with tools for educational and economic mobility.¹⁷

White ethnic working-class women clashed with Berkeley's government as they strove to implement their community vision. As in Montclair, the government protected middle and upper-class neighborhoods from industrial development and hazardous chemicals, but allowed these undesirable developments near European immigrant neighborhoods. Montclair's government attempted to place a public garbage incinerator and allowed a private company to place oil tanks in the center of the Italian community; in Berkeley, the city council placed a garbage dump and permitted the construction of multiple factories in the vicinity of West Berkeley homes. White working-class women vehemently fought these developments, contending that they threatened their quality of life and neighborhood's desirability.

Like Black women in Montclair, Frances Albrier also strove to realize her vision of Southwest Berkeley as a residential community with educational, cultural, and recreational resources for Black families autonomous from the white elite. Albrier had moved to Berkeley from Tuskegee, Alabama in 1920 as part of a migration of over 600,000 Blacks to the Pacific Coast from the South during the first part of the twentieth

¹⁶ Bernard L. Marthaler and Carol Dorr Clement, *Catholic Daughters of the Americas: A Century in Review* (New York: Mercury Publishing Services, Inc., 2003), pp. 23-5.

¹⁷ *Centennial: Saint Joseph the Workman Parish: Berkeley, California, 1879-1979* (Berkeley, Calif.: Saint Joseph the Workman Parish, 1979). Diocese of Oakland Archives. Oakland, California.

century. These migrants sought economic opportunity and freedom from segregation and racial violence.¹⁸

Despite sharing similar reasons for migrating and community visions, Montclair and Berkeley's Black communities differed in important ways. While the availability of service sector jobs attracted most Black migrants to Montclair, Berkeley's reputation as a middle-class Black enclave was the primary attraction for African Americans. Thus, while Montclair's Black community was economically diverse with service sector and professional workers, Berkeley's was primarily middle-class. Additionally, Black residents comprised a significantly smaller percentage of Berkeley's population. In 1920, Blacks comprised .5 percent of Berkeley's population compared with almost 15 percent of Montclair's.¹⁹

In addition to being a smaller percentage of the population, Berkeley's Black community was also predominantly middle-class while working-class private service sector workers formed most of Montclair's. Indeed, Berkeley's Black residents earned the most money and had highest degree of educational attainment in the Bay Area.²⁰ A graduate of Howard University with a degree in nursing, Albrier belonged to Berkeley's Black professional class.²¹ One social scientist described Berkeley's Black community as, "a better class whose homes are neat, well-cared for, and of good external appearance."²² By moving to Berkeley, Black professionals created a spatial separation between themselves and working-class African Americans who lived in San Francisco

¹⁸ James Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina, 2005), pg. 20.

¹⁹ 1920 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C.

²⁰ 1930 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C.

²¹ Frances Albrier Oral History. Regional Oral History Office. Berkeley, California. Pg. 28.

²² Robert Coleman Francis, *A Survey of Businesses in the San Francisco Bay Region* (Berkeley, Calif.: M.A. Thesis, 1926).

and Oakland and, according professional Blacks, failed to embody middle class standards of dress, sobriety, and personal comportment.²³ Additionally, working-class Black residents lacked sufficient discretionary income to maintain their homes and neighborhood according to the standards of Black professionals.

Despite the high educational level of Berkeley's Black residents, many experienced downward occupational mobility after migrating to the Bay Area from the South. On the other hand, they earned more income than they likely would have earned working as a Black professional in the South. Discrimination in the Bay Area's employment market prevented African Americans from obtaining white-collar and professional positions regardless of their training or educational background.²⁴ In the South, Black professionals staffed segregated schools, hospitals, and other institutions, but these opportunities did not exist in the Bay Area. Despite Albrier's professional nursing certification, Bay Area hospitals bluntly told her that, "we just don't hire Negro nurses" when she applied for nursing jobs.²⁵ Discrimination forced Albrier and other college-educated African Americans to work as Pullman porters and maids, which were among the best jobs open to Blacks in the Bay Area.²⁶ While most service sector jobs available to African Americans were in private service occupations with no benefits, little employment security, and no collective bargaining rights or union representation, Pullman porters and Pullman maids were employed by the Pullman Railroad, which

²³ Victoria Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), chapter 4.

²⁴ Gregory, *Southern Diaspora*, pp. 96-100.

²⁵ "Frances Albrier is a Spunky Septuagenarian." *Oakland Post*, July 22, 1971 and Joyce Maupin, *Frances Albrier: Railroad Maid, Shipyard Welder*, in "You Can't Scare Me..." (Reprinted from Union WAGE, May-June 1980), pp. 43-49 and Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

²⁶ Frances Albrier Oral History. Regional Oral History Office. Berkeley, California. Pg. 28.

offered them greater autonomy than private service jobs, union representation, decent, steady wages, and the opportunity to travel around the country. African Americans often earned more money working as Pullman maids or porters than as teachers, nurses, or other professional positions in the South.²⁷ Since Berkeley's Black residents earned higher wages than most African Americans in the Bay Area and Black professionals in the South, they were among the region's and arguable nation's Black elite.



Image 2.1: Portrait of Frances Albrier, Photo Courtesy of the Berkeley Public Library

Albrier's job as a Pullman maid kept her away from Berkeley during the 1920s, limiting her opportunities for community activism. However, when the Pullman Railroad ended maid service on trains during the Great Depression, Albrier's husband, a Pullman porter, insisted that she remain at home in Berkeley and watch her children from a previous marriage rather than find another job.²⁸ Albrier cared for her two children, but also used the opportunity to realize her vision of southwest Berkeley as a Black community with good schools, attractive homes, and other resources for families. She joined Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, the Mothers Club, Women's Art and Industrial Club,

²⁷ Beth Tompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) and Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color*.

²⁸ Maupin, *Frances Albrier*, pp. 43-49.

and the Longfellow Parent-Teachers Association and used these organizations to improve the Black neighborhood's schools, parks, and housing and create charity programs that provided unemployed African Americans with food and clothing. Since white women ignored the Black community's material needs, Albrier and other Black established charity programs that assisted their community as well as poor African Americans in nearby Oakland. They refused to accept their lack of control over their neighborhood's development, yet had a more confrontational politics than Black women in Montclair that made them willing to directly lobby for demanded representation in Berkeley's government and access to white-collar government jobs.

Women shaped Montclair and Berkeley's development as they implemented their community visions, yet despite this similarity Berkeley's unique geography also shaped women's activism. Berkeley had more non-residential spaces that were gendered masculine including an industrial district, a world-renowned university, and commercial downtown. Montclair also had a small business district and college, yet the scope of both was considerably smaller. Moreover, most of Montclair College's students and employees lived outside Montclair while the University of California's students, faculty, and administration lived in Berkeley and participated in civic life. This limited women's civic power since local white upper and middle-class businessmen and university officials controlled the Berkeley City Council and sought to transform Berkeley into a flourishing city. The city council's policies supported the development of middle and upper-class neighborhoods in the Berkeley Hills, an industrial district in West Berkeley, and a thriving downtown commercial district near the University of California. Like white women in Montclair, white women still largely enjoyed white men's support when

they created Americanization and social welfare programs targeting European immigrants since these programs did not interfere with industrial and commercial development in West Berkeley. On the other hand, African American and European immigrant women clashed with Berkeley's government over industrial development near their neighborhoods.

Additionally, elite white residents created a utopian view of Berkeley that resulted in important differences in Montclair and Berkeley's racial politics. During the interwar period, Berkeley's white community tied Progressive policies that improved the quality of life for European immigrants to Berkeley's image as a utopian community and international center of culture and knowledge. Overt racial discrimination marred this image. Thus, while racial and ethnic discrimination existed, elite white residents ignored it. Furthermore, middle and upper-class white women tapped into this utopian image to cull support for their social welfare programs. This utopian image encouraged white elite residents to conceive of and treat working-class white and racial and ethnic minorities as members of the community. Montclair's elite white residents seldom also acknowledged racism and emphatically insisted that Blacks were treated fairly. However, they never envisioned Montclair as a model progressive city and instead focused on maintaining the town's position as an elite residential suburb. In Montclair, white elite women adopted a patronizing attitude towards Black and Italian residents to obtain support for their social welfare endeavors. They claimed to know and act in the best interests of all residents and equated the interests of Blacks and Italians with those of the entire town.

This chapter's first section discusses Berkeley's development and politics during the interwar period, the second section analyzes white women's social welfare programs,

the third section examines African American and European immigrant and white working-class women's activism, and the fourth section interrogates how the Black community's growth and subsequent increased assertiveness had transformed racial politics by 1940.

The Athens of the West

Berkeley, like Montclair, had emerged as a prosperous, racially and socially diverse community by the interwar period. Settled in 1797 by the Spanish, American military and civilian settlers displaced the Spanish rancheros arrived in 1847.²⁹ During the 19th century, a heterogeneous mix of migrants formed two distinct communities in Berkeley: an ethnically and racially diverse working-class community named Ocean View in West Berkeley and a white upper and middle-class community in East Berkeley near the College of California.³⁰ On April 1st, 1878, Berkeley was incorporated under the leadership of East Berkeley residents, but remained a small until the devastating earthquake of 1906 destroyed San Francisco and sent refugees fleeing to the East Bay.

²⁹ Charles Wollenberg, *Berkeley: A City in History*, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2008), pp.4-5.

³⁰ Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, chapter two. Berkeley was the original campus for the University of California until the Board of Regents opened a "southern branch" or what today is the University of California, Los Angeles in 1927. Kenneth G. Peterson, *The University of California Library at Berkeley, 1900-1945* (Berkeley, Calif. University of California Press, 1970).



Image 2.2: Refugees Encamped at the University of California field in April of 1906 after the San Francisco Earthquake. Photo Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

Many San Francisco residents, businesses, and factories relocated to the East Bay after the earthquake because the East Bay had little earthquake damage, offered a milder climate, attracting residents and businesses, and intersection of shipping and railroad lines attracted manufacturing enterprises.³¹ The East Bay superseded San Francisco as the region's manufacturing center by 1920. East Bay communities including Oakland, Berkeley, Richmond, Emeryville, and San Leandro attracted canning and packing houses, truck manufacturing plants, and shipbuilding during the 1920s. This economic expansion attracted migration to the East Bay, including Portuguese, Italian, and Mexican immigrants who worked in the canneries and other unskilled industrial jobs, Swedish, Finnish, and German immigrants who worked in well-paid skilled industrial jobs, and African Americans who worked as Pullman porters and maids and settled near the

³¹ Werner Hegemann, Report on a City Plan for the Municipalities of Oakland and Berkeley, 1915. New York Public Library. Science, Industry, and Business Library. New York, NY and Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pg. 47.

Pullman Railroad Company's West Oakland terminal during the 1910s and 1920s.³² By 1910, the East Bay had emerged as the region's population center, home to 730,000 residents compared to San Francisco's 416,912 residents.

In 1920, Berkeley was an important residential, commercial, and industrial community in the East Bay with 56,036 residents.³³ Despite its growth, Berkeley remained divided between East Berkeley's white middle and upper-class community, West Berkeley's working-class European immigrant and white community, and Southwest Berkeley's tiny Japanese and African American enclaves.



Image 2.3: The Key System and Berkeley sign at San Pablo Avenue and University Avenue. Notice how the sign points west for the manufacturing district and east for the University of California. Photo courtesy of the Berkeley Public Library.

Berkeley's spatial geography and built environment reflected its social and racial divisions. West Berkeley developed as a working-class European immigrant

³² Self, *American Babylon*, pp. 26-7.

³³ 1920 United States Census. United States Government Publication. West Berkeley's immigrant community included 3,815 English, 1,214 Scottish, 2,651 Irish, 1,497 Swedish, 3,776 German, 1,428 Italian, and 1,167 Finnish immigrants.

neighborhood called Ocean View that was separate from East Berkeley. 1876, the Central Pacific Railroad opened a train service between West Berkeley and Oakland. East Berkeley, on the other hand, lacked a direct transportation link to San Francisco or Oakland and the founding of the College of California, renamed the University of California, sparked its development. Established in 1868, East Berkeley's earliest homes were clustered around the university.³⁴

In 1874 and 1878, Oakland's government attempted to annex Ocean View and East Berkeley to create a great East Bay city to rival San Francisco. These persistent attempts caused East Berkeley's white elite to incorporate Ocean View and East Berkeley as Berkeley in 1878.³⁵ East and West Berkeley, however, remained distinct communities. Illustrating this continued divide, no reliable, quick transportation connection existed between East and West Berkeley until the Key System opened a trolley line in 1893.³⁶ East Berkeley's residents controlled Berkeley's government and the incorporation process. Berkeley was initially established as a township with a non-partisan commission government. In 1923, white male elite decided that the rapid economic and population growth necessitated a stronger government and greater civic unity. They subsequently amended the charter to transform Berkeley into a city manager form of government.³⁷ Under this form of government, city council members were elected from the entire

³⁴ William Warren Ferrier, *Berkeley, California: The Story of the Evolution of a Hamlet into a City of Culture and Commerce* (Berkeley, Calif.: Privately Published, 1933).

³⁵ William Warren Ferrier, *Berkeley, California: The Story of the Evolution of a Hamlet into a City of Culture and Commerce* (Berkeley, Calif.: Privately Published, 1933).

³⁶ Mary Alice Klees, "Child Welfare in the Public Schools of Berkeley, 1920-1930," *Local Welfare Services in California, 1925-1927: Historical Essays*, (M.A. Thesis: University of California, Berkeley, 1964) pp. 137-156.

³⁷ William Warren Ferrier, *Berkeley, California: The Story of the Evolution of a Hamlet into a City of Culture and Commerce* (Berkeley, Calif.: Privately Published, 1933).

community rather than a specific ward and hired a city manager who supervised all municipal departments.

In 1920, West Berkeley remained geographically, socially, and spatially distinct from East Berkeley. It was primarily a neighborhood of single-family bungalows with an industrial area in its westernmost section along the San Francisco Bay shoreline. In many ways, it was a continuous extension of West Oakland's industrial garden.³⁸ Small bungalows inhabited by white working-class, European immigrant, Black, and Japanese families comprised the housing stock. These owner-occupied homes were located on tiny plots of land. This section of Berkeley was colloquially called the "flats" because of its low elevation and proximity to the San Francisco Bay. Restrictive zoning laws, neighborhood covenants, or racially discriminatory housing deeds were absent from West Berkeley, yet Italian and Portuguese usually lived west of Sacramento Street, close to the manufacturing district, skilled white working-class residents who were often the descendants of German and Irish immigrants lived east of Sacramento and north of Ashby in slightly larger homes, and Japanese and African Americans settled in Southwest Berkeley south of Ashby Avenue in an area bordering West Oakland's Black neighborhood. Ethnic grocery stores, hair salons, flower shops, social clubs, churches, and other small businesses catering to the residents dotted Sacramento Avenue, the primary thoroughfare. Trolleys connected West and East Berkeley, yet most West Berkeley residents worked in factories in West Berkeley or nearby Richmond or Oakland and seldom entered East Berkeley.

East Berkeley was a bucolic community in 1920 anchored by the University of California. During the early twentieth century most upper and middle-class white

³⁸ Self, *American Babylon*, chapter one.

residents worked for the university or worked in San Francisco which was accessible via ferry.³⁹ They comprised two-thirds of Berkeley's population, yet dominated political, social, and economic life and lived in racially and socially homogeneous white neighborhoods. The earliest white upper and middle-class neighborhoods developed in the Berkeley foothills. Spacious estates were located southeast of the University of California in Claremont, an upper-class white neighborhood bounded by the Berkeley Hills on the east while more modest single-family homes developed south and north of the university.⁴⁰ After the automobile made traveling to and from the Berkeley Hills more convenient, elite white residents preferred to live in the Berkeley Hills, which provided breathtaking views of the San Francisco Bay. The Berkeley City Council zoned all of East Berkeley for low-density residential and commercial development, prohibiting multi-family homes and apartment buildings as well as manufacturing establishments.⁴¹ The Berkeley Hills were entirely residential while some small commercial establishments catering to local residents emerged in the Berkeley foothills.

Fewer of Berkeley than Montclair's white male residents held managerial and executive positions because many held professional jobs for the university.⁴² While East Berkeley was comprised of professionals and white-collar workers, its residents were

³⁹ William Warren Ferrier, *Berkeley, California: The Story of the Evolution of a Hamlet into a City of Culture and Commerce* (Berkeley, Calif.: Privately Published, 1933).

⁴⁰ 1930 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. US Census Bureau. Washington, D.C. In 1930, 1,324 female worked as teachers, 1,198 as domestic servants, 1,128 as clerks, and 608 as saleswomen. In 1920, nearly 3,000 of Berkeley's 16,248 employed male residents worked in trade positions, 2,376 in professional jobs, and 2,050 in clerical positions. 1920 United States Census Data. In 1930, 24,582 men were employed. Of this number, 5,244 worked in trade positions, 3,826 in professional service and 3,138 in clerical positions.

⁴¹ William Warren Ferrier, *Berkeley, California: The Story of the Evolution of a Hamlet into a City of Culture and Commerce* (Berkeley, Calif.: Privately Published, 1933).

⁴² 1930 United States Census. United States Government Publication. In 1920, nearly 3,000 of Berkeley's 16,248 employed male residents worked in trade positions, 2,376 in professional jobs, and 2,050 in clerical positions 1920 United States Census Data. 24,582 men were employed in 1930. Of this number, 5,244 worked in trade positions, 3,826 in professional service and 3,138 in clerical positions.

slightly less affluent than Montclair's white elite. Additionally, more white men worked in Berkeley itself and enjoyed greater presence in community life than in Montclair.

During the interwar period West Berkeley was a multi-ethnic and multi-racial neighborhood filled with immigrants from Ireland, German, Sweden, Finland, Italy, and Portugal, and small African American and Japanese enclaves. Foreign-born residents and residents with foreign-born parents comprised 35.1 percent in 1920. This figured included West Berkeley's immigrant community as well as middle-class Canadian, English, and Scottish immigrants who were often lived in East Berkeley.⁴³ Among West Berkeley's European immigrants, white working-class as well as middle and upper-class residents viewed Italian and Portuguese immigrants as "nonwhite."⁴⁴ On the other hand, Mark Wild illustrates that in interwar Los Angeles, European immigrants made connections across ethnic lines despite the efforts of white Anglos to divide ethnic groups.⁴⁵ Similarly, more connections existed across ethnic lines in West Berkeley than in East Coast cities. West Berkeley's working-class community lacked political representation and equal municipal resources because East Berkeley's white elite controlled the municipal affairs. Most of West Berkeley's residents held manufacturing

⁴³ 1920 United States Census. United States Government Publication. West Berkeley's immigrant community included 3,815 English, 1,214 Scottish, 2,651 Irish, 1,497 Swedish, 3,776 German, 1,428 Italian, and 1,167 Finnish immigrants.

⁴⁴ Matthew Frye Jacobson uses the probationary whiteness in his book, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, to describe Southern and Eastern European immigrants who were not fully accepted as white during the interwar period. For more on the contested, constructed nature of whiteness, see David R. Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005) and Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1998). For studies of specific ethnic groups, see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁴⁵ Mark Wild, *Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles*, (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 2005).

positions, which employed one-third of Berkeley's male residents and a significant number of women.⁴⁶

The absence of racial violence in Berkeley against either the Japanese or Black communities suggests that white residents accepted their presence. Most scholarship on California's Japanese population during the interwar period focuses on either urban or rural communities, a small enclave of Japanese immigrants flourished in Berkeley until the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII.⁴⁷ The Japanese represented an economic threat to many white farmers and working-class residents in rural and urban areas. In 1924, the federal government even prohibited nearly all Asian immigration after violent race riots roiled many rural Californian communities. Similarly, many working-class white and European immigrant residents in cities the Northeast and Midwest employed violence when Black migrants from their South moved into their neighborhoods during the interwar period. Like California's white residents, they viewed Blacks as a threat to their homes and neighborhoods.⁴⁸ The absence of racial violence in Berkeley is notable given the prevailing anti-Japanese hysteria across California during the 1920s and 1930s and significant Japanese population and illustrates how white elites viewed the Japanese as members of the community. The Japanese comprised 1.4 percent

⁴⁶ 1920 and 1930 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. US Government Bureau. Washington, D.C. In 1920, 5,817 male residents worked in manufacturing and another 1,324 in transportation. In 1930, 7,703 of 24,582 employed male residents worked in manufacturing.

⁴⁷ Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2002); David Yoo, *Growing up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-1949* (Urbana, I.L.: University of Illinois Press, 2000); and Brian Masaru Hayashi, "For the Sake of Our Brethren": *Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism among the Japanese of Los Angeles, 1895-1942* (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930* (Urbana, I.L.: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-1945* (Urbana, .IL.: University of Illinois Press, 1985); James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago, I.L.: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

of the population in 1900 and 2.4 percent in 1920. By 1930, the Japanese population had stabilized, but, since Berkeley's total population had expanded to 82,109 residents, the Japanese community only comprised 1.7 percent of the population.⁴⁹

Despite the absence of racial violence, Berkeley's Japanese and Black residents faced more severe discrimination in the housing and labor markets than working-class European immigrant residents.⁵⁰ Racial discrimination barred them from almost all non-service sector jobs.⁵¹ Japanese residents often worked as domestic servants, gardeners, or owned their own small business. Illustrative of the racial stratification of the wider Bay Area's job market, 56.6 percent of Issei women, first-generation Japanese immigrants, and 50.4 percent of Nissei women, second generation Japanese immigrants, employed outside the home worked as domestics during the interwar period.⁵² Barbara Takahashi's story illustrates how the Japanese encountered severe job discrimination. She graduated from the University of California's School of Nursing, but could not find employment as a nurse and worked as a private household worker.⁵³ She finally obtained professional work managing the public health nursing staff at a Japanese internment camp during

⁴⁹ 1930 United States Census Data. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Publication); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), pp. 28-30.

⁵⁰ Matthew Frye Jacobson uses the probationary whiteness in his book, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, to describe Southern and Eastern European immigrants who were not fully accepted as white during the interwar period. For more on the contested, constructed nature of whiteness, see David R. Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005) and Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1998). For studies of specific ethnic groups, see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁵¹ 1920 and 1930 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. US Government Bureau. Washington, D.C. In 1920, 5,817 male residents worked in manufacturing and another 1,324 in transportation. In 1930, 7,703 of 24,582 employed male residents worked in manufacturing.

⁵² Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), pp. 28-30, 77.

⁵³ First Congregational Church Records, Box One, Folder One. Interview with Henry and Barbara Takahashi, April 1974. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

WWII. Japanese men also encountered barriers to obtaining white-collar or professional jobs. Henry Takahashi graduated from the University of California with honors and a degree in optometry in 1926. He resided in Berkeley, but opened an optometry practice in San Francisco's Japantown because Berkeley real estate agents refused to rent him office space.⁵⁴ Many Japanese were forced to work as domestic servants or gardeners because they were unable to secure alternative employment regardless of their qualifications.

In California, clearly delineated Black and Japanese "ghettos" did not exist until federal policies and migration patterns resulted in hardened racial boundaries in housing after WWII. At the same time, African American and Japanese residents were confined to Southwest Berkeley during the interwar period.⁵⁵ In fact, Berkeley was one of the few communities in the country other than Los Angeles where Black and Japanese residents lived in close proximity.⁵⁶ Blocks were typically racially homogeneous, but grammar and junior high schools were racially mixed. In Southwest Berkeley's two grammar schools, Blacks composed 20 percent and 25 percent of students while Japanese formed 10 percent and 7 percent respectively.⁵⁷

Even though Japanese and African American residents combined comprised only 5 percent of Berkeley's population in 1930 and were confined to Southwest

⁵⁴ First Congregational Church Records, Box One, Folder One. Interview with Henry and Barbara Takahashi, April 1974. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁵⁵ Regina Freer, "L.A. Race Woman: Charlotta Bass and the Complexities of Black Political Development in Los Angeles," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No.3 (September 2004), pp. 607-632; Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

⁵⁶ Daniel Widener, 'Perhaps the Japanese Are to Be Thanks?' Asia, Asian Americans, and the Construction of Black California," *Positions*, 11:1 Spring 2003, pp. 135-181.

⁵⁷ *Berkeley Occupancy and Land Use Survey*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, 1935).

Berkeley, white middle and upper-class residents viewed them as a threat to the stability and desirability of their East Berkeley neighborhoods.⁵⁸ During the 1920s they formed neighborhood improvement associations subsequently used to enact racial covenants prohibiting African Americans and Japanese from owning or renting property in East Berkeley.⁵⁹

Oswald McCall was the only white resident who publicly opposed the white community's establishment of racial covenants. Pastor of First Congregational Church, a progressive church located near the University of California, he appealed to the white community's civic pride when he criticized the racial covenants.⁶⁰ He insisted that racial covenants harmed the white community's aspiration to transform Berkeley into "the Athens of the West" or progressive community that was an international center of knowledge production and culture. Berkeley, McCall noted, "was the home of a great University which welcomes students and professors of all races." To become the "Athens of the West" he maintained that, "Berkeley should and must rise above those stereotypes which poison human relations in so many communities and which do not belong to the high human 'proposition' to which this country was dedicated."⁶¹ McCall insisted that the white community's attempts to exclude African Americans and Japanese from their East Berkeley neighborhoods contradict Berkeley's progressive reputation. By

⁵⁸ T. Robert Yamada. *The Berkeley Legacy: The Japanese American Experience*. (Berkeley, Calif.: The Berkeley Historical Society, 1995), pp. 8-9. *Berkeley Occupancy and Land Use Survey*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, 1935)

⁵⁹ Robert M. Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870-1930* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁶⁰ Other white residents may have opposed racial covenants, but did not leave a written record.

⁶¹ Undated Article. Race Relations Folder. Berkeley History Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

ignoring McCall's vocal protests, white residents implied that housing segregation was compatible with their aspirations to transform Berkeley into a Progressive community.

In addition to encountering severe housing and employment discrimination, Black and Japanese residents lacked access to social welfare and relief programs. In Montclair, the Junior League's community house, Montclair YWCA, and other social welfare programs targeted African Americans. In sharp contrast, social welfare programs that white female residents created either refused to assist or ignored Black and Japanese residents and focused exclusively on European immigrants. The Berkeley Day Nursery, for example, refused to accept either African American or Asian children.⁶²

As in Montclair, white middle and upper-class residents created a non-partisan system of government that allowed them to control Berkeley's development and exclude European immigrant, Black, and Japanese residents from government representation. Members of the Berkeley City Council and Berkeley Board of Education, the only elected government bodies, were elected at large rather than by a ward. Since white residents comprised two-thirds of the electorate, European immigrants, white working-class, Japanese, or Black residents failed to win a seat on either body during the interwar period. Japanese residents neither campaigned for public office, but the white working-class and African American communities nominated candidates during the 1930s, challenging white elite's political control.⁶³ Berkeley's government officials usually hailed from the upper-middle class and were businessmen or high-level administration officials at the University of California.

⁶² Margery Carpenter, *Study of Social Work in Berkeley* (Berkeley, C.A.: Commission of Public Charities, 1926), pg. 39.

⁶³ "Registration in Berkeley Shows Gain of 1676." Berkeley Daily Gazette. April 14, 1932, pg. 1.

Berkeley's male civic leaders, like Montclair's, claimed that their political domination was in the community's best interests. They insisted that their professional expertise allowed them to manage governmental affairs more effectively than other residents and implement progressive policies that modeled good government. The Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, Berkeley's largest civic organization with more than 860 members, implied that white upper and middle-class men were uniquely able to govern Berkeley with a progressive, forward thinking mentality.⁶⁴ The Chamber of Commerce exclaimed that, "Berkeley has a political situation is nearly as ideal as could be imagined...public spirited citizens who are the most cultured, far-seeing and public spirited people of the land [control the government]." The organization tied the implementation of effective civic policies to white middle and upper-class men's civic leadership, asking them "to come here and join with us in the building the city of tomorrow."⁶⁵ The harnessing of white upper and middle-class men's professional skills and knowledge, the Chamber of Commerce stated, would propel Berkeley to its potential as a model community.

Business, civic, and government leaders worked to realize their vision of Berkeley as "The Athens of the West" that included East Berkeley as an attractive residential community with white middle and upper-class residents situated near the University of California, an international center of knowledge production, and a small commercial downtown. The Berkeley Chamber of Commerce's 1905 advertising campaign propagated this image. The campaign, titled, "Berkeley the Beautiful," depicted East

⁶⁴ 1923 June Report to Members. Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. New York Public Library, Science, Industry, and Business Library (SIBL). New York, NY.

⁶⁵ 1924 June Report to Members. Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. New York Public Library, Science, Industry, and Business Library (SIBL). New York, NY.



Image 2.3: Postcard, “On the Road of a Thousand Wonders,” idealizing East Berkeley as an ideal residential community. Image courtesy of the Berkeley Public Library.

Berkeley as the ideal residential community, highlighting its convenient location, beautiful homes, ideal climate, and scenic setting.⁶⁶ The University of California was not yet globally famous, yet according to historian Charles Wollenberg, local government and civic leaders had, “a strong sense of Berkeley as a special place, a charmed community of great accomplishment and unlimited potential.”⁶⁷

Despite envisioning East Berkeley as an attractive residential community, local government and business leaders valued West Berkeley as a tax-generating industrial district. Robert Fogelson argues that the bourgeois feared non-residential development in pre WWII suburbs, many prewar American suburbs contained a mix of both residential and commercial property.⁶⁸ In Berkeley and Montclair and other older suburbs like them, white businessmen supported limited industrial and commercial development as long as

⁶⁶ Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pg. 64.

⁶⁷ Ibid, pg. 64.

⁶⁸ Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*.

the developed occurred outside of their own neighborhoods.⁶⁹ The vision of Berkeley's business leaders was similar to "the industrial garden" vision that Eastbay civic elites developed in Oakland during the 1930s. According to this vision, workers would live near clearly defined industry districts. The tax revenue factories produced would allow the government to keep property tax rates low yet maintain quality municipal services.⁷⁰

However, in Berkeley white businessmen promoted this vision rather than working-class residents during the interwar period. In 1923, the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce requested that Berkeley's city planning board prioritize "future growth and prosperity" and submitted a proposed a city plan that expanded West Berkeley's industrial zone and created a downtown transportation center, efficient roadways that connected industrial, residential, and commercial sections of Berkeley, a deep-water harbor for shipping, and wide boulevards and parks that provided a barrier between West Berkeley's industrial areas and East Berkeley's neighborhoods.⁷¹ The Chamber of Commerce's city plan prioritized industrial growth in West Berkeley, yet preserved East Berkeley as a residential community. Similarly, Roy T. Wise, president of the Berkeley Manufacturers' Association, supported industrial growth as long as the city council restricted it to West Berkeley. In 1930 report on Berkeley's development, he noted that, "the industrial areas of the city are well-defined, low-lying level and along the Bay Shore."⁷²

⁶⁹ Robert Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870-1930* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁷⁰ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and Power in Postwar Oakland*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁷¹ 1923 June Report to Members. Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. New York Public Library, Science, Industry, and Business Library (SIBL). New York, NY.

⁷² Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, *1930 Yearbook* (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, 1930), pg. 53.

The number of factories in Berkeley expanded rapidly during the 1920s as the city council promoted industrial development. During the late nineteenth century, Berkeley had only two or three factories. By 1924, however, more than one-hundred factories were located in Berkeley and produced car motors, marine engines, other types of gas engines of all kinds, gears, electrical appliances, thermostats and hydrometers, automatic egg cleaning and candling machines, tools; motor driven railroad cars, motorboat, toys and dolls, soap, food products, airplanes, and coconut oil.⁷³ The increased value of factory goods produced in Berkeley similarly increased from \$21,900,000 in 1921 to \$31,200,000 in 1926.⁷⁴



Image 2.4: Berkeley Soap Factory, one of West Berkeley's bustling factories during the interwar period. Photo Courtesy of the Berkeley Public Library.

By restricting industrial development to West Berkeley, East Berkeley remained unaffected by its noxious effects since the wind generally blew away from the Berkeley

⁷³ Berkeley Chamber of Commerce *Berkeley Tourist and Business Survey: A Survey of the City of Berkeley, its Attractions and its Businesses*. (Berkeley, Calif.: H.B. Knowles, 1924.

⁷⁴ 1927 May Report to Members. Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. New York Public Library. Science, Industry, and Business Library (SIBL). New York, NY.

Hills and its neighborhoods were at a higher elevation. On the other hand, unpleasant smells permeated West Berkeley during the interwar period because of its proximity to the new factories. In 1903, E. A. Cutter, owner of Cutter Laboratories opened a laboratory located along West Berkeley's waterfront to test vaccines and other pharmaceutical products.⁷⁵ The company's headquarters were in San Francisco because Cutter felt that it needed a prestigious address, but the availability of inexpensive land near regional transportation networks convinced Cutter to relocate the production and research divisions from San Francisco to Berkeley.⁷⁶ Guinea pigs, mice, rats, pigeons, chickens, rabbits, sheep, goats, horses, and cattle were used to test vaccines and lived at the Berkeley facilities. While live animals were necessary to product development, nearby residents were forced to tolerate a foul odor permeating from Cutter Laboratories' West Berkeley facilities.⁷⁷

White upper and middle-class women also supported industrial development in West Berkeley. While women lacked representation on the Montclair Town Commission, the Berkeley City Council had at least one female member from the interwar period onward. The Berkeley LWV, claiming that women offered a unique perspective, convinced the city council to appoint white female residents to vacancies on the city council and board of education.⁷⁸ In response to this tacit agreement, in 1923 the city council appointed Carrie L. Hoyt, a leader in the LWV, to city council.

⁷⁵ Cutter Laboratories, 1897-1972. Oral History Interview. Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris. August 10, 1973. Regional Oral History Office. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ *Berkeley Historical Society Newsletter*. Winter 2005. Berkeley Historical Society, Berkeley, CA.

⁷⁸ "League Marks 50th Year." Berkeley Gazette. November 25, 1961.

Although the LWVW claimed that white women offered a unique perspective, but Hoyt seldom dissented from white businessmen's agenda and approved the construction of factories in West Berkeley and expansion of the industrial district during her tenure on council from 1923 until 1947.⁷⁹ In 1923, for instance, she voted to open a garbage dump in West Berkeley along the San Francisco Bay shoreline.⁸⁰ Like her male counterparts, she ignored the noise and health hazards West Berkeley's industrial areas created. Ruth Patrick, the daughter of Irish immigrants, held her breath when traveling on trolleys in southwest Berkeley to avoid breathing in the foul stench that permeated the air.⁸¹ Far from East Berkeley, the dump did not impact Hoyt or other middle or upper-class white residents, yet harmed the quality of life for European immigrants who often lived nearby.

European immigrants, however, could not ignore industrial development's effects on their community; they had an enormous pride and financial investment in their homes and neighborhoods. They moved to West Berkeley because of its residential character and eagerly purchased homes. Ruth Patrick's family moved to West Berkeley after renting an apartment in West Oakland. She recalled that, "everyone in neighborhood bought homes, the area was definitely residential when we moved there."⁸² Like Montclair's Italian population, viewed home ownership as a bulwark against economic downturns. Home ownership provided Patrick's family with a measure of economic security. Her father used the yard to earn supplemental income. She remembered "In the back yard he [her father] raised rabbits. He would sell them and we would eat them too.

⁷⁹ "Our Berkeley Councilmen Retain Seats." Oakland Tribune. May 2, 1945, pg. 13.

⁸⁰ For more on environmental racism, see Andrew Hurley, *Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press), 1995.

⁸¹ Sister Ruth Patrick. Oral History Interview. Interviewed by author. October 21, 2008. Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, CA.

⁸² Sister Ruth Patrick. Oral History Interview. Interviewed by author. October 21, 2008. Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, CA.

He would give free veggies with the rabbit.”⁸³ The pride of Patrick’s family and other European immigrants coupled with their financial investment in their homes compelled them to fight industrial development.

European immigrant women lead the struggle to thwart the industrial district’s expansion, recognizing its potential to harm their community’s quality of life. Scholars have demonstrated that working-class suburban residents often preferred mixed industrial and residential communities rather than solely residential communities because factories provided jobs.⁸⁴ In Berkeley, however, European immigrant women preferred to reside in a community of single-family homes and challenged the city council’s gradual rezoning of West Berkeley from residential to industrial.⁸⁵ West Berkeley’s factories employed almost ten times more men than women; although undoubtedly many husbands, sons, and brothers of these women worked in the factories, few European immigrant women worked there themselves.⁸⁶ They lacked a direct financial tie to Berkeley’s factories.

Additionally, their role as wives and mothers linked them to the community. Ruth Patrick recalled that, “my mother was mostly involved in home life. When she got married, she had to quit her job. During that era there was so much the homemaker had

⁸³ Sister Ruth Patrick. Oral History Interview. Interviewed by author. October 21, 2008. Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, CA.

⁸⁴ Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 14-35 and Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto’s American Tragedy, 1900 to 1950* (Baltimore, M.D.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁸⁵ See Berkeley City Council Meetings. Berkeley City Council Minutes. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

⁸⁶ 1927 May Report to Members. Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. New York Public Library. Science, Industry, and Business Library (SIBL). New York, NY. 5,317 male and 651 female residents of Berkeley worked in factories. Over fifty percent of these residents worked in West Berkeley factories.

to do that is taken care of today.”⁸⁷ Patrick’s mother and other European immigrant women’s primary concern was the home and neighborhood. Thus, they preferred to reside in a residential rather than mixed-use community.

Excluded from government representation, European immigrant women mobilized their neighborhood networks to fight for their vision of West Berkeley as an attractive residential community. Like white middle-class women, European immigrant women were also agents of community change but used different methods and tools. They finally abandoned their efforts during the early 1940s after the city council had approved the construction of dozens of factories and African Americans had moved into West Berkeley in greater numbers.

European immigrant women demanded that the city council recognize their right as tax-paying citizens to live in a residential community free of the health hazards, unpleasant smells, noise, and the other negative effects of industrial production.⁸⁸ Lacking their own political organizations, they marshaled their collective power to fight their neighborhood’s rezoning. Mrs. Edna Whyte, Mrs. James Gallagher, and Mrs. Margaret Young protested the city council’s approval of a smelting plant in West Berkeley. At a council meeting in May of 1939, their lawyer claimed that, “these women have worked hard for their homes and would not want them disturbed. They feel that if this request is granted others would soon follow.”⁸⁹ They claimed a right to live in a residential community as hard-working homeowners. European immigrant women’s request to block the smelting plant was unsuccessful, but their activism reveals that they

⁸⁷ Sister Ruth Patrick. Oral History Interview. Interviewed by author. October 21, 2008. Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, CA.

⁸⁸ Hise, “Border City.”

⁸⁹ May 23, 1939. Berkeley City Council Minutes. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

fought for their right to shape West Berkeley's development. Similar cases occurred throughout these two decades.⁹⁰ In October of 1929, for instance, European immigrant women unsuccessfully fought the city council's attempt to install electronic lighting on West Berkeley's primary commercial thoroughfare.

A Model Progressive Community

Unfortunately, European immigrant women enjoyed little success in stopping industrial development. Lacking a political voice, their community vision interfered with the city council's goal of industrial expansion. Maureen Flanagan argues that in Chicago, white women also clashed with the city government over Chicago's development.⁹¹ In Berkeley, however, white women seldom clashed with the local government as they realized their vision of Berkeley by creating social welfare and other programs designed to help ethnic and racial minorities. Berkeley's civic and business leaders promoted industrial development yet recognized that poor living conditions among European immigrants would harm Berkeley's image as a progressive city. Thus, they applauded and financially supported white women's efforts to create social welfare programs that provided European immigrants with recreational, economic, and education resources.

Unfortunately, as in Montclair, white women's efforts to realize their community vision created an unequal helping relationship with European immigrants. Michael McGerr recently has attempted to resuscitate the image of the Progressive reformers, arguing that their efforts resulted in material improvements in the lives of working class

⁹⁰ For more examples of European immigrant women's struggle against industrial development, see the Berkeley City Council minutes. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

⁹¹ Maureen A. Flanagan, *Seeing with their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871-1933*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), pg 9.

and poor immigrants.⁹² In Berkeley and Montclair, white women's social welfare program indeed provided European immigrants and also Blacks residents in Montclair with childcare, recreational programs, clothing, food, language classes, and other valuable resources. At the same time, white women in Montclair and Berkeley reinforced the subordinate status of ethnic and racial minorities by helping and teaching rather than empowering them. Moreover, white women presumed to understand and act in the interests of minority residents.

The socially exclusivity of white middle and upper class women's clubs contributed to the formation of hierarchal relationship between white and minority women. The Berkeley City Club was Berkeley's largest women's organization with nearly 4,500 members. Like the Montclair Women's Club and Woman's Club of Upper Montclair, the cost of membership as well as informal social barriers ensured that white middle and upper-class women comprised the membership. The club facilitated the formation of social connections through countless musicals, teas, dinners, dances, bridge luncheons, swimming lessons, fashion shows, art programs.⁹³ Eva Hicks, president of the organization in 1933, noted that the Great Depression "was a real test of the value of our club to the women of Berkeley...while its use has been curtailed because of the financial crisis, there has been a continuous and steady use of it, which tells us that it is meeting the need of its members."⁹⁴ European immigrant, African American, and Japanese women lacked the opportunity to interact with white women on an equal level because they did not belong to the Berkeley City Club.

⁹² Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁹³ *1933 Yearbook*. Berkeley Women's City Club. Oakland History Room. Oakland Public Library. Oakland, California.

⁹⁴ "President's Report." Woman's City Club Record. June 1933.

The Berkeley LWV and Twentieth Century Club were also racially exclusive clubs that only admitted Black and Japanese women as members during the 1940s.⁹⁵

The Twentieth Century Club was Berkeley's oldest women's club. An invitation only club like the Junior League of Montclair, it only invited white women from the upper-middle and upper classes during the interwar period. Informal social barriers ensured that the LWV remained all-white until 1943, when it purposefully desegregated by asking Frances Albrier, a Black clubwoman, to join.

Since club networks and organizations were central to white women's civic involvement, the exclusion of racial and ethnic minorities from the Berkeley City Club, Berkeley LWV, and Twentieth Century Club underscores the hierarchal relationship between white, European immigrant, African American, and Japanese women. Anna Saylor, for instance, joined the Berkeley City Club, League of Women Voters, and Twentieth Century Club after she arrived in Berkeley used the clubs to implement her community goals. Moreover, club networks were pivotal to her successful campaign for California State Assembly in 1920.⁹⁶ Minority women's exclusion from these networks blocked the formation of a more cooperative interracial relationship between women. White women claimed to work in the interests of all residents, but the racial and ethnic homogeneity of their organizations meant that they failed to understand the community vision of European immigrant, African American, and Japanese women. White women thus often implemented programs and reforms opposed to minority women's interests and goals.

⁹⁵ Frances Albrier Oral History. Regional Oral History Office. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁹⁶ "Death Takes Anna Saylor." Berkeley Daily Gazette. September 21, 1956.

White women's social welfare programs also perpetuated an unequal, helping relationship between white and minority women. Mobilized Women, arguably white women's most important civic endeavor during the 1920s and 1930s, was founded during World War I to assist with the war effort. The organization grew to 800 members by the war's end and shifted focus to the Americanization of European immigrants.⁹⁷ Mobilized Women constructed a community center named "American House" which housed recreational programs, kindergarten, and language and citizenship classes.⁹⁸ Claiming that most charities neglected immigrant women despite their centrality to their children's education and acculturation, Mobilized Women's programs targeted immigrant women rather than men. Ida Blochman, a leader in the organization, claiming that, "foreign women are the primary moral custodian of the home."⁹⁹ According to Blochman, Mobilized Women operated the American House as "an Americanization and women's education center for all nationalities."¹⁰⁰

Mobilized Women provided European immigrants, especially women, with important resources, but also perpetuated an unequal, helping relationship between white and European immigrant women. Mobilized Women, for example, operated a summer school that allowed children academically behind to catch-up to their grade level. More than fifty children enrolled, suggesting that the school provided a valuable service.¹⁰¹ Language and citizenship classes were also routinely offered as well as an evening school

⁹⁷ "Mobilized Women-History Unique." Berkeley Gazette. April 14, 1941. "Waste Paper Will Be Made Aid to Americanization." San Francisco Chronicle. March 19, 1922.

⁹⁸ Carton Two, Scrapbooks. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁹⁹ "So We're Told." Carton Three, Newspaper Clippings. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁰ "So We're Told." Carton Three, Newspaper Clippings. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰¹ Carton Three, Folder One, News Clippings. June 10, 1932 article. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

specifically for women who worked during the day.¹⁰² Mobilized Women also offered piano and singing lessons for all ages and had a playground at the American House.¹⁰³

Despite providing important resources, Mobilized Women attempted to instill middle-class values and practices into European immigrants, assuming the superiority of their values and practices. The organization taught scientific forms of child rearing that in actuality reflected white middle-class practices and its courses on caring for the sick and personal hygiene emphasized middle-class standards of cleanliness that were only practical if the family had running water inside their homes.¹⁰⁴ Some reciprocity existed and white middle-class women likely learned from European immigrant women. At the same time, Mobilized Women presumed the inferiority of colloquial ethnic knowledge about sanitation, childcare, and other aspects of family life and implied that the adoption of their childcare methods and hygiene standards would improve the quality of life for European immigrants.

Additionally, Mobilized Women often combined job training and educational programs with instructions about white “American” culture, forcing European immigrants who utilized these programs to receive instructions in middle-class culture and practices. Mobilized Women routinely visited the homes of children enrolled in its kindergarten classes to ensure that immigrant parents adopted middle-class childrearing and hygiene practices. Adult women enrolled in English language classes also received home visits. Anna Saylor, head of Mobilized Women’s Americanization Committee,

¹⁰² Carton Thee, Folder One, News Clippings. Oct. 7, 1919 Article. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰³ Carton Thee, Folder One, News Clippings. March 5, 1924 article. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁴ Carton Thee, Folder One, News Clippings. Oct. 7, 1919 Article. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

acknowledged that the intent was to influence European immigrant women's family life, declaring that, "the visits give assistance in the private affairs of foreign families."¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Mobilized Women integrated Americanization work into its sewing and millinery classes.¹⁰⁶ Attempts to influence the home life of European immigrants reinforced a hierarchical, helping relationship between women and illustrate how Mobilized Women presumed to understand and act in the interests of European immigrant women.

Mobilized Women's employment bureau also reinforced this unequal, helping relationship. Established during the Great Depression, the employment bureau found jobs for 258 residents each year. At the same time, it placed immigrants in unskilled service sector jobs that paid low wages and often offered no room for advancement. Margery Carpenter, secretary of the Berkeley Charity Commission, reported that, "housework and caring for children are given to women, cleaning, washing windows and painting and garden and outside work to men."¹⁰⁷ Immigrants who accepted such jobs and had previously worked in factories experienced downward economic mobility. Moreover, like the jobs offered through the Montclair Women's Club's job campaign during the Great Depression, European immigrants became charity cases to white residents who had only created jobs in response to Mobilized Women's appeal. The jobs only provided a minimum level of subsistence, were temporary, and made European immigrants the economic dependents of white middle and upper-class residents.

¹⁰⁵ Carton One, Organizational Minutes, April 21, 1920. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁶ Carton One, Organizational Minutes, March 16, 1921. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁷ Carton Two, Scrapbook. April 1929, "Mobilized Women Find Employment for 258 Persons," 1929 Scrapbook. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California. Berkeley, California.

At the same time its programs reinforced a hierarchal, helping relationship between white women and European immigrants, Mobilized Women claimed that its intention was to promote economic independence. This is different than in Montclair. In Montclair, white women acknowledged the unequal, helping relationship and never expressed a desire to encourage the economic independence or advancement of Italian and Black residents. Miss Eubanks, a member of Mobilized Women, exclaimed at an organization meeting held in March of 1921 that the organization operated on “the fundamental principle that helping people to help themselves best form of relief, let all pay according to ability, do not pauperize by outright general giving.”¹⁰⁸ In keeping with this belief, it never offered direct material assistance and instead focused on job training, educational, child rearing, and other classes.¹⁰⁹ In 1940, Ida Blochman, a reporter for the *Berkeley Gazette*, credited Mobilized Women for the European immigrant community’s economic mobility, claiming that, “some of Berkeley’s most successful families got their start in Mobilized Women’s classes soon after arriving from foreign shores.”¹¹⁰

Although Mobilized Women applauded themselves for assisting European immigrants, European immigrant women created their own networks and programs that provided an alternative and reflected their community vision. At the same time, the European immigrant community’s economic mobility reduced the demand for economic assistance. By the 1940s, Mobilized Women’s programs focused on assisting Mexican rather than European immigrants.

¹⁰⁸ Carton One, Organizational Minutes, March 16, 1921. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁹ *Report of Study Committee: Mobilized Women of Berkeley*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Council of Social Planning, Bay Area, 1962), pg. 12.

¹¹⁰ Carton Thee, Folder One, News Clippings. February 15, 1940 article. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley.

Mobilized Women's social welfare programs also illustrate how white women's social welfare programs targeted European immigrants yet ignored African Americans and Japanese residents. This forced Berkeley's Black community to create their own networks and organizations for assistance. In Montclair, the Black community formed a larger percentage of the population and domestic service connected the Black and white communities. White women's charity thus endeavors focused on Black residents. In Berkeley and most other cities, however, African Americans gained access to economic assistance with the advent of the New Deal and the federal government's increased involvement in social welfare and economic relief programs.¹¹¹ The Berkeley Day Nursery, for example, did not accept Black children during the interwar period. Black professional women founded the Fannie Wall Home, an orphanage and day nursery, to address this unmet need.¹¹²

In Berkeley, the social welfare and charity programs white women created during the interwar period also ignored the Japanese community. However, a hierarchal, helping relationship developed through domestic service. The most frequent point of contact between white and Japanese women, Japanese women who worked as domestics often lived in their white employer's home. This provided white women had a significant amount of economic and social control over Japanese women who had limited contact with their ethnic community.¹¹³ Kurasaburo sent his teenage daughters, Shizuko and

¹¹¹ Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal, Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹¹² Marta Gutman, *On the ground in Oakland: Women and Institution Building in an Industrial City* (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California, Berkeley, PhD Diss., 2000).

¹¹³ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

Yuri, to live with affluent white families in Berkeley in 1929 and 1931.¹¹⁴ These girls became lonely because they only interacted with other Japanese on Sundays when they returned home for church.¹¹⁵

At the same time, domestic service offered Japanese women the opportunity to learn English and the American culture. Japanese fathers sent their daughters to work as servants for wealthy white families regardless of the family's social status because domestic service provided the opportunity to learn English and acquire more knowledge of upper class white culture. Margaret Jacobs has noted that American Indians similarly sent their daughters to work in white households in San Francisco to obtain knowledge of American culture.¹¹⁶ Fluency in English and American culture promised upward mobility. Kurasaburo thus accepted the temporary absence of his daughters, Shizuko and Yuri, when they worked as domestic servants because they would expand their social status and, by extension, marriage prospects.¹¹⁷

Additionally, employment as a domestic servant provided Japanese women with a measure of economic and social autonomy. Sexism prevented them from joining most Japanese social organizations and confined them to the home.¹¹⁸ When they traveled to work Japanese women who worked as domestic workers and lived in their community

¹¹⁴ John Naoki Fujii. *Fuji: Kurasaburo 1881-1959 and Kikuyo 1891-1982*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Privately Published, 1986). Berkeley Historical Society. Ethnic Groups Vertical Folder. Berkeley, California.

¹¹⁵ John Naoki Fujii. *Fuji: Kurasaburo 1881-1959 and Kikuyo 1891-1982*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Privately Published, 1986). Berkeley Historical Society. Ethnic Groups Vertical Folder. Berkeley, California.

¹¹⁶ Margaret D. Jacobs, "Working on the Domestic Frontier: American Indian Domestic Servants in White Women's Households in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1920-1940." *Frontiers*. Vol. 28, No. 1. 2007, pp. 165-198.

¹¹⁷ John Naoki Fujii. *Fuji: Kurasaburo 1881-1959 and Kikuyo 1891-1982*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Privately Published, 1986). Berkeley Historical Society. Ethnic Groups Vertical Folder. Berkeley, California.

¹¹⁸ Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nissei, War Bride*, chapter 5.

enjoyed time outside the purview of either their white employer or male relatives. Moreover, Japanese women earned their own money. Japanese women thus reported gaining satisfaction from their work because of their increased economic independence and geographic mobility.¹¹⁹

White women created a hierarchal, helping relationship with European immigrants as they realized their vision of Berkeley by creating social welfare programs. Their programs, however, ignored African American and Japanese residents. A hierarchal, helping relationship emerged with Japanese women through domestic service. On the other hand, white middle and upper-class and African American women seldom interacted during the interwar period.

Struggling to Realize their Visions

Like white women, European immigrant, African American, and Japanese women also transformed Berkeley as they realized their community visions. Despite their limited resources and lack of government representation, they used their organizations and networks to create vibrant, autonomous communities with educational opportunities and attractive housing that reflected their culture.¹²⁰

Despite this important commonality, some differences existed between Japanese, Black, and European immigrant women's activism. Black and European immigrant women demanded recognition as equal citizens with a right to realize their community vision, recognizing that they needed government representation and equal municipal resources to implement their vision and shape their community's development. European immigrant women's organizations and networks formed during middle part of the 1920s

¹¹⁹ Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nissei, War Bride*, pg. 39.

¹²⁰ Kelley, "We Are Not What We Seem," pp. 75-112.

while African American women's networks formed during the latter part of the 1920s and into the 1930s, reflective of the Black community's later migration to Montclair. Despite this slightly different timeline, by the mid 1930s, both European immigrant and Black women and created their own organizations. Japanese women also worked to implement their community vision, but focused on teaching their children knowledge of the Japanese culture and language and providing them opportunities for educational achievement rather than the creation of community organizations.

St. Joseph's Church was central to European immigrant women's efforts to realize their community vision. While ethnic parishes flourished in metropolitan regions in the Northeast and Midwest, the Archdiocese of San Francisco discouraged ethnic and racial fragmentation and refused to create ethnic parishes in the East Bay. Even in San Francisco, only a handful of ethnic parishes existed.¹²¹ While Montclair had a territorial parish, a Black parish, and an Italian parish, St. Joseph's Church was Berkeley's oldest and only Catholic parish. Socially and geographically central to the European immigrant community, the parish was Catholic women's primary point of social contact regardless of their ethnicity.¹²² At the parish, predominantly Irish and native-born white priests,

¹²¹ John McGreevey, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Barrett, James R. and David R. Roediger, "The Irish and the 'Americanization' of the 'New Immigrants' in the street and in the Churches of the Urban United States, 1900-1930." *Journal of Ethnic History*, Summer 2005, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 4-33; Richard M. Linkh, *American Catholicism and European Immigrants, 1900-1924* (Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 1974); and Robert D. Cross, *The Emergence of Liberal Catholicism in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958).

¹²² Barbara Gamba. *St. Mary Magdalene Parish, Berkeley California, Founded 1923*. Diocese of Oakland Records. Diocese of Oakland Archival Records. Oakland, California. St. Mary Magdalene was founded in 1923 in North Berkeley, but St. Joseph's Church still dominated social life for West Berkeley's Catholics because of its geographic centrality in the community.

nuns, and lay leaders worshiped alongside Portuguese, Mexican, German, Italian, and Black Catholics.¹²³

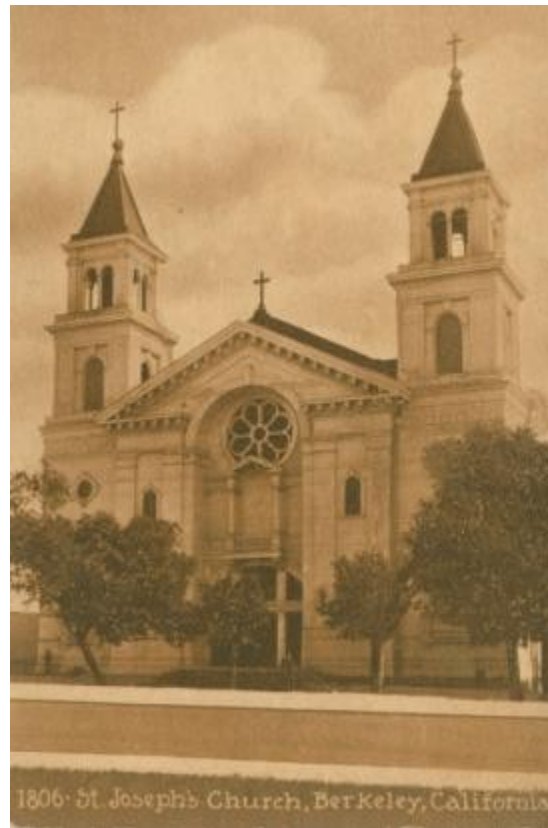


Image 2.5: St. Joseph's Church, Photo Courtesy of Berkeley Public Library

Norma Gray, an active parishioner, likely overstated the ease of interracial and interethnic interaction, but claimed that parish's diversity facilitated the formation of these relationships. Gray arrived in Berkeley in 1937 after attending a more ethnically homogenous Irish German parish in Iowa. She proudly claimed that St. Joseph's embraced racial diversity long before the Civil Rights Movement and Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, exclaiming that, "the parish was so diverse that the term itself

¹²³ *Centennial: Saint Joseph the Workman Parish: Berkeley, California, 1879-1979.* (Berkeley, Calif.: Saint Joseph the Workman Parish, 1979). Diocese of Oakland Archives. Oakland, California.

was passé long. We viewed diversity as part of the parish's identity.”¹²⁴ She positively contrasted St Joseph's history of integration with the ethnic and racial fragmentation that occurred in parishes located in cities in the East Coast, insisting that, “We never had separation by nationality. They [the Catholic Church] did that in the East [Coast] but not in Berkeley. Here everyone is people under same umbrella, that's just how you are...one of the greatest things about Berkeley is getting to know people of other cultures and races”¹²⁵ As evidence of the parish's racial integration, she noted that her son's wedding party included childhood friends from the parish who hailed from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, commenting that, “if you had seen cadre of ushers, would know he grew up in Berkeley.” Similarly, Gray described her daughter's African American classmates at Presentation High School, one of the parish's parochial school, as “wonderful friends.”¹²⁶

European immigrant and native-born white Catholic women established community networks through parish organizations such as the Catholic Ladies Aid Society, Young Ladies Institute, Xaverian Club, church choir, Women's Catholic Order of Foresters, Presentation Players Theatre Group, Catholic Daughters of America, and St. Joseph's Altar Society.¹²⁷ The Presentation Players Theatre Group, for example, put on performances for the parish and Berkeley's wider community, yet Ella Mae Cunha fondly recalled the social aspect. She exclaimed that, “It was such fun! After every rehearsal,

¹²⁴ Norma Gray Oral Interview. Interviewed by author in interviewee's home. October 22, 2008. Berkeley, California.

¹²⁵ Norma Gray Oral Interview. Interviewed by author in interviewee's home. October 22, 2008. Berkeley, California.

¹²⁶ Norma Gray Oral Interview. Interviewed by author in interviewee's home. October 22, 2008. Berkeley, California.

¹²⁷ *Centennial: Saint Joseph the Workman Parish: Berkeley, California, 1879-1979*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Saint Joseph the Workman Parish, 1979). Diocese of Oakland Archives. Oakland, California.

the cast and helpers would come to our house or to the McKenna's house for coffee and doughnuts or butterhorns."¹²⁸ Cunha belonged to an upwardly mobile class of native-born white Catholics, but interacted recent Catholic immigrants with different ethnic backgrounds through St. Joseph's.¹²⁹

European immigrant women mobilized these parish networks to realize their vision of West Berkeley as a residential community that reflected their culture and offered a high quality of life. The Catholic Ladies Aid Society provided Catholic families with anonymous material assistance from an organization sympathetic to their religious beliefs.¹³⁰ Norma Gray's family was so poor when they arrived in Berkeley that she recalled that, "we stayed in Berkeley because the 25 cents to cross the bridge to San Francisco, that could buy loaf of bread and hamburger meat." Gray's mother immediately became pregnant after arriving. Since the family could not afford medical care, Gray recalled that, "a wonderful nurse named Rose Curran was member of the Ladies Aid Society...[she]arranged for mother to have all of her pre and post natal care at Providence Hospital by the grace of the Ladies Aid Society."¹³¹ Because of the anonymity, Gray recalled that the assistance did not create a sense of shame or inferiority.¹³² While white upper and middle-class women would have likely criticized Gray's mother for having more children than the family could afford and recommend that

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ St. Joseph's Collection. Box 7. Presentation Archives. Motherhouse, Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, California.

¹³⁰ Norma Gray Oral History Interview. October 21, 2008. Interviewed by Author in interviewee's home. Berkeley, California.

¹³¹ Norma Gray Oral Interview. Interviewed by author in interviewee's home. October 22, 2008. Berkeley, California.

¹³² Norma Gray Oral History Interview. October 21, 2008. Interviewed by Author in interviewee's home. Berkeley, California.

her mother use a contraceptive device in the future, the Catholic hospital respected her mother's religious beliefs and refrained from such condescending lectures.¹³³

European immigrant women also worked to realize their community vision through the creation of parochial schools that prepared their children for college and celebrated their culture and religious values. Unlike in the South, where segregation was a Black and white issue, school segregation in California impacted African American, Latino, and Asian students.¹³⁴ Berkeley was no exception. As in Montclair, legal segregation did not exist, but the Berkeley Board of Education gerrymandered school district lines to segregate schools. In West Berkeley's grammar and junior high schools, Japanese, African American, and European immigrant children comprised 90 percent of pupils while East Berkeley's grammar and junior high schools were predominantly white.

¹³³ Norma Gray Oral History Interview. October 21, 2008. Interviewed by Author in interviewee's home. Berkeley, California.

¹³⁴ Mark Brilliant, *Color Lines: Civil Rights Struggles on America's 'racial frontier,' 1945-1975*, (PhD Diss: Stanford University, 2002); Charles Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855-1975* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, Berkeley, 1976); and Michael E. James, *The Conspiracy of the Good: Civil Rights and the Struggle For Community in Two American Cities, 1875-2000* (New York: Peter Lang Press, 2005).



Image 2.6: Seven African American, Japanese, and European Immigrant boys on the traffic patrol at Longfellow Elementary School in 1932, photograph courtesy of Berkeley Public Library

Moreover, Berkeley's board of education solidified school segregation by implementing a vocational curriculum in West Berkeley's schools and an academic curriculum in East Berkeley's schools and academic tracking in Berkeley's only public high school.¹³⁵ The Berkeley Board of Education, much like the Montclair Board of Education, portrayed academic tracking and the creation of different curriculums as progressive policies that allowed students to receive an education tailored to their abilities. In reality, these practices institutionalized ethnic and racial segregation in Berkeley as well as Montclair's public schools. African American, Japanese, and European immigrant children attended courses in dressmaking, domestic science, woodworking, and other vocational subjects at Burbank Junior High School, West Berkeley's junior

¹³⁵ "Berkeley Organized the First Junior High School." California School Boards Association. December, 1960. Berkeley Historical Society. Berkeley, CA.

high school. Latin and French were not even offered at Burbank, which were required subjects for college admittance. At the same time, all students at Garfield Junior High, which was more than 99 percent white, received a college preparatory education.¹³⁶

When students entered Berkeley High School, the only public high school, this educational disparity only worsened. Guidance counselors placed minority children on the vocational academic track and white students on the college preparatory track regardless of the student's educational aspirations and academic record.

European immigrant women lacked a strong voice in Berkeley's public schools, but realized their community vision by creating parochial schools that celebrated their culture, taught their children the Catholic faith, and provided opportunities for their children's economic and educational mobility. As a testimony to the importance of parochial education to Berkeley's Catholic immigrants, Berkeley's parochial schools opened before St. Joseph's Church even existed. In 1878, the Presentation Sisters, an Irish order of religious sisters, opened a school for Catholic girls called St. Joseph's Presentation Academy. Four years later Father Cumerford, an Irish priest, founded a school for Catholic boys across the street. By 1920, more than 200 children attended both schools.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Berkeley Evening School 1924 School Subjects. Berkeley Evening School Vertical Files. Berkeley Historical Society. Berkeley, California.

¹³⁷ Presentation High School Collection. Annuals of the Convent. Presentation Archives. Motherhouse, Presentation Sisters. San Francisco, CA.



Image 2.7: St. Joseph's Grammar School, Photograph Courtesy of Presentation Archives, San Francisco, CA

European immigrant women supported West Berkeley's parochial schools because the schools offered avenues for economic and social mobility. Parochial schools enrolled Spanish, Irish, Italian, Portuguese, and Black Catholic children whose fathers worked as machinists, hotel clerks, electricians, carpenters, and railroad engineers as well as other blue-collar occupations. While West Berkeley's grammar and junior high schools offered a vocational education, the parochial schools offered a college preparatory education. Many working-class parents preferred for their children to receive a college preparatory education and thus made significant financial sacrifices so that their children could attend the parochial schools.¹³⁸ Rose and Marie Curran's father worked as

¹³⁸ Presentation High School Collection. *Annals of the Convent*. Presentation Archives. Motherhouse, Presentation Sisters. San Francisco, CA. Sister Ruth Patrick. Oral History Interview. Interviewed by author. October 21, 2008. Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, CA.

a laborer, but their parents scrimped and saved so that their daughters could attend the parochial schools. Their sacrifices reaped dividends when Rose became a nurse and Marie a teacher, two white-collar occupations.

Rose and Marie Curran's upward mobility was possible because teachers and administrators in the parochial schools demanded that all children excel academically and take college preparatory courses regardless of their ethnic or social background. Ruth Patrick, an alumna of Presentation High School, noted that, "in high school everyone took language, Latin and French, algebra, chemistry, physics, religion, geometry, basics for getting ready for college." Patrick particularly praised an English teacher's efforts to encourage students to attend college, exclaiming that, "we had wonderful English teacher at time. She had made arrangements with Cal that we took the subject English test senior year... You had to take if you were going to apply to go to Cal... so the whole class took this and passed, which I thought was interesting, spoke very well of our teachers."¹³⁹ A remarkable accomplishment, this demonstrated that minority and working-class students could prepare for college if given the opportunity.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Sister Ruth Patrick. Oral History Interview. Interviewed by author. October 21, 2008. Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, CA.

¹⁴⁰ Sister Ruth Patrick. Oral History Interview. Interviewed by author. October 21, 2008. Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, CA.



Image 2.8: Presentation High School. Photograph Courtesy of Presentation Archives, San Francisco

Illustrative of the importance of the parochial schools to European immigrant's community vision, in 1923 Ella Cunha founded a Mothers' Club in the parochial schools. She recalled that, "I got the idea that maybe we should have something like the public school's PTA."¹⁴¹ The club's twenty-seven founding members worked to achieve their stated goal of "A Catholic Education for Every Catholic Child" by organizing fundraisers that subsidized the parochial schools' tuition.¹⁴² The Mothers' Club organized bazaars, minstrel shows, dinners, card parties, cake sales, paper drives, hot dog sales, annual uniform and school supply drives, and passed around a weekly offering plate during Mass each Sunday as part of its fundraising efforts. The club's also organized free enrichment activities such as annual spring and autumn festivals where girls participated in folk dances and boys learned sword and flag drills and the sailors' hornpipe. The club

¹⁴¹ "St. Joseph's Centennial." Catholic Churches Vertical File. Berkeley Historical Society. Berkeley, California.

¹⁴² Ibid.

flourished and proved so useful that the Archbishop of San Francisco urged other parochial schools in the Bay Area to form similar clubs.¹⁴³

While the schools were the Mothers' Club's focus, its reach extended far behind the parochial schools and Catholic women also used it to create a vibrant Catholic community in West Berkeley.¹⁴⁴ Since no clear separation existed between the parochial schools and parish, the Mothers' Club also organized parish socials, parties, dances, and bazaars.¹⁴⁵ Norma Gray, whose children attended the parochial schools, claimed that, "the Catholic Schools were such an integral part of parish... the Mothers' club did everything in parish, you name it they did it, all social activities of parish, if parish or school families needed something, the Mothers' club saw they got it, uniform exchange, school supplies, help with tuition, they were the people who did it. They were much more involved than PTA because the PTA was strictly for school. This organization did a lot of things in parish."¹⁴⁶ European immigrant and native-born white working-class women in the Mothers' Club created opportunities for their children's economic and educational advancement and a vibrant Catholic community in West Berkeley.

Like European immigrant women, Japanese women also valued their children's educational mobility and knowledge of the Japanese culture. However, Japanese women also believed that some acculturation to white middle class values would mitigate racial hostility towards their community and open white-collar positions to their children. Rather than create their own schools, they purposefully enrolled their children in

¹⁴³ "St. Joseph's Centennial." Catholic Churches Vertical File. Berkeley Historical Society. Berkeley, California.

¹⁴⁴ Recollections by Sr. Carmelita Drew, PBVM. Biographical Files, Sr. Carmelita Drew. Presentation Archives. Motherhouse, Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, California. Norma Gray Oral Interview. Interviewed by author in interviewee's home. October 22, 2008. Berkeley, California.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Berkeley's public schools to learn English and middle-class American culture, hoping that their children would eventually attend the University of California and obtain white-collar and professional jobs.¹⁴⁷ Henry Takahashi's immigrant father, for instance, worked as a gardener and never attended college, yet Henry and nine of his ten siblings graduated from the University of California.¹⁴⁸ Further illustrative of the Japanese community's emphasis on education, in 1935 Berkeley's two school districts with greatest percentage of Japanese residents reported the highest percentage of 5 to 16 year olds enrolled in school.¹⁴⁹ Although many Japanese parents were undoubtedly experiencing economic hardships during the Great Depression, they still valued their children's education more than the additional income their children would earn if they dropped out of school and worked fulltime. Many Japanese parents also paid for their children to attend the University of California even though most white-collar and professional jobs were closed to the Japanese until after WWII. They incurred tremendous financial sacrifices so that their children could obtain an education.

In addition to encouraging their children's educational advancement, Japanese women also used their centrality to child rearing to teach their children the Japanese

¹⁴⁷ Yoo, *Growing up Nisei*, chapter 1.

¹⁴⁸ First Congregational Church Records, Box One, Folder One. Interview with Henry and Barbara Takahashi, April 1974. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹⁴⁹ Lincoln and Longfellow Elementary School Districts housed 287 and 469 or 756 Asian American residents while altogether only 790 Asian Americans lived in Columbus, Franklin, Jefferson, Whittier, Thousand Oaks, Cragmont, Oxford, Hillside, Le Conte, Emerson, and John Muir, Berkeley's remaining elementary school. 96.6 percent and 95.3 percent of 5 to 16 year olds who lived in Lincoln and Longfellow's districts attended school compared with 93.4 percent to 88.9 percent of 5 to 16 years olds who lived in the other elementary schools. Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, Berkeley Social of Architects, and City of Berkeley, *Final Reports: Berkeley Occupancy and Land Use Survey* (Berkeley, Calif.: City of Berkeley, 1935). Institute for Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, Calif.

culture.¹⁵⁰ While they viewed learning English and assimilating into the American culture as important to their children's economic prospects, Japanese women, also valued their cultural identity and ethnic community and taught their children the Japanese culture and language. Japanese immigrant mothers enrolled their children in Japanese language schools, spoke Japanese with them at home, taught them Japanese history, calligraphy, floral arrangement, painting, and other arts, and served Japanese foods.¹⁵¹ Their efforts taught their children how to straddle two different cultures and advance economically while still maintaining their cultural identity.



Image 2.9: A Japanese mother with her girls celebrating "Girls Day," a traditional Japanese celebration in 1933. Japanese women used these and similar activities to teach their children the Japanese culture. Photograph courtesy of the Berkeley Public Library.

Japanese women also used their church networks to implement their goal of establishing a vibrant Japanese community. White Protestants founded most of

¹⁵⁰ Edward K. Strong, Jr. *Japanese in California*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1933). Oakland History Room. Oakland Public Library.

¹⁵¹ Yoo, *Growing up Nisei*, pp. 6-9 and Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nissei, War Bride*, pg. 38.

Berkeley's Japanese churches as mission projects; however, by the 1920s most of these mission projects had become Japanese-led congregations.¹⁵² The Berkeley Christian Church founded the Japanese Christian Church in 1904 as a mission project to, "bring the Japanese to a knowledge of and faith in Christ." In 1914, however, Japanese attendees rejected its paternalistic roots and reestablished the mission project as the Berkeley Japanese Church of Christ, an independent, Japanese-led congregation without any denominational affiliation.¹⁵³ The fledgling church encountered hostility from Berkeley's white community despite their Christian faith and fact that more than 50% of church members were American born. In 1928, the church requested permission to construct a permanent building in Southwest Berkeley after outgrowing the four room house where it had met since 1914. More than 50 percent of Japanese residents lived within five blocks of proposed location, making it ideal for the church. Moreover, the Japanese community lacked any church building in Berkeley at the time. The Berkeley City Planning Commission approved the request, but Berkeley City Council overturned the decision and refused to allow the Japanese church to construct a permanent structure.¹⁵⁴ Eventually, Berkeley's white University Christian Church circumvented city council and purchased and leased the lot to the Japanese Church of Christ for \$1 for 25 years. The arrangement allowed the church to continue to meet and ended only after WWII.¹⁵⁵

Although Japanese-led churches encountered hostility from white residents, churches were central to Japanese women's networks and efforts to realize their

¹⁵² Yoo, *Growing up Nissei*, chapter 2.

¹⁵³ Idalene M. Raab, *The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) At Work in Berkeley, 1893-1963* (Berkeley, C.A.: Pacific School of Religion, 1968).

¹⁵⁴ Idalene M. Raab, *The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) At Work in Berkeley, 1893-1963* (Berkeley, C.A.: Pacific School of Religion, 1968).

¹⁵⁵ Idalene M. Raab, *The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) At Work in Berkeley, 1893-1963* (Berkeley, C.A.: Pacific School of Religion, 1968).

community vision. Additionally, the patriarchal structure of Japanese Churches excluded women from formal leadership. Nevertheless, like Italian and African American women in Montclair, Japanese women appropriated autonomous space within their churches that they used to form social networks.¹⁵⁶ In 1929, the Japanese Church of Christ's female members founded a mother's club that provided a support network for them. The club's meetings provided Japanese women with the opportunity to discuss home problems, study the Bible, and pray outside the purview of the church's male leadership. Female church members also attended church-wide dances, clubs, picnics, movies, sports events, and other activities. Church events proved so popular that many members of Berkeley's Japanese community attended rather than just church members, allowing Japanese women the opportunity to form networks with members of their ethnic community.¹⁵⁷



Image 2.10: Members of Japanese Christian Churches. Churches were critical to Japanese women's community networks. Photograph courtesy of the Berkeley Public Library.

¹⁵⁶ Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nissei, War Bride*, pg. 39.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Like Japanese and European immigrant women, African American women also worked to realize their vision of Southwest Berkeley as an attractive residential community that offered a high quality of life. Black women's networks solidified later than European immigrant women's networks, reflecting the Black community's smaller size, yet were equally as important to the implementation of their community goals.

In both Berkeley and Montclair, churches were central to Black women's networks and community vision as one of the few Black-led organizations.¹⁵⁸ Founded in 1918, McGee Baptist Church was central to Black women's networks during interwar period. Although the church's religious leaders were male, women comprised the majority of church members and led the choir, children's education programs, and missionary society.¹⁵⁹ For example, women composed twenty-one of the Busy Bee Club's twenty six members. With the stated goal to "increase Christian brotherly and sisterly love," the Busy Bee Club and other church organizations formed the backbone of Black women's networks.¹⁶⁰

African American women's clubs were also central to their networks and efforts to realize their community vision. Scholars have argued that African American clubwomen usually belonged to the Black elite, but because they encountered racism themselves, they viewed clubwork as a means to insure the Black community's survival.¹⁶¹ Black women's club movement flourished in Berkeley. Black women formed multiple clubs affiliated with the National Association for Colored Women's

¹⁵⁸ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*.

¹⁵⁹ *McGee Avenue Baptist Church. Reflections: 1918 to 1966*. Oakland Public History Room. Oakland Public Library. Oakland, California.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ See Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1981), chapter 8; Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves: 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); and Anne Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women's Activism* (Urbana, I.L.: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

Clubs (NACW) including the Book Lovers Study Club, Mothers Charity Club, Art and Industrial Club, Inc., Phyllis Wheatley Club, Berkeley Civic Study Club, and Fannie Jackson Coppin Club.¹⁶² Montclair also had Black women's clubs, but clubs assumed a greater importance in Berkeley to Black women's networks. In Berkeley, most early Black migrants who belong to the Black middle-class formed most club members. Stella Tibbs, for instance, arrived in Berkeley in 1920 from Louisiana. Her husband, Samuel, worked as a Pullman porter, among the highest paid positions open to Black men at the time.¹⁶³ The Tibbs purchased a house on a block with Portuguese, Norwegian, and Swedish immigrants and she did not hold paid employment, a rarity among Black women.¹⁶⁴ As a Black middle-class woman, Tibbs was active in the Berkeley Civic Study Club, an NACW affiliated club.¹⁶⁵

The Berkeley Civic Study Club, the only overtly political club, encouraged Black women to advocate for their vision of Southwest Berkeley by expanding their knowledge of and involvement in local government affairs. Berkeley Civic Study Club was initially named the Swastika Civic Study Club. Prior to the Second World War, the Swastika was a common symbol associated with good luck and success in American society. Because of this association, Black women's clubs across the country adopted it as a symbol. The Berkeley Civic Study Club changed its name only after the swastika became universally

¹⁶² Hundreds of Delegates Continue to Gather Daily." Western American. July 30, 1930, pg. 1. California, Berkeley. The Chicago Defender. February 5, 1938, pg. 11. "Berkeley, California." The Chicago Defender. June 23, 1934, pg. 20.

¹⁶³ Melinda Chateauvert, *Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters* (Urbana, I.L.L.: University of Illinois Press, 1998) and Beth Tompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), chapter one.

¹⁶⁴ 1920 United States Census Data. United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.

¹⁶⁵ "Berkeley Club Women Busy." Western American. February 4, 1927.

associated with the Nazi regime¹⁶⁶ Black women created the club in 1924 to “alert members to the solution of civic problems which affect Berkeley Negro citizens.”¹⁶⁷ The club researched local civic problems and encouraged members to attend the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, City Council, and Board of Education’s meetings to voice their concerns. Moreover, Stella Tibbs, head of the club’s municipal committee, attended all public government meetings and summarized the proceedings for those clubwomen unable to attend.¹⁶⁸ Club members later used the knowledge of Berkeley’s government to demand equal resources for Southwest Berkeley.

Although the Berkeley Civic Study Club was overtly political, other Black women’s clubs focused on promoting educational and cultural achievement. Organized in 1899, the Fannie Jackson Coppin Club’s goal was, “to bring out the literary, musical, creative, and administrative talents of its members, and to present outstanding artists for the enjoyment and inspiration of the community.”¹⁶⁹ The club was located in Oakland, yet most members resided in Berkeley because it was the geographic center of the East Bay’s Black professional community.¹⁷⁰ Black women also founded the Book Lovers Club, which encouraged Black residents to read well-known literature. African American women’s emphasis on cultural and educational achievement reflects their goal of transforming Southwest Berkeley into a vibrant, middle-class Black community.

Black women’s clubs also strove to improve the quality of life for Southwest Berkeley’s African American families, another aspect of their community goals.

¹⁶⁶Malcolm Quinn, *The Swastika: Constructing the Symbol*, (London: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁶⁷ “Tribute to Mrs. Stella Tibbs Lyons.” Box 2. Colored Women’s Clubs and Associations. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, California.

¹⁶⁸ “Berkeley Club Women Busy.” *Western American*. February 4, 1927.

¹⁶⁹ “Fanny Jackson Coppin Club.” Box 4, Folder 7. Colored Women’s Clubs and Associations. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, California.

¹⁷⁰ Box 4, Folder 7. Colored Women’s Clubs and Associations. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, California.

Illustrating this focus, the Women's Art and Industrial Club's departments included a Mother, Home and Child Committee and Motion Picture Council Committee. Both committees sought to improve Black family life. With this in mind, the Mother, Home, and Child Committee raised money for the Fannie Wall Home, an orphanage and day nursery for Black children in Oakland. The Motion Picture Committee, on the other hand, sought to protect Black children from morally questionable motion pictures. Other clubs also worked to improve Southwest Berkeley's moral environment. The Phyllis Wheatley Club's members, according to a pamphlet describing its activities "were working in the interest of raising the moral and social standards of our communities."¹⁷¹ With this goal in mind, the club organized baby contests, flower shows, teas, and other events that raised money for the Fannie Wall Home, an orphanage and day nursery for Black children, Home for the Aged and Infirm Colored People, and other Black-led charities. In addition to donating funds to Black-led charities, it directly provided medical supplies, food, clothing, furniture, rent, transportation fare, tuition payments, and other material assistance for needy Black families. The Mothers Charity Club similarly provided material resources for Black families by distributing food and money to destitute mothers and children.¹⁷²

The Fannie Wall Home was the centerpiece of Black club women's efforts to improve Black family life because it provided a safe place where working Black mothers could leave their Black children. In 1918, Black clubwomen in Berkeley and Oakland partnered together to found a day nursery and boarding home for African American

¹⁷¹ Phyllis Wheatley Club of the East Bay Program. Box 4, Folder 4. Undated pamphlet from late 1930s or early 1940s. Colored Women's Clubs. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, California.

¹⁷² "Mothers Charity Club." The California Voice. October 21, 1938.

children.¹⁷³ According to the Fannie Wall Home's organizational history published in 1929, the women had "became aware of the inadequate resources in the community for the care of Negro children in need of institutional care."¹⁷⁴ The Berkeley Day Nursery, Berkeley's only daycare facility, refused to admit Black or Asian children.¹⁷⁵ Fannie Wall Home was the only orphanage and day nursery in Northern California that primarily cared for Black children.¹⁷⁶ Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, the Civic Study Club, the Art and Industrial Club, the Phyllis Wheatley Club, and the Mothers Charity Club, Black women's clubs located in Berkeley, supported the home through individual donations and money raised through bake sales, tea parties, and holiday bazaars.

Black clubwomen who operated the Fannie Wall Home attempted to improve family life by encouraging working-class Black women and children to adhere to middle-class standards of cleanliness and hygiene, personal comportment, dress, temperance, and industriousness. Similar to the Black women who the Montclair YWCA, the Fannie Wall Home's leaders believed that Black middle-class values would improve the Black community's health and family life.¹⁷⁷ The organization's mission reflected this emphasis, claiming that the home aimed to "care for homeless, dependent and neglected

¹⁷³ Marta Gutman. *On the Ground in Oakland: Women and Institution Building in an Industrial City*. (PhD Diss.: University of California, Berkeley, 2000).

¹⁷⁴ Frances Mary Albrier Collection. The True Story of Fannie Wall Home. Box 2. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, California. "The Fannie Wall Home." Oakland Independent, December 14, 1929.

¹⁷⁵ Margery Carpenter. *Study of Social Work in Berkeley*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Commission of Public Charities, 1926).

¹⁷⁶ Frances Mary Albrier Collection. The True Story of Fannie Wall Home. Box 2. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, California. "The Fannie Wall Home." Oakland Independent, December 14, 1929.

¹⁷⁷ See Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*; Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*; Stephanie Shaw, *What a Woman ought To Be and To Do: Black Women Professional Workers during the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability*.

children; to provide daycare for children of working parents; to preserve and strengthen family life in the community; to prevent delinquency.”¹⁷⁸

Middle-class Black club women leveraged their club networks to promote the Black community’s educational advancement and improve Black family life. The wife of a dentist and member of Berkeley’s Black professional class, Tarea Hall Pittman served on the governing committee for the Fannie Wall Home.¹⁷⁹ She had moved to Berkeley in 1923 to study social work at the University of California. After graduating, Pittman became involved in the Fannie Wall Home and other Black women’s clubs since racial discrimination prevented her from securing employment as a social worker.¹⁸⁰ She recognized the importance of the Fannie Wall Home’s services to working Black women, remarking that, “the woman who works for lower wages and is a domestic or has a very poor paying job is still finding it very difficult to find a place to put her children while she works.”¹⁸¹ As president of the California Association of Colored Women’s Clubs from 1936 through 1938, Pittman continued her efforts to assist working-class Black mothers. Pittman remarked that her primary goal as president was to, “raise the standards of black homes throughout the state, particularly as it refereed to the well-being of women and children.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ “Fannie Wall Home and Day Nursery.” 1938 Report. Colored Women’s Clubs Collection. Box 3. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, CA.

¹⁷⁹ “Fannie Wall Home and Day Nursery.” 1938 Report. Colored Women’s Clubs Collection. Box 3. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, CA.

¹⁸⁰ Tarea Hall Pittman Oral History Interview. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. Interviewed by Joyce A. Henderson in 1971 and 1972.

¹⁸¹ *Tarea Hall Pittman: NAACP Official and Civil Rights Worker*. Regional Oral History Project. University of California, Berkeley. Interviewed by Joyce A. Henderson, 1970, pg. 60. Tarea Hall Pittman Oral History Interview. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. Interviewed by Joyce A. Henderson in 1971 and 1972.

¹⁸² *Tarea Hall Pittman: NAACP Official and Civil Rights Worker*. Regional Oral History Project. University of California, Berkeley. Interviewed by Joyce A. Henderson, 1970, pg. 55.

In addition to attempting to improve Black family life, economic and educational mobility were also key components of Black women's community vision. Once they had arrived in Montclair and Berkeley, African Americans aggressively sought access to educational opportunities that they were barred from in the South.¹⁸³ The presence of the University of California in Berkeley, California's premier university, increased Black parents' desire for their children to attend college. In order to attend, Black children only needed to pass the entrance exams and pay student fees.

Unfortunately, the education African American children received in Berkeley's public schools that did not reflect the hopes of Black parents. Like European immigrant children in Berkeley and Italian and Black children in Montclair, African American children received a vocational education that failed to prepare them for college.¹⁸⁴ As Berkeley's Black population increased during the 1930s, Black children were increasingly concentrated into specific schools. Nevertheless, African American women used the Parents-Teachers Association to improve predominantly Black neighborhood grammar and junior high schools.¹⁸⁵ Frances Albrier, who had two children enrolled at Longfellow Grammar School, worked to improve the school as PTA president. She organized several plays, bazaars, and dances that raised funds for playground equipment, school supplies, and clothing for needy children. She and other Black women obtained greater control of their children's schools through their efforts.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) and Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, chapter two.

¹⁸⁴ Robert Coleman Frances. *A Survey of Negro Business in the San Francisco Region*. (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, Berkeley, Master's Thesis, 1926), pg. 56.

¹⁸⁵ See also Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance*, chapter 4.

¹⁸⁶ "Longfellow Installs New Officers." Oakland Tribune. April 3, 1938. "PTA and School Supplementary." The California Voice. September 6, 1941.

Black women also realized their community vision by improving their neighborhood's physical environment. Racially discriminatory mortgage practices among commercial banks, racial covenants enacted by white homeowners, and informal agreements among real estate agents and homeowners not to sell or rent properties to African Americans in white neighborhoods confined Black residents to Southwest Berkeley. The false belief that African Americans failed to maintain their homes and depressed property values justified these discriminatory practices.¹⁸⁷

African American women challenged the link between African American residents and a neighborhood's physical deterioration. In 1938, the Berkeley Civic Study Club created an attractive community garden in Southwest Berkeley.¹⁸⁸ Illustrative of their successful effort to refute the link between an area's physical deterioration and presence of African American residents, the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce credited Black women with transforming "an overgrown weed patch to a garden whose colors is a pleasure to every passerby...they have made a notable contribution toward making Berkeley more beautiful...proving conclusively that vacant lots do not need to be an eyesore."¹⁸⁹ Black clubwomen demonstrated that African Americans improved rather than harmed a neighborhood's attractiveness and were in fact desirable neighbors.

Black women attempted to refute the link between a neighborhood's deterioration and Black migration by showcasing the attractiveness of their neighborhood to white

¹⁸⁷ John Denton, *Apartheid American Style* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1967); Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge Press, 1995).

¹⁸⁸ "Berkeley Civic Study Club." Colored Women's Clubs and Associations. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, California. Box 2.

¹⁸⁹ "A Community Garden." California Voice. December 2, 1938.

residents. Over two hundred and fifty white and Black residents attended an art exhibit hosted by Delta Sigma Theta, a Black sorority. *The Chicago Defender*, a Black newspaper with a national audience, described the affair's intricate details in a one-page story, reporting that, "after a delightful promenade with the artists, the guests were ushered into a spacious dining salon with Mrs. Vivian Osborn-Marsh presiding at an elaborately appointed table. Here guests exchanged comments on the brilliance of the event."¹⁹⁰ Since white upper and middle-class residents seldom entered Southwest Berkeley, the event allowed African American clubwomen to showcase the elegance of their homes and community to attendees such as Robert Gordon Sproul, the president of the University of California, university faculty, and local businessmen.

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, women's activism had transformed Berkeley into an attractive residential community with strong parochial and public schools, vibrant churches, and social welfare programs. However, local businessmen and government officials only acknowledge white women's attempts to improve the European immigrant community's quality of life. While white women's efforts indeed shaped Berkeley's development, European immigrant and African American women also transformed Berkeley as they attempted to realize their community visions. Berkeley's government and business leaders, however, ignored their efforts. They recognized only white women's citizenship, but equated womanhood with white womanhood and rendered minority women politically invisible.

The Berkeley Chamber of Commerce praised Mobilized Women's Americanization efforts in 1924, crediting them with, "starting a great American

¹⁹⁰ "Sacramento Clubrooms Scene Sunday for Many Guests." *The Chicago Defender*. December 8, 1934.

movement.” The Chamber of Commerce noted that Mobilized Women “had made a place for them in the hearts of foreign people and laid the foundation for a great piece of civic and national work that every citizens of Berkeley should have part in its structure.”¹⁹¹ Hal Johnson, an editor for the *Berkeley Gazette*, also applauded Mobilized Women’s Americanization programs. In an editorial published in the *Berkeley Gazette*, he emphasized the importance of Mobilized Women’s programs to European immigrant women, commenting that, “foreign women had few contacts with Americanization save corner store grocery. Mobilized women argued that it was of prime importance that foreign women were Americanized because they were the moral custodians of home. They thought it was neglected at the time in Berkeley and took it over.” Mobilized Women, according to Johnson, taught immigrant women important skills and knowledge that they otherwise would not acquire because of their isolation from the white community.

White upper and middle-class women active in the Berkeley City Club’s programs also gained recognition as equal citizens and civic leaders from local businessmen and government leaders. When the organization opened its new clubhouse in 1930, the *Berkeley Gazette* described it as “a stately structure whose six stories loom on the landscape as a monument to the hope, ambitions, patience, and efforts of a small group of Berkeley women.”¹⁹² According to the *Gazette*, the building’s grandeur reflected positively on the organization’s members. Similarly, the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce exclaimed in its 1939 yearbook that, “the Berkeley Women’s City Club enlists hundreds of Berkeley’s finest women...it is a great benefit to the members

¹⁹¹ Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, *Berkeley Tourist and Business Survey: A Survey of the City of Berkeley, its Attractions and its Businesses*. (Berkeley, Calif.: H.B. Knowles, 1924).

¹⁹² Ibid.

themselves and the community at large, financed by and dedicated to Berkeley Womanhood.”¹⁹³ The Chamber of Commerce and local newspaper viewed the opening of Berkeley City Club’s new clubhouse as a noteworthy event that showcased white women’s civic accomplishments.

At the same time, the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, *Berkeley Gazette*, and other local government and business leaders ignored Black, Japanese, and European immigrant women’s efforts to improve their community and only imputed civic agency to white women. The *Berkeley Gazette* described the Berkeley City Club’s new clubhouse as “the gathering place of the mothers, wives, and daughters of succeeding generations of Berkeley residents.”¹⁹⁴ This statement ignored the club’s social and racial exclusivity. Likewise, the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce statement that, “the City Club enlists hundreds of Berkeley’s finest women and is a great benefit to the members themselves and the community at large” implied that white women rather than all women were civic leaders.¹⁹⁵

White clubwomen reinforced minority women’s the civic invisibility by insisting that they rather than European immigrants improved the quality in West Berkeley. The Berkeley City Club asserted that Berkeley’s finest women used the club to become “spiritually, mentally and physically fit; the attempt to establish to the best of our ability the place and the facilities where we may render ourselves into such fitness.” After using the club to transform themselves into model citizens, the club claimed its members entered endeavored “to leave an imprint upon the history sometime to be written of

¹⁹³ Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. *1930 Yearbook*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, 1930). pp. 22-3.

¹⁹⁴ “Monument to Womanhood.” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*. November 20, 1930.

¹⁹⁵ “Monument to Womanhood.” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*. November 20, 1930.

women, of a consecrated attempt to perceive a worthy purpose and a devoted effort to achieve it.”¹⁹⁶ Louise Engler, a member of the Berkeley City Club, articulated the idea that white women used the racially and socially exclusive club to improve Berkeley’s community, exclaiming that, “clubwork falls short of its rightful purpose unless the members reach out beyond themselves and perform some service, civic, educational, or philanthropic, in their community.”¹⁹⁷

White women such as Engler claimed that as Berkeley’s finest and fittest women, they improved Berkeley’s quality of life. By excluding Black and European immigrant women from their organizations and networks, white women implied that only they rather than all women were civic leaders capable of transforming Berkeley into an ideal community. In both Montclair and Berkeley, white women’s civic activism targeted racial and ethnic minorities rather than their own community and they gained recognition as civic leaders from local government leaders and businessmen for their efforts. This linked white women’s citizenship to the civic invisibility and existence of European immigrants and African Americans whom white women could claim to help.

Whose Neighborhood is West Berkeley?

By the late 1930s, Berkeley’s changing demographics started to impact local politics. The National Origins Act, which passed in 1924, restricted Southern and Eastern European immigration to the United States. Berkeley’s European immigrant population, like Montclair’s, gradually declined. Upwardly mobile second European immigrants increasingly formed West Berkeley’s population.

¹⁹⁶ “Monument to Womanhood.” Berkeley Daily Gazette. November 20, 1930.

¹⁹⁷ “Mrs. Louis Engler: Prominent Club Worker.” Berkeley Daily Gazette. August 27, 1929.

They started to challenge their political exclusion and unequal access to municipal resources during the late 1930s and early 1940s.¹⁹⁸ In 1941, George Gelder, an upwardly mobile second generation immigrant who worked as a lawyer, angrily asserted at council meeting that the Berkeley City Council routinely discriminated against West Berkeley residents. As evidence, he cited the council's refusal to construct a swimming pool in West Berkeley after providing a downtown swimming pool near East Berkeley. Gelder alleged that, "West Berkeley has to fight for everything we get... West Berkeley asked for a municipal swimming pool a long time ago and were promised that the government would construct a pool along the waterfront."¹⁹⁹ Gelder blamed the city council's discrimination against West Berkeley on the neighborhood's lack of representation on council. Gelder noted that West Berkeley residents had supported countless municipal bond efforts, but seldom benefit from the improvements the bonds funded, noting that nearly all community centers, pools, and parks were located in East Berkeley.²⁰⁰ He threatened that, "West Berkeley does not want to secede, but won't stand its exclusion any longer."²⁰¹ Gelder's words reveal a raw anger among West Berkeley's residents over East Berkeley's unilateral government control. He demanded equal municipal resources for West Berkeley, insisting that city council "construct the swimming pool now."²⁰²

While the European immigrant population declined, Berkeley's Black and Japanese communities gradually expanded into West Berkeley. During the 1920s and 1930s, Dwight Way formed a dividing line between Southwest Berkeley, which was

¹⁹⁸ 1930 United States Census Data. From Ancestry.com. United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.

¹⁹⁹ City Council Minutes. June 16, 1941. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

²⁰⁰ City Council Minutes. June 16, 1941. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

²⁰¹ City Council Minutes. June 16, 1941. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

²⁰² City Council Minutes. June 16, 1941. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

predominantly Japanese and Black, and Northwest Berkeley, which was a white working-class neighborhood. By 1930, Berkeley's Black population had increased from 1 to 2 percent of the community. The Japanese population comprised another 2.4 percent of residents.²⁰³ African American and Japanese residents, like European immigrants, sought the opportunity to live in a neighborhood with attractive single-family homes and good schools; nevertheless, white working-class women strongly opposed Black and Japanese migration into their all-white neighborhoods.²⁰⁴ These women were not members of the social elite, but living in Northwest Berkeley was a small step up the social and economic ladder and linked their social mobility to the neighborhood's racial composition. West Berkeley's white residents demanded that Berkeley's government block Black and Japanese migration into their neighborhoods, citing it as a threat to their social and economic investment in their homes and community.

Second and third generation European immigrant women defended West Berkeley's white neighborhoods from Black and Japanese migration. Mary Scanlon, a Canadian immigrant and parishioner at St. Joseph's, attempted to prevent Blacks and Asians from moving near the parish. Previously, she had lived near the parish in a bungalow with her family and worked to create a vibrant Catholic immigrant community with economic and educational opportunities for residents. She was an officer in the Mothers' Club and enrolled her children in the parish's parochial schools. While

²⁰³ 1930 United States Census. United States Census Bureau. United States Government Publication. By 1930, Black formed 2.6 percent and Asians just over two percent of Berkeley's population

²⁰⁴ 1930 United States Census. United States Census Bureau. United States Government Publication. By 1930, Black formed 2.6 percent and Asians just over two percent of Berkeley's population

Scanlon's husband worked as a machinist, a skilled blue-collar position, her sons worked as a priest and salesman, positions requiring post-secondary education.²⁰⁵

Although Scanlon's family eventually moved to a larger home in East Berkeley, like other upwardly mobile European immigrants in Berkeley, she remained invested in West Berkeley and believed that Blacks and Asians threatened the parish and neighborhood's desirability. Immediately after a Japanese family purchased a home three blocks from St. Joseph's Church in 1939, she asked city council to block the sale and encouraging the city council to determine how the City of Albany prevented Blacks and Asians from purchasing property in white neighborhoods. At a council meeting she stated that, "I ask not for myself alone but in the interest of the entire community."²⁰⁶

African Americans and Japanese together still only comprised 5 percent of the population, yet their population had doubled since 1920. Entire blocks that were previously all white had become Black or Japanese. For instance, Italian, Portuguese, Norwegian, and Swedish families lived in on Stella and Samuel Tibbs' block when they purchased their house in 1920. By 1930, Black and Japanese families lived on the block.²⁰⁷ Most of Berkeley's Black and Japanese residents hailed from the middle-class and had high educational aspirations for their children. Still, Scanlon could not overcome her racial prejudice and feared for West Berkeley stability.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ 1930 United States Census Data. From Ancestry.com. US Government Publication. Washington, D.C. 1920 United States Census Data. From Ancestry.com. US Government Publication. Washington, D.C.

²⁰⁶ October 10, 1939. Berkeley City Council Minutes. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

²⁰⁷ 1930 United States Census Data. From Ancestry.com. United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.

²⁰⁸ 1930 United States Census Data. From Ancestry.com, United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.

The Berkeley City Council rebuffed Scanlon's request to prevent Blacks and Asians from purchasing property in white neighborhoods. The council supported racial segregation, but refused to act because they believed that white residents should form racial covenants to protect their homes. The city council's members lived in East Berkeley neighborhoods that were protected by racial covenants established during the early 1920s and remained all-white well beyond the 1930s and 1940s. When Mary Scanlon asked the city council to prevent African American and Asian residents from buying property in West Berkeley's white neighborhoods, the council refused to act. The council thanked Scanlon for sharing her views, but claimed that they lacked the legal power to act. They suggested that white residents form racial covenants to prevent Black migration into their neighborhood and urged Scanlon to work with the realty board to sort out the matter.²⁰⁹

White middle and upper-class residents ignore the rising racial tension during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Instead, they focused on promoting their vision of Berkeley as the "Athens of the West" and maintaining political control. In 1937, the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce described their vision of Berkeley as, "a beautiful city with Cal on one side, industrial center on another, and beautiful residential homes along the hills."²¹⁰ That year the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, Berkeley Downtown Association, and white clubwomen organized a two day event that attracted more than 100,000 to promote this vision. The event included water sports at a new yacht harbor

²⁰⁹ October 17, 1939. Berkeley City Council Minutes. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

²¹⁰ March 1937 Newsletter. Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. Berkeley, California. New York Public Library. Science, Industry, and Business Library. New York, NY.

and aquatic park as well as a downtown fair and fiesta. Carrie L. Hoyt, a councilmember, directed white women's participation.

Notably, European immigrant, Black, and Japanese residents did not help organize the festivities as white upper and middle-class residents failed to acknowledge them as civic leaders. White middle and upper-class residents used maintained control over Berkeley's government. Like Montclair's white residents, they still contended that government officials should be selected on the basis of merit rather than their political ideology or affiliation. According to the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce's 1939 annual report, "Berkeley's wholesome and effective city government made the climate hospitable for business expansion."²¹¹ White residents contended that their political control provided the most capable and efficient government and ignored the need for government representation for African American, Japanese, and European immigrant residents.

At the same time, African American women recognized that they needed political representation to successfully implement their community goals. They demanded representation on the city council and board of education and forced the government to hire qualified African Americans for white-collar government jobs previously reserved for white residents.

In 1939, Frances Albrier campaigned for a seat on Berkeley City Council, insisting that Black residents deserved representation as taxpayers, homeowners, and citizens. She was active the non-Partisan League, an interracial and interclass political organization that "sought to educate the masses of people in labor and to educate them in

²¹¹ March 1939 Annual Report to Members. Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. New York Public Library. Science, Industry, and Business Library. New York, NY.

politics about the importance of voting, the importance of getting out the vote, and the importance of getting persons in offices that favored your ideas...the organization even included housewives because they were employed in some form or another...some were secretaries, the cooks in private homes, and maids in private homes, all joined...no one was turned away.”²¹² Albrier created the East Bay Women’s Welfare Club as a branch of the non-Partisan League after learning that the Berkeley Board of Education refused to hire Black teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators. She recalled that, “my children and other children who were going to school noted there wasn’t a single Black teacher...there wasn’t a Black face that they could turn to who understood.”²¹³ Albrier viewed the absence of Black educators as harmful Black children. She claimed that Black educators would offer Black children role models as well as a sympathetic year in the schools. She partnered with Vivian Marsh, a leader in Black women’s clubs, to demand the Berkeley Board of Education to reverse this discriminatory policy.

As the East Bay Women’s Welfare Club’s leaders, Marsh and Albrier stressed that political pressure would force the board of education to hire Black educators. They urged all Black women to exercise their right to vote at the club’s first meeting, claiming that would create political pressure to open white-collar government jobs to Blacks.²¹⁴ The seventy-five women present immediately joined the organization. Primarily members of the Black middle-class, Albrier noted that the members were women “owned homes in Berkeley and their children were going to school in Berkeley.”²¹⁵ Their

²¹² Frances Mary Albrier Interview. Berkeley Regional Oral History Office. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California, pg. 102.

²¹³ Ibid, pg. 104.

²¹⁴ “Welfare Club.” The California Voice, October 21, 1938.

²¹⁵ Frances Mary Albrier Interview. Berkeley Regional Oral History Office. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California, pg. 114.

position as homeowners and mothers provided a strong investment in improving Berkeley's public schools.

Immediately after the organization formed, the East Bay Women's Welfare Club studied the African American community's employment situation. The study confirmed that more than 5,000 Blacks lived in Berkeley, yet lacked civic representation and access to white-collar government jobs. To Albrier, this was unacceptable. "We had no representation," she exclaimed. "We had no teachers in the schools; we didn't even have a janitor or a clerk. We didn't have a recreation leader in the parks. We didn't have anything."²¹⁶ Albrier decided to campaign for city council in 1939 to publicize the Black community's lack of political representation and access to government jobs.

The non-Partisan League supported the East Bay Women's Welfare Club's goals, but demanded that Albrier withdraw her candidacy for city council. The league had nominated Brownlee Shirek, a white wagon driver who was a union man, and insisted that Albrier's candidacy would harm Shirek's chances of winning the election by splitting the working-class vote. Albrier complained that, "they thought that I shouldn't run because they had a candidate running and I was Black and he would have a better chance."²¹⁷ The non-Partisan League bluntly informed her that, "people would not vote for a Black or for a woman."²¹⁸

Albrier ignored their request and refused to withdraw. Since the non Partisan-League refused to support her campaign, she turned to her club and church networks that she developed during the 1920s and early 1930s for support. Albrier acknowledged the

²¹⁶ Ibid, pg. 105.

²¹⁷ Frances Mary Albrier Interview. Berkeley Regional Oral History Office. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California, pg. 107.

²¹⁸ Maupin, *Frances Albrier*, pp. 43-49.

centrality of women's clubs to her campaign, recalling that, "I knew a great many of women through church and a great many through the Northern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs and knew these women could be organized. They helped me achieve my goals."²¹⁹ During her campaign for city council, she spoke at countless Black churches, women's clubs, and organizations, obtained financial contributions from Black residents, and received assistance from Black professionals who volunteered for her campaign. Albrier admitted that, "I didn't think that people were broad-minded enough to elect a Black woman."²²⁰ However, indicative of the strength of her club and church networks, she remarked that, "I was in for a surprise because I received a great many votes."²²¹

Albrier lost the election, yet remained active in civic affairs. She mobilized the East Bay Women's Welfare Club to demand that the Berkeley Board of Education hire a Black teacher.²²² After a five-year struggle, in 1943 the board of education agreed to hire Ruth Acty as a kindergarten teacher at Longfellow Elementary School.²²³ Acty was a member of Berkeley's Black professional class. She had graduated from the University of California and Northwestern University, but could not obtain employment as a teacher in the Bay Area. Berkeley's Board of Education claimed that white parents would protest the placement of any Black teacher or guidance counselor in their child's school. Since none of Berkeley's schools were 100 percent African American, the school board refused to hire Black educators. By opening teaching jobs to educated Black women, Albrier

²¹⁹ Frances Mary Albrier Interview. Berkeley Regional Oral History Office. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California, pg. 105.

²²⁰ Frances Mary Albrier Interview. Berkeley Regional Oral History Office. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California, pg. 106.

²²¹ Frances Mary Albrier Interview. Berkeley Regional Oral History Office. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California, pg. 106.

²²² "Welfare Club." *The California Voice*. October 21, 1938.

²²³ Frances Mary Albrier Interview. Berkeley Regional Oral History Office. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

provided Black youth models of Black professional achievement and Black women with avenues for economic mobility.

Louise Hector, board of education's only white female member, supported Albrier and the East Bay Women's Welfare Club's effort to hire a Black teacher, yet still attempted to minimize any potential racial conflict. Albrier recalled that "Dr. Louise Hector was quite understanding of our problem...she approved of what we were doing herself. She felt that not only should Black teachers be in the schools, but other races, teachers, should be in the schools and that we would have to come to that someday."²²⁴ Despite hiring Acty, Hector placed her as a kindergarten teacher at Longfellow Elementary School in an attempt to minimize conflict with white parents. Kindergarten was optional and Black children comprised almost 50 percent of Longfellow's students, the highest concentration in any Berkeley school. Hector thus attempted to forestall complaints from white parents who objected to their child having a Black teacher.

On the other hand, Hector, a white, middle-class woman, was willing to hire a Black teacher. In Montclair, white women ignored the Black community's demands for government representation and greater access to white-collar jobs.

Conclusion

Women transformed Berkeley and Montclair's physical and social environment during the interwar years as they attempted to realize their community visions. Middle and upper-class white women attempted to improve the quality of life for European immigrants in West Berkeley. Unfortunately, as in Montclair, their social welfare

²²⁴ Frances Mary Albrier Interview. Berkeley Regional Oral History Office. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California, pg. 108.

programs created an unequal, helping relationship between themselves and European immigrants.

Despite this important similarity between white women's activism in Montclair and Berkeley, differences also existed. While white women's activism in Montclair focused on Italian immigrant and African American residents, white women in Berkeley ignored the Black and Japanese communities. Moreover, white women in Berkeley gained political recognition from white men for their efforts and partnered with them to implement their common vision of Berkeley as a national model for other metropolitan communities. This partnership empowered white women, yet ignored European immigrant, Japanese, and Black women's visions of West Berkeley.

In Montclair and Berkeley, Black and European immigrant women's civic activism focused on implementing their vision of West Berkeley as an attractive residential community that reflected their culture and offered opportunities for economic and educational advancement. Their vision conflicted with white men's attempts to expand West Berkeley's industrial district, yet, like Black and Italian residents in Montclair, they gradually transformed West Berkeley into their community vision and were agents of change in both communities.

European immigrant women transformed West Berkeley into a vibrant residential community by creating community networks, parochial schools, social welfare programs, and other resources for their community. Like Italian women in Montclair, they worked through their church organizations and created a community that celebrated their culture and created avenues for upward mobility for their community.

African American women encountered racism in housing, employment, education, and other aspects of public life. Black women, however, created their own parallel social network of clubs, social welfare programs, and sororities that they also mobilized to implement their vision of Southwest Berkeley.

Japanese women faced severe racial discrimination in employment and housing in Berkeley. Still, white upper and middle-class residents tolerated their presence because they filled service sector jobs. Despite their position as members of a patriarchal immigrant community, Japanese women taught their children the Japanese culture, created networks through their churches, and gained some economic autonomy by working as domestic servants.

During the late 1930s, Berkeley's Black community started to directly demand that the local government acknowledge their rights as citizens. Like Montclair's Black residents, they valued economic and educational mobility and demanded access to teaching jobs and quality public schools. White women demonstrated a greater willingness in Berkeley than in Montclair to provide Blacks with limited access to white-collar jobs. At the same time, clear limits to their racial liberalism.

During the 1930s, second generation European immigrant women also started to claim that they had a right to live in all-white neighborhoods. Their community's racial composition was entangled with their vision of West Berkeley as a desirable residential community and they attempted to prevent African American and Japanese residents from purchasing homes in their white neighborhoods. In stark contrast, in Montclair, Black migrants also moved into Italian neighborhoods. However, Italian residents never

demanded that the Montclair Town Commission protect their neighborhoods from Black migration or that they had a right to live in an all-white community.

European immigrant women's efforts to preserve their neighborhoods as all-white were unsuccessful. Berkeley City Council claimed that they lacked the authority to prevent African Americans and Japanese Americans from purchasing homes in West Berkeley and told working-class white residents to enact racial covenants if they wanted to block Black and Japanese residents from moving into their neighborhoods.

The massive Black migration to Berkeley and internment of the Japanese during the Second World War transformed Berkeley's racial demographics. The Japanese forcibly migrated to internment camps, leaving behind their homes, churches, and organizations. At the same time, well-paid shipbuilding jobs near Berkeley attracted poor Blacks from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and other parts of the South to the Bay Area. Blacks also migrated to Montclair, but in much smaller numbers. Berkeley's new Black migrants sought freedom from economic exploitation and violence in the South and political citizenship, but immediately recognized that racial segregation existed in Berkeley and struggled against long odds to obtain political inclusion and economic opportunity.

When the Japanese returned to Berkeley after WWII, African Americans had moved into their homes in Southwest Berkeley. The Japanese reestablished their community, but formed a much smaller percentage of Berkeley's population and lived scattered throughout Berkeley rather than in one neighborhood. Racial politics in the coming decades focused on how Berkeley's government should respond to the dramatic expansion of Berkeley's Black population.

Chapter Three: Remaking the Fourth Ward: Montclair, 1941-1959

In 1941, Jane Barus, a leader in the Montclair LWV and former chair of the Montclair Housing Authority, expressed alarm about the condition of Montclair's housing stock after a fire killed twelve residents. She blamed the Montclair Town Commission's failure to address overcrowding in Black neighborhoods for the tragic deaths, contending in an article in the *Montclair Times* that the commission "knew such conditions existed in Montclair and needed remedy."¹ Barus proposed low-income public housing as the solution to the town's housing crisis, stating that, "I shall be happy to investigate this possibility because there are terrible housing shortages and overcrowding among the low income families."²

Barus blamed the refusal of Montclair's government to assume what she viewed as its rightful role in managing housing for the emergence of overcrowded, substandard living conditions in Black neighborhoods and demanded the implementation of policies that would provide all residents with affordable, modern housing. Her proposals, if implemented, would have improved and increased number of the housing units available to African Americans, ensuring that Montclair remained racially diverse. Moreover, her actions suggested that Blacks were entitled to municipal resources as members of the community and Montclair could retain its racial heterogeneity and desirability to prospective white middle and upper-class residents. Barus, like elite white women during the interwar period, linked improving the material condition of working-class Black an

¹ "Housing Group May Re-Examine Local Situation." *Montclair Times*. November 4, 1941.

² "Housing Group may Re-examine Local Situation." *Montclair Times*. November 4, 1941.

Italian-American residents, as critical to the realization of her vision of Montclair as a racially and economically diverse residential suburb where white elite women had a leading role in civic affairs.

This chapter explores how women's efforts to realize their community visions during the mid 1940s and 1950s started to transform Montclair into a community that embraced a multi-racial identity and liberal political agenda. A split emerged between white liberals and conservatives in the postwar period over how to treat the Black population. Previously, white elites had followed the advice of John Nolen, an urban planner and landscape architect whose 1909 town plan allocated land on the outskirts of Montclair for the burgeoning Black and Italian ethnic population.³ During the late 1940s, white conservative elites controlled the government and refused to allocate municipal resources for and ignored overcrowding in the predominantly Black and Italian fourth ward. White elites increasingly treated the African American community with overt hostility by the 1950s, refusing to acknowledge that Blacks were members of the community. The chapter's first section discusses Montclair's changing demographics. The next section examines how white improved the fourth ward's housing and African American and Italian-American women created a vibrant community despite encountering resistance from the town commission. The final sections discuss how Black and Italian-American residents increasingly refused to accept their civic exclusion and demanded a voice in the fourth ward's development.

While U.S. metropolitan regions were racially segregated during the interwar period, racial segregation increased during the postwar period. Housing segregation

³ John Nolen, *Montclair, the Preservation of Its Natural Beauty and its Improvement as a Residence Town* (Montclair, N.J.: A report of John Nolen to the Municipal Art Commission, 1909).

became a federal policy during the late 1930s. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) rated homogeneous white suburbs as financially sound investments, making residents eligible for lower-cost, government insured mortgages. On the other hand, the FHA rated mixed-race and African American neighborhoods as financially risky investments, forcing prospective homebuyers to obtain commercial bank mortgages with significantly higher interest rates and fees. The FHA's policies effectively subsidized the cost of homeownership in all-white neighborhoods, increasing the desirability of all-white suburbs to prospective white homebuyers. Only limited private housing construction occurred until the early 1940s because of the federal government's rationing of construction materials, mitigating the effects of these policies on metropolitan development.

Once private housing construction boomed during the postwar period, however, the FHA's discriminatory policies intensified existing racial segregation patterns in metropolitan regions.⁴ White metropolitan residents moved from mixed-race urban neighborhoods to all-white suburbs. Scholars have illustrates how white urban residents had numerous reasons for these massive suburban migration. Eric Avila discusses the importance of popular culture in associating cities with fear and crime and the suburbs as an idyllic safe, family-centric environment.⁵ Arnold Hirsch and Thomas Sugrue argue that fears about racial integration as well as local planning policies and politics sparked white suburbanization in Chicago and Detroit. Sugrue also emphasizes deindustrialization as a factor in Detroit, noting that the city had few economic

⁴ Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*.

⁵ Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2004).

opportunities for residents as factories relocated to the Sunbelt.⁶ Matthew Lassiter and Kevin Kruse, on the other hand, emphasize the “push” factor in postwar suburbanization. Lassiter notes that middle-class white residents strongly supported segregation in Charlotte, North Carolina and Atlanta, Georgia while upper middle-class white residents were generally more sympathetic towards Black demands for housing and school integration.⁷ Kruse also focuses on how fears of racial integration among Atlanta’s white working and middle-class spark suburbanization and led eventually to the rise of the new conservative movement.⁸

Recently Robert Self has challenged the term “white flight,” arguing that white metropolitan residents moved to all-white suburbs because of economic incentives as well as the cultural image of suburban as the embodiment of the American Dream.⁹ David Freund has also complicated the idea of postwar white flight, noting that ideas of biological and cultural inferiority, racial covenants, and restrictive zoning supported housing segregation while after the postwar period state policy backed mortgage discrimination, allowing white residents to claim that they lack racial bias even as white suburbs were closed to prospective Black homebuyers.¹⁰ Steven Gregory and Bruce

⁶ Arnold Hirsch, *The Making of the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) and Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁷ Matthew Lassiter, *Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁸ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁹ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Haynes demonstrate that this white suburbanization included migration away from mixed-race suburbs such as Yonkers and Corona, New York.¹¹

A variety of push and pull factories drove white suburbanization during the postwar period and hardened racial boundaries in housing in metropolitan regions around the country. Unable to purchase housing in these new suburbs, African Americans increasingly lived in urban “ghettos” isolated from metropolitan region’s economic, educational, and cultural resources.¹² Black ghettos even emerged in cities with a history of a more liberal racial politics such as San Francisco.¹³

Trends in racial segregation in northern New Jersey mirrored the national trends during the postwar period.¹⁴ Indeed, racial discrimination in Essex County’s housing market was so egregious that in 1956 almost nine out of ten Blacks who lived in Essex County resided in just three municipalities-Newark, East Orange, and Montclair.¹⁵ *The Bernardsville News*, a regional newspaper, bluntly acknowledged widespread housing discrimination throughout the region, stating that, “Although no crosses burn on Essex lawns to remind Negroes to stay in their place, a segregated pattern in private housing is rigidly maintained.”¹⁶

Additionally, “racial cleansing” in many predominantly white suburbs in northern New Jersey removed existing pockets of Black residents, contributing to the hardening of

¹¹ Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) and Bruce Haynes, *Red Lines, Black Spaces: The Politics of Race and Space in a Black Middle-Class Suburb* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 2001).

¹² Douglass S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

¹³ Deirdre L. Sullivan, *Letting Down the Bars: Race, Space, and Democracy in San Francisco, 1936-1964* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, PhD Diss., 2003).

¹⁴ Lizabeth Cohen, *Consumer’s Republic: the Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf Press, 2003).

¹⁵ “No Fiery Crosses: But Housing is His Big Problem.” *The Bernardsville News*. April 24, 1956.

¹⁶ “No Fiery Crosses: But Housing is His Big Problem.” *The Bernardsville News*. April 24, 1956.

metropolitan racial segregation.¹⁷ Previously local governments had used building codes, zoning restrictions, racial covenants, and land-use regulations prohibiting less expensive dwellings to confine Black residents to specific neighborhoods. During the postwar period, however, many suburban governments employed urban renewal program to demolish Black neighborhoods.

While many suburbs used urban renewal, in Montclair racial covenants and an unspoken “gentlemen’s agreement” among real estate agents not to rent or sell properties to Blacks outside the fourth ward upheld housing segregation during both the interwar and postwar periods. In 1947, a study of Montclair’s race relations found that 40 of 170 home deeds examined prohibited the sale, lease, or gift of the property to African Americans, Jews and Italians. While white residents and real estate agents often ignored this restriction for prospective middle and upper-class Italian-American and Jewish homebuyers, they still upheld the restriction against Black homeowners or renters.¹⁸ Reported in 1956, the frank explanation of one real estate agent to an African American man was that regardless of his social status, “I’m sorry, but I can’t rent you that place and I can’t sell it to you. There are certain places I can’t sell or rent to you people.”¹⁹

Despite the persistence of housing segregation, Jane Barus’ advocacy of housing reform, however, illustrates that affluent white women remained agents of community development during the postwar period as they continued to advocate for progressive social policies that included a legitimate place for African American families. Moreover, their activism ensured that Montclair’s racial politics differed from most cities and suburbs during the 1940s and 1950s. Women and gender scholars have noted how

¹⁷ Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, chapter 4 and pp. 104-9.

¹⁸ “No Fiery Crosses: But Housing is His Big Problem.” *The Bernardsville News*. April 24, 1956.

¹⁹ “No Fiery Crosses: But Housing is His Big Problem.” *The Bernardsville News*. April 24, 1956.

women advocated for a variety of progressive causes during the postwar era and shaped urban development during the Progressive Era.²⁰ The role of women in postwar metropolitan development, however, is largely unexplored by scholars. Joseph Heathcott has demonstrated that white middle-class women active in the St. Louis LWV shaped metropolitan development during the 1940s as members of an interracial liberal alliance that successfully lobbied for low-income public housing.²¹ Similarly, white middle and upper-class women in Montclair not only continued to advocate for Progressive causes during the postwar era, but remained at the forefront of community development. Indeed, in 1947 David Mabey, a member of the town planning board, stated that, “women invariably play an important and sometimes dominant role when it comes to town planning.”²²

As during the interwar period, white upper and middle-class women such as Jane Barus continued to focus on improving the quality of life for minority residents. At the same, they focused on different issues and employed different tactics. Rather than operate private social welfare programs through their organizations such as the Junior League, white women leveraged their organizational networks to demand that Montclair’s government improve the local housing stock.

²⁰ Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: American Women in the 1950s* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000); Helen Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women’s Organizations* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2002); Susan Lynn, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Racial Justice, Peace, and Feminism, 1945 to the 1960s* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993); and Sylvia Murray, *The Progressive Housewife: Women’s Suburban Activism in Suburban Queens, 1945-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003). For examples of how women shaped urban development during the Progressive Era, see Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream* and Isenberg, *Downtown America*.

²¹ See Joseph Heathcott, “The City Quietly Remade: National Programs and Local Agendas in the Movement to Clear the Slums, 1942 to 1952.” *Journal of Urban History*, January 2008, pp. 221-242.

²² “Montclair’s Unique Planning Program.” Leo Marsh Papers. Katz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN.

An unequal, helping relationship between African American and white women continued to define Montclair's politics and white women's activism well into the 1950s, providing an important continuity between the post and prewar periods. As Michael Katz demonstrates, private social welfare programs founded during the Progressive Era provided the foundation for the emergence of national social welfare state predicated on the control and supervision of minorities and the working-class. A hierarchal relationship and element of control thus remained imbedded within public housing and other federal New Deal programs.²³

The fact that elite white women continued to attempt to improve Montclair by advancing the quality of life for working-class African American and Italian-American residents during the postwar period reveals how Montclair's politics differed from those of most suburbs. During the interwar period, white women created private social welfare programs that provided minority residents with educational programs and material assistance. The Junior League, for example, taught Black and Italian mothers middle-class American standards of childcare, housekeeping, and hygiene, presuming that the superiority of these standards over colloquial knowledge. Incited by the economic and geopolitical crises of the Great Depression and Second World War, the federal government's role in housing and economic relief programs underwent an unprecedented expansion during the 1930s and 1940s.²⁴ In Montclair, a younger generation of white women looked to the government rather than private organizations to assist low-income residents. They also focused on housing reform rather than social welfare programs,

²³Michael Katz, *Poverty and Policy in American History* (New York: Academic Press, 1983) and *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

²⁴ Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990) and David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

contending that public housing would advance the quality of life for low-income residents.²⁵ Nonetheless, elite white women failed to challenge racial segregation, which created overcrowded conditions in Montclair's Black sections.

Although housing reforms were less intrusive than the social welfare programs white women created during the interwar period, an unequal relationship still existed between them and minority residents. During the both the pre and post WWII eras, white women viewed themselves as civic leaders and claimed to understand and act in best interests of Black and ethnic Italian residents. Upper middle-class white women's attempts to help rather than partner with minority residents caused them to support measures that often failed to reflect and at times even contradicted minority women's community visions.

Montclair's government as well as local businessmen and real estate agents thwarted white women's efforts at housing reform. Like other predominantly white suburbs with existing pockets of Black residents, they believed that African Americans harmed Montclair's desirability to new white residents and sought to block any attempt to either improve or expand the housing stock available to Black residents.

African American women also shaped Montclair's development as they continued to transform the fourth ward into an attractive neighborhood with opportunities for educational and economic advancement. Since racial discrimination barred them from other suburbs, many African Americans had an even stronger investment in Montclair's development than white upper and middle-class residents. Among the most desirable

²⁵ Amy Lynne Howard, *"More Than Shelter: " Community, Identity, and Spatial Politics in San Francisco Public Housing, 1938-2000* (PhD Diss.: College of William and Mary, 2005) and John F. Baranski, *Making Public Housing in San Francisco: Liberalism, Social Prejudice, and Social Activism, 1906-1976* (PhD Diss.: University of California, Santa Barbara, 2004).

suburbs in northern New Jersey open to African Americans at the time, a growing number of Black professionals moved to fourth ward after WWII and purchased single-family homes because of its residential character. They thus had a clear investment in its development. Many Black women recognized that racial discrimination in northern New Jersey's housing market had created overcrowded conditions. Since neither low-income public housing nor the other housing reforms white women proposed addressed this underlying issue, Black women focused on building strong neighborhood schools and institutions and fought the town commission's approval of developments in opposition to their community vision such as taverns.

Like white and African American women, Italian-American women also actively participated in Montclair's development during the postwar period as they struggled to transform their section of the fourth ward into a vibrant residential community that celebrated their culture. However, unlike African Americans who encountered severe housing discrimination outside the fourth ward, Italian-Americans could purchase or rent housing just about anywhere they could afford to live in either Montclair or Essex County.²⁶ Indeed, the Second World War as a transformative moment in race relations and ideas about race in the United States.²⁷ During the interwar period, Americans conceived of race as a pluralistic, flexible hierarchy linked to cultural and behavioral characteristics. White middle and upper-class Anglos perceived of Italians as an "inbetween people," inferior in their view to white Anglos but superior to Asians and

²⁶ See Wild, *Street Meeting*, conclusion, and Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*.

²⁷ Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); and Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*.

African Americans.²⁸ Montclair's Italian community faced unequal access to housing and jobs and lacked political representation.

By the end of the 1950s, however, most Americans understood race as a black and white binary based on a fixed set of biological characteristics. White ethnics demanded greater access to jobs and housing and used their economic affluence to position themselves as white in the minds of white Anglos.²⁹ In Montclair, the Italian community had greater claims to jobs and housing during the postwar period. Many upwardly mobile Italian-Americans moved to white neighborhoods in Montclair or nearby suburbs, opening space within the fourth ward for the Black community's expansion across the Lackawanna Railroad Station into southeast Montclair.³⁰ Illustrating how the national shift in racial discourse impacted local politics, in 1947, white civic leaders conducted a study of local race relations that focused on African Americans and ignored Italian-Americans. In contrast, during the 1930s the Junior League had categorized Italians and African Americans as minority groups.³¹

Italian women enjoyed greater geographic mobility than Black women during the postwar period, yet many remained in the fourth ward formed a grassroots alliance with African Americans in support of improved schools in the fourth ward. Interracial

²⁸ James R. Barrett and David Roediger, "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality, and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 16 (Spring 1997), pp. 3-4; Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005); Robert Orsi, "The Religious Boundaries of an Inbetween People: Street Feste and the Problem of the Darked-Skinned Other in Italian Harlem, 1920-199," *American Quarterly*, 44 (September 1992), pp. 314-347; Guglielmo, *Are Italians White?*; and Guglielmo, *White on Arrival*.

²⁹ David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How American's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

³⁰ See Wild, *Street Meeting*, conclusion; Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); and Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*.

³¹ *Montclair Civil Rights Audit*. Reported at Montclair Forum, December 11, 1947. Pamphlet. Special Collections and University Archives. Alexander Library, Rutgers University. New Brunswick, New Jersey.

alliances were pivotal to the Black community's struggle for equality and indicate an additional difference between Montclair's racial politics and most suburbs. Of course, Italian-Americans enjoyed more success in leaving the fourth ward because of their greater access to jobs and housing. Nevertheless, the refusal of Montclair's government to provide the fourth ward with municipal resources inspired a new coalition of working-class Italian-Americans and African Americans who demanded government representation, improved neighborhood schools, and protection from crime and harmful development. African American and Italian residents had lived in proximity to each other during the interwar period, but never formed a political coalition.

Montclair's postwar racial politics differed from the common story of white migration from cities to suburbs.³² Cleveland Austin, chairman of the town planning board remarked that, "Montclair has a spirit all its own-a rare thing in a metropolitan area. People take a *personal* pride in the town...residents are willing and eager to work for town improvement"³³ Austin recognized that the white community's civic pride could be mobilized to shape Montclair's social and physical landscape, noting that, "this civic pride unifies the community for the furthering of the common interests of all citizens...I call upon this old-fashioned grass-roots spirit to rejuvenate Montclair."³⁴

Women answered Austin's call, ensuring that Montclair remained a predominantly white, middle-class suburb that was also multi-racial. Although white women never supported racial equality, African Americans comprised the majority of

³² Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Hirsch, *Making of the Second Ghetto*, and Self, *American Babylon*.

³³ "Montclair's Unique Planning Program." Leo Marsh Papers. Katz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN.

³⁴ "Montclair's Unique Planning Program." Leo Marsh Papers. Katz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN.

residents who benefited from their proposed housing reforms. Their actions implied African Americans were members of the community entitled to some municipal resources. At the same time, African American and Italian-American women attempted to transform the fourth ward into a neighborhood with attractive homes and quality schools. Women's activism demonstrated that Montclair could retain its racial diversity and desirability as a suburb.

A People on the Move: Postwar Montclair

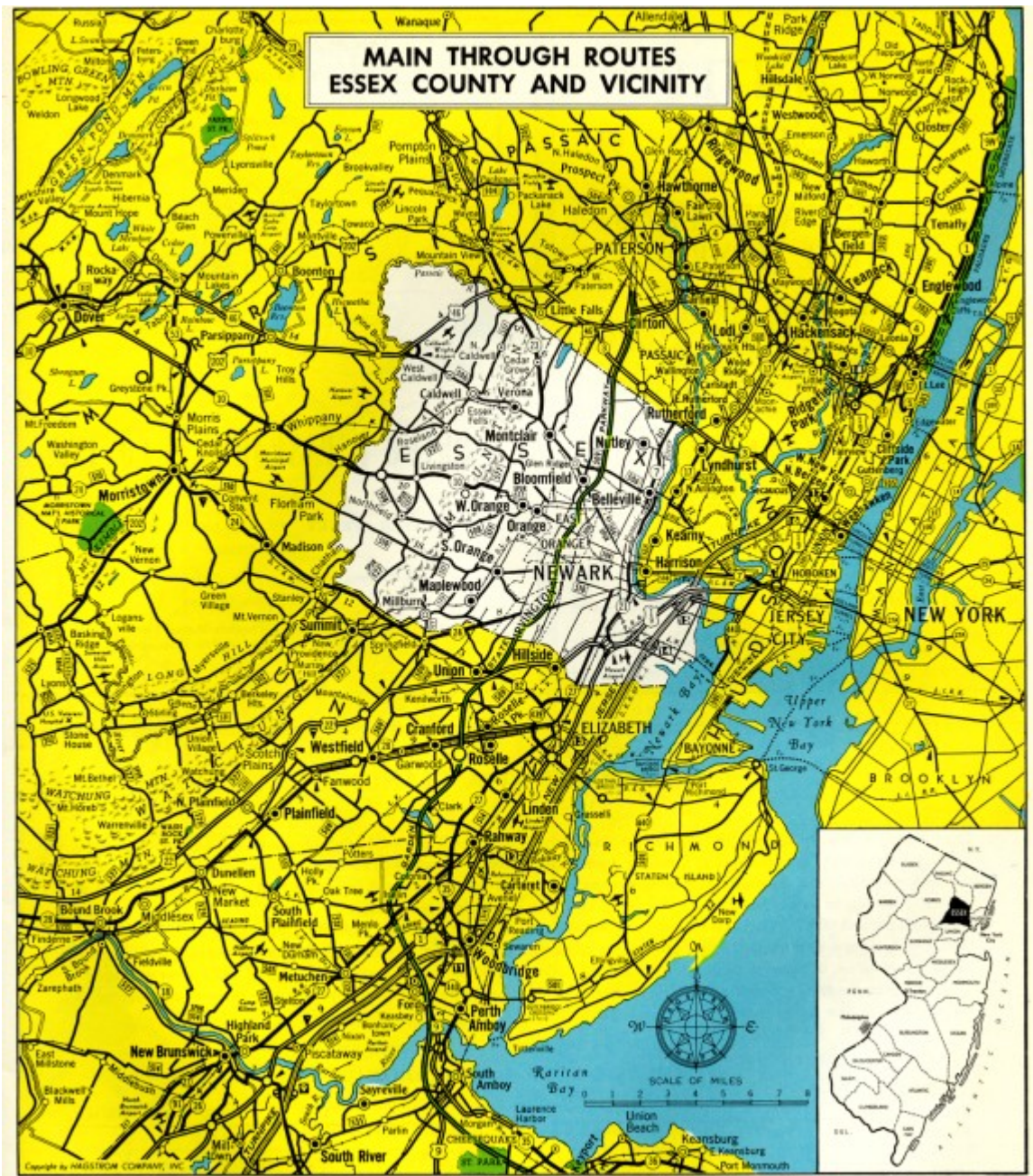
Montclair's status as an elite residential suburb declined during the postwar era relative to emerging suburbs in Morris and Bergen counties which affluent white residents viewed as more desirable communities.³⁵ Most cities in northern New Jersey expanded slowly during the postwar period while the suburbs rapidly expanded.³⁶ For example, largely suburban Bergen County's population increased more than 90 percent between 1940 and 1960 from 409,646 to 780,255 residents. Transportation developments propelled this growth as residents enjoyed easy automobile access to Manhattan via the George Washington Bridge, an alternative to the train or ferry.³⁷ Although most suburbs expanded, established suburbs in northern New Jersey experienced only marginal growth during the postwar period. Essex County's population only expanded approximately 10 percent between 1940 and 1960 from 837,340 to 923,545 residents, much slower than Bergen County. Moreover, Black migration to Newark and, to a lesser extent, also East Orange and Montclair propelled Essex County's population growth. As an established

³⁵ Some examples of these communities include Alpine, Englewood Cliffs, Saddle River, Franklin Lakes, Woodcliff Lake, Haworth, Demarest, Wychoff, and Ridgewood.

³⁶ Lizabeth Cohen, *Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf Press, 2003).

³⁷ Michael Birkner, *A Country Place No More: The Transformation of Bergenfield, New Jersey, 1894-1994* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994), pg. 115.

suburb in Essex County, Montclair's population increased less than 10 percent.³⁸ Growth and status are not synonymous. Nevertheless, the migration of white middle and upper-class residents from Essex County to developing suburbs suggests that they viewed Essex County as less desirable.



³⁸ Hugh W. Ransom. *The Neighborhood Center Experiment in Montclair, New Jersey: An Evaluation*. (New York: The New York School of Social Work, Columbia University, 1942), pp. 2-3.

Image 3.1: 1954 map of northern New Jersey during the postwar period. Note Montclair's proximity to Newark compared with more rapidly growing suburbs in the far northeast section of the map. Photograph courtesy of Rutgers University Special Collections.

Outside experts revealed the deep-seated concern among Montclair's white elites that the town's position as an elite residential suburb would decline unless it adopted swift measures. In 1948, the Montclair Board of Education hired researchers from Columbia University's Teachers College to study the town schools. The researchers concluded that Montclair's schools currently ranked among the state's best, yet ominously claimed that demographic trends in metropolitan regions might cause the quality of education to decline in the near future. According researchers reported that, "Montclair cannot escape the impact of certain metropolitan trends, congestion in community, decreased birth rate, longevity and earlier retirement, mobility of people, tendency of parents to be out of home and community during large portions of day, increase in child delinquency, divorce rate, nervous disorders, etc."³⁹ These demographic trends, the researchers from Columbia forewarned, were inevitable and would transform Montclair unless the government acted immediately.

In response to Montclair's declining position as an elite suburb, in 1946 the Montclair Town Commission hired Scott Bagby, a professional planner, to recommend how Montclair could retain its status as a desirable suburb. Bagby's report emphasized how broader forces in metropolitan development had already chipped away at the town's status as an elite suburb. He noted that:

"Montclair has been impacted by forces of decentralization. This has caused loss of millions of dollars in Montclair property valuations, which may best be

³⁹ Institute of Field Studies, Teachers College, Columbia University, *The Report of The Survey of the Public Schools of Montclair, New Jersey* (New York: Columbia University, 1948). Rutgers University Special Collections. Rutgers University. New Brunswick, New Jersey.

compared to spreading epidemic of a serious disease. The automobile and bus have changed the area of urbanization from a 4 mile to a 50 mile radius and the older central areas are deteriorating masses of blighted and slum areas. Montclair became a high class residential suburb in the 1910-1930 period as it benefited initially from decentralization, but now the forces of decentralization are harming the city.”

Bagby implied Montclair’s status as an elite suburb would decline unless the town attracted more middle and upper-class white residents. He noted that, “some areas could have further damage (a decline in property values) prevented by more restrictive zoning.” He urged the commission to act aggressively to prevent single-family homeowners from leaving, commenting that, “one family section pay a preponderant share of the tax bill and do much to maintain the quality of Montclair’s population. It is imperative their values be retained.”⁴⁰

Tinged with racial implications, Bagby’s report contended that Montclair would become an overcrowded city if the town commission failed to swiftly adopt comprehensive measures. Specifically, he recommended the construction of a new junior high school in an affluent white neighborhood, strengthening zoning measures to prevent the conversion of single family homes into apartments, redeveloping large estates into multiple single family homes affordable to white middle-class families, adopting housing codes that limited overcrowding, and surveying blighted or deteriorated areas to

⁴⁰ Scott Bagby, The Development of the Town of Montclair. A Report to the Montclair Development Board. July 1946. Montclair League of Women Voters Papers. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

determine whether a low-income housing project was necessary to alleviate overcrowding in the fourth ward.⁴¹

Bagby's report implied that the expanding Black population threatened the town's desirability as a residential suburb to most affluent and middle-class white families. Indeed, Bergen County's racial demographics, which attracted middle and upper-class white migration, and Montclair, whose growth was driven by Black migration, illustrates the link between the racial composition of a suburb and its desirability to white families. In 1942, less than 3 percent of Bergen County residents were African American compared to 15 percent of Montclair's population. Montclair's Black population almost doubled between 1940 and 1956 from 6,000 to 11,000 residents, forming 25 percent of the population by the mid 1950s and concentrated in the fourth ward.⁴²

Despite the Black community's expansion, Montclair remained a predominantly white and middle-class suburb.⁴³ In 1960, 91 percent of residents had completed high school and 56 percent worked in white-collar occupations compared with only 24 percent in manufacturing.⁴⁴

Moreover, as Montclair transformed from an elite white residential suburb into a more socially and racially diverse community, it became a national magnet for middle-class African Americans and the existing African American community enjoyed upward

⁴¹ Scott Bagby, *The Development of the Town of Montclair. A Report to the Montclair Development Board*. July 1946. Montclair League of Women Voters Papers. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁴² "No Fiery Crosses: But Housing is His Big Problem." *The Bernardsville News*. April 24, 1956.

⁴³ See Birkner, *Country Place No More*, pp. 217. 1940 United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C. 1960 United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.

⁴⁴ Table 78. 1960 United States Census Data. 32-272. United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.

economic mobility.⁴⁵ While many Blacks settled in Montclair before the war because of the availability of service sector jobs, the presence of an established African American community in a residential area with single-family housing attracted middle-class Blacks during the postwar period. Indeed, even in 1940 more than 50 percent of African Americans employed in Montclair worked as private household workers.⁴⁶ By 1950, however, only 162 of employed men and 1,571 of employed women who lived in Montclair worked as private household workers.⁴⁷ Most Black migrants were now professionals who worked as engineers, doctors, teachers, lawyers, dentists, and in other professional occupations who commuted to Newark or New York.⁴⁸ The existing Black population also increasingly left private service sector jobs for other occupations during the postwar period. Lillian Margaret Connor arrived in Montclair in 1931 and worked as a domestic servant until WWII when she found factory employment in the midst of a severe labor shortage.⁴⁹ A license childcare provider, she opened her own daycare center, Hollow Day Care, during the postwar period.

The Black community's economic diversification ended the social and economic interdependence that had characterized interactions between African American and white residents during the interwar period. At the same time, this close, hierarchical relationship that domestic service created before the war continued to influence racial politics well into the 1940s and 1950s. Wealthy white residents still attempted to control and

⁴⁵ For more on Black unemployment in the urban North during the Great Depression, see Grossman, *Land of Hope* and Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*.

⁴⁶ 1940 United States Census Data. Pg. 896. Table 33. United States Government Publication. Washington, D.C. 1950 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Table 35, pg. 30. Washington, D.C.

⁴⁷ 1950 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Table 35, pg. 30. Washington, D.C. Table 78. 1960 United States Census Data. 32-272. United States Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.

⁴⁸ See Lake, *New Suburbanites*, chapter five and Wiese, *Places of Their Own*

⁴⁹ Lillian Margaret Connor Oral Interview with author. January 19, 2007.

subordinate the African American community after WWII, yet lacked economic power over them which sparked racial tension. In 1943, Jane Rinck, a social worker, described Montclair's race relations as, "caught in psychological tangle made up by impossible mixture of old employer-servant relationship and a new feeling of self sufficiency brought on by wartime employment in essential industries."⁵⁰ Rinck noted that African Americans only enjoyed token government representation and received inferior municipal services. As a result, according to Rinck, they had "a chip on the shoulder attitude."⁵¹ In her view, "The race problem is dynamite!"⁵²

As before the war, white residents continued to insist that they governed town affairs in the Black community's best interests and that Montclair was a model of positive race relations. White residents interviewed in 1956, for example, provided a cheery, optimistic assessment of race relations, declaring that they "compare favorably with other communities in the areas and that Montclair has all the resources needed to be a living demonstration of race relations on its best."⁵³ In contrast, African Americans listed multiple grievances including housing segregation, the lack of professional and government jobs open to qualified African Americans in Montclair, and their lack of political representation. Based on this survey, the council concluded that local politics

⁵⁰ Jane Rinck, *Juvenile Delinquency in Montclair, New Jersey* (New York: New York School of Social Work, Columbia University, 1943).

⁵¹ Jane Rinck, *Juvenile Delinquency in Montclair, New Jersey* (New York: New York School of Social Work, Columbia University, 1943).

⁵² Jane Rinck, *Juvenile Delinquency in Montclair, New Jersey* (New York: New York School of Social Work, Columbia University, 1943).

⁵³ *Exploring Montclair: An Action-Directed Exploratory Study of Human Relations in Montclair, New Jersey Sponsored by the Neighborhood Council of Montclair*. By: Rhett M. Arter. (New York: The Center for Human Relations Studies, School of Education, New York University, 1956). Rutgers University Special Collections. Rutgers University. New Brunswick, NJ.

were “democratic in principle, reactionary in practice” and “the master-servant history” negatively influenced race relations.⁵⁴

At the same time, during the late 1940s and early 1950s cracks emerged in the white community’s nearly seamless political control. Black residents demanded access to municipal resources, government representation, and the right to shape their community’s development. A growing shore of the electorate, some white elites gradually accepted the need for Black government representation and appointed Black professionals to government bodies. Additionally, in 1956 Arthur Thornhill, a resident of the fourth ward and physician, was the first Black candidate for Montclair’s town commission.⁵⁵

At a time when Montclair’s racially demographics and politics were changing, women’s attempts to improve the quality of life for residents of the fourth ward also sparked conflict with the town government. White women advocated for improved housing in the fourth ward while African American and, to a lesser extent, Italian-American women mobilized their organizations to demand equal municipal resources. Montclair’s government rejected most of white, Italian-American, and Black women’s proposals throughout the postwar period. By the late 1940s, however, the local government increasingly treated African American women with hostility, directly interfering with African American women’s realization of their community goals.

Montclair’s Housing Crisis

White progressive women attempted to remake Montclair between 1938 and 1950 by asking the town commission to strengthen building codes and construct a low-income

⁵⁴ *Exploring Montclair: An Action-Directed Exploratory Study of Human Relations in Montclair, New Jersey Sponsored by the Neighborhood Council of Montclair.* By: Rhett M. Arter. (New York: The Center for Human Relations Studies, School of Education, New York University, 1956). Rutgers University Special Collections. Rutgers University. New Brunswick, NJ.

⁵⁵ “Thornhill Asks for Voice for Negro.” Montclair Times. May 3, 1956.

public housing project in the fourth ward. Improved housing in the fourth ward was a key component of elite white women's community vision because they perceived it as their civic responsibility to provide adequate housing for low-income residents. Most early twentieth century suburbs attempted to exclude and remove low-income and, most especially, Black residents during the postwar period and used urban renewal programs and public housing as tools.⁵⁶ Similarly, white elite women urged Montclair's government to consider public housing, but viewed it as a solution to overcrowding in existing Black neighborhoods rather than as a means of racial cleansing. Illustrating the centrality of home to housing reform in Montclair, Mrs. Jennings S. Lincoln, a member of the Montclair Planning Board, favorably compared women's organizations to other groups in 1947. She extolled that the planning board, "doesn't expect to have any difficulty receiving intelligent cooperation from the women's groups. Montclair's women leaders have a sane, sensible approach to the [housing] problem."⁵⁷ White women insisted that the town had a responsibility to provide adequate housing for all residents and maintained that Montclair could retain its racial diversity and remain a community comprised of attractive homes and neighborhoods.⁵⁸

In 1938, the Montclair Housing Committee's female members spearheaded an effort to construct low-income public housing in the fourth ward. The Montclair Town Commission had appointed Jane Barus chair of the Montclair Housing Committee, a new body the town commission created at the Montclair LWW's urging to address the housing shortage. Illustrating their central role in the body's creation, white women comprised

⁵⁶ Wiese, *Places of Their Own*.

⁵⁷ "Montclair's Unique Planning Program." Leo Marsh Papers. Katz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN.

⁵⁸ "Mrs. Maxwell Barus, Fifty Year Resident." Montclair Times. August 17, 1977. "Find Wings for the Work of Jailbirds." Newark Evening News. July 30, 1961.

more than 50 percent of the committee or 7 of the 12 members and the LWV vocally supported the committee's proposed reforms. The housing committee contended that public housing would not only reduce overcrowding in the fourth ward, but would also benefit all residents by improving Montclair's quality of life. Jane Barus' previous research as chair the LWV's housing committee convinced her that public housing would provide the entire community with tangible benefits.⁵⁹ As chair of the Montclair Housing Committee, she spearheaded the successful effort to obtain federal funds for the construction of a 125-unit apartment building for low-income residents on Label Street.⁶⁰ Mrs. Charles Kellers and Mrs. Charles Wenhold also supported the project as members of the housing committee and enumerated the proposed project's benefits at a LWV meeting. They described public housing as "a new world movement" that would save money by improving the safety and health of residents.⁶¹ They remarked that the fourth ward contained 25 percent of the population, yet received 60 percent of the money private, state, and municipal social service agencies spent in Montclair.⁶² Public housing, they contended, would decrease the demand for social services in the fourth ward.⁶³

The leader of the campaign, Jane Barus insisted that public housing would prevent Montclair's physical deterioration. She claimed that blighted neighborhoods slowly spread outward like a cancer until eventually harming property values throughout the entire municipality rather than just the blighted section. Under her tenure as

⁵⁹ "About Our Next Meeting." The League Bulletin. April 1938. League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area Private Papers.

⁶⁰ "About Our Next Meeting." The League Bulletin. April 1938. League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area. Private Records.

⁶¹ "About Our Next Meeting." The League Bulletin. April 1938. League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area Private Papers.

⁶² "Montclair Drops Housing Project." The New Jersey Times. November 16, 1938. Montclair was also the first municipality in New Jersey to apply for federal funds under the Housing Act of 1937.

⁶³ "Tiny Montclair Slum Area Uses 60% of Town Funds." Newark Evening News. April 15, 1938.

president, the New Jersey LWV proposed a state law in 1944 designed to facilitate large-scale public housing projects by allowing municipal governments to make contracts with banks and other agencies to redevelop entire neighborhoods. She insisted that:

“It is intended to provide a solution to an increasingly difficult problem faced by all our older cities. As they have grown old, certain sections of them have fallen in value, and have become what is known as “blighted” or “depressed” areas.

This has happened sometimes because of shifts in population, sometimes because the district has become a business one instead of a residential one, and sometimes simply because the buildings themselves have become obsolescent. These depressed areas go steadily downhill. The original occupants move away. Rents fall. Landlords make up for loss of income by taking in more families per house. It is impossible to keep the properties up and the houses deteriorate more and more. What was a good section is on the way to becoming a slum.”⁶⁴

According to Barus, blighted areas expanded outward without corrective action, leading her to believe that, “naturally the slump in value is not confined to the original area, but spreads to neighboring blocks...eventually the only way in which the section can be rehabilitated is by complete rebuilding of a whole neighborhood.”⁶⁵ The proposed redevelopment bill did not mention Montclair, yet it reflected her belief and local experience that the fourth ward’s deterioration harmed property values in Montclair’s

⁶⁴ Jane Garey Barus Papers. Box 1, Folder 5, “Notes on Redevelopment Amendment.” New Jersey Historical Society. Newark, New Jersey.

⁶⁵ Jane Garey Barus Papers. Box 1, Folder 5, “Notes on Redevelopment Amendment.” New Jersey Historical Society. Newark, New Jersey.

white neighborhoods. She proposed the Label Street project to forestall a town-wide decline in property values.⁶⁶



Image 3.2: Property on Label Street that would be replaced with the proposed Label Street Housing Project. Photograph Courtesy of the Montclair Public Library.

Although white elite women urged the local government to construct public housing, many white male realtors and businessmen insisted that public housing would harm Montclair by attracting more low-income residents. The New Jersey Merchants Association, the Montclair Chamber of Commerce, the Montclair Real Estate Board, and the South End Association strongly opposed the Label Street project, rejecting the claim that substandard housing conditions even existed in Montclair. In a statement published in the *Montclair Times*, they alleged that the Montclair Housing Committee's report, "was not a fair presentation of the facts...we do not believe housing in Montclair is such

⁶⁶ Jane Garey Barus Papers. Box 1, Folder 5, "Notes on Redevelopment Amendment." New Jersey Historical Society. Newark, New Jersey.

as to justify the report.”⁶⁷ The statement diametrically opposed slums and suburbs, declaring that, “if slum clearance under the law is every justifiable it is a crime for Montclair to ask for any part of the money where slum conditions in our large cities are so much more in need of correction.”⁶⁸ The organizations insisted that Montclair lacked slums and thus should not requested federal funds for public housing.

While many twentieth century elite residential suburbs used public housing to remove all or at least part of the Black population, in Montclair opposition to public housing was based on the desire to prevent additional Black migration to Montclair.⁶⁹ Warren Homes, president of the Montclair Real Estate Board, and George Stanton, a local realtor, explicitly tied their opposition to public housing to Black migration, declaring that public housing threatened Montclair’s suburban identity. In a statement published in the *New York Times* and *Montclair Times*, they argued that:

“We feel that the erection of housing therewith would be detrimental to the best interests of Montclair. Montclair is a suburban, not an industrial town. Its laboring population has to find employment either as servants in the homes of the community, in the building industry, or in neighborhood towns. We already have more of this class of population than the town can employ, and this class is growing. We believe that a housing project as proposed would attract more of these people to the town and make more difficult the conditions of those we already have with us.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ “Housing Project in Stirs in Montclair.” *New York Times*. July 3, 1938.

⁶⁸ “Housing Project in Stirs in Montclair.” *New York Times*. July 3, 1938.

⁶⁹ Wiese, *Places of Their Own*.

⁷⁰ “Housing Project in Stirs in Montclair.” *New York Times*. July 3, 1938.

These men boldly claimed that public housing would encourage an influx of low-income residents to Montclair. Furthermore, the *New York Times* reported that, “some opponents of the housing project have expressed the opinion privately that low-cost housing might cause an influx of domestic workers to the detriment of the community generally.”⁷¹ Since most domestic workers were Black, the *Times* implied that white residents who opposed public housing in reality opposed Black migration.

The New Jersey Merchants Association, the Montclair Chamber of Commerce, the Montclair Real Estate Board, and the South End Association circulated an anti-housing petition that garnered more than 7,000 signatures, forcing a referendum on the Label Street project in November of 1938.⁷²

Despite widespread opposition to the proposed project, the Montclair LWV encouraged members to consider supporting it. The national and New Jersey LWV officially supported public housing, but many local chapters ignored the position and declined to promote or even study public housing. The Montclair LWV, however, studied and expressed limited support for the Label Street project. Before the November 1938 referendum, the Montclair LWV reminded members in a newsletter that, “public low-rent housing is on the support program of both the State and National League of Women Voters. It, therefore, is very serious responsibility of our Montclair League to know thoroughly what is now being proposed for Montclair and whether this particular project merits our support.”⁷³ The Montclair LWV’s lack of official support for the project suggests that some members opposed or were ambivalent towards it, yet urged members,

⁷¹ “Montclair Drops Housing Project.” *New York Times*. Nov. 16, 1938.

⁷² “Tiny Montclair Slum Area Uses 60% of Town Funds.” *Newark Evening News*. April 15, 1938.

⁷³ “The League Stand On Public Low-Rent Housing.” *The League Bulletin*. November 1938. League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area Private Papers.

“to study the question in an unbiased an unpartisan way.”⁷⁴ The LWV encouraged members to seek the welfare of the entire community even when elite white women personally opposed public housing.

In addition to encouraging members to study the proposed project, the Montclair LWV provided Barus with a platform to cultivate support for it by inviting her to speak about it at a League meeting. At the meeting, she insisted that, “where housing projects have been carried through it has been demonstrated that the general environmental conditions have been improved and the town has directly benefited in the reduction of social evils.” She claimed the Label Street project would similarly benefit all residents by solving social ills, noting that, “studies are indicative of bad housing and social problems in Montclair...the project will benefit the town and low income group of residents.”⁷⁵

Despite the LWV’s efforts, Montclair voters rejected the \$1 million federal grant the Montclair Housing Committee had secured for the Label Street project. Barus ominously warned that spurning public housing would only hasten Montclair’s potential decline. She claimed that, “Montclair, like all American cities and towns more than fifty years old, has a serious problem in the existence of obsolescent houses in the older sections of the town. As time goes by, such houses will continue to deteriorate in value and become the centers of so-called blighted areas which tend to spread into surrounding neighborhoods.”⁷⁶ According to Barus, if the town refused to act, “these conditions posed a threat to the health and morals of the community which inevitably accompanies

⁷⁴ “The League Stand On Public Low-Rent Housing.” The League Bulletin. November 1938. League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area Private Papers.

⁷⁵ “Better Housing and Its Effect on Juvenile Delinquency.” The League Bulletin. November 1938. League of Women Voters of the Montclair Area Private Papers.

⁷⁶ “Chairman Asks For Withdrawal of USHA Offer.” Montclair Times. November 18, 1938.

bad housing.”⁷⁷ She lamented that, “The problem remains. Montclair does have bad housing areas and such areas will invariably spread unless steps are taken to prevent it.”⁷⁸

Montclair’s rejection of low-income housing had tragic consequences for African Americans who lived in dangerously overcrowded conditions since the proposed project would have provided an additional 125 housing units in a predominantly Black neighborhood. Barred from purchasing homes or renting apartments outside of the fourth ward, Black migrants poured into the fourth ward during the 1930s in search of a dwindling number of private service sector jobs. In response to the increased housing demand, landlords converted old and deteriorated single-family homes into small apartments often inhabited by multiple families who had doubled or even tripled up. On October 28, 1941, an oil stove exploded inside of a frame house, engulfing it within minutes. The fire, the deadliest in Montclair’s history, killed 12 of the 25 people living inside. The Boggs, Espys, and Thurmans, all migrants from Virginia, had taken in extended family members who followed them to Montclair. The landlord turned a blind eye to the dangerously overcrowded conditions as long as the families paid their rent.

At a town meeting held two days after the fire, neighbors pointed to the negligence of white firefighters in assessing the tragedy but blamed poor housing conditions as the primary cause. Witnesses reported that the firefighters responded to the fire slowly and refused to risk their own lives to save trapped residents. Randolph Durham, a 14-year old boy who lived next door to the Boggs, Espys, and Thurmans, testified that it took the firemen fifteen minutes to respond to the alarm and Bertha Roister, another neighbor, complained that the firemen “took a long time coming.”

⁷⁷ “Chairman Asks For Withdrawal of USHA Offer.” Montclair Times. November 18, 1938.

⁷⁸ “Chairman Asks For Withdrawal of USHA Offer.” Montclair Times. November 18, 1938.

Moreover, Roister decried that once the firemen arrived, “I didn’t see any of them go into the house...it seemed like they were afraid to take risks in an attempt to rescue some of the victims.”⁷⁹ Even more damning, Jesse James, another neighbor, reported that one firefighter declared that, “he wasn’t going to commit suicide saving those Niggers.”⁸⁰ Mayor Speers rejected the accusations of negligence, insisting that the fire department “responded promptly and did everything humanly possible at the scene of the fire.”⁸¹ Still, witnesses insisted that swift, aggressive action may have saved the victims.

Black residents faulted the fire department for its slow, ineffective response, yet recognized that overcrowded housing conditions were the primary cause of the tragic deaths. B.W. Thornhill, a local realtor, complained that, “Negroes cannot obtain credit from banks and building and loan associations.” The Black community’s lack of access to credit, he believed, was transforming the fourth ward from a community of homeowners into a community of renters who lived in small, crowded apartments.⁸² John Armstead, a local resident, also blamed housing conditions, lamenting that, “colored residents are existing and not living...there will be a repetition if better housing is not provided.”⁸³

African Americans demanded that the government immediately reform housing conditions in the fourth ward to prevent another tragic fire. Ferdinand D. Williams, president of the Montclair NAACP, squarely blamed the town commission for allowing overcrowding to occur, asserting that he had reported the overcrowded conditions in the

⁷⁹ “City Blamed for Fire in Which 12 Died.” New Jersey Afro-American. November 8, 1941.

⁸⁰ “12 Killed, 7 injured as Blast, Fire Trap 22 in Overcrowded Home on Which Warning was Issued.” Montclair Times. October 31, 1941.

⁸¹ “12 Killed, 7 injured as Blast, Fire Trap 22 in Overcrowded Home on Which Warning was Issued.” Montclair Times. October 31, 1941.

⁸² “12 Killed, 7 injured as Blast, Fire Trap 22 in Overcrowded Home on Which Warning was Issued.” Montclair Times. October 31, 1941.

⁸³ “City Blamed for Fire in Which 12 Died.” New Jersey Afro-American. November 8, 1941.

building that burned to the building inspector multiple times multiple times only to have his concerns ignored. He bemoaned that, “living conditions for colored people are terrible...many houses should be condemned and torn down.”⁸⁴ Similarly, William C. Darden urged the commission to immediately improve housing conditions, complaining that, “it is difficult for Negroes to get decent housing.” He demanded that the commission construct a public housing project to increase the housing units available to African Americans, asking rhetorically, “Should any of us be denied a chance to live?”⁸⁵

To northern New Jersey’s whites more generally, the tragic fire seemed to confirm a perception of Montclair’s decline as an elite residential suburb. *The Newark Evening News*, a regional newspaper, blamed Montclair’s white residents for the tragedy, noting that Montclair, “has great pride, not with reason, in its scenic setting...but it also has its ‘other side of the tracks areas.’”⁸⁶ According to the *Evening News*, Montclair’s government used a discursive sleight of hand to ignore the obvious need for public housing, stating that, “Montclair didn’t label these areas as slum spots, instead euphemistically calling them ‘obsolescent neighborhoods. This obsolescence was tragically revealed by the burning to death of 10 children and two women in an 8 room dwelling into which were crowded 25 persons living together as one family.”⁸⁷ If white residents had confronted the town’s decline, the *Evening News* insisted, they would have realized that, “these living conditions as a matter of health and safety should not have been permitted to exist.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ “City Blamed for Fire in Which 12 Died.” *New Jersey Afro-American*. November 8, 1941.

⁸⁵ “City Blamed for Fire in Which 12 Died.” *New Jersey Afro-American*. November 8, 1941.

⁸⁶ “Housing in Montclair.” *Newark Evening News*. November 3, 1941.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ “Housing in Montclair.” *Newark Evening News*. November 3, 1941.

Progressive white women also blamed the white community for the tragic fire, claiming that they had abdicated their civic responsibility to ensure that all residents had adequate housing since they rejected the federal grant that the housing authority had secured for low-income housing. Jane Barus and Mrs. Dewitt Stucke, former members of the housing committee, stated this view in the *Montclair Times*. According to Barus, white residents, “knew such conditions existed in Montclair and needed remedy,” yet they had rejected federal funds for low-income public housing.⁸⁹ Mrs. Dewitt Stucke similarly maintained that, “the large Negro population is a grave civic responsibility.”⁹⁰ White residents, they implied, were responsible for the twelve tragic deaths since they refused to provide adequate housing for all residents.

By insisting that the white community should monitor and, if needed, improve housing conditions for low-income residents, Stuck, Barus, and other progressives accepted the presence of Blacks and supported the rehabilitation of existing and construction of more housing units in Black neighborhoods. Their actions implied that Montclair could remain a desirable suburb despite the presence of a low-income, minority population.

In response to these charges, Montclair’s government blamed African Americans for creating the overcrowded conditions that led to the tragedy. A public health official declared that, “it is virtually impossible to prevent overcrowded conditions because of the migration of families and the changing numbers.”⁹¹ Mayor Speers also blamed African Americans for the fire. He reminded residents at a town commission meeting that, “The tragic occurrence seems to have been caused by an oil heater being dropped as it was

⁸⁹ “Housing Group May Re-Examine Local Situation.” *Montclair Times*. November 4, 1941.

⁹⁰ “Whispers Grow to Shouts.” *Montclair Times*. November 4, 1941.

⁹¹ “City Blamed for Fire in Which 12 Died.” *New Jersey Afro-American*. November 8, 1941.

carried up the stairs.”⁹² Mayor Speers went further to blame African Americans for public housing’s defeat despite their political weakness and the New Jersey Merchants Association, Montclair Chamber of Commerce, local real estate board, and South End Association, which were comprised of white male realtors and businessmen, had spearheaded opposition to the project. Speers acknowledged that Montclair “needed a housing project in 1938 and we need it now,” yet maintained that “colored owners of property caused the proposal to be dropped.”⁹³

After the town commission refused to investigate the causes of the fire, an Essex County judge subpoenaed a grand jury to determine the causes and issue recommendations designed to prevent future catastrophes. The grand jury determined that poor living conditions indeed caused the fire and recommended stronger enforcement of building codes and the construction of a low-income housing project.⁹⁴

In the wake of the tragedy, white progressives used the fire to urge the town commission to reconsider public housing. Jane Barus stated that, “I shall be happy to investigate this possibility because there are terrible housing shortages and overcrowding among the low income families.”⁹⁵ Similarly, Hubert Ryan, former vice chairman of the housing committee, insisted that low-income public housing would have prevented the fire. He declared that, “the increasing influx of low income residents challenges the

⁹² “12 Killed, 7 injured as Blast, Fire Trap 22 in Overcrowded Home on Which Warning was Issued.” Montclair Times. October 31, 1941.

⁹³ “City Blamed for Fire in Which 12 Died.” New Jersey Afro-American. November 8, 1941.

⁹⁴ “Delve into Cause of 12 Deaths in Fire.” The Chicago Defender. November 8, 1941.

⁹⁵ “Housing Group may Re-examine Local Situation.” Montclair Times. November 4, 1941.

⁹⁵ “Housing Group may Re-examine Local Situation.” Montclair Times. November 4, 1941.

citizens of the community to see that decent living conditions prevail in town...this tragedy was the result of a rotten housing situation that public housing could solve.”⁹⁶

Lacking funding and community support, the town commission still refused to construct low-income public housing. Federal funds were unavailable since federal funding now prioritized housing projects for defense industry workers and military personnel. Moreover, most white residents still opposed public housing. Reflecting this opposition, *the Montclair Times* claimed that, “demands for a revival of low cost housing are loose talk which has not been substantiated by facts...public housing will not help those most concerned...only immediate official action dealing with housing conditions as they exist today will.”⁹⁷

Five years after the fire, many white residents still opposed public and war housing even though overcrowding in Black neighborhoods had only worsened. A year after the fire, Hugh Ransom, a social worker, remarked that, “the area between the Lake Erie and Lackawanna railroads is badly in need of new housing, doesn’t have it yet and any plan for public housing have been scrapped for lack of support among Montclair’s white citizens.”⁹⁸ He speculated that white residents believed that addressing overcrowding would attract low-income residents and draw attention to the deterioration of Montclair’s housing. He bluntly remarked that, “the town’s elite citizens might have their good name defamed by admitting to a housing problem and do not want more lower income residents.”⁹⁹ He further reported that, “general concern exists among the white

⁹⁶“Housing Group may Re-examine Local Situation.” *Montclair Times*. November 4, 1941.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Hugh W. Ransom, *The Neighborhood Center Experiment in Montclair, New Jersey ‘An Evaluation*. (New York: New York School of Social Work, Masters’ Thesis, 1942).

⁹⁹ Hugh W. Ransom, *The Neighborhood Center Experiment in Montclair, New Jersey ‘An Evaluation*. (New York: New York School of Social Work, Masters’ Thesis, 1942).

population over the increasing number of Negro residents alongside the decreasing number of whites.”¹⁰⁰

Class divisions also emerged as less affluent white residents proved less willing to support public housing than more affluent residents. An anonymous letter addressed to Mr. Mayor equated support for public housing with upper-class status. According to the 1946 letter, the town commission ignored the opinions and interests of middle-class white residents by proposing a second public housing project without obtaining broad community support. The letter declared that, “the town commission’s claims that citizens supported [public housing] were merely window dressing, and what was meant was high-income citizen backing-an idea which I should be exceedingly loathe to entertain, but which keeps pressing upon me as I think of the meeting like a horrid nightmare that I can’t get rid of.”¹⁰¹ The author insisted that public housing would destroy the middle-class, querying: “Does Montclair want to be the best possible place for people to live or does Montclair want to be an exclusive community of high class homes?” Public housing, the author declared, would transform Montclair into, “a community of extremes with high-income group and very low income group with very few in between.”¹⁰²

Recognizing public housing’s unpopularity, the LWV nevertheless pushed for other housing improvements. In May of 1945 the LWV instead proposed a new law that required boarding and rooming houses to erect fire escapes constructed out of

¹⁰⁰ Hugh W. Ransom, *The Neighborhood Center Experiment in Montclair, New Jersey ‘An Evaluation.* (New York: New York School of Social Work, Masters’ Thesis, 1942).

¹⁰¹ Montclair Town Government Records. Box 35. November 2, 1946 unsigned letter to the Mayor. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁰² Montclair Town Government Records. Box 35. November 2, 1946 unsigned letter to the Mayor. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

nonflammable materials.¹⁰³ Many Black and ethnic Italians had converted their homes into rooming and boarding homes to earn additional money and house new migrants without making significant changes to the structure of their homes. This phenomenon worried elite white women who perceived rooming and boarding homes as adding to the town's overcrowding conditions and creating a fire hazard for all residents. Designed to prevent another tragic fire, Mrs. Weaver Pangburn, chairman of the LWV's social welfare department, hailed the measure as a "great step forward in raising housing standards."¹⁰⁴ She had supported low-income public housing when on the town's housing committee, yet now advocated for strong building codes as an alternative.

The town commission passed the measure, yet another fire occurred in 1948. Many Italian-Americans, like African Americans, lived in overcrowded conditions in the fourth ward. The Papa family lived in an overcrowded house that was converted into apartments.¹⁰⁵ Their block was predominantly Black, but they could not afford to move. The father worked as a truck driver, making the family's economic position precarious. Three of the Papa's four children died in fire on December 24, 1948. Although portable oil heaters were viewed as dangerous, especially in tight spaces and near children, the Papas could not afford a modern, fixed coal heater for their apartment and used an oil heater in their four room apartment. Home alone while their father was working and mother was retrieving Christmas presents, the children accidentally overturned the heater while playing. The heater immediately exploded, engulfing the apartment in flames. The fire killed three children and severely injured the fourth child.

¹⁰³ "Oct. 1 Rooming Housing Deadline." Montclair Times. September 13, 1945.

¹⁰⁴ "Licensing of Rooming Houses Law." Montclair Times. May 24, 1945.

¹⁰⁵ "Tragic Christmas Eve Fire Is Fatal to Three Children; Father, Sister Badly Burned." Montclair Times. December 29, 1948.

After the tragic fire, ethnic Italian organizations launched a benefit drive for the Papa family, illustrating the continued strength of the Italian community. Father Nunzio Crescenti, pastor of Mt. Carmel Church, headed the Papa Benefit Fund Committee.¹⁰⁶ The *Italian Tribune*, an English and Italian language newspaper based in Newark, bluntly stated in a front page article that, “the family was not affluent and the tragedy has left it destitute. The survivors need financial help desperately. They need money for funeral expenses, hospital and doctor bills and will need money to finance plastic surgery and therapeutic treatments.”¹⁰⁷ The article commanded Italian-Americans to lend a hand, declaring that, “you are called upon to show your compassion by donating to the cause. Your Christmas was filled with joy. Theirs with agony. In the spirit of the season, in keeping with the lessons taught by Jesus Christ, Our Lord, whose birthday we celebrate, give to these people.”¹⁰⁸

Italian-Americans donated more than \$10,000 in response.¹⁰⁹ The Montclair Patrolmen’s Benevolent Society, Montclair Department of Public Works, and a local chapter of the United Electrical Radio Union all contributed to the fund. Italian-Americans, however, raised most of the money canvassing the fourth ward.¹¹⁰

Once again, the town commission and white conservatives rebuffed attempts to construct public housing or even pass an ordinance banning the use of portable oil heaters. Instead, they continued to blame poor residents for the tragic fire. Commissioner William McBratney insisted that a ban on oil heaters was impractical,

¹⁰⁶ “Tragedy Strikes, Help Desperately Needed Now.” *Italian Tribune*. December 31, 1948.

¹⁰⁷ “Tragedy Strikes, Help Desperately Needed Now.” *Italian Tribune*. December 31, 1948.

¹⁰⁸ “Tragedy Strikes, Help Desperately Needed Now.” *Italian Tribune*. December 31, 1948.

¹⁰⁹ “Tragic Christmas Eve Fire Is Fatal to Three Children; Father, Sister Badly Burned.” *Montclair Times*. December 29, 1948.

¹¹⁰ “Papa Fund Now Nearing \$10,000.” *Montclair Times*. January 13, 1949.

declaring that, “this would eliminate all heat from homes where they are now in use.”¹¹¹ Similarly, the *Times* refused to link the tragic fire with housing conditions and insinuated that parental negligence instead had caused the deaths. Similarly, the *Montclair Times*, the voice of local conservatives, acknowledged in an editorial that, “there has been much heated discussion over the fire and already the signal has been sounded for a low cost housing project for the thickly populated fourth ward.” The newspaper, however, refused to support low-income housing. Instead, it listed ten instructions on how to use oil heaters safely, including: proper ventilation, keeping children away from the oil heater, and keeping sand handy in case of fire.¹¹² Unfortunately, it would have been difficult for the Papas to follow these instructions. Two of the four rooms in their apartment lacked windows, making ventilation impossible and the apartment’s small size made it difficult to keep the children away from the oil heater. The suggestions were untenable for the Papas and other families who lived in overcrowded apartments.

Progressive white women departed from the town commission’s laissez faire approach to housing, but despite the two tragic fires theirs was increasingly a minority voice. In a letter published in the *Montclair Times* Dollie Mason alleged that the white community had neglected its responsibility to ensure that poor residents had adequate housing. She blamed the town’s rejection of public housing for the Papa children’s deaths, pointedly asking, “Are the real estate interests prepared to tell Mr. Papa that if they had not fought against low income federal housing that Rose Marie and her brothers might be alive today? That perhaps the two boys might have had a bedroom instead of sleeping in the living room beside an oil burner.” She claimed that overcrowded

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² “A Shocking Tragedy.” *Montclair Times*. January 6, 1949.

conditions had also, in fact, caused several fires, stating that, “most of the fires this Christmas were caused by oil stoves, which are used by people of low income in bad housing conditions because we will not construct a low income housing project.” The town commission, she declared, had prioritized commercial development by “building of huge parking lots instead of homes, while the Papa children and many millions of people still are forced to live in hazardous conditions.” Mason closed the letter demanding that the commission reverse its priorities by “erecting our first low income housing project in the memory of these children.”¹¹³

Immediately after the fire, the Montclair LWV urged the town commission to create a housing authority and hire a town planner with the goal of developing a plan to improve housing. The commission responded favorably to the League’s request. It hired Scott Bagby as town planner and appointed citizens to a newly created housing authority charged with developing a plan to improved housing conditions. Since Montclair’s charter required residents to vote on whether to authorize new municipal bonds, on November 8th, 1949, residents voted on whether the housing authority could issue bonds for a housing project. Since Bagby and the housing authority had not proposed a public housing project, the vote was a referendum on public housing in general. Like arguments articulated in 1939, Scott Bagby connected public housing to Montclair’s desirability as a suburb and insisted that it would benefit the entire town. Public housing, he stated, was “one of the most hopeful solutions to our primary economic and social problems in Montclair.” Since fewer residents would need social services, he maintained that the project would offer “a lasting and increasing benefit to every taxpayer in the

¹¹³ “A Shocking Tragedy.” Montclair Times. January 6, 1949.

community.”¹¹⁴ He boldly claimed that residents who voted in favor of public housing “chose to remain a fine community.”¹¹⁵

The Montclair LWV strongly advocated for public housing as leaders of a Progressive coalition. Before the housing authority even announced its intent to construct public housing, the League ran several articles in the *Montclair Times* explaining the housing authority’s purpose, structure, and goals and reassured anxious citizens that it would first study local conditions, encourage private investment in deteriorating areas, and propose public housing only if absolutely necessary.¹¹⁶ The LWV also strongly urged residents to authorize municipal bonds for public housing. In an article published in the *Montclair Times* one week before the November referendum, it reminded that Bagby’s study of Montclair “showed 300 acres of problem areas in town in which redevelopment was needed.” Furthermore, like Bagby, the League insisted that the proposed housing project would benefit all residents by preventing the entire town’s decline. It stated that, “the effect of blight is not only to grow worse within given areas, but to spread and discourage improvement in surrounding areas...public housing is a small but essential prerequisite for redevelopment or complete enforcement of safety ordinances.” The League, conceiving of blight like a cancer, claimed that public housing would block the spread of blight to other sections of Montclair, spark redevelopment, and allow enforcement of existing ordinances.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ “Bagby Says Housing Project ‘Will Benefit Every Resident; Warns about ‘Red Herrings.’” *Montclair Times*. October 6, 1949.

¹¹⁵ “Bagby Says Housing Project ‘Will Benefit Every Resident; Warns About ‘Red Herrings.’” *Montclair Times*. October 6, 1949.

¹¹⁶ “Voters League Answers Questions on Housing.” *Montclair Times*. September 22, 1949.

¹¹⁷ “Local Housing Responsibilities.” *Montclair Times*. October 27, 1949.

Reverend Dr. Morgan Phelps Noyes, the pastor of Central Presbyterian Church, a large affluent white church, also supported public housing. He also implied that white residents had a civic responsibility to ensure that all residents, including African Americans, enjoyed modern, clean housing. In an editorial published in the *Montclair Times*, he asserted that, “a mature society must bring forth better fruits than bad housing. Good citizens should be ashamed of housing conditions in the fourth ward.” Since the town had a civic obligation to provide adequate housing, he declared that opponents of the public housing “an obligation to suggest some other way of meeting this situation.”¹¹⁸ Moreover, he, like the LWV and Bagby, asserted that public housing would benefit the entire town, claiming that, “we want every individual in America to grow up in an environment which gives him a fair chance to become a good citizen...we know that the whole community suffers if there are conditions which breed crime or disease or ignorance. The community owes it to itself to make sure that its youth have a fair chance to grow up in surroundings that make for good citizenship.”¹¹⁹

Despite these arguments, Montclair’s voters rejected the authorization of municipal bonds for public housing in the November referendum by 916 votes.¹²⁰ White conservatives spearheaded opposition to it. According to the *Montclair Times*, they “conducted a quiet but obviously effective campaign against the acceptance of funds for housing here.”¹²¹ Bagby also blamed the referendum’s outcome on “a small group whose leadership depends on racial enmity, die-hard Republicans of every kind that have the

¹¹⁸ “Rev. Dr. Noyes Stresses the Necessity of Bettering Housing Conditions.” *Montclair Times*. October 20, 1949.

¹¹⁹ “Rev. Dr. Noyes Stresses the Necessity of Bettering Housing Conditions.” *Montclair Times*. October 20, 1949.

¹²⁰ “Proposal for Low Cost Public Housing Here is Rejected by Montclair Voters.” *Montclair Times*. November 10, 1949. “Group Suggests.” *Montclair Times*. November 17, 1949.

¹²¹ “Heavy Balloting Marks Election.” November 10, 1949.

blind staggers every time Roosevelt's name is mentioned, and real estate men who thought Montclair's residential status would be impaired."¹²² These white conservatives, he claimed, incited fears about public housing's effects on Montclair's demographics and development.

After Montclair's voters again rejected public housing, housing conditions continued to deteriorate in the perception of middle and upper-class white residents as more African Americans moved into the neighborhood. In 1956, the *Bernardsville News*, a regional newspaper, described the fourth ward as "one of the worst blighted residential sections in all of Essex County."¹²³ Between 1946 and 1950, federal, state, and local governments spent \$608,468 on improvements in Montclair's first ward compared with only \$262,416 on the fourth ward, where the need was much greater.¹²⁴ *The Bernardsville News* denounced this discrepancy, remarking that the first ward was "regarded it as one of the wealthiest residential sections in the country."¹²⁵ Private construction companies only exacerbated this gap, spending \$6 million on construction in the first and second wards compared with less than \$200,000 in the fourth ward.¹²⁶ Reacting to the increased demand for housing in the fourth ward, landlords subdivided existing multi and single-family homes into even more apartments. While this created more housing units, the fourth ward's housing stock deteriorated further.

In addition to the split over public housing between white conservatives and progressives, African Americans were divided over whether to support low-income

¹²² "Politics Blamed for Housing Lack." *Newark Evening News*. December 15, 1938.

¹²³ "No Fiery Crosses: But Housing is His Big Problem." *The Bernardsville News*. April 24, 1956.

¹²⁴ "No Fiery Crosses: But Housing is His Big Problem." *The Bernardsville News*. April 24, 1956.

¹²⁵ "No Fiery Crosses: But Housing is His Big Problem." *The Bernardsville News*. April 24, 1956.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

public housing. Todd Michney has demonstrated that wartime housing open to African Americans paved the way for middle-class Black migration to Southeast Cleveland, yet later opposed low-income public housing.¹²⁷ In Montclair, middle-class African Americans were ambivalent towards public housing. They preferred to reside in a community of single-family homes, yet recognized that a severe housing shortage existed for working-class residents. They were suspicious of the motivations of white Progressive residents who claimed to act in their best interests, yet declined to consult with them about housing crisis. Moreover, white Progressives failed to address the underlying cause of the fourth ward's overcrowding- discrimination in the housing market. In 1949, after the referendum on public housing, the *Montclair Times* reported that, "one of the major surprises of the voting was the apathetic attitude of the Fourth Ward towards the referendum...barely more than half of those who cast ballots bothered to express an opinion at the polls."¹²⁸

Since white Progressives usually failed to consult with residents of the fourth ward about their proposals, their attempts to improve housing conditions sometimes negatively impacted African American and Italian-American residents. When the League of Women Voters proposed a rooming house ordinance in 1945, for instance, it appeared to be a clear victory for Black and Italian-American residents because it required landlords to install fire escapes.¹²⁹ The LWV, however, had overlooked the cost of implementation for local rooming house proprietors who were often Italian-Americans. Forced to construct a fire escape without financial assistance, they viewed the new

¹²⁷ Todd Michney, "Constrained Communities: Black Cleveland's Experience with World War II Public Housing," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 40, No. 4, pp. 933-956.

¹²⁸ "Heavy Balloting Marks Election." November 10, 1949.

¹²⁹ "Rooming House Study Reported Here" *Montclair Times*. May 24, 1945.

ordinance as an expensive, unwelcome mandate. Mrs. Girard Minaldi, a rooming house proprietor, recognized that the ordinance passed because of the fourth ward's lack of government representation, contending at a town meeting that it was "the people [of the fourth ward] who support the town" instead of "the millionaires on Upper Mountain Avenue."¹³⁰ She asserted that she could not bear the additional expense of constructing a fire escape, reporting that she "spent a great deal of money fixing up her place for the average business girl who makes \$18 to \$20 a week." Moreover, she reminded the town commission that rooming houses could meet the housing shortage, claiming that, "the government is crying for us to take people off the street."¹³¹ In lieu of fire escapes, she proposed placing fire extinguishers in third floor bedrooms in each rooming house as a more economical solution.

African Americans also urged the government to improve housing. At the same time, they were reluctant to support public housing, fearing that the town commission would use it to drive working-class Blacks out of town. Cleveland Austin, the Montclair Planning Board's chairman, acknowledged that African Americans "feared discrimination in some of the proposed changes."¹³² He noted that they had expressed concern that "new housing projects will cost more than the tenants occupying the old buildings can afford to pay." Austin attempted to alleviate the fear that public housing would price Black residents out of Montclair, claiming that, "we want no Iron Curtain in

¹³⁰ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. April 10, 1946. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹³¹ "Objections to Rooming House Plan." Montclair Times. April 12, 1945.

¹³² "Montclair's Unique Planning Program." Leo Marsh Papers. Katz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN.

Montclair.”¹³³ Similarly, when addressing the Black community’s concerns about public housing, Mayor Deyo insisted that the government would “not make them roofless.”¹³⁴ When the Neighborhood Council, an organization based in the fourth ward, interviewed African Americans about how to improve housing in the fourth ward, they supported low-cost public housing projects, yet feared that the town commission would use housing reform to harden racial boundaries in housing.¹³⁵

Fourth ward resident had good reason to worry. Despite Austin and Deyo’s assurances, in 1948 the town commission authorized the demolition of the homes of four African American families as part of a commercial urban renewal project. Only one of the affected families located alternate housing in Montclair. Moreover, this 8 member family now lived in a one-room apartment in a house inhabited by other thirty residents. This living situation was clearly inadequate for their needs.¹³⁶ Still, the apartment was all that they could afford. The Montclair NAACP demanded that the town commission delay the evictions and allow remaining three families to remain in their homes.

The Montclair NAACP insisted that the town commission prioritize living space over commercial development, suggesting it ignored the needs of the four Black families because of their race. On behalf of the Montclair NAACP, Peggy Melcher presented a petition 200 residents had signed at a town meeting. The petition urged the commission to suspend eviction proceedings until all families found suitable housing. Mrs. Lucile

¹³³ “Montclair’s Unique Planning Program.” Leo Marsh Papers. Katz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN.

¹³⁴ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. September 10, 1948. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹³⁵ *Exploring Montclair: An Action-Directed Exploratory Study of Human Relations in Montclair, New Jersey Sponsored by the Neighborhood Council of Montclair.* By: Rhetta M. Arter. (New York: The Center for Human Relations Studies, School of Education, New York University, 1956). Rutgers University Special Collections. New Brunswick, New Jersey.

¹³⁶ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. September 10, 1948. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

Durant, one of the affected families, directly accused the town commission of ignoring them because of their race, insisting that they “want the same consideration as long as we pay rent and stay there.” The NAACP convinced the town commission to delay the evictions. Still, the incident fostered a climate of distrust between the Black community and town commission. One year later, when Bagby and the Montclair Housing Authority proposed public housing, African Americans, recalling this incident, likely feared that public housing would displace their community.¹³⁷

Rather than support public housing, African Americans focused on using their economic resources and community organizations to transform the fourth ward into an attractive residential community with well-maintained homes, good schools, recreational opportunities, and other amenities that provided a high quality of life. Barred from other sections of Montclair and Essex County, they had a tremendous investment in their community. Montclair's town planner, Robert Edwards, declared in 1956 that homes in the fourth ward represented, “the best that Essex County Negroes could obtain.”

Edwards credited Black homeowners with improvements to the neighborhood, noting that they “sought to protect themselves from conversions” and displayed “great pride in home ownership.”¹³⁸ Similarly, Lydia Barrett described her view of residents of the fourth ward as “families with goals for themselves who had pride in their homes.”¹³⁹

Perhaps the most significant evidence of the effort to improve housing in the fourth ward was African Americans constructing new housing units and renovating

¹³⁷ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. October 5, 1948. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹³⁸ “No Fiery Crosses: But Housing is His Big Problem.” The Bernardsville News. April 24, 1956.

¹³⁹ “Montclair: It Ain’t Just Cookies!” May/June 1990 Magazine Article. Blacks in Montclair Collection. Montclair Historical society, Montclair, NJ

existing units. Arnold Hirsch and Andrew Wiese have illustrated the importance of Black capital to efforts to improve Black occupied housing in postwar suburbs and cities.¹⁴⁰ In Montclair, the Underwood Company, a Black-owned construction firm, received a \$311,500 FHA loan in 1950 to construct garden apartments for 52 families.¹⁴¹ Albert B. Cook, another Black businessman, also received a \$162,000 FHA construction loan in 1949 to construct garden apartments.¹⁴² The FHA categorized the developments as segregated “minority housing” and Montclair’s Black bourgeois likely objected to the presence of apartments in the vicinity of their homes. Nevertheless, the low-density apartment buildings helped alleviate overcrowding and working-class African Americans likely welcomed the opportunity to live in modern apartment complexes.

In addition to the importance of Black capital, grassroots efforts by individual property owners to improve their homes were equally as important to community revitalization. One white real estate agent exclaimed that, “the lion’s share of 4th ward improvements were made by Negroes living in the south end sections.”¹⁴³ The Black community’s attempts at improving housing proved so successful that Lillian Scott, a Black reporter, expressed amazement after she visited Montclair in 1950. In an article published in *the Chicago Defender*, a Black newspaper with a national circulation, she exclaimed that, “I was pleased to see the accomplishments of the brother there...homes aren’t homes, they’re mansions.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Hirsch, *The Making of the Second Ghetto* and Wiese, *Places of Their Own*.

¹⁴¹ “Plan Housing for 52 New Jersey Families.” *The Chicago Defender*. May 6, 1950.

¹⁴² “City Official Blasts Jim Crowism in Housing Units.” *New York Amsterdam News*. February 19, 1949.

¹⁴³ Jane Garey Barus Papers. New Jersey Historical Society. Box 1, Folder 5. “Notes on Redevelopment Amendment.” Newark, New Jersey.

¹⁴⁴ “Along Celebrity Row.” *The Chicago Defender*. August 5, 1950.

While the Black community focused on renovating and constructing housing units, Italian-Americans improved the fourth ward by continuing to invest in strong community institutions. The dedication of Mount Carmel Church's new sanctuary in 1939 illustrates the Italian-American community's financial stake and cultural pride in the fourth ward.¹⁴⁵ Italian-Americans funded, designed, and constructed the Italian gothic style sanctuary. The American Legion Fife and Drum Corps, Italian War Veterans, Girls of Mount Carmel Fife and Drum Corps, Children of Mary, Society of Christian Mothers, Lavine Society of Caldwell, St. Sebastian Society, Arte E. Mistere, Holy Name Society, Knights of Columbus, and various Italian-American political clubs attended the dedication.¹⁴⁶ Italian-Americans brought traffic to a standstill as they lined the streets to watch the procession into the sanctuary and participate in a dedication Mass. Frank Brunetto, Jr., chair of the building project committee, articulated the obvious pride Italian-Americans displayed in the new sanctuary, declaring that they "had their dreams realized after many years of services in the old church."¹⁴⁷

Italian-Americans also worked to transform the fourth ward into an autonomous, ethnic enclave by holding an annual festa that honored Saint Sebastian, an Italian saint. As Robert Orsi found in Italian East Harlem, religious feasts provided an opportunity for ethnic Italians to express their ethnic identity and create a common sense of community.¹⁴⁸ Other scholars have similarly argued for the importance of parades and

¹⁴⁵ "Depression and Construction." Montclair Historical Society. Pamphlet. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁴⁶ "Dedicate New Church with Solemn Rites." Montclair Times. February 2, 1937.

¹⁴⁷ "Architects Sketch of New Mt. Carmel Church and Rectory." Montclair Times. November 10, 1939.

¹⁴⁸ Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1985) and Orsi, "The Inbetween People."

festivals the creation of an ethnic community identity.¹⁴⁹ Started in 1922, the August festa allowed residents to display pride in their Catholic faith and Italian heritage. Women transformed Pine Street into an Italian village, decorating their homes with flags and banners, covering sidewalks with booths selling homemade delicacies, and displaying religious objects and amulets.¹⁵⁰ Residents demonstrated devotion to Saint Sebastian by dressing in their finest clothing, eagerly attending a special outdoor Mass, and placing money into a statue.¹⁵¹ Illustrating the event's importance, men bid for the right to carry the statute during an enormous procession that included bands, young boys and girls who had received their first holy communion that spring, and other political and social clubs.¹⁵² Italian-American appropriated public space in the fourth ward for the festa, transforming it into a vibrant Italian community.

¹⁴⁹ See Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990*, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002); David Scobey, "Nymphs and Satyrs: Sex and the Bourgeois Public Sphere in Victorian New York," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 37, No.1 (Spring 2002), pp. 43-66; Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997); Hewitt, Nancy, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s* (Urbana, I.L.L.: University of Illinois Press, 2001), chapter four.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Paul Porcelli. Interviewed by Author, June 29, 2009 in interviewee's home in Glen Ridge, New Jersey.

¹⁵¹ "Depression and Construction." Montclair Historical Society. Pamphlet. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁵² Interview with Paul Porcelli. Interviewed by Author, June 29, 2009 in interviewee's home in Glen Ridge, New Jersey.



**Image 3.3: Italian men holding the Statue of St. Sebastian during the annual festival.
Photograph courtesy of Montclair Public Library.**

Italian-American women also founded cultural clubs as part of their continued effort to maintain their community's vitality. Raised in the neighborhood, Rose Grieco established the Italian Folklore Group in 1947 after recognizing that young Italian-Americans lacked knowledge of their culture. She lamented that, "it is difficult to get young male dancers of Italian background interested in folk dancing...they say, 'that's old stuff. Who needs it?'"¹⁵³ She contrasted this indifference with the enthusiasm of her parents, recalling that, "my parents would come home after a game of bocce, and we would have a hearty Italian dinner and then there would be folk songs and dancing...it

¹⁵³ Ibid.

was all so pleasant and lovely, I couldn't see this heritage going out of our lives."¹⁵⁴ To teach Italian-Americans their culture, she learned Italian from the Filippini Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, an Italian order of religious sisters, and traveled to Italy to acquire knowledge of Italian folk dances and songs.¹⁵⁵ Grieco continued to live in fourth ward even after became a successful dancer and singer in New York, reflecting her continued investment in the Italian-American community.¹⁵⁶



Image 3.4: The Italian Folklore Group. Ethnic and cultural groups were one way that Italian women created a vibrant community that reflected their vision. Photograph courtesy of Italians of Montclair.

Italian-Americans and African Americans worked to realize their vision of the fourth ward as an attractive neighborhood, sighting its transformation into a deteriorating, overcrowded community. This was especially important to African Americans since racial discrimination barred them from most other suburbs in Essex County. Italian-

¹⁵⁴ "Sings, Dances, Acts, Writes." *Newark Star-Ledger*. January 27, 1974. Rose Grieco Papers, IHRC841, Immigration history Research Center, University of Minnesota.

¹⁵⁵ "New Jersey's Rose Grieco in Spotlight." *Fra noi*. September 1969. Rose Grieco Papers, IHRC841, Immigration history Research Center, University of Minnesota.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Americans enjoyed access to housing in white neighborhoods, yet many chose to live in the fourth ward.

Demanding Equal Citizenship

African Americans and Italian-Americans marshaled their resources and organizations to implement their community visions and fight the fourth ward's deterioration, sparking conflict with the town commission which increasingly acted with unconcealed hostility towards them. While Montclair's government had discriminated against Black and Italian residents during the interwar period, white civic and government leaders claimed that they acted in the best interests of all residents, denied that racism motivated their actions, and claimed to treat all residents, including African Americans and Italians, equally. By the late 1940s and 1950s, however, town officials attacked the fourth ward's institutions, allowed liquor traffic in it, and turned a blind eye to police brutality towards Black residents. In large part, Montclair's government employed these strategies to discourage additional Black migration. Black and Italian-American residents responded by aggressively challenging their lack of government representation during the 1950 and protesting the town commission's actions.

The town commission approved liquor stores and taverns in the fourth ward during the 1940s and early 1950s, denying Black and Italian-American residents a voice in their neighborhood's development. They moved to Montclair because it was residential and viewed liquor traffic as hazardous to their community. This was an especially important issue to middle-class African American women. They viewed liquor traffic longer than middle-class white women, linking sobriety to respectability and membership in the Black middle-class. They believed that their embodiment of respectability challenged

negative racial stereotypes about African Americans and thus vigorously protested the establishment of taverns and liquor stores near their homes.¹⁵⁷

African Americans protested town commission's approval of Elm Tavern in 1941, arguing that it threatened their community. Edwin Adams presented a petition on behalf of 581 residents at a town commission meeting, stating that commission's decision to grant the tavern a liquor license was "an attack on the dignity of their neighborhood."¹⁵⁸ He insisted that African Americans had "been working hard to improve the fourth ward" and tavern would threaten these efforts.¹⁵⁹ The area near the tavern, he further remarked, was "entirely residential...with a great many children and families."¹⁶⁰ Lottie Blanchard spoke on behalf of 270 African American women at the meeting, imploring the commission to revoke the tavern's liquor license. Blanchard belonged to a group that helped distressed women and children and stated, "I know what it's like to live down there and have to pass these kinds of places; you hear all kinds of language; we are appealing that you see it as we see it. Please help our men stay strong by not having too much to drink."¹⁶¹

The town commission ignored Adams and Blanchard's remarks and refused to reverse its decision. It favored the interests of white business owners over local residents even at the risk of breaking state law. New Jersey law prohibited taverns less than 200 feet from churches. The town commission ignored Elm Tavern's proximity to Mt. Carmel

¹⁵⁷ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability*, and Georgina Hickey, *Hope and Danger in the New South: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890-1940* (Athens, G.A.: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

¹⁵⁸ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 21, 1941. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁵⁹ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 21, 1941. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁶⁰ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 21, 1941. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Church, a Black Pentecostal church with fewer than 100 members. Refusing to accept that the storefront church was a legitimate site of worship, the commission interrogated J.C. Creech, the pastor, about his activities and decided that Mt. Carmel did not meet the legal definition of a church. The commission's decision allowed the tavern to operate despite Mt. Carmel's nearby presence.

Three years later, however, the town commission denied Elm Tavern's request to move one block, deferring to Black residents. At a town commission meeting held in December of 1944, the Neighborhood Center, Montclair YWCA, George Washington PTA, Watchung PTA, George Inness PTA, and Montclair Business Association presented a petition that 1,307 residents and business owners signed in opposition to the tavern's continued presence. Henry Stanfield, the coalition's representative, emphasized how the tavern harmed the quality of life for local residents. The tavern, he claimed, "happens to be near the center of the colored population; there are some 8 or 9 churches there and a YMCA; this would be a detriment to the civic betterment, educational, and social life of that community...the tavern is a nuisance and interferes with the inherent rights of the people. In my mind no one has any interest in the place except ugly, vicious, broken-down wrecks who are nothing more than stumble-bums who loiter there and use vile language"¹⁶² Similarly, Elizabeth Baker, representing the Neighborhood Center, an organization based in the fourth ward, contended that, "eleven or twelve arrests occurred near the tavern last year alone for disorderly conduction and four or five cases of assault." In her view, these arrests provided undisputed evidence of the tavern's deleterious effects

¹⁶² Ibid.

on the community.¹⁶³ Speaking on behalf of the more than 1,000-member Montclair NAACP, Octavia Catlett also claimed that the tavern harmed efforts at community improvement. She declared that the “obnoxious” tavern thwarted the NAACP’s efforts to achieve “the moral and economic advancement of the youth.”¹⁶⁴

The town commission heeded the complaints and allowed Elm Tavern’s liquor license to expire in 1944 without the possibility of future renewal. Nevertheless, ten years later, the town commission approved a liquor establishment in the middle of Montclair’s Black professional neighborhood. Salvatore Battaglia requested a liquor permit in 1954 for a lounge that would serve alcoholic beverages and offer take-out. The town commission had rejected his first proposed location, which was located near the Montclair Art Museum and Hillside Junior High School, important civic institutions.¹⁶⁵

But town officials approved Battaglia’s second proposed location over the objections of Black residents.¹⁶⁶ Citing liquor’s harmful effects on families and the community, Black residents charged that the town commission’s decision discriminated against Black residents. Revered D. C. Rice, Union Baptist Church’s pastor, informed the commission at a town meeting that, “wives and children would have to pass by the Montclair Lounge,” implying that the lounge might endanger their physical or moral safety. He reminded the commission that Black professionals “had tried to build homes

¹⁶³ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. December 19, 1944. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁶⁴ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. December 19, 1944. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁶⁵ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. July 20, 1954. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁶⁶ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. July 20, 1954. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

in south Montclair area for wives and children and did not want saloons.”¹⁶⁷ Mrs. Helen Good also claimed that the tavern would harm the efforts to improve the neighborhood, stating that the Black community, “wanted to protect the South End for children...they had tried to build the section up to make better citizens of their children.”¹⁶⁸ Barbara Morris, Gertrude Morris, Mrs. George Phillips, Sara Green, Rosemary Jones, and Sadie Barnes also spoke against the commission’s decision, declaring that the lounge would harm family life.¹⁶⁹

Despite the Black community’s strong objections, the town commission refused to reverse its decision to grant the Montclair League a liquor license. Mayor Dill praised African Americans for their “demonstrated the civic consciousness of the community and the great regard people have for Montclair.” Nevertheless, he as well as the other town commissioners forestalled their efforts to improve the fourth ward by allowing taverns in near their homes.

In response to the town commission’s decision, Black residents boldly declared that they had as much right to shape their community’s development as white residents. Rev. Rice recognized that racism shaped had the commission’s decision and provocatively dared it to, “locate the license in Upper Montclair where there are no taverns.” The town commission, of course, ignored his request, and protected white neighborhoods from taverns and liquor stores.

Italian-Americans fought the establishment of taverns in their community with more success than African Americans. Although enjoyed greater access to housing than

¹⁶⁷ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. July 20, 1954. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Black residents, those that lived in the fourth ward also resided near taverns that negatively impacted their community. In 1956, Italian-Americans successfully blocked the renewal of the Montclair Civic League and the Society of St. Sebastiano's liquor permits. At a town commission meeting held in June of 1956, Michael Zarrilli, chairman of Pine-Glen Neighborhood Betterment Committee, presented a petition that enumerated complaints against the organizations such as parking problems and increased profanity, drunkenness, and littering.¹⁷⁰ Rev. Joseph Cevetello, pastor of Mount Carmel Church, declared that the tavern had detrimental effects on the Italian-American community.

Italian-Americans convinced the town commission to deny the Society of St. Sebastiano and Montclair Civic League new liquor permits. Bando Caruso, a community leader and local resident, had narrowly election for town commissioner in 1956. He demanded that the commission to listen to the Italian-American community's complaints and blamed the commission for the neighborhood's decline, insisting that, "conditions had deteriorated since granting of two licenses to serve public." Revoking the liquor licenses, he continued, "would have a good influence on morality and be positive step to curb deteriorating influences."¹⁷¹ At the next town commission meeting, the commission renewed the liquor permits for one year without the possibility of future renewal.¹⁷² Italian-Americans had convinced the commission to reduce the presence of taverns in their neighborhood.

¹⁷⁰ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. June 19, 1956. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁷¹ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. June 19, 1956. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁷² Montclair Town Council Minutes. June 26, 1956. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

In addition to allowing liquor traffic in the fourth ward, the town commission also ignored the police department's harassment of Black residents during the late 1940s and 1950s. As part of an increasing pattern of arresting Black residents for petty crimes, Patrolman Moore arrested Clifford Bell on charges of vagrancy in September of 1948. Christine Bell, his wife and proprietor of a local restaurant, protested the police department's discriminatory treatment of Black residents at a town meeting. She asserted that as a restaurant owner, she watched the police escort drunken white men home to bed, yet angrily noted that the police took her husband to jail and charged him with vagrancy for the same offense.¹⁷³ As evidence, she cited the fact that Moore had arrested twice as many Black as white residents between January and September of 1948, yet African Americans composed only about 20 percent of residents. Julius Garnes backed Bell's claim that the police treated Blacks unfairly. He alleged that police department's treatment reflected how Montclair's government was "growing more and more fascist" towards African Americans. Montclair's government, he maintained, "had never intended that Negroes and Italians should own property."¹⁷⁴ Owning property provided economic security and citizenship, rights he claimed that white residents never intended for Blacks to enjoy. He implied that since the town commission could not easily remove Black homeowners from Montclair, it allowed the police to harass Black residents, denying them one of the basic rights of citizenship.

The police department's harassment of Black residents escalated during the early 1950s. On March 12, 1952, a patrolman sexually abused Mrs. Roger Brown inside her Montclair home. She lived alone as the widow of a WWII veteran. An intoxicated police

¹⁷³ "Discrimination Charges Made." Montclair Times. September 9, 1948.

¹⁷⁴ "Discrimination Charges Made." Montclair Times. September 9, 1948.

office broke into her home at 4:30 a.m. and tried to rape her, but her screams aroused the neighbors and she eventually forcibly ejected the officer from her home.¹⁷⁵ The fleeing officer entered a patrol car manned by another officer outside and sped off. Two hours later, Brown called the police department to report the incident.¹⁷⁶

The Montclair Town Commission and white community refused to believe that the attack could occur in Montclair, insisting that the police and white residents treated African Americans fairly. When Brown called the Montclair Police Department, the desk sergeant who answered insisted that, “the story is impossible, this it could not happen in Montclair...why don’t you call the Orange or East Orange police who might be more likely have been involved in the perpetration of this horrible offense.”¹⁷⁷ The desk sergeant found the attack so inconceivable that he insisted that Brown had misidentified her assailant. Even after she filed a formal complaint, Montclair’s police department refused to investigate the incident or suspend the two officers allegedly involved.¹⁷⁸

Undeterred, Brown enlisted the assistance of Arthur Chapin, the New Jersey CIO’s civil liberties director and a Montclair resident. Chapin interviewed Brown and determined that her complaint had merit. After investigating the incident, he submitted a report to the Director of Public Safety, Duane E. Minard. His report urged the town commission to intercede in the incident by suspending the two officers involved and reforming the police department’s training and culture to prevent a repeat incident.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, he recognized that the police department’s cover-up of the attack was part of a broader campaign to deny African Americans their fundamental rights. Chapin

¹⁷⁵ “Wife Foils Cop’s Lust.” New Jersey Afro-American. March 22, 1952.

¹⁷⁶ “Wife Foils Cop’s Lust.” New Jersey Afro-American. March 22, 1952.

¹⁷⁷ “Wife Foils Cop’s Lust.” New Jersey Afro-American. March 22, 1952.

¹⁷⁸ “Wife Foils Cop’s Lust.” New Jersey Afro-American. March 22, 1952.

¹⁷⁹ “Wife Foils Cop’s Lust.” New Jersey Afro-American. March 22, 1952.

maintained that similar incidents had previously occurred, claiming at a town meeting that, “there is a repetition of a pattern that seems to be pursued by police officers entering the homes of citizens without regard for their constitutional rights and guarantees.”¹⁸⁰ As evidence of this pattern, Reitman, the CIO’s lawyer, reported at the town commission meeting that the police had informed Brown that, “it was not in the best interests of her and the police department to say anything about it.”¹⁸¹ Moreover, the desk sergeant on duty that night deleted any record of the incident from his nightly report, suggesting that a broad cover-up of the incident occurred in the police department. Reitman and Chapin demanded that the town commission investigate the cover-up of the attack.¹⁸²

The town commission, however, refused to either suspend the officers involved or investigate the police department’s conduct. Mayor Deyo insisted that the commission bore no responsibility for the department’s conduct, even claiming that he “does not understand the purpose in addressing commission.” Deyo asked the CIO to file a complaint with the police instead, insisting that the commission lacked jurisdiction.¹⁸³ Reitman, however, insisted that the town commission had a responsibility to supervise the police department, reminding Deyo that, “this was second experience a woman has had with Montclair police and another colored person has also been subjected to unfair treatment.”¹⁸⁴ Since the incident was part of a pattern, he demanded not only the immediate suspension of the officers involved, but also public hearings about the

¹⁸⁰ “Wife Foils Cop’s Lust.” New Jersey Afro-American. March 22, 1952.

¹⁸¹ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 19, 1952. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁸² Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 19, 1952. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁸³ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 19, 1952. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁸⁴ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 19, 1952. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

department's conduct and the implementation of a training course for all police officers on race relations.¹⁸⁵ Deyo again refused.¹⁸⁶ Reitman persisted, maintaining that, "people in community have right to look to you when member of police department engages in such conduct."¹⁸⁷

Finally, Minard, Director of the Department of Public Safety, pledged to investigate the incident. At the same time, he maintained that it was more important to conduct thorough, impartial investigation than act immediately. He thus refused to either suspend the officers involved until the investigation ended or provide a timeline for the investigation's completion.¹⁸⁸ Another town commissioner even lashed out at Reitman for demanding that the immediate suspension of the two officers, insisting that, "they have the facts and will not take the lambasting of the police department."¹⁸⁹ Minard never submitted his report and the town commission mentioned the incident again during their meetings. The commission instead allowed the police department's harassment of African Americans to continue unabated.

The fact that the Montclair Town Commission allowed such attacks to occur represents a stark change from the interwar period. In 1925, upper and middle-class white residents prided themselves on their measured, rational response to the kidnapping and death of Mary Daly. They allowed the courts and police to conduct a thorough

¹⁸⁵ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 19, 1952. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁸⁶ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 19, 1952. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁸⁷ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 19, 1952. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁸⁸ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 19, 1952. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹⁸⁹ Montclair Town Commission Minutes. March 19, 1952. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

investigation of the crime even after witnesses blamed an unidentified Black man. *The Montclair Times* compared Montclair's response to the all too common rush to judgment and lynching of a Black suspect in the South. The local courts eventually convicted Harrison Noel, the son of a wealthy lawyer who lived in Montclair, of the crime. Raymond Pierce, a Black taxi driver, was innocent and had the misfortune of driving Noel's getaway car and was murdered alongside Mary Daly. White residents started a fund for Raymond Pierce's widow that allowed her to support the couple's three children after Pierce's death. By 1952, white residents and the town commission no longer demanded that the police protect African Americans and ignored the police officer's attempted rape of Brown and the department's subsequent cover-up of the incident.

Further illustrating the town commission's hostile attitude toward the Black community, at an equality rally held in 1949, Reverend D. C. Rice, the pastor of Union Baptist Church, alleged that the commission had an "anti-Negro" plan."¹⁹⁰ Rice angrily claimed that, "the Negro in Montclair is the joke of the community, being neither loved, respected, nor feared."¹⁹¹ As evidence of this agenda, he noted that the commission allowed white business owners to establish bars in Black neighborhoods, barred Blacks from any government job higher than garbage collector, ignored police brutality against Blacks, and allowed the police to ignore crimes with Black victims.¹⁹² The town commission's actions thwarted African Americans' efforts to improve their community.

The Montclair Board of Education's policies also illustrate how Montclair's government increasingly treated the fourth ward with hostility by the mid 1940 and 1950s. During the interwar period, the board of education implemented a racially

¹⁹⁰ "Pastor Charges Anti-Negro Plan." *Montclair Times*. October 6, 1949.

¹⁹¹ "Pastor Charges Anti-Negro Plan." *Montclair Times*. October 6, 1949.

¹⁹² Ibid.

discriminatory tracking system that clearly discriminated against Black and Italian children by placing them on the first or second lowest academic tracks and white children on the first or second highest. Nevertheless, the school board insisted that its policies were in the interests of all children and contended that Italian and African American children lacked the intellect necessary to succeed in college and could not obtain white-collar jobs after graduating. The board thus claimed that a vocational education was more suitable for them because it allowed them to develop marketable job skills.

By the mid 1940s, however, the board of education no longer claimed that its policies reflected the best interests of Black and Italian-American. New Jersey ratified a new constitution ratified in 1947 that prohibited racial discrimination and segregation in New Jersey's public schools, yet school segregation increased in Montclair during the postwar era. The board of education a new grammar school in an upper-class white neighborhood and at the same time closed the Italian community's school, George Washington. Additionally, the school board redrew school district lines to increase segregation without denying that this was their intent.

In 1948, the Montclair Board of Education created a new grammar school in Montclair's southwest section, where some of the town's wealthiest residents lived. At the same time, this section was located near Black neighborhoods. Black migrants settled nearby during the interwar period to work in service sector jobs inside the homes of affluent white residents.¹⁹³ By 1950s, these affluent white residents hired fewer Black

¹⁹³ New Jersey Conference of Social Work, *the Negro in Montclair*, (Newark, N.J.: New Jersey Conference of Social Work, 1935). Fourteenth Census of the United States. Volume IV. Occupations. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1920), pp. 292-3.

residents as domestic servants, yet still lived in proximity to an established Black community.¹⁹⁴

White residents sought to segregate themselves from the Black population and argued that the lack of a grammar school in their neighborhood harmed property values and discriminated against them. Glenfield, which was more than 50 percent Black, was the closest grammar school. White residents refused to send their children there and opted instead for private schools. The South Side Association, an organization comprised of affluent white residents, declared that, “property owners in this section are being discriminated against. They not only have to pay high taxes, but also considerable extra money for their children’s education. Small wonder that real estate men and bankers frequently discourage young people from buying in this section.”¹⁹⁵ The South Side Association implied that a new school would enhance the section’s desirability to white families and eventually generate more tax revenue, benefitting the entire town. The board of education approved the South Side Association’s request and created Southwest School with carefully constructed district boundaries to ensure that it enrolled white children while Glenfield remained predominantly Black.

Residents of the fourth ward recognized that the board of education had kowtowed to the interests of affluent white residents. James McMahon blasted the school board’s decision.¹⁹⁶ He complained at a board meeting, “the purchase of an abandoned residence and appropriation of a large sum of money to make it available for school

¹⁹⁴ 162 employed men and 1,571 employed women who lived in Montclair still worked as household workers in 1950. 1950 United States Census Data. United States Government Publication. Table 35, pg. 30. Washington, D.C. See Lake, *New Suburbanites*, chapter five and Wiese, *Places of Their Own*.

¹⁹⁵ “South Side Group Committee Differs on Two Major Points with School Board Statement.” *Montclair Times*. June 10, 1948.

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Census Data. Census Place: *Montclair Ward 4, Essex, New Jersey*; Roll *T625_1030*; Page: *13A*; Enumeration District: *85*; Image: *998*.

purposes in the extreme south end of the town in the very shadow of the West Orange line is a glaring example of the wanton disregard of public interest; a violation of the long accepted idea that schools should be centrally located and an abject surrender to a pressure group.”¹⁹⁷ He angrily asked, “Why should some taxpayers be required to provide what is tantamount to private school facilities for a particular portion of our town while they must accept the ordinary run-of-the-mine variety?”¹⁹⁸

The board of education also increased segregation throughout Montclair when Southwest opened in 1949 by revising all school district boundaries. McMahon recognized the board’s intent to increase segregation, complaining at a school board meeting that, “when one examines the school lines recently established he does not have to stretch his imagination too far to realize the real purpose behind the school scheme.”¹⁹⁹

African American and Italian-American residents worked together to fight the new school district lines in September of 1949.²⁰⁰ The revision district lines had forced 57 Italian-American and African American children to transfer from Grove Street School, which was located on the fourth ward’s edge, to George Washington School, located near the center of the fourth ward. This increased the concentration of white children at Grove Street and minority children at George Washington. Mrs. Harold S. Bell, Bart Cross, Dr. and Mrs. J.G. Pavia, and Mrs. George S. Tyson led a coalition of Black and Italian-American parents who protested the transfers. They complained that their children lived closer to Grove Street than George Washington and demanded that their children attend the closest school. Moreover, they alleged that George Washington offered an inferior

¹⁹⁷ “Housing Action.” Montclair Times. September 8, 1949.

¹⁹⁸ “Housing Action.” Montclair Times. September 8, 1949.

¹⁹⁹ “Housing Action.” Montclair Times. September 8, 1949.

²⁰⁰ “Break Seen Near in School Battle.” Montclair Times. September 15, 1949

education, claiming that it had least experienced teachers and oldest school building.

These facts, they claimed, demonstrated that the board discriminated against their children.²⁰¹ These parents circulated a petition signed by 60 residents who opposed the revised school lines and organized a school boycott that started in September of 1949.

The board, however, ignored the boycott and maintained that the district lines did not discriminate against African American and Italian-American children. The parents appealed to the New Jersey State Department of Education's Division against Discrimination. The division, which enforced New Jersey's constitutional provision against school segregation, heard the appeal on September 28, 1949. But the division concluded that the Montclair Board of Education's actions did not amount to discrimination, noting that 12 white children were transferred to George Washington alongside the 26 African American and 15 Italian-American children. Furthermore, it found that George Washington's teacher-pupil ratio and facilities were better than Grove Street's. State officials thus also rejected the claim that George Washington offered an inferior education.²⁰²

The school boycott ended after the New Jersey Department of Education rejected the appeal, but Black and Italian-American parents continued to fight for their children's right to an equal education. They protested the Montclair Board of Education's decision to close George Washington School in 1957.²⁰³ Long central to the Italian community, the board claimed that the school's declining enrollment made it too expensive to operate.

Italian-Americans viewed the board's decision to close George Washington as an attack on their community. Other neighborhoods had their own grammar school, yet the

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² "Bias Decision Upholds Board." Montclair Times. September 29, 1949.

²⁰³ "George Washington Closing Postponed." Montclair Times. April 11, 1957.

decision forced Italian-American children to attend school outside their neighborhood.²⁰⁴ Immediately after the board announced its decision, the Pine Glen Neighborhood Committee circulated a petition in opposition that more than 1600 residents signed. At an emotionally charged board of education meeting, Joseph Tucci handed the board the petition and implored it reconsider its decision. He reminded them that, “the area is a neighborhood joined together by a tradition, social, economic and national. The school is the backbone of the neighborhood. A school in the area incites the interests of parents in the district.”²⁰⁵ Tucci linked the fate of school with the fate of the community, emphasizing that its closing would harm the entire community. Kendall B. DeBovoise, president of the board of education, acknowledged George Washington’s importance to the Italian community, noting that, “it is far more than a school. It is an institution.”²⁰⁶ Still, he insisted that it was too expensive to operate.²⁰⁷

DeBevoise failed to convince Italian-Americans of the financial necessity of closing George Washington School. They recognized that the board of education claimed the school was too costly to operate because of its small enrollment, yet had spent vast sums of money to construct Southwest School at the request of affluent white residents. Southwest, Italian-Americans recognized, only enrolled 69 pupils when it opened in 1949 and still had only 170 pupils by 1955, far fewer than George Washington’s almost 300 pupils.²⁰⁸ Southwest was likely equally if not more expensive to operate than George Washington; nevertheless, the school board was committed to it.

²⁰⁴ “George Washington Site Turned Over to Church.” Montclair Times. October 5, 1961.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ “George Washington Closing Postponed.” Montclair Times. April 11, 1957. “George Washington Site Turned Over to Church.” Montclair Times. October 5, 1961.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ “Experimental No Longer.” Montclair Times. February 10, 1955.

In 1955, two years before the school board proposed closing George Washington, the *Montclair Times* reported that Southwest “started as an experiment with some doubt for its future, but is now high ranking among Montclair’s schools.”²⁰⁹

To Italian-Americans, Southwest School symbolized the board of education’s repeated investment in other neighborhood schools at the expense of George Washington. Joseph Tucci complained about the board of education’s allocation of financial resources favored schools located in affluent white neighborhoods. He asserted that Montclair’s southwest and northeast sections were “built up” by the board of education’s financial investment in nearby grammar and junior high schools. Not surprisingly, upper and middle-class white residents populated these areas. Southwest School was a particularly raw issue for Louis DiBella who alleged that, “southwest children went to private schools until you gave them a public-private school.”²¹⁰ DeBevoise rebuffed DiBella’s accusation, maintaining that, “the southwest area has as much right to a neighborhood school as any other district.”²¹¹

Although the board of education’s decision to close George Washington School primarily affected the Italian-American community, African Americans also protested the decision. Representing the NAACP at a school board meeting, Octavia Catlett declared that, “there is a need to keep a school in this community that transcends economics. We want this area maintained and improved. It seems hasty to close the school when we might need one in four or five years.”²¹² African Americans recognized the centrality of

²⁰⁹ “Experimental No Longer.” *Montclair Times*. February 10, 1955.

²¹⁰ “George Washington Site Turned Over to Church.” *Montclair Times*. October 5, 1961.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

good schools to the community and that the board of education's refusal to invest in the fourth ward's schools also harmed their community.

The board of education ignored the Italian-American community's protests and closed George Washington. Italian-Americans, however, continued to fight for a neighborhood school. Mount Carmel parishioners convinced the Archbishop of Newark to purchase, renovate, and reopen the school building in December of 1963 as a k-8th grade parochial school that enrolled 350 students.²¹³

Seeking a Political Voice

Blacks and Italian-American residents' continued lack of government representation allowed the board of education to discriminate against them and fueled resentment. Although 25 percent of residents were African American and 10 percent Italian-American, neither group had representation on the board of education. Instead, affluent white residents dictated school policy.

White civic leaders started to acknowledge the need for Black government representation during the late 1940s and appointed Leo Marsh to the town planning board in 1947.²¹⁴ Recognizing the importance of Black civic representation, in 1949 Marsh urged Mayor Howard Deyo to appoint an African American to the board of education when a vacancy opened. Deyo accepted that Blacks should have a civic voice, but claimed that Black representation should increase gradually rather than immediately. He informed Marsh that, "there is no question in my mind that the time will come when we should have a Negro on this board, but I do not think this is the time for such an

²¹³ "Depression and Construction." Montclair Historical Society. Pamphlet. Montclair, New Jersey.

²¹⁴ Leo Marsh Papers. Katz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN. March 17, 1947 letter from George Batt to Leon B. Marsh.

appointment.”²¹⁵ Marsh resigned after serving his five-year term. His job as an executive board member for the national YMCA required frequent travel, forcing him to miss many planning board meetings. Deyo thanked Marsh for his service, implying that Black residents could make valuable civic contributions, but declined to appoint another Black resident to the planning board.²¹⁶

By the late 1950s, Black and Italian-American residents had become more resentful over their lack of civic representation and control over their neighborhood’s development. When the Neighborhood Council surveyed residents in 1956, African Americans complained about their continued exclusion from civic leadership.²¹⁷ One resident even labeled this as “taxation without representation,” contending that affluent white residents monopolized leadership positions in the government and other community agencies even though Blacks comprised approximately 25 percent of taxpayers.²¹⁸ The Neighborhood Council concluded that, “Montclair cannot reach its highest potential until the fourth ward is freed to fully participate in civic life.”²¹⁹

Although white civic leaders ignored the recommendation, in 1957 Black residents demanded that the town commission appoint a Black resident to the board of

²¹⁵ Leo Marsh Papers. Katz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN. March 14, 1949 letter from Howard N. Deyo to Leo B. Marsh.

²¹⁶ Leo Marsh Papers. Katz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN. August 21, 1952 letter from Howard N. Deyo to Leo B. Marsh.

²¹⁷ Rhetta M. Arter, *Exploring Montclair: An Action-Directed Exploratory Study of Human Relations in Montclair, New Jersey Sponsored by the Neighborhood Council of Montclair*. (New York: The Center for Human Relations Studies, School of Education, New York University, 1956). From pamphlet in Rutgers Special Collections. Alexander Library, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

²¹⁸ Rhetta M. Arter, *Exploring Montclair: An Action-Directed Exploratory Study of Human Relations in Montclair, New Jersey Sponsored by the Neighborhood Council of Montclair*. (New York: The Center for Human Relations Studies, School of Education, New York University, 1956). From pamphlet in Rutgers Special Collections. Alexander Library, New Brunswick, New Jersey, pp. 21.

²¹⁹ Rhetta M. Arter, *Exploring Montclair: An Action-Directed Exploratory Study of Human Relations in Montclair, New Jersey Sponsored by the Neighborhood Council of Montclair*. (New York: The Center for Human Relations Studies, School of Education, New York University, 1956). From pamphlet in Rutgers Special Collections. Alexander Library, New Brunswick, New Jersey, pp. 34.

education when a seat became vacant. Octavia Catlett, president of the Montclair NAACP, informed the town commission at a town meeting that African Americans were “distressed that they did not have representation on the board of education.” Similarly, Arthur Chapin, vice-president of the Montclair NAACP, complained that African Americans comprised 25 percent of the population, yet “often the community has ignored so many of its colored citizens.” He claimed that African Americans “have made great contributions to welfare of town,” earning them a voice in Montclair’s development.²²⁰

Chapin submitted the names of nine qualified African American candidates for the town commission’s consideration.²²¹ Since the town commission claimed that the board of education required an engineer’s professional expertise to manage school facilities, the list included two engineers, Dr. Lincoln Hawkins and Vincent Gill. Dr. Hawkins held a bachelors degree in chemical engineering from Renneslear Polytechnic Institute and a PhD from McGill University. Gill also had extensive qualifications. He had a degree in mechanical engineering from City College and had supervised large projects as the chief engineer and former vice president at Eastern Aircraft Products Corps, a subsidiary of Weatherhead Corporation.²²²

Despite their qualifications, the commission appointed John Brigham to the vacant seat. Brigham also had the desired qualifications: he held a degree in civil engineering from Cornell University and was chief engineer at Wallace Alderman Inc.

²²⁰ September 24, 1957. Montclair Town Commission Minutes. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

²²¹ July 16, 1957. Montclair Town Commission Minutes. Montclair Municipal Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

²²² “Montclair Decision. New Jersey Afro-American. September 28, 1957. School Appointment Under Negro Fire.” Montclair Times. September 26, 1957.

At the same time, the commission ignored Dr. Hawkins and Gill's qualifications and the importance of Black representation on the school board.

African Americans were incensed by the commission's decision. Lincoln Hawkins, one of the Black candidates, angrily remarked that, "it is curious that in all the years of Montclair's existence no Negro has been judged qualified to serve on the Board of Education." Since he and Gill had the required qualifications, Hawkins concluded that, "racial prejudice that gnaws beneath the surface" of the commission's decision.²²³

Mayor Dill repudiated the charge of racism, insisting that the commission appointed the most qualified person. He maintained that, "every resident of Montclair, Negro or white, has received fair and equal facilities, consideration and treatment in public matters." He insisted that the commission selected board members on the merits of each candidate in order to create the most effective board of education. He declared that, "the board of education needs to continue to be composed of the most able men and women in the community who have the experiences desirable." Finally, Mayor Dell diametrically opposed the welfare of all children with the interests of narrow constituencies, declaring that commission's appointments to the board of education "will not be made to serve any cause but the educational welfare of all the children of Montclair."²²⁴ Dill failed to see a need for African American representation and instead claimed that board's appointment was in the best interests of the entire community.

When the next vacancy on the board of education opened two years later, African Americans convinced the town commission to appoint Bessie Marsh, a middle-class Black resident. Marsh had lived in the fourth ward since she moved to Montclair

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ "School Appointment Under Negro Fire." Montclair Times. September 26, 1957.

immediately after WWII and had a long history of community involvement. Her husband, Leo, worked for the YMCA and had served on the planning board. She taught elementary school in Columbus, Ohio prior to marrying, had two children enrolled in the public schools, and belonged to the Montclair PTA Council.²²⁵ Her appointment was a tangible result of the Black community's efforts to obtain civic representation.

Despite Marsh's appointment, African Americans lacked representation on the Montclair Town Commission until 1964. The influential Community Committee continued its political domination. It still functioned as an exclusive social club where current members nominated new members, perpetuating its middle and upper-class composition, and dominated local elections by nominating a slate of candidates. The committee purported to seek the entire town's welfare by nominating the most qualified candidates without political considerations. However, as during the interwar period, the committee only nominated white middle and upper-class men. The absence of political wards allowed the committee to dominate local elections since each town commissioner represented the entire community rather than a single ward.²²⁶ This forced prospective African American candidates to cull votes from the white community since Blacks were 25 percent of the electorate. On the other hand, the Community Committee's candidates were elected without Black votes since white residents formed 67 percent of voters.²²⁷

Italian-Americans, however, gained representation on the town commission by forming an alliance with the Community Committee. The Community Committee nominated Angelo Fortunato as part of its slate of candidates in 1952. His parents, Maria

²²⁵ "Dill Appoints Mrs. Marsh." Montclair Times. January 29, 1959.

²²⁶ "Some Unfinished Tasks in the Area of Human Relations in Montclair and Vicinity." Presented for the Ministerial Association of Montclair and Vicinity. December 1, 1961. Leo Marsh Papers, Katz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota.

²²⁷ "Thornhill Asks for Voice for Negro." Montclair Times. May 3, 1956.

and Domenico had, immigrated to Montclair and operated a small Italian grocery store in the fourth ward.²²⁸ His parents had only a rudimentary education, but Angelo graduated from college and became a teacher at Montclair High. He was not wealthy, yet lived in a white middle-class neighborhood and enjoyed local notoriety as a former football star at Montclair High and Fordham University.²²⁹ The first Italian-American elected and youngest candidate the Community Committee ever nominated, Fortunato served alongside William Dill, Jr., George Nye, N. Conant Webb and Robert Hooke, white professional men who comprised the Community Committee's other candidates.²³⁰

Fortunato declared the Community Committee's decision to nominate an Italian-American demonstrated that it sought the good of the entire community. He claimed that democracy "demands public officials who have the capacity and the selfless willingness to serve, not just part of the community, but the community as a whole." He noted that the Community Committee's candidates lacked political platforms beyond promising "to give Montclair good government."²³¹ Fortunato claimed that this allowed them to govern unencumbered by campaign promises and declared that, "for this reason I consider it a great honor to be campaigning on the Community ticket."²³² Moreover, he insisted that his nomination demonstrated that the Community Committee recognized the need for broader community representation on town commission, declaring that, "this year I believe the Community Committee has set a new high level in local democracy by selecting its candidates through polls of so many citizens in all parts of town."²³³

²²⁸ 1930 United States Census Data. U.S. Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.

²²⁹ "How to Make Democracy Work." Montclair Times. April 24, 1952.

²³⁰ "How to Make Democracy Work." Montclair Times. April 24, 1952.

²³¹ "How to Make Democracy Work." Montclair Times. April 24, 1952.

²³² "Both Sides are Confident." Montclair Times. May 8, 1952.

²³³ "How to Make Democracy Work." Montclair Times. April 24, 1952.

Fortunato claimed that the Community Committee modeled democracy by nominating him and other candidates who served the entire town's interests. At the same time, the organization likely allied with upwardly mobile Italian-Americans such as Fortunato to reinforce their political control. By expanding their political base, the organization forestalled the possibility that a Black and Italian-American candidate would upend their civic leadership. White organization's candidates usually struggled in the fourth ward, Fortunato received more votes than any other candidate because of support from Italian-Americans.²³⁴ The Community Committee perhaps recognized that the expanding Black population threatened their future political control if left unchecked.²³⁵

Indeed, Black and Italian-American residents contested the Community Committee's political control in 1956. Bando Caruso, Angelo Fortunato, and Arthur Thornhill, an African American physician, all campaigned for town commissioner. Caruso campaigned as an independent seeking representation for the fourth ward and received 3,690 votes. Thornhill, on the other hand, demanded Black representation in Montclair's government and received 3,483 votes, slightly less than Caruso.²³⁶ Fortunato campaigned as part of the Community Committee's slate and won the most votes.

Thornhill, a life-long resident who had graduated from Montclair High School and Howard University and practiced medicine, enjoyed professional success, like other Blacks, he lacked civic representation and asserted that, "I feel that a group that makes up one-fifth of the population is entitled to representation."²³⁷ He alleged that the Black

²³⁴ Dill, Second High, Expected to Continue as Mayor; Induction Listed for Tuesday Noon. Montclair Times. May 10, 1956.

²³⁵ "Montclair Community Committee for 1952." Montclair Times. May 1, 1952.

²³⁶ "Dill, Second High, Expected to Continue as Mayor; Induction Listed for Tuesday Noon. Montclair Times. May 10, 1956.

²³⁷ "Thornhill Asks Voice for Negro." Montclair Times. May 3, 1956.

community's political exclusion allowed the government to attack them.²³⁸ As evidence, he claimed that, "Negroes are denied participation in town affairs despite the fact that one out of every five citizens of Montclair is a Negro. The survey shows that Montclair has no Negro elected or appointed town officials...few Negroes have received appointments as teachers or firemen."²³⁹ Thornhill also cited how the board of education removed Black residents from their homes in order to construct a playground, terming the project, "a most inhuman step...some of the people have been striving for years to establish their homes and here comes the Board of Education and says, 'Let's take it'" and insisted that he would prevent such injustices from occurring if elected.²⁴⁰ He polled twice as many votes as other candidates in the fourth ward's second district, the center of the Black community.²⁴¹ Still, African Americans only comprised 25 percent of the population and Thornhill lost the election.

Bando Caruso, on the other hand, campaigned for "representation from more wards."²⁴² He claimed that representation other than the Community Committee "would bring a clear, clean, fresh new viewpoint to the team," and pejoratively labeled the Community Committee's candidates as "yes men." Born in Montclair, Caruso had graduated from Montclair High and attended Mount Carmel Church. He enjoyed upwardly mobility as a lawyer, but still resided in the fourth ward. Caruso lost the election, yet polled 3,690 votes primarily from the fourth ward.

²³⁸ "Caruso Offers Cooperation." Montclair Times. May 3, 1956.

²³⁹ "Thornhill Asks Voice for Negro." Montclair Times. May 3, 1956.

²⁴⁰ "Caruso Offers Cooperation." Montclair Times. May 3, 1956.

²⁴¹ Dill, Second High, Expected to Continue as Mayor; Induction Listed for Tuesday Noon. Montclair Times. May 10, 1956.

²⁴² "Caruso Offers Cooperation." Montclair Times. May 3, 1956.

Despite Caruso and Thornhill's strong support from the Black and Italian communities, neither candidate gained support from both communities. Fortunato, on the other hand, polled 8,446 votes, the most of any candidate.²⁴³ His strong showing demonstrates how the Community Committee expanded its political base by culling votes from Italian-Americans as well as white middle and upper-class residents.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1950s, African Americans still lacked representation on the Montclair Town Commission while upwardly mobile Italian-Americans formed a political alliance with conservative white men. Montclair's government increasingly displayed hostility towards Blacks during the late 1940s and 1950s.

Women declined to campaign for the town commission during the 1950s, yet still shaped Montclair's development. White women demanded that the government provide housing for all residents regardless of their class and race. Although their efforts were unsuccessful, they accepted that Montclair was a multi-racial community and their investment in Montclair forestalled the possibility of white flight. Italian-American women started to leave Montclair for other Essex County suburbs where they could obtain new and less expensive housing and integrate socially with white residents. Nevertheless, Italian-American women who remained strengthened community institutions.

African American women used their networks and organizations to improve neighborhood schools and housing and demanded that the town commission reverse its approval of taverns and liquor stores near their homes. Unfortunately, their unequal

²⁴³ "Dill, Second High, Expected to Continue as Mayor; Induction Listed for Tuesday Noon. Montclair Times. May 10, 1956.

access to municipal resources and housing in other sections of Essex County and Montclair prevented the full realization of their vision of the fourth ward as an attractive residential community. During the 1960s, they demanded educational resources for their community as part of their continued efforts to implement their community goals.

African Americans started to recognize that progressive whites could serve as allies in their quest for citizenship and equality. In 1961, Leo Marsh spoke as vice-president of the Montclair Human Relations Council to the Ministerial Association of Montclair and Vicinity, an interdenominational, interracial organization of ministers. In his remarks, Marsh articulated the possibility of an alliance between white professional residents who held progressive political beliefs and middle-class African Americans. He reminded his audience of racial discrimination in Montclair, declaring that:

“The Negro has not been fully emancipated” because “churches are predominantly segregated, the practices of white realtors, residential areas are racially segregated, there is defector racial segregation in the elementary and junior high schools, the service clubs have no non-white members, Montclair High School has only one Negro on its teaching staff, banks and department stores employ Negroes only in menial jobs, the racial tension in the schools, the failure of town authorities to make use of more competent non-whites on all town commissions and committees, and the existence of conditions which justify the Clergy Club as a separate organization of Negro ministers.”²⁴⁴

Marsh maintained this was especially egregious in Montclair because the white community included “a large segment of people who are at the decision-making and policy-making levels affecting the lives of people in all parts of the world who were

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

leaders in banking, business, education, science, the professionals, social welfare, the United Nations, and local, state, and federal government.”²⁴⁵ Marsh urged white and Black residents to work together to affect social change, declaring that, Montclair should “bring together white and Negro citizens of comparable status and interest to work on common community and church related projects to undertake widespread community education to prepare citizens for change.”²⁴⁶

Marsh’s remarks foretold the emergence of a coalition between middle-class Black and white Progressives during the 1960s. As key members in this coalition, white women’s efforts to improve Montclair encouraged them to seek racial reconciliation and eventually school integration for the good of the town.

²⁴⁵ Leo Marsh Papers. Katz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN. Presentation for the Ministerial Association of Montclair and Vicinity. December 1, 1961.

²⁴⁶ Leo Marsh Papers. Katz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN. Presentation for the Ministerial Association of Montclair and Vicinity. December 1, 1961.

Chapter Four: Race and Metropolitan Space in Berkeley, 1941-1959

Ruth Kingman and Alice Heyneman, leaders of the Berkeley League of Women Voters (LWV), expressed concern about the grim reality of Berkeley's deteriorating housing stock in a 1950 letter to the Berkeley City Council. They informed the city council that, "the LWV has observed the many changes that the war years and substantial increase of population have brought. We know that there is overcrowding in Berkeley...it is our opinion that it is time the city got the essential facts on the housing situation and determine what should be done to keep Berkeley a town of which we can be justly proud."¹ Like white female activists in the Montclair LWV, they blamed the local government's inaction for Berkeley's housing crisis and urged it implement policies that reversed this downward trend. Kingman and Heyneman did not contest housing segregation, yet like white women in Montclair, they ensured that Berkeley remained multi-racial by urging the local government to improve and increase housing in predominantly Black neighborhoods. Furthermore, their actions implied that African Americans were members of the community and thus entitled to adequate housing irrespective of their race or class.

White upper and middle-class women in both Montclair and Berkeley still attempted to implement their community vision by improving the quality of life for minority residents. The issues they focused on, however, shifted. Previously, white women had focused on creating social welfare programs for racial and ethnic minorities.

¹ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville Records, 1911- ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36. February 28, 1950 letter from the LWV to the Berkeley City Council. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

During the 1940s and 1950s, however, a younger generation lobbied Berkeley and Montclair's governments to improve housing in Black neighborhoods. They contended that low-income public housing not only represented a significant improvement over existing dilapidated, overpriced housing, but would also improve community life.²

African American women also shaped Berkeley's development as they attempted to realize their vision of Southwest Berkeley an attractive neighborhood with educational and economic opportunities. Southwest Berkeley, like Montclair's fourth ward, considered most desirable Black suburbs African Americans in the Bay Area during the postwar period and attracted Black professionals who purchased single-family homes and raised their families there. Confined to Southwest Berkeley by housing discrimination, Black women's activism focused on improving local schools and institutions and obtaining political representation so that Berkeley's government provided their neighborhood with equal resources.

European immigrant women also continued to work towards their vision of West Berkeley as a vibrant Catholic community. At the same time, most viewed the Black community's encroachment on their neighborhoods as threatening their efforts to realize their vision. Many migrated from Berkeley to white suburbs on the metropolitan periphery rather than partner with African Americans to work towards common goals.

Nevertheless, women's activism illustrates a crucial difference between Berkeley and Montclair's racial politics from other suburbs. While most white suburbanites resolutely fought Black migration and attempted to remove existing Black enclaves

² Amy Lynne Howard, *"More Than Shelter:" Community, Identity, and Spatial Politics in San Francisco Public Housing, 1938-2000* (PhD Diss.: College of William and Mary, 2005) and John F. Baranski, *Making Public Housing in San Francisco: Liberalism, Social Prejudice, and Social Activism, 1906-1976* (PhD Diss.: University of California, Santa Barbara, 2004).

during the postwar period, white and Black women remained and transformed Berkeley and Montclair into attractive, interracial, residential communities. While the white conservative men who controlled Montclair and Berkeley's governments often ignored Black women's demands and blocked white women's proposed reforms, women's activism forestalled the possibility of white flight and ensured that Montclair and Berkeley remained multi-racial communities.³ Moreover, women in Montclair and Berkeley forged a path to postwar racial liberals by implying that Montclair and Berkeley could retain their racial diversity and desirability as residential communities.

Despite this key similarity between Montclair and Berkeley's post racial politics, important differences also emerged that reflected the different demographics and regional development of the communities and respective metropolitan regions. Namely, a more egalitarian relationship emerged between middle-class white and Black women in Berkeley. During the interwar period, white women in Berkeley interacted with European immigrant women through social welfare programs and Japanese women through domestic service. White women created a hierarchal, helping relationship with European immigrant and Japanese women through these interactions. At the same time, white women seldom interacted with the predominantly middle-class Black community, which enjoyed economic and social autonomy, establishing their own businesses and professional practices or working for the Pullman Railroad Company and creating independent social welfare programs such as the Fannie Wall Home.

In contrast, interracial interactions occurred more frequently between in Montclair as more than 50 percent of African American residents worked as private household workers. Although Montclair also had a significant middle-class Black

³ Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, pp. 104-9.

population, the employment of Blacks in service positions created a hierarchal relationship that impacted local politics and all aspects of community life. Montclair's civic leaders, including white women, declared that they understood and acted in the Black community's interests, erasing the need for Black political representation. Indeed, white women's social welfare programs reflected the Black community's subordination, viewing African American residents as dependents to help rather than civic leaders who should have a voice in their community's development.

By the mid 1940s and 1950s, Montclair's white liberals still assumed that their policies reflected the entire town's best interests and attempted to help rather than partner with Black residents even after encountering stiff political opposition from white conservatives. The Montclair LWV, for example overlooked the opportunity to partner with African Americans to lobby the local government to construct low-income public housing after an apartment fire in 1941 killed twelve of the twenty-five residents. White liberals' reluctance to form a political coalition with the Black community allowed white conservatives to control the local government and implement policies that openly discriminated against the Black community.

In Berkeley, on the other hand, white and African American liberals formed an interracial coalition earlier that provided liberals greater influence in Berkeley's development. Middle-class white and Black women started to form interracial networks during the mid 1940s. Although these networks excluded working-class white and Black women, they were central to the emergence of an interracial liberal coalition. Black and white liberals' common vision of Berkeley as progressive city created shared support for improvements to West Berkeley's housing, schools, and municipal infrastructure.

The University of California's growing physical and political presence supported the emergence of this coalition. Faculty members formed key coalition members and openly supported racial equality. They declared that Berkeley must provide adequate housing and treat all residents fairly irrespective of their race or risk losing its position as a leading progressive city that was an international center of knowledge and culture.

Chapter four explores how women's activism created a new civic identity of Berkeley as a liberal, multi-racial community during the 1940s and 1950s. The first section discusses how the African American community and University of California's explosive growth transformed Berkeley's physical landscape and politics. The second section explores how white women stored the Japanese community's belongings when wartime internment and located housing for returning Japanese after the war ended. Their activism illustrates how they started to envision Berkeley as a multi-racial community. The third section analyzes how white women and other liberals demanded that Berkeley's government provide adequate housing for working-class Black migrants, tying to Berkeley's reputation as a progressive city. The fourth section discusses how women development interracial networks that laid the groundwork for the emergence of an interracial liberal coalition. The fifth section examines how this coalition gained control of Berkeley's government during the late 1950s.

WWII: A Watershed Moment

World War II was a watershed moment for Berkeley and the Bay Area. While Montclair changed gradually during the 1940s and 1950s, the impact of the war on the region's political, social, and economic development was so profound that the *San*

Francisco Chronicle labeled it the second gold rush.⁴ The region received more than \$19 billion in U.S. government contracts, inciting an economic boom.⁵ Defense industry jobs attracted migrants predominantly from the south and southwestern United States. The number of workers in the shipbuilding industry, for example, increased almost 2500 percent from 5,000 to 240,000 between 1938 and 1944.⁶ As the population surged, housing grew scarce and vacancy rates hovered around 1 percent.⁷

Many of these migrants were African Americans who were recruited to fill a labor shortage and comprised a visible Black working-class for the first time in the Bay Area. The East Bay's Black population increased from 14,000 to 60,000 during the war and more than 70 percent of Black wage earners worked in shipbuilding, the region's largest defense industry.⁸ Racial discrimination combined with an acute housing shortage confined most Black migrants to temporary federal public housing projects.⁹

Berkeley's Black population also exploded during the 1940s and 1950s. Although most Black migrants settled in federal housing projects, Berkeley's proximity to Richmond and Oakland's shipyards as well as presence of an existing Black population drew some migrants to Berkeley. During the interwar period the existing Black community lived interspersed with the Japanese in Southwest Berkeley. Housing

⁴ Marilyn Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1996); Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000); Deirdre L. Sullivan, *Letting Down the Bars: Race, Space, and Democracy in San Francisco, 1936-1964* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, PhD Diss., 2003); Delores McBroome, *Parallel Communities: African Americans in California's East Bay, 1850-1963* (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1993); and Charles Wollenberg, *Golden Gate Metropolis: Perspectives on Bay Area History* (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of Governmental Studies).

⁵ Lotchin, *Fortress California*, pp. 131-69.

⁶ McBroome, *Parallel Communities*, pg. 92.

⁷ McBroome, *Parallel Communities*, chapter 4.

⁸ Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pp. 111-12.

⁹ McBroome, *Parallel Communities*, pg. 92, Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pp. 111-12, and Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites*, pp. xiv-xv.

vacancies existed when the wartime migrants arrived because of the Japanese community's interment.¹⁰ Berkeley's African American population increased 300 percent between 1940 and 1950 while the total population only increased 33 percent. Further illustrating this dramatic growth, in 1940 African Americans accounted for 4 percent of Berkeley's residents. By 1950, they represented 10 percent of residents.¹¹



Image 4.1: Dolores Delcombre, Ann Mitchell, Marylese Mitchell, Willie Mae Delcombre in West Berkeley during the late 1940s. These women were part of the large Black migration to Berkeley. Photograph courtesy of the Berkeley Public Library.

As in northern New Jersey, the federal government invested in housing and development on the metropolitan fringe rather than established cities and suburbs. While the Bay Area's entire population doubled between 1945 and 1970, San Francisco and Oakland, the region's largest urban centers, lost residents.¹²

¹⁰ Census of Population: 1950. Vol. II, Part 5, California. United States Government Printing Office, 1952. Pg. 5-55. Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pp.114-5.

¹¹ Census of Population: 1950. Vol. II, Part 5, California. United States Government Printing Office, 1952. Schedule 5-55.

¹² Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pg. 121.

Berkeley, however, defied this trend and benefitted from the federal government's largesse towards higher education during the postwar period. While Montclair's population stagnated during the postwar period, Berkeley's population increased 40 percent and peaked in 1960 at 115,000 residents. The University of California's expansion propelled the city's economic and demographic growth.¹³ The university's student population more than doubled between 1945 and 1948.¹⁴ Students composed 4 percent of Berkeley residents in 1940, but by 1960 were 20 percent. Federal research dollars created white and pink-collar jobs. The university became Berkeley's largest employer, employing 20 percent of residents.¹⁵ By 1960, over 50 percent of male residents employed in professional positions worked in the educational sector as well as over 50 percent of female residents who held pink-collar jobs as typists and secretaries.¹⁶

¹³ Douglass S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), Self, *American Babylon*, Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pg. 123, and Freund, *Colored Property*.

¹⁴ Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pg. 121.

¹⁵ 8,485 of 47,103 employed residents worked for the university. Census of Population: 1960. Volume I, Part 6, California. United States Government Printing Office, 1961. Schedule 6-737.

¹⁶ Census of Population: 1960. Volume I, Part 6, California. United States Government Printing Office, 1961. Schedule 6-737. According to the 1960 U.S. Census, 5,545 white-collar men worked in the education sector.



Image 4.2: Downtown Berkeley during the 1960s. Photograph Courtesy of the Berkeley Public Library.

Like Montclair, a racial binary emerged in postwar Berkeley. The Japanese and foreign-born white population had decreased at the same time the Black community had expanded to become Berkeley's largest minority group. In 1960, the Japanese only comprised 2 percent of the population while the foreign-born white population had declined from 20 percent in 1930 to only 10 percent.¹⁷ Japanese and second-generation European immigrants also enjoyed greater access to housing than African Americans in Berkeley itself and throughout the Bay Area. Their increased geographic mobility transformed racial patterns in housing. Confined to Southwest Berkeley during the 1920s and 1930s, the Japanese now lived scattered throughout Berkeley. The Japanese still encountered housing discrimination, but noticeably less than African Americans. Second

¹⁷ Census of Population: 1950. Volume II, Part 5, California. United States Government Printing Office, 1952. Schedule 5-179. See Gary Y. Okihiro, *Stories Lives: Japanese Students and World War II* (Seattle, W.A.: University of Washington Press, 1999).

and third generation European immigrants enjoyed the most access to housing and moved to East Berkeley neighborhoods as well as other suburbs in the Bay Area.¹⁸

Berkeley's Black population changed from a small predominantly middle-class population into a diversified, large community. Many middle-class African Americans purchased single-family homes in Berkeley after living in nearby Oakland and Richmond for a few years and accumulating enough money for a down payment.¹⁹ Indeed, Berkeley had the highest percentage of Black home ownership in the Bay Area and African Americans often residing in Berkeley as evidence of upward mobility.²⁰ At the same time, working-class Black migrants settled in Codornices Village, a temporary wartime federal housing project located on Berkeley's Albany border. The project housed 10,000 shipyard workers between 1944 and 1955, approximately of who lived in the Berkeley section.²¹

White conservative businessmen controlled still local politics during the 1940s and 1950s, yet became concerned over Berkeley's physical and demographic changes.²² The city planning commission's 1953 report expressed concern that Berkeley had transformed from a white middle-class suburb into a city. The report noted that Berkeley was among the most attractive suburbs in the entire country during the interwar years, stating that "Berkeley was famous for scenic beauty and mild climate and at cross roads of world commerce...the Berkeley Hills was one of most desirable residential areas...the

¹⁸ Census of Population: 1960. Volume I, Part 6, California. United States Government Printing office, 1961. Schedule 6-268. Foreign-born whites comprised 9,289 residents in 1960. See Guglielmo, "Are Italians White?", Guglielmo, *White on Arrival*, Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*, Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, and Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*.

¹⁹ Margaret Johnson. *The Negroes in West Berkeley: Sociology-Economics 126 Ethnic Groups*. Mills College, 1952 paper.

²⁰ Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites*, pp. 164.

²¹ Report of the Meeting Held at the Friends Meeting House." Institute for Governmental Studies. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

²² "Four Berkeley Councilmen Retain Seats." Oakland Tribune. May 2, 1945.

area did not have much development because of transportation difficulties and had great vistas from foothills.”²³ The commission characterized postwar Berkeley in starkly different terms as “a part of the rapidly deteriorating urban core.” The report predicted that Berkeley’s population would continue to increase until it reached 176,000 residents.²⁴ This increase, the committee declared, would further exacerbate overcrowding and claimed that urban problems already plagued Berkeley such as traffic congestion, parking problems, deteriorating residential areas, and overcrowded schools. The commission recommended that the city council to adopt a comprehensive planning program designed to alleviate these problems.²⁵

The planning commission’s proposed solution to these ills reflected white conservative businessmen’s priorities: commercial and industrial development in West Berkeley and protection of East Berkeley’s white middle and upper-class neighborhoods from overcrowding and other urban problems. The commission declared with its recommendations, “Berkeley should receive a just proportion of economic and population growth and retain position as a residential and educational center in the Bay Area.”²⁶ The report specifically proposed creating a light industrial district in West Berkeley to “help transition the area from residential to commercial and serve as buffer between resident neighborhoods to east and west and general industrial districts to the

²³ Preliminary Master Plan for Berkeley. City Planning Commission, 1953 Report. Institute of Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

²⁴ Preliminary Master Plan for Berkeley. City Planning Commission, 1953 Report. Institute of Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

²⁵ Preliminary Master Plan for Berkeley. City Planning Commission, 1953 Report. Institute of Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

²⁶ Preliminary Master Plan for Berkeley. City Planning Commission, 1953 Report. Institute of Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

father west.”²⁷ The commission recommended the construction of an airport located along West Berkeley’s waterfront to facilitate commercial growth, claiming that “currently nearly 5000 acres are submerged; this said land is one of Berkeley’s most valuable resources.”²⁸ To alleviate Berkeley’s housing shortage, the commission recommended “higher neighborhood densities neighborhoods in south and west Berkeley.”²⁹ To protect East Berkeley as a middle and upper-class residential section, the commission recommended that Berkeley’s city council restrict both industrial and dense residential development to West Berkeley.³⁰

The report reflected white conservatives’ developmental priorities and ignored the priorities of Black and, to a less extent, second generation European immigrant residents who lived near the proposed airport, dense residential developments, and light industrial zone. African Americans militantly demanded a civic voice, recognizing that their political exclusion would allow the government to implement unwelcome elements of the planning commission’s plan. In 1953, Lionel Wilson campaigned for Berkeley City Council on the basis of representation for West Berkeley.³¹ An attorney who lived in Southwest Berkeley, he alleged that, “a city government without representation from over one-half of its citizens is basically opposed to all principals of a fair and democratic government.”³² He claimed that the West Berkeley’s political exclusion allowed the city

²⁷ Preliminary Master Plan for Berkeley. City Planning Commission, 1953 Report. Institute of Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

²⁸ Preliminary Master Plan for Berkeley. City Planning Commission, 1953 Report. Institute of Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

²⁹ Preliminary Master Plan for Berkeley. City Planning Commission, 1953 Report. Institute of Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

³⁰ Preliminary Master Plan for Berkeley. City Planning Commission, 1953 Report. Institute of Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

³¹ “Atty. Wilson to Run For Council in Berkeley.” California Voice. February 20, 1953.

³² “Atty. Wilson Gains Support for Council Post.” California Voice. March 19, 1953.

council to ignore overcrowding in West Berkeley as well as the need for neighborhood improvements, citing Lincoln Grammar School's lack of playground space as only one example.³³ Although Wilson did not mention race, since West Berkeley was more than 50 percent Black, he indirectly asserted that Blacks deserved a political voice.

Wilson lost his campaign, but four years later Vivian Marsh campaigned for city council. Like Wilson, she was a middle-class Black resident of Southwest Berkeley. She not only argued that West Berkeley deserved a political voice, but directly confronted the issue of race. She asserted that, "Council needs to become aware of the basic fundamentals of the problem of inter-racial adjustments. This can be better accomplished by a Council composed of qualified representatives of more than one race."³⁴ Although Marsh lost the election, Blacks continued to push for political representation, recognizing that it would offer a greater voice in West Berkeley's development.

During the 1940s and early 1950s, a political divide emerged between white conservative and liberal residents that opened the door for a new alliance between African American and white liberals. While white conservatives refused to improve West Berkeley's housing stock, white liberal contended Berkeley's new demographics and rapid growth necessitated a strong local government. A strong government, they contended, could ensure that all citizens regardless of their race enjoyed adequate housing, quality schools, and other municipal services. Furthermore, while white conservatives ignored the Black community's vision for West Berkeley's development white liberals also recognized the need for a Blacks to have voice in their neighborhood's

³³ Atty. Wilson Gains Support for Council Post." California Voice. March 19, 1955.

³⁴ "League of Women Voters Questionnaire for Candidates for Mayor and Council." Berkeley Elections Vertical File. Berkeley History Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

development. During the late 1950s, a new alliance of middle-class white and Black liberals gained control of city council from white conservatives.

“A Beacon of Sanity:” Japanese Internment, Gender, and Liberalism

Japanese internment emerged from a history of discriminatory laws and racial violence in the U.S. targeting the Japanese. Scholars have explored the Japanese community’s experiences in the internment camps and lasting feelings of shame, yet few have researched the response of white residents who lived near displaced Japanese.³⁵ Berkeley offers an excellent opportunity to explore this topic since the Japanese represented a larger percentage of Berkeley’s population than in any other municipal in the Bay Area.

White middle and upper-class women mobilized their church networks to assist Berkeley’s displaced Japanese residents. During the interwar period, frequent interracial interactions occurred between the Japanese and white communities because many Japanese worked as domestic servants or gardeners. Many white women even taught their Japanese domestic servants English and white American culture. When internment occurred, white women treated the Japanese as members of the community rather than alien residents. They spearheaded an effort to store the Japanese community’s belongings, provided the displaced residents with temporary housing, and located

³⁵ See Bailey, Beth and David Farber, Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1969); Okihiro, *Storied Lives*; David J. O’Brien and Stephen S. Fugita, *The Japanese American Experience* (Bloomington, I.N: University of Indiana Press, 1991); Michi Nishiura Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America’s Concentration Camps* (Seattle, W.A.: University of Washington Press, 1996); Dillon Myer, *Uprooted Americans: The Japanese Americans and the War Relocation Authority during World War II* (Tucson, A.Z.: University of Arizona Press, 1971); Edward H. Spicer et al., *Impounded People: Japanese Americans in the Relocation Centers* (Tucson, A.Z.: University of Arizona Press, 1969); and Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Little, Brown, 1989). For a recent study that examines the impact of Japanese resettlement on local racial politics, see Charlotte Brooks, “In the Twilight Zone between Black and White: Japanese American Resettlement and Community in Chicago, 1942-1945,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 86, no. 4 (March 2000), pp. 1655-1687.

housing for returning Japanese after the war ended. Moreover, white women tied their image of Berkeley as a progressive community that was an international center of culture and knowledge production to the treatment of the Japanese, declaring that unlike other California communities, Berkeley treated the Japanese fairly.

Internment disrupted life for Berkeley's 1,300 Japanese residents who had created a thriving community with dozens of social organizations, Japanese language schools, grocery stores, flower shops, nurseries, repair shops, rooming houses, cleaning establishments, and bathhouses.³⁶ Although racial discrimination existed in Berkeley, racial violence never erupted and the Japanese lived peacefully in Southwest Berkeley in proximity to African Americans. Robert Yamada, a Japanese resident interned during the war, later remarked that, "a way of living had been formed by the community. The Japanese were applauded for not rocking the boat, for doing well academically, characterized as hard working and honest...they had the lowest crime rate for any ethnic group and, all in all, in their place, were a significant asset to the community."³⁷ On February 19th, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which allowed military officers to create military zones from which any or all persons could be excluded. Two months later, the federal government announced the relocation of California's Japanese population to internment camps in the U.S. interior.³⁸ The military arrived one week later to remove Berkeley's Japanese community.³⁹

³⁶ T. Robert Yamada. *The Berkeley Legacy, 1895-1995* (Berkeley, Calif.: The Berkeley Historical Society, 1995), pp. 11-2.

³⁷ Ibid, pg. 12.

³⁸ "Berkeley: Peace, war and Executive Order 9066." *The Sunday Paper*. February 13, 1983. Newspaper Clipping. Japanese-American Internment Vertical File. Berkeley Historical Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

³⁹ "Berkeley: Peace, war and Executive Order 9066." *The Sunday Paper*. February 13, 1983. Newspaper Clipping. Japanese-American Internment Vertical File. Berkeley Historical Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

Ruth Kingman leveraged her networks with the University of California and university YMCA to assist the displaced Japanese. An alumna of the university and wife of the YMCA's leader, Kingman convinced university administrators and faculty members to partner with her to found the Fair Play Committee in December of 1941. The presence of high-level administration officials including President Robert Sproul increased the committee's credibility and public voice. She flew to Washington multiple times as the committee's executive secretary to lobby the federal government to protect the Japanese from violence.⁴⁰ After internment occurred, Kingman continued to advocate for the Japanese population's rights. Although Kingman never opposed internment, she demanded that the government protect the displaced Japanese's property and provide them with adequate housing and opportunities to attend school and work.

⁴⁰ "When Berkeley Protested Japanese Internment." Oakland Tribune. April 30, 1992 and "Berkeley: Peace, war and Executive Order 9066." The Sunday Paper. February 13, 1983. Newspaper Clipping. Japanese-American Internment Vertical File. Berkeley Historical Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California. Ruth Kingman Oral History Interview. Interviewed in 1973 by Rosemary Levenson. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. University of California, Berkeley.



Image 4.3: Ruth Kingman, Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley. Kingman led efforts to assist Berkeley's Japanese community.

In addition to her lobbying at the federal level, Kingman persuaded Berkeley's white residents to store the Japanese community's belongings. After a conversation with a faculty member's wife, she recognized that the Japanese "were losing household goods because they couldn't take practically anything with them."⁴¹ Kingman convinced the wives of faculty members and female members of First Congregational, First Baptist, and First Methodist Churches to store the belongings of hundreds of families in their attics and basements. She also persuaded the University YMCA and YWCA to canvass Southwest Berkeley to inform the Japanese community about this assistance.⁴² The Japanese entrusted these women with items of significant monetary and personal worth,

⁴¹ Ruth Kingman Oral History Interview. Interviewed in 1973 by Rosemary Levenson. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. University of California, Berkeley.

⁴² Ibid.

including a deceased relative's ashes, dwarf tree, and plant worth more than \$500. The Japanese ultimately retained many valuables because of women's efforts.⁴³

Kingman also convinced female members of First Congregational, First Baptist, and First Methodist Churches to provide the Japanese with temporary housing during the relocation process. She decried the U.S. Army's decision to house thousands of Japanese residents in an empty auto showroom for several days before transporting them to a permanent detention center as inhumane and asked First Congregational Church's pastor to allow the Japanese to sleep in the church instead.⁴⁴ The pastor initially expressed reservations about the plan. Kingman marked that, "he welcomed use of church building for the purpose, but wanted to see how the old timers would react once the word got around."⁴⁵ The church's Woman's Committee, however, eagerly embraced the plan. They convinced the church's board of trustees to approve it and then enthusiastically implemented it. According to Eleanor Breed, the committee's secretary, "a number of women such as Mrs. Fulmer were ecstatic about idea. Mrs. Hadden was so happy that she wanted to weep."⁴⁶ Female volunteers placed flowers in rooms, created signs demarcating the location of rooms, prepared the parlors and kindergarten rooms for use,

⁴³ *Report on the Reconstruction of First Congregational Church*. First Congregational Church Vertical File. Berkeley History Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California. "When Berkeley Protested Japanese Internment." Oakland Tribune. April 30, 1992. Newspaper Clipping. Japanese-American Internment Vertical File. Berkeley Historical Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

⁴⁴ "When Berkeley Protested Japanese Internment." Oakland Tribune. April 30, 1992. Newspaper Clipping. Japanese-American Internment Vertical File. Berkeley Historical Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

⁴⁵ Ruth Kingman Oral History Interview. Interviewed in 1973 by Rosemary Levenson. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. University of California, Berkeley.

⁴⁶ Ruth Kingman Oral History Interview. Interviewed in 1973 by Rosemary Levenson. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. University of California, Berkeley.

found cots for people to rest on, served tea, fruit, and sandwiches, and greeted the Japanese as hostesses.⁴⁷



Image 4.4: First Congregational Church, Photograph Courtesy of Berkeley Public Library

Although they could not prevent the Japanese community's displacement, white women mitigated the Japanese community's property loss and treated them as members of the community with rights. Kingman housed the Japanese at the church because it was "less brutal than processing center. We attempted to make them [the Japanese] as comfortable as possible."⁴⁸ She insisted that, "the little we have done has been helpful in changing the attitude of some of the most bitter memories and feelings of the

⁴⁷ Ruth Kingman Oral History Interview. Interviewed in 1973 by Rosemary Levenson. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. University of California, Berkeley.

⁴⁸ Ruth Kingman Oral History Interview. Interviewed in 1973 by Rosemary Levenson. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. University of California, Berkeley.

evacuees.”⁴⁹ The displaced Japanese later favorably recalled the assistance white women provided. Robert Yamada described Berkeley as “a beacon of sanity” during the war in contrast to most communities in California. Yuchiko Uchida similarly recalled that, “what I remember most about Berkeley people were those at the First Congregational Church. They were very thoughtful and caring.”⁵⁰

After the war ended, white women continued to assist the Japanese by locating housing for them.⁵¹ Many Japanese lacked enough money for either the down payment on a home or rental deposit, disadvantaging them in a tight housing market. Jane Davis, the wife of a University YMCA employee and member of First Congregational Church, organized a resettlement assistance service out of the YMCA’s kitchen that located housing for dozens of families and helped Japanese homeowners to reclaim their properties. For instance, the resettlement service loaned Henry and Barbara Takahashi money to repair their home, which wartime tenants had made uninhabitable.⁵²

White liberals declared that the assistance Berkeley offered Japanese at the nadir in the history of America’s treatment of the Japanese demonstrated that Berkeley was a leading progressive community and offered a model of positive race relations for other communities. Dr. Loper, First Congregational Church’s pastor at the time, exclaimed that his decision to assist the Japanese “was the most important thing that I had ever

⁴⁹ Ruth Kingman Oral History Interview. Interviewed in 1973 by Rosemary Levenson. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. University of California, Berkeley.

⁵⁰ “When Berkeley Protested Japanese Internment.” Oakland Tribune. April 30, 1992. Newspaper Clipping. Japanese-American Internment Vertical File. Berkeley Historical Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

⁵¹ Ruth Kingman Oral History Interview. Interviewed in 1973 by Rosemary Levenson. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. University of California, Berkeley.

⁵² Box One, Folder One. Dr. Henry and Barbara Takahashi, April 1974. First Congregational Church Records, Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

done...members of the church were very proud of their efforts.”⁵³ Church members similarly expressed pride in their reaction to Japanese internment. Dr. Monroe Deutsch, a church member and university administrator, recalled “with great admiration and gratitude the manner in the recent war in which Japanese and Japanese Americans were being evacuated from this city to go to Tanforan...the First Congregational Church and its Pastor demonstrated to this group the ideal of human brotherhood.”⁵⁴ Mrs. E. Hamilton, another member, also hailed the church’s actions. In a letter to Dr. Loper, she declared that church had enacted Jesus’ commandment to help the poor, outcasts, and downtrodden. She cited the Bible verse where Jesus told his disciplines, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these [the least of these], ye have done it unto me” and closed the letter exclaiming that the church demonstrated Christianity in action by fulfilling the commandment.⁵⁵ Similarly, the author of the church’s history claimed that the church’s treatment of the Japanese revealed “the many ways the church built the brotherhood” and sparked “an unbroken record of human rights activism from 1942 to this day.”⁵⁶

White liberals replaced the history of discrimination against Berkeley’s Japanese community with an image of Berkeley as a progressive community that treated minorities fairly. The Japanese, however, remembered. Robert Yamada recalled that, “Berkeley was still a racist place...Japanese Americans were very restricted before the war.” Indeed, Berkeley’s Japanese community experienced severe discrimination existed in

⁵³ Ruth Kingman Oral History Interview. Interviewed in 1973 by Rosemary Levenson. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. University of California, Berkeley.

⁵⁴ *Report on the Reconstruction of First Congregational Church*. First Congregational Church Vertical File. Berkeley History Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

⁵⁵ April 25, 1942 Letter from Mrs. E. Hamilton to Dr. Vere V. Loper. Box 2, First Congregational Church Records. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁵⁶ Ibid. “When Berkeley Protested Japanese Internment.” *Oakland Tribune*. April 30, 1992. Newspaper Clipping. Japanese-American Internment Vertical File. Berkeley Historical Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

housing, employment, and civic life. Most Japanese held service sector positions or owned a small business, barred from white-collar and professional jobs regardless of their qualifications. Racial covenants confined them to Southwest Berkeley, were excluded from white churches and social organizations, and lacked government representation.

Given the history of racial discrimination against Berkeley's Japanese community, it is unsurprising that white residents never spoke out against internment itself even when it targeted Americanized, middle-class Japanese residents. Kimio Obata and Hasa Sato were Japanese-American residents who had graduated from the University of California. The Kimio's father was a faculty member at the university and Obata's father was a deacon at the Japanese Congregational Church and owned a prosperous shop. . Their families' affluence allowed them to hold their wedding reception at the Claremont Hotel, an upscale venue in an affluent white neighborhood. Still, despite their social status, the family was interned without protest from Berkeley's white community. Obata's father even lost his business, which he had spent years building.⁵⁷ Ruth Kingman, who spearheaded the efforts to assist the interned Japanese, even claimed that interment benefitted the Japanese by protecting them from racial violence.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, despite these clear limitations to her progressivism, Kingman treated the Japanese as members of Berkeley community.

A Government Responsibility: Housing Politics in Berkeley

Wartime migration created a chronic housing shortage throughout the Bay Area. Berkeley was no exception. Berkeley's population increased almost 33 percent between

⁵⁷ Ruth Kingman Oral History Interview. Interviewed in 1973 by Rosemary Levenson. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. University of California, Berkeley.

⁵⁸ Ruth Kingman Oral History Interview. Interviewed in 1973 by Rosemary Levenson. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley. University of California, Berkeley.

1940 and 1953, but the number of housing units stagnated.⁵⁹ This shortage disproportionately impacted African Americans, who encountered severe housing discrimination and formed a disproportionate number of recent migrants. Berkeley's Black population increased fourfold between 1940 and 1953.⁶⁰ Excluded from East Berkeley's white neighborhoods, West Berkeley absorbed most Berkeley's population increase. Migrants moved into homes converted into temporary apartments, creating overcrowded conditions in West Berkeley similar to those in Montclair's fourth ward.

As in Montclair, white liberals blamed the local government's negligence for the deterioration of Berkeley's housing stock and contended that tighter building codes and the construction of low-income public housing would reverse this decline and improve the quality of life for Black residents.⁶¹ The Berkeley LWV, a non-partisan organization comprised of more than 500 middle and upper-class white women, also spearheaded efforts to improve Berkeley's housing stock. The LWV's policies in Berkeley and Montclair ensured that the communities remained multi-racial by urging the government to construct additional housing for Black residents. In Berkeley, for example, the LWV urged the city council to convert Codornices Village, a temporary federal public housing project that housed approximately 5,000 Black residents, permanent.

White upper and middle-class women in Montclair and Berkeley still worked to implement their visions of Montclair and Berkeley as ideal residential communities by helping minority residents. However, during the postwar period, white women in both communities focused on improving housing for African American residents instead of

⁵⁹ Margaret Johnson. *The Negroes in West Berkeley: Sociology-Economics 126 Ethnic Groups*. Mills College, 1952 paper.

⁶⁰ Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pp.114-5.

⁶¹ "League Marks 50th Year." Berkeley Gazette. November 25, 1961.

creating social welfare programs. Mobilized Women, for example, offered educational and recreational programs designed to Americanize West Berkeley's European immigrant community during the interwar period. During the postwar period, the organization's importance to Berkeley's civic life declined and a younger generation of white women worked through different organizations such as the LWV and YWCA to demand that the government address the housing crisis.⁶²

At the same time, an important difference existed in Berkeley and Montclair's housing politics. In Montclair, white women encountered stiff opposition to their proposals and declined to form a coalition with the Black community. In Berkeley, however, the LWV and other white liberal women partnered with liberal male faculty members at the university of California and African American organizations such as the NAACP to advocate for improved housing. This liberal interracial coalition contended that overcrowded conditions in Black neighborhood's harmed Berkeley's reputation as a community at the forefront of progressive change.

Despite the emergence of broad coalition that supported public housing in Berkeley, white conservatives still controlled the government and blocked low-income public housing as well as other housing reforms. They asserted that low-income public housing would transform Berkeley's demographics and character and preferred to wait for additional private housing to alleviate the shortage.⁶³

The LWV first addressed Berkeley's housing crisis in 1944 when its planning and housing committee sponsored a lecture series that discussed the housing crisis and need for the local government to manage its role in housing regulation. Alice Heyneman

⁶² Box 1, Scrapbook, 1946-7. Mobilized Women of Berkeley. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁶³ Johnson, *Second Gold Rush*, pp. 228-31,

emphasized the need for a government-sponsored regional housing plan in her lecture, declaring that, “facts would indicate that postwar needs in the Bay Area will call for a well-planned building program.”⁶⁴ She informed the audience that, “the Bay Area has nearly 100,000 housing units that were built through the agencies of the Federal Public Housing Authority. It has been estimated that only 10,000 of these are permanent and if all the families housed in these dwelling units remain in California after the war, in what and by whom are they to be housed?”⁶⁵ Most wartime migrants, who were predominantly Black, lived in temporary public housing units that were slated for closure after the war ended. The closure of these units, Heyneman recognized, would create a severe housing shortage unless new units were constructed. She specifically faulted the Berkeley City Council’s refusal to rezone vacant commercial and industrial lots in West Berkeley for residential use despite the acute housing shortage, declaring that, “many of the 200 vacant lots in the so-called Negro district are zoned for industry and business and the council refuses to allow residential use of these lots.”⁶⁶

Concerned about the looming postwar housing shortage, in 1945 the LWV surveyed Berkeley’s housing and submitted a report to the city planning commission that demanded that the city government intervene to alleviate overcrowding in Black neighborhoods. The LWV blamed racial discrimination for overcrowded conditions in West Berkeley, noting that 95 percent of African Americans lived in Southwest Berkeley because racial covenants barred them from other neighborhoods. The LWV concluded that, “restrictive covenants cover up to 80 percent of Berkeley property...it is almost

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ “League to Study Housing Problems.” Berkeley Daily Gazette. January 21, 1944.

⁶⁶ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville. Records, 1911-ongoing. Carton 6, folder 37, Planning, Fair Housing, Berkeley. 1944 Report. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

impossible for colored persons to live elsewhere in the city. New colored residents have almost been entirely absorbed by the same census district. The result is a condition of overcrowding.⁶⁷ The LWV insisted that, “this overcrowding detrimental to the health and welfare of the Negro population” and urged the government to create a comprehensive plan that prioritized the Black community’s housing needs.⁶⁸ They directly stated: “We ask the city manager, Berkeley planning commission, and city council to consider the needs and problems of housing of our colored citizens whenever it becomes possible for a program of urban redevelopment to be planned for Berkeley...someplace, somehow, housing must be made available for colored persons in other parts of the city.”⁶⁹ The LWV declined to endorse a specific intervention, but demanded that the government increase the amount of housing units available to Blacks.

The city council, however, ignored the report and refused to alleviate the housing shortage in Black neighborhoods. Five years later, the LWV asked the council to survey local housing conditions in order to identify unmet housing needs. Ruth Kingman, president of the LWV, wrote to councilmen in November of 1949 and reminded them that, “the LWV is greatly concerned over the need of some actual and current statistics on the housing situation in Berkeley. There has been no adequate survey of housing since the 1940 census and the increase in the population during the war years made the facts gathered at the time obsolete.” Kingman implied that the council had neglected its responsibility to regulate housing, stressing that, “in developing a master plan for

⁶⁷ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville Records, 1911 - ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36. 1944 Report to the Berkeley Planning Committee. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁶⁸ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville Records, 1911 - ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36. 1944 Report to the Berkeley Planning Committee. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Berkeley, it would seem essential that an integral part of the plan would be attention to the future of the residential needs, which cannot be done intelligently unless we do have facts on the present conditions and needs in housing.” Her remarks implied that city council had a responsibility to provide adequate housing for all residents and she ended the letter asking that the city council “request the Berkeley Planning Commission to take the responsibility of undertaking a Berkeley housing survey at the earliest possible time.”⁷⁰

Berkeley’s housing crisis continued to worsen after 1949. Since the city council stoutly refused to intervene, the LWV more explicitly blamed the city council for the housing shortage. Kingman and Heyneman, leaders in the LWV, again asked the council to survey local housing conditions in the *Berkeley Gazette* in February of 1950. They insisted that, “government responsibilities begin where private industry have failed or been unable to solve the problems of planning and housing” and made the stark reality known that a housing shortage existed because of the council’s inaction. As evidence of the crisis, the League stated that Berkeley currently had 3,747 substandard housing units and construction firms had only built 3,545 dwellings between 1940 and 1948, far too few to adequately house the city’s additional 25,000 residents.⁷¹ This discrepancy, they alleged, had created, “real instances of substandard and unhealthy living conditions.” They cited two families who lived in deplorable conditions: a white family of 8 lived in two rooms in a basement apartment with an outdoor toilet, and an African American

⁷⁰ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville Records, 1911- ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36. Letter from Ruth Kingman to the Berkeley City Council. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁷¹ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville Records, 1911- ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36. Letter from Ruth Kingman to the Berkeley City Council. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

family of 8 lived in a small cottage with no hot water, shared an outdoor toilet with three other dwelling units, and used an outside laundry tub for a bathtub.⁷² Kingman and Heyneman squarely blamed the council for these squalid conditions and requested that the city council allocate \$3,000 for a housing survey as the first step towards reversing Berkeley's decline. They boldly claimed that, "the LWV has observed the many changes that the war years and substantial increase of population have brought. We know that there is overcrowding in Berkeley...it is our opinion that it is time the city got the essential facts on the housing situation and determine what should be done to keep Berkeley a town of which we can be justly proud."⁷³

At a council meeting held two weeks after the *Gazette* article appeared, a coalition of middle-class African Americans and white liberals also demanded that the government allocate money for the city planning commission to conduct a housing survey. Alice Heyneman spoke in favor of a housing survey at the meeting. She stated that, "If the facts shown by the preliminary survey are substantially accurate, something should be done about it and not wait until the situation become a real crisis."⁷⁴ Tarea Pittman, a middle-class Black resident representing the NAACP, similarly expressed support for a housing survey at the meeting as well as the Berkeley Young Democratic Club, County

⁷² League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville Records, 1911- ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36. February 15, 1950 letter from Mrs. Harry Kingman and Mrs. Paul Heyneman to Mr. Kacy Ward, Editor of the Berkeley Gazette. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁷³ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville Records, 1911- ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36. February 28, 1950 letter from the LWV to the Berkeley City Council. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁷⁴ February 28, 1950. Berkeley City Council Minutes. Berkeley Public Library, Berkeley, California. League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville Records, 1911- ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36. April 12, 1950 letter from the LWV to Mr. Jack Steinberg. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

Rent Advisory Board, East Bay Independent Socialist League, Codornices Housing Council, and community YWCA.

University of California faculty members were key coalition members who enjoyed more political influence because of the university's postwar expansion. In 1950, liberal faculty members created the Berkeley Municipal League to advocate for an expanded local government role in housing.⁷⁵ T.J. Kent, a professor of urban planning and the Municipal League's leader, squarely blamed Berkeley's decline on "the council's ignorance of the city's social problems." He alleged that the council had ignored overcrowded, run-down conditions and insisted that new leadership was needed to reverse this downward trend, stating that, "old-timers were unable to understand that the old Berkeley they had known no longer existed. Everything that had run down during the war, stayed down. Conditions grew worse."⁷⁶ Illustrating the importance of university faculty to the liberal coalition, Kent campaigned successfully for city council in 1953 and, once elected, continued to support improvements to Berkeley's housing stock.

Despite broad community support, seven of the city council's nine members voted against allocating \$3,000 for the city planning commission to survey Berkeley's housing, linking it to support for public housing. Arthur K. Beckley, an executive at Cutter Laboratories, Dr. George Pettit, an high-level administration official at the University of California, Edward A. Martin and Arthur Harris, practicing attorneys, Wheldon Richards, the owner of a construction manufacturing company, Kent Pursel, a local pharmacist, and

⁷⁵ "Housing Plan Up for Debate." *Oakland Tribune*. February 26, 1950.

⁷⁶ T.J. Kent, *Berkeley's First Liberal Democratic Regime, 1961-70: a political essay on the postwar awakening of Berkeley's liberal conscience*, (Berkeley, C.A.: Institute for Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, 1976), pg. 10.

Donald Parce, the owner of a laundry, all voted against the housing survey.⁷⁷ They issued a statement declaring that, “the only reason the results would be useful would be for the purpose of securing low-rent public housing for Berkeley...the council hereby releases the planning commission from further consideration of said question of a housing survey on the grounds that the council as of this date does not favor public housing for the city of Berkeley.”⁷⁸ These seven councilmen heeded the concerns of the Berkeley Realty Board, Berkeley Home Builders, Berkeley Home and Property Owners Association, Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, and Alameda County Apartment House which opposed the survey and profited from the exorbitant rents and home prices that the housing shortage created.

Indeed, the two councilmen who refused to vote against the survey complained about how the other councilmen linked it to public housing. Laurence Cross, pastor of an interracial church located in Southwest Berkeley, voted in favor of the survey. The LWV asked him to campaign for mayor three years earlier to challenge the pro-business coalition’s domination of local politics.⁷⁹ He voted for the survey because he sought information on the city’s housing stock, declaring that, “my vote is not a vote for public against private housing, my vote is for knowledge against lack of knowledge.”⁸⁰ He thus insisted that he did support public housing and lamented that, “because of action of council, Berkeley will not be able to get more up to date facts on housing until the 1950

⁷⁷ Berkeley City Council Minutes. February 28, 1950. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley California.

⁷⁸ Berkeley City Council Minutes. February 28, 1950. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley California.

⁷⁹ T.J. Kent, *Berkeley’s First Liberal Democratic Regime, 1961-70: a political essay on the postwar awakening of Berkeley’s liberal conscience*, (Berkeley, C.A.: Institute for Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, 1976), pg. 8-9.

⁸⁰ Berkeley City Council Minutes. February 28, 1950. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley California.

census is released in 1952.”⁸¹ Lilly Whitaker, the only female councilmember, abstained from voting on the survey and resented the implication that the housing survey was a Trojan horse that liberals would later use to justify public housing. She asserted that she “would not be maneuvered into voting on such a resolution that put the issue of public housing into the matter of the survey.”⁸² She expressed willingness to consider public housing, but first sought additional information, declaring that, “I feel the city should prove whether or not it needs low cost housing.”⁸³

Despite this the city council’s refusal to fund a housing survey, the LWV and other liberals fought the city council’s decision to allow rent control to expire. Rent control, which the federal government implemented during WWII, was set to expire in Berkeley in the fall of 1951 unless the local government extended it. Although only 1.6 percent of Berkeley’s rental units were vacant at the time, the council declared that no housing shortage existed and refused to extend rent control beyond the fall.⁸⁴

The LWV and other white liberals found the decision outrageous. William Doyle, chair of the Berkeley Council for Rent Control, labeled the decision shocking in a letter to the LWV, declaring that, “vacancy factors are well under the normal factors.”⁸⁵ Mrs. Richard Roberts, a member of the LWV’s housing and planning committee, wrote to the

⁸¹ Berkeley City Council Minutes. February 28, 1950. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley California.

⁸² League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville. Records, 1911-ongoing. Carton 6, started with folder 36, Planning, Fair Housing, Berkeley. September 1, 1951 letter from the LWV to the Berkeley City Council.

⁸³ Berkeley City Council Minutes. February 28, 1951. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley California.

⁸⁴ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville. Records, 1911-ongoing. Carton 6, started with folder 36, Planning, Fair Housing, Berkeley. August 31, 1951 Letter from William T. Doyle to the LWV.

⁸⁵ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville. Records, 1911-ongoing. Carton 6, started with folder 36, Planning, Fair Housing, Berkeley. August 31, 1951 Letter from William T. Doyle to the LWV.

California Office of Housing in July of 1951 to inquire about the expiration of rent control would impact local rents. The office informed Roberts that on average municipalities had experienced a 50.4 percent increase in rental prices after rent control expired.⁸⁶ Since only 1.6% of housing units in Alameda County were vacant, the LWV feared that rental prices would skyrocket in Berkeley that fall.⁸⁷ The League and Berkeley Council for Rent Control requested that the city council establish a committee to guarantee that landlords did not gouge tenants after rent control ended.

The council, however, denied the request. John D. Phillips, a councilmember, informed Mrs. Russell T. Prescott, chair of the LWV's housing and planning committee, that the "necessity for such a body was not established."⁸⁸ The council's inaction potentially priced predominantly Black low-income residents out of Berkeley's rental market while the LWV worked to keep rents affordable for low-income residents.⁸⁹

White conservatives' and liberals' starkly different views about the local government's role in housing policy that caused them to clash over whether to convert Codornices Village into a permanent low-income public housing project. Located along Berkeley's northwest border, the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) constructed Codornices Village as to house approximately 10,000 wartime migrants employed in Richmond and Oakland's shipyards. The project was located on a 120 acre lot split

⁸⁶ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville. Records, 1911-ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36, Planning, Fair Housing, Berkeley. July 23, 1951 letter from office of housing expediter to Mrs. Richard Roberts, LWV of Berkeley.

⁸⁷ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville. Records, 1911-ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36, Planning, Fair Housing, Berkeley. Sept. 1, 1951 letter to the federal government's rent control office, Alameda County.

⁸⁸ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville. Records, 1911-ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36, Planning, Fair Housing, Berkeley. August 28, 1951 letter from John D. Phillips, Berkeley City Manager to Mrs. Russell T. Prescott, League of Women Voters. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁸⁹ Report of the Meeting Held at the Friends Meeting House." Institute for Governmental Studies. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

between Berkeley and Albany, an adjacent suburb. Berkeley's section was zoned for industrial use while the University of California owned the Albany section. The project's two-story buildings contained 1,056 apartments in Berkeley and 840 in Albany.

Codornices Village's closing directly impacted African Americans. Over 70 percent of African American wage earners in the Bay Area worked in shipbuilding, making them eligible for most wartime public housing projects. At the same time, racial discrimination restricted the private housing units available to them. Thus, Black migrants were overrepresented in the Bay Area's public housing projects. Codornices Village was no exception and when it opened, 50 percent of tenants were Black.⁹⁰ This percentage only increased until Blacks comprised more than 90 percent of tenants when the project closed.⁹¹ The project's fate had clear implications for Berkeley's racial demographic since many of the project's 10,000 working-class Black tenants could not afford Berkeley's private housing units. Codornices Village's closure potentially removed them from Berkeley.⁹²

White liberals advocated for the project's conversion into a permanent low-income housing project. They contended Berkeley must provide decent housing for all residents regardless of their race and linked the provision of housing for working-class Blacks to Berkeley's image as a progressive city that served as a beacon of knowledge and culture.

Berkeley's government and white businessmen, on the other hand, opposed the project for the beginning and sought its swift removal once the war ended. Even before

⁹⁰ Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pp. 111-12.

⁹¹ W. J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War: The 1960s*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 54-5.

⁹² Helen Smith Alancraig, *Codornices Village: A Study of Non-Segregated Public Housing in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, Berkeley, MA Thesis, 1953).

the FPHA announced plans to construct public housing in Berkeley, the city council attempted to pre-empt the possibility by voicing opposition to it. At council meeting held on November 19th, 1942, the city council issued a statement declaring that, “Berkeley does not have slums and does not approve of public housing despite the swell in wartime population.”⁹³ The council insisted that public housing was only useful for slum clearance and, since Berkeley lacked slums, it did not need public housing.

Immediately after the FPHA announced its plans to construct Codornices Village, the city council held a special meeting to reiterate their opposition to public housing in Berkeley and the proposed project. At the meeting, Mayor Fitch Robertson stated the council’s intention to transform the project’s site into an industrial area, maintaining that, “it is the only industrial site left in the city and the Chamber of Commerce has had several inquiries from industry seeking immediate post-war construction.”⁹⁴ Robertson claimed that the project’s location would block the land’s utilization for industrial production. Since businesses generated tax revenue, he demanded that the FPHA construct wartime public housing units in Richmond instead.⁹⁵ The council voted 6 to 1 in support for a resolution expressing opposition to Codornices Village at the meeting.⁹⁶

The Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, Realty Board, and Manufacturer’s Association also immediately announced opposition to the project at the special council meeting, arguing that it would fundamentally alter Berkeley.⁹⁷ Arthur Wenderig, a business owner and Chamber of Commerce member, asserted that, “Berkeley wants to

⁹³ Berkeley City Council Minutes. November 19, 1942. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

⁹⁴ “2 Bay Cities Resigned to Housing Plan.” Oakland Tribune. August 19, 1943.

⁹⁵ “2 Bay Cities Resigned to Housing Plan.” Oakland Tribune. August 19, 1943.

⁹⁶ “City Drafts Protest on U.S. Housing.” Berkeley Daily Gazette. August 20, 1943.

⁹⁷ Berkeley City Council Minutes. August 20, 1943. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

preserve the characteristics of a University community.” If the project went forward, he contended that, “returning veterans will find a transformed community.”⁹⁸ Other businessmen similarly claimed that public housing would spark undesirable changes in Berkeley’s demographics and opposed Codornices Village.

Berkeley’s city council and businessmen maintained that private companies could meet the increased housing demand. In a letter addressed to the FPHA director and Berkeley’s U.S. Senators and Congressmen, city council claimed that, “we cannot help but feel that in this particular instance the war effort can more readily be prosecuted by the building of private housing units.”⁹⁹ The Chamber of Commerce’s representative likewise stated at the special council meeting that private construction firm could meet the housing demand and declared that, “we have a strong desire that there would be no public housing in Berkeley.” The Chamber of Commerce’s 1943 survey of Berkeley’s housing uncovered a severe housing shortage. Nevertheless, the organization insisted that private construction firms would meet the increased housing demand, noting that, “plans are underway for the addition of several hundred new residential units.”¹⁰⁰ *The Berkeley Gazette*, a local newspaper with ties to business leaders, publicized the Chamber of Commerce’s claim that private construct firms could adequately meet the demand for housing. An editorial maintained that, “Berkeley builders are ready, willing, and able to help out by constructing private housing at no cost to the government.” Illustrating the paper’s opposition to public housing, separate front page headlines decried Codornices

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ “City Shack Unit Plan Rapped.” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, August 25, 1943.

¹⁰⁰ Berkeley Chamber of Commerce August 1943 Report. Science, Industry, and Business New York Public Library, Science, Industry, and Business Library (SIBL). New York, NY.

Village as “a city shack unit plan” and “tenement shacks.”¹⁰¹ *Gazette* staff denounced FPHA’s decision to proceed with the project in spite of strong local opposition, declaring that it had “boldly ignored the official protests of the University of California and city councils of Berkeley and Albany.”¹⁰²

Despite its opposition to Codornices Village, the Berkeley City Council pledged cooperation with the FPHA in the interests of the war effort. Mayor Robertson declared that, “if Mr. Post [the FPHA director] has come to the conclusion that this is the only available site for this project, which we do not believe, naturally we will have to co-operate in the interest of the war effort.”¹⁰³ When the war ended, however, the council attempted to close Codornices Village as quickly as possible and spurned opportunities to convert it into a permanent housing project.¹⁰⁴ In October of 1945, six months after hostilities ended, Mayor Robertson asked the FPHA to replace the project’s current tenants who were predominantly Black with returning veterans and their families who were presumably white. After the FPHA rejected the proposal, Robertson urged FPHA to demolish the project, reminding the FPHA that Berkeley had opposed the project’s construction and only cooperated because of the war. Since the war ended, Robertson alleged that FPHA should demolish the project since it no longer housed “essential war

¹⁰¹ “City Shack Unit Plan is Rapped.” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*. August 25, 1943. “FPHA Will Double Number of Tenement ‘Shacks’ here.” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*. September 9, 1943. Berkeley Chamber of Commerce August 1943 Report. Science, Industry, and Business New York Public Library, Science, Industry, and Business Library (SIBL). New York, NY.

¹⁰² “FPHA Will Double Number of Tenement ‘Shacks’ here.” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*. September 9, 1943

¹⁰³ “2 Bay Cities Resigned to Housing Plan.” *Oakland Tribune*. August 19, 1943. “FPHA Will Double Number of Tenement ‘Shacks’ here.” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*. September 9, 1943

¹⁰⁴ “Village Urged for Returnees.” *Oakland Tribune*. October 3, 1945.

workers.”¹⁰⁵ The FPHA refused, stating that the region’s severe housing shortage necessitated the project’s continued operation.



Image 4.5: Codornices Village is the apartment complex in the foreground. Photograph courtesy of Albany Public Library.

White conservatives encouraged the council to demolish the project. In December of 1947, two years after the war ended, Weller Noble, president of the Berkeley Manufacturers’ Association, unequivocally declared that manufacturing was “vital to the future of the city” and demanded that the FPHA close Codornices Village and allow Berkeley’s city council rezone the area for industrial use.¹⁰⁶

While the city council and white conservatives clearly prioritized industrial development, Codornices Village provided much-needed housing to Berkeley’s Black

¹⁰⁵ “Village Urged for Returnees.” Oakland Tribune. October 3, 1945.

¹⁰⁶ “Zoning Fight in Berkeley.” Oakland Tribune. December 10, 1947.

community. Discrimination in private housing coupled with the region's housing shortage trapped Black migrants into temporary public housing projects long after the war ended. Because of the housing shortage, in 1948 the Codornices Village Council, a tenant organization, asked the city council to keep the project open by converting it into a permanent public housing project when the FPHA disbanded it. In response to their request, the council appointed a committee comprised of Berkeley and Albany residents to determine whether the project's fate. The committee concluded that the facts revealed a strong demand for the project's housing units. Since approximately 150 families applied for housing each month yet the average number of vacancies was only 40, more than 500 families were on the project's waiting list.¹⁰⁷ The committee expressed ambivalence, however, about the project's continued despite the undeniable housing shortage in Albany and Berkeley. John Ratcliff, the committee's chair, stated at a council meeting that, "I realize there is a tremendous demand for housing but feel the City Council should consider the owners of the property on which Codornices Village is built...this property is owned by some 52 private individuals...action should be taken to return some of the property to the property owners."¹⁰⁸

The city council also acknowledged the regional housing shortage, yet insisted that the project remain temporary. They told the committee to create a plan for the project's gradual end. Councilmember Arthur Harris declared that, "the taking of applications should be stopped...if this is not done; it will be several years before the housing is torn down."¹⁰⁹ Similarly, another councilmember warned against complacency, noting that, "in Washington, D.C., there is temporary housing that was put

¹⁰⁷ Berkeley City Council Minutes. July 6, 1948. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁸ Berkeley City Council Minutes. July 6, 1948. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁹ Berkeley City Council Minutes. July 6, 1948. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

in during World War I and is still in use; Berkeley doesn't want a repetition of that situation.”¹¹⁰

White and African American liberals, however, urged caution and claimed that closing the project immediate would make many tenants homeless. African American pharmacist and California State Assemblyman Byron Rumford contended that, “hasty action which will adversely affect the people now living in Codornices Village. It is true that the persons owning the land on which the village is located are anxious to recover, but it is also true that there are hundreds of families that will be thrown out of homes, and their children displaced from their schools with no immediate place to go...I would suggest a gradual relocation program.”¹¹¹ Berkeley's city council affirming its intention to close the project, yet acknowledged Rumford and other liberals concerns. They thus ordered the committee to create a plan for “the progressive evacuation of the project.”¹¹²

In 1954, the FPHA closed all temporary public housing projects including Codornices Village. However, since a housing shortage still existed in the Bay Area, the FPHA asked the Berkeley City Council to convert Codornices Village into a permanent low-income housing project since the council would assume responsibility for the project's long-term management. The council, however, refused.¹¹³ On March 13, 1954, the FPHA issued eviction notices to tenants. After the tenants had evacuated, the FPHA

¹¹⁰ Berkeley City Council Minutes. July 6, 1948. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Berkeley City Council Minutes. July 6, 1948. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

¹¹³ “Report of the Meeting Held at the Friends Meeting House.” Institute for Governmental Studies. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California, U.S. to Close Codornices Housing.” San Francisco Chronicle. March 13, 1954.

returned the Albany section to University of California and the Berkeley section to the businesses that owned parts of it.¹¹⁴

In stark contrast to the city council's prioritization of industrial development, the same interracial liberal coalition that requested a local housing survey also lobbied for Codornices Village's conversion into a permanent low-income public housing project in 1954 after the FPHA decided to close it. Other municipalities had converted more than 25 percent of the Bay Area's temporary public housing projects into permanent low-income housing and offered a clear precedent for the conversion of Codornices Village into a permanent housing project.¹¹⁵ To cull support for the project's conversion into a permanent housing project, the LWV organized tours of the project that displayed its modern features one month prior to the council's decision. The League also organized discussions about the project that conservative, liberal, and government organizations, including the Berkeley Community Chest, FPHA, Codornices Village tenants committee, Berkeley-Albany Realty Board, and American Friends Service Committee, attended.¹¹⁶

Despite these efforts, the city council refused to convert the project into permanent low-income public housing and assume responsibility for its management. Once the project's closure was definite, the NAACP, Berkeley YWCA, American Friends Service Committee, and other members of Berkeley's liberal coalition organized a conference to discuss how to assist the displaced tenants. Carol Sibley, a conference attendee and president of the YWCA, tied the community's response to the housing crisis to Berkeley's reputation as a progressive city and international center of culture, claiming

¹¹⁴ "U.S. to Close Codornices Housing," San Francisco Chronicle, March 13, 1954.

¹¹⁵ History of Codornices Village. Box 4, Carol Sibley Papers. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹¹⁶ League of Women Voters of Berkeley Voters Issue, September 1954. Institute for Government Studies. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

that, “a city of the stature and prestige of Berkeley could not in good conscience adopt less than the objective of a decent home for everyone that lives in our city.”¹¹⁷ She boldly declared that, “the welfare of everyone who resides in the city regardless of circumstances that brought them there is our responsibility.”¹¹⁸ She implied that the government had a duty to assist the displaced tenants, stating that, “problems as complex as Codornices Village can only be solved by elected and appointed officials working with private citizens through their agencies.”¹¹⁹

Sibley tapped into the white community’s civic pride when she demanded that the city government provide displaced tenants with relocation assistance and other service. Moreover, she declared that the council’s intervention would benefit the entire community by transforming the project’s tenants into better citizens. She asserted that, “public monies should be spent to provide the conditions for the full life and the kind of atmosphere in which these citizens who may not presently manifest the standard of behavior would desire will as a result of living in our community develop into the kinds of citizens of which we can all be proud.”¹²⁰ Sibley tapped into the white community’s civic pride and declared that inaction would tarnish Berkeley’s reputation while action would benefit the entire community.

The conference attendees submitted a report to the city council that recommended that the city locate alternative housing for all families and the establishment of a housing

¹¹⁷ May 10, 1955 Conference Proceedings. Carol Sibley Papers. Carton Three. Bancroft Library, the University of California, Berkeley.

¹¹⁸ May 10, 1955 Conference Proceedings. Carol Sibley Papers. Carton Three. Bancroft Library, the University of California, Berkeley.

¹¹⁹ May 10, 1955 Conference Proceedings. Carol Sibley Papers. Carton Three. Bancroft Library, the University of California, Berkeley.

¹²⁰ May 10, 1955 Conference Proceedings. Carol Sibley Papers. Carton Three. Bancroft Library, the University of California, Berkeley.

committee charged with “advising the Council on how Berkeley might permanently achieve the minimum objective of a decent home for all of its residents.”¹²¹ The report declared that the local government had a responsibility to intervene. It stated: “there two dimensions to the housing problem in Berkeley. One is the present emergency problem at Codornices; the other is the long-term problem of providing decent lost-cost housing.”¹²² The report claimed that municipal expenditures on housing were justified because such expenditures would ensure that all residents enjoyed a full life. The report declared that, “public monies are spent to provide the conditions of a full life, whether be in the form of good schools, parks, recreational facilities, or decent homes and neighborhoods...those that are needed to repair the human and material damage which is done when such conditions are not provided are necessary expenditures.”¹²³ Echoing Sibley’s remarks, the committee concluded that assisting Codornices Village’s displaced tenants would improve Berkeley and was in the entire community’s interests.

In response to the liberal coalition’s demands, the city council agreed to hire a social worker and establish a committee that would locate housing for tenants. Only two weeks later, however, the NAACP alleged that the city council had refused to provide the promised assistance and charged the council with racial discrimination. Edward Grice, chair of the NAACP’s housing committee, asserted that the council’s failure to hire the promised social worker displayed its desire to remove Black residents from Berkeley. He boldly stated that, “obviously the city of Berkeley is more concerned with getting Negro

¹²¹ History of Codornices Village. Conference Report, May 10, 1955. Box 4, Carol Sibley Papers. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹²² History of Codornices Village. Conference Report, May 10, 1955. Box 4, Carol Sibley Papers. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹²³ History of Codornices Village. Conference Report, May 10, 1955. Box 4, Carol Sibley Papers. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

citizens out of the city than with assuming their proper governmental responsibilities. If the mayor and council will not assist these people, then we private citizens and organizations will have to do so.”¹²⁴ Arthur Green, president of the NAACP, also lambasted the council’s inaction. He insisted that, “non-Caucasian families can’t find adequate housing at rents they can pay in the real estate pattern of the Bay Area. I challenge you do to something about finding that kind of housing. If you don’t and try to put people out of Codornices, you’ll have to do it at the point of bayonets.”¹²⁵ Green and Grice demanded that the council either push back the project’s demolition or locate affordable housing for the displaced tenants. Most remaining tenants were working-class Blacks with an average of 2.15 children who could not afford more than an apartment large enough for their children and lacked enough money to purchase a home.¹²⁶ They claimed that the council’s inaction unmasked its desire to remove poor Blacks from Berkeley and would make working-class Black families homeless.

At the urging of Black and white liberals, the city council created a community committee that located housing for Codornices Village’s displaced tenants.¹²⁷ The LWV, the University YWCA, NAACP, Berkeley Christmas Committee, Berkeley Clinic Auxiliary, and several white and Black churches participated in the effort and located housing for 144 of the 345 remaining families.¹²⁸ They implied that the community had

¹²⁴ “Berkeley Mayor Charged with Stalling in Codornices Village Housing Situation.” California Voice. May 20, 1955.

¹²⁵ “Berkeley Council Okays Codornices Ouster Study.” California Voice. March 26, 1954.

¹²⁶ “Codornices Village: A Report on Summer Developments.” League of Women Voters of Berkeley Voters Issue, September 1954. Institute for Government Studies. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California. “Codornices Village: A Report on Summer Developments.” League of Women Voters of Berkeley Voters Issue, September 1954. Institute for Government Studies. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹²⁷ “Field Worker to Aid Codornices Families.” Berkeley Daily Gazette. May 25, 1955.

¹²⁸ City of Berkeley. Community Welfare Commission Report. Codornices Village Relocation. February 1959 Report. Berkeley History Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

responsibility to provide housing for all residents and ensured that Black residents could remain in Berkeley if they desired. In one case, a predominantly white church convinced the owner of a vacant factory to donate the property and materials needed to transform it into a home and then renovated the property. In another case, Berkeley's Family and Children's Services helped a twelve-member family purchase a home. They worked with the family to create a budget and then found a bank willing to lend them a mortgage.¹²⁹

The reactions of white liberals and conservatives to Codornices Village's closing illustrate their different views of Berkeley and political priorities. White conservatives who controlled city council refused to find housing for the displaced Black tenants and prioritized industrial development. Their inaction potentially removed thousands of working-class African Americans from Berkeley.

White liberals, on the other hand, contended that the government should locate housing for the displaced tenants.¹³⁰ The LWV, NAACP, and other organizations located housing for families otherwise locked out of the housing market. At a period when the vacancy rate was 1 percent, their efforts ensure that Berkeley remained multi-racial.

Additionally, white liberals tied improved housing to Berkeley's image as a progressive community that cared for the needs of all residents irrespective of their race or class. This differentiates racial politics in Montclair and Berkeley. In Montclair, white liberals never articulated an image of Montclair as a progressive community or model of positive race relations. In Berkeley, however, liberals such as Sibley tied the provision of housing for all residents to Berkeley's reputation as a progressive

¹²⁹ City of Berkeley. Community Welfare Commission Report. Codornices Village Relocation. February 1959 Report. Berkeley History Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

¹³⁰ "Codornices Village: A Report on Summer Developments." League of Women Voters of Berkeley Voters Issue, September 1954. Institute for Government Studies. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

community that was a center of knowledge and culture. Like they previously tied the white community's favorable treatment of interned Japanese residents to Berkeley's reputation, white liberals now claimed that community's efforts to locate housing for Black residents demonstrated that Berkeley was a model progressive community. The Community Welfare Commission, a predominantly white liberal organization, declared that, "the best that could be done was to carry out the assignment as an orderly process with sensitivity to the human factors involved."¹³¹ The commission further remarked that, "the whole undertaking was carried out with the conviction that families should not be 'pushed around' nor used for the advantage of others...It was determined that there should be no evictions, and there were none."¹³²

Although white conservatives and liberals clashed over the government's rightful role in housing and differed over how to shape Berkeley's development, both groups strove to maintain Berkeley's desirability as a residential community. This distinguishes racial politics during the postwar era in Berkeley as well as in Montclair from larger cities in the North and West as well as racially homogeneous suburbs.¹³³

Berkeley's New Political Landscape

The white conservatives and liberals' conflict over housing policy illuminates the transformation in Berkeley's political landscape. Middle-class African American and white liberals cultivated interracial networks during the 1940s and early 1950s that laid the groundwork for the emergence of a new liberal coalition. Women's organizations led

¹³¹ League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville Records, 1911- ongoing. Carton 6, folder 36. February 28, 1950 letter from the LWV to the Berkeley City Council. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ See Self, *American Babylon*, Hirsch, *Making of the Second Ghetto*, Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Freund, *Colored Property*, and Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*.

the creation of these interracial networks. Liberal white women started to envision Berkeley as a diverse community, view middle-class African American women as leaders of the Black community, and partner with them to realize their overlapping goal of improving Berkeley's housing.

White women integrated the Berkeley LWV in 1947, recognizing the need for African Americans to have an expanded civic voice. Although the LWV's charter never barred racial or ethnic minority women from membership, informal social barriers existed and effectively segregated the organization. Most members belonged to the white middle-class, resided in East Berkeley, and seldom interacted with either African American or Japanese women. After Berkeley's Black population grew fourfold, the LWV invited Frances Albrier, middle-class Black woman active in the PTA, NAACP, and African American women's clubs, to join. The LWV likely recognized her as a leader in the Black community. In 1943, only four years earlier she spearheaded a successful effort to convince the Berkeley Board of Education to hire Berkeley's first Black teacher.

Albrier accepted the invitation join and, at the LWV's request, led a study group located in Southwest Berkeley. Indeed, white women hoped to use the group to reach out the Black community and recruit additional Black members. Previously, League study groups were located in white middle-class neighborhoods. Since Albrier's group was located in a Black neighborhood, it was more accessible to Black women.¹³⁴

Additionally, Albrier's leadership likely created a welcoming climate.

On the other hand, the LWV only recognized middle-class Black women as leaders of their community. Similar to how Mobilized Women viewed European

¹³⁴ Frances Albrier Oral History. Regional Oral History Office. Berkeley, California.

immigrant women during the interwar period, the LWV viewed working-class Black women as followers who needed training before assuming leadership roles and still attempted to establish a hierarchical, helping relationship with them. Although Albrier's study group targeted middle-class Black women, Mrs. David Bortin, a middle-class white woman, started a Codornices Village study group in 1949 targeting working-class Black women. She insisted that the project's tenants "lacked any developed leadership," necessitating her leadership of the group.¹³⁵

Middle-class white and Black women also formed interracial networks through the Berkeley Women's Town Council. Clarence Haring created the organization in 1943 to facilitate cooperation and communication between leaders of women's organizations, recalling that she thought it would be, "mutually profitable to bring together once a month for lunch a group of influential women in the community."¹³⁶ Mobilized Women of Berkeley, the YWCA, the Berkeley Women's City Club, and the LWV represented some of the 48 organizations who sent a representative to the meetings. Most organizations were comprised of white women, but middle-class African American women's organizations such as the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) also participated. By inviting middle-class Black women's participation, Haring recognized that they were "influential women in the community."¹³⁷ Although the Women's Town

¹³⁵ League of Women Voters of Berkeley Voters Issue, December 1949. Institute for Government Studies. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹³⁶ Berkeley Women's Town Council History. Berkeley Women's Town Council Vertical File. Berkeley History Room. Berkeley Public Library.

¹³⁷ Berkeley Women's Town Council History. Berkeley Women's Town Council Vertical File. Berkeley History Room. Berkeley Public Library.

Council facilitated the formation of interracial networks between middle-class women, working-class Black and European immigrant women were absent from the meetings.¹³⁸

During the 1940s, middle-class white and African American liberals also fostered interracial networks through the Intercultural Interfaith Fellowship and South Berkeley Community Church. Reverend John Dillingham, Dr. Stanley Hunter, and Rabbi William Stern founded the Intercultural Fellowship in 1947 to create “a closer alliance of persons of varied religious and cultural backgrounds.” Methodist, Presbyterian, Disciples of Christ, Congregational, and Baptist churches attended the multi-racial and faith monthly worship services and social gatherings held downtown at First Congregational Church.¹³⁹

Despite its racial progressivism, the organization ignored Berkeley’s white working-class Catholic community. At a meeting held in December of 1965, one attendee proudly declared that the fellowship, “has outlived its usefulness...integrated church services not unusual now.” At the same time, he or she noted that the fellowship “had neglected in past other people such as Roman Catholic whose inherited culture differs greatly from ours.”¹⁴⁰ Working-class European immigrants were again absent from Berkeley’s interracial networks.

The South Berkeley Community Church also facilitated the formation of interracial networks. In 1943, Roy Nichols, an African American student at the Pacific School of Religion, and Dr. Buell Gallagher, a professor at it, founded the church specifically to encourage interracial interactions in religious spaces. The church grew so fast that one year later it had 175 members and Nichols dropped out of seminary to serve

¹³⁸ “Unique Council.” Independent Gazette. January 17, 1980.

¹³⁹ Black Churches Collection. Interfaith Intercultural Fellowship Vertical File. African American Museum and Library, Oakland, California.

¹⁴⁰ Black Churches Collection. Interfaith Intercultural Fellowship Vertical File. African American Museum and Library, Oakland, California. 12-6-65 minutes.

as pastor fulltime. Although Blacks formed a plurality of members, the church was racially diverse: 45 percent of members were Black, 35 percent white, and 20 percent Chinese and Japanese.¹⁴¹ Moreover, white members accepted Nichols as a spiritual leader and with Black members on an equal level. In 1944, one year after the church's founding, Gallagher declared that it was an unequivocal success.¹⁴²

Further illustrating the emergence of interracial networks, in 1946 African American and white liberals established an interracial South Berkeley YWCA. The Berkeley Community Chest provided funding to convert the South Berkeley USO hospitality into a shared building that the YM and YWCA shared. The Rosenberg Foundation contributed operational funding with the purpose of supporting interracial cooperation.¹⁴³ The YWCA's board of directors was deliberately interracial, including white, Black, and Asian women.¹⁴⁴ Despite the funding the effort to create an interracial YWCA failed. Membership became primarily Black as white residents left the neighborhood.¹⁴⁵ Finally, the YWCA closed it and attempted to facilitate interracial interactions at its downtown branch.

Berkeley's Black community finally obtained political representation as members of the liberal coalition. The Berkeley Board of Education was an important target for the liberal coalition. Predominantly Black grammar and junior high schools received fewer municipal resources and Black residents determined to reverse this inequality obtained support from white liberals who backed quality schools. After a board of education

¹⁴¹ "Inter-Racial Church Declared a Success." New York Amsterdam News. November 18, 1944.

¹⁴² "Inter-Racial Church Declared a Success." New York Amsterdam News. November 18, 1944.

¹⁴³ "Open Berkeley Center Sunday." The Chicago Defender. December 7, 1946.

¹⁴⁴ "YW" Committee Group Meets." The Pittsburgh Courier. April 5, 1947. "Negro History to be Forum Topic." Oakland Tribune. February 1, 1953.

¹⁴⁵ *Report of Committee to Study Berkeley Community YWCA*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Council of Social Planning-Berkeley Area, 1963).

member resigned mid-term in July of 1960, the Jefferson PTA, a mixed-race elementary school located in West Berkeley, and the South Berkeley Citizens Committee demanded that the board of education appoint an African American to the vacancy.¹⁴⁶ Mrs. Edward Johnson, president of Jefferson PTA, claimed the board's failure to fulfill the request would create a "lack of faith and support among the Negro community."¹⁴⁷ Similarly, the South Berkeley Citizens Committee declared that, "we are deeply concerned that a Negro who is truly representative of the thinking and interest of the people of southwest Berkeley and its leadership be appointed to the Berkeley Board of Education."¹⁴⁸ Claiming that an African American would represent the Black community's interests, West Berkeley community organizations demanded that the board appoint a Black resident to board of education.

The board of education, however, refused to appoint an African American to the board until after Berkeley's voters had elected one. In Berkeley, voters elected board of education members unless someone resigned mid-term. In contrast, the Montclair Town Commission appointed all board of education members. Berkeley's method was more democratic, yet African Americans were unable to win election to the board without the white community's support since white residents comprised more than 50 percent of voters. Alice Sackett, president of Berkeley's board of education, feared the white community's negative reaction to the appointment of an African American. She acknowledged that, "a Negro would be an excellent contribution to the Board since our

¹⁴⁶ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. October 4, 1960. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

¹⁴⁷ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. October 4, 1960. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

¹⁴⁸ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. July 5, 1960. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

Negro population is about one-fourth of our school population,” yet maintained that, “the first Negro member of the board should be elected from the community.”¹⁴⁹ Split between two conservative and two liberal members, the board of education failed to agree on who to appoint and the seat remained vacant until the 1961 election.

Roy Nichols and Carol Sibley’s election to the Berkeley Board of Education illustrates how the interracial networks formed in the South Berkeley YM-YWCA, South Berkeley Community Church, LWV, Intercultural Interfaith Fellowship, and Women’s Town Council formed the backbone of the new liberal coalition that emerged during the 1950s. This coalition provided both African American and white liberals with an increased ability to affect community change and opportunity to break white conservatives’ nearly hegemonic political control.¹⁵⁰

In 1961, Nichols, the co-founder of South Berkeley Community Church and Sibley, president of the Berkeley YWCA and member of the LWV and Women’s Town Council, campaigned together successfully for the board of education on the Democratic Party’s slate of candidates. Once installed as board members, they integrated Berkeley’s junior high schools in 1964 as part of their shared goal of providing all students with a quality education. Nichols moved to New York City immediately afterwards to accept an appointment as head pastor of a 3,000 member Methodist church.¹⁵¹ Sibley, however, remained and spearheaded elementary school integration. Illustrating their strong

¹⁴⁹ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. August 23, 1960. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California. Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. October 4, 1960. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

¹⁵⁰ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. April 18, 1961. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

¹⁵¹ Roy Nichols Vertical File. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, California.

friendship and rapport, Nichols spoke at Sibley's memorial service, held at First Congregational Church.¹⁵²

At the same time, working-class Black and white residents were excluded from the liberal coalition as from the networks that supported it. Their networks instead remained centered on their families and churches. Moreover, because of this exclusion, working-class Black and white residents continued to lack a civic voice into the 1960s.

White working-class women continued to implement their vision of West Berkeley during the 1940s and 1950s as a vibrant residential community by supporting St. Joseph's Church and parochial schools. The church community remained vibrant as approximately 2,500 people attended Sunday Mass and parochial school enrollment peaked in 1958 at almost 1,500 students.¹⁵³ The Mothers' Club strongly backed a 1954 parish capital campaign. The campaign funded the expansion of the elementary school's enrollment capacity, installation of new playground equipment, and other projects.¹⁵⁴ Catholic women volunteered time and money to ensure the campaign's success.¹⁵⁵

Working-class Black women also used their churches to transform Southwest Berkeley into an attractive residential community.¹⁵⁶ Phillips Chapel AME Church, McGee Avenue Baptist Church St. Paul AME Church, and Progressive Baptist Church all

¹⁵² "Her City Honors Her." *Berkeley Gazette*. April 13, 1986.

¹⁵³ "Farewell to Presentation High School." Presentation Archives. Motherhouse, Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, California. *The Monitor*. May 14, 1954. Diocese of Oakland Archives. Oakland, California.

¹⁵⁴ "St. Joseph's Is Planning Day-Long Fair." Presentation Archives, St. Joseph's Collection. Motherhouse, Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, California.

¹⁵⁵ St. Joseph's Parish. "St. Joseph's Launches Major Campaign for Improvement of School and Church." May 2, 1954. St. Joseph's Parish Records. St. Joseph the Worker Parish. Berkeley, California.

¹⁵⁶ Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Lemke-Santangelo also stresses the importance of family, church, and neighborhood ties to Black migrant women.

expanded their buildings during the 1940s and 1950s.¹⁵⁷ McGee, for example, opened a building expansion in 1947 that included a new social hall, classrooms, and larger sanctuary.¹⁵⁸ Black women raised funds specifically parts of the building that supported family life, including the nursery and playground.¹⁵⁹ By investing time and money in their churches, they created the resources needed to realize their community vision.

Black and white working-class residents lacked political representation long after white conservatives control of Berkeley's politics ended. In 1962, the city council's Black and white liberal members approved the construction of a West Berkeley BART station, a commuter train linking Berkeley to regional suburbs and cities. The proposed location was in the center of West Berkeley's European immigrant community and only blocks from St. Joseph's parish.¹⁶⁰ Parishioners protested the location since it entailed the demolition of dozens of homes located on 14 city blocks. The council, however, ignored their protests and approved the project. The station's construction hastened the decline of West Berkeley's white working-class population, displacing dozens of white working-class families from their homes.¹⁶¹

Conclusion

Federal housing policies encouraged white migration from mixed-race to racially homogeneous suburbs. In the Bay Area, cities experienced a drop in population as white residents moved to suburbs on the metropolitan periphery. San Francisco and Oakland's residents accounted for more than half of the region's population in 1940. By 1970, they

¹⁵⁷ "Religious Activities." *California Voice*. November 7, 1952.

¹⁵⁸ *McGee Avenue Baptist Church: Reflections*. Published Privately. Churches Vertical File. Oakland History Room. Oakland Public Library, Oakland, California.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Presentation Academy Collection. Box One. "History of St. Joseph's, Part XI. Presentation Archives. Sisters of the Presentation Motherhouse, San Francisco, California.

¹⁶¹ *History of St. Joseph's, Part XI*. Presentation High School Collection. Presentation Archives. Motherhouse, Sisters of the Presentation. San Francisco, CA.

accounted for only 25 percent. The investment of white liberals and conservatives in Berkeley and Montclair's development and coupled with women's vision of Montclair and Berkeley as racially diverse communities forestalled white flight during the 1940s and 1950s. White civic leaders envisioned Berkeley as a leading progressive city that was an international center of knowledge production and culture home to attractive middle-class neighborhoods. They attempted to control and contain the growing Black community rather than move all-white suburbs while liberal female activists sought to improve housing for low-income African American residents.¹⁶²

Despite the stabilization of Berkeley and Montclair's white population, the upward mobility of European immigrants shifted the racial geography of both communities. West Berkeley became predominantly Black as white middle and working-class residents relocated to all-white suburbs on the metropolitan periphery such as Walnut Creek, whose population quadrupled during the 1960s.¹⁶³ This exodus of whites coupled with the continued inward migration of working-class African Americans created a stark racial divide between East and West Berkeley similar to fourth ward and the rest of Montclair because of the emigration of Italian-Americans.¹⁶⁴

The daughter of Italian immigrants and a lifelong West Berkeley resident, Ann Curtaz's family illustrates the changes that occurred in West Berkeley.¹⁶⁵ Curtaz's parents moved to Berkeley from West Oakland during the early 1940s when they purchased a home. Curtaz's mother worked in the Richmond shipyards during the war

¹⁶² See Self, *American Babylon*, Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, and McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*.

¹⁶³ Walnut Creek's population increased from 10,000 to 40,000 residents. Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pg. 122. Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, pp. 121-2.

¹⁶⁴ See Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*, Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, and Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*. Self, *American Babylon*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁶⁵ Oral History Interview with Ann Curtaz. Interviewed by author, October 20, 2008. Interviewed in interviewee's home, Berkeley, California.

and in a cookie factory afterwards and participated in West Berkeley's Catholic community as members of St. Joseph's parish. Curtaz's son, however, found a well-paid white-collar job as a bridge inspector and purchased a home in El Cerrito, a predominantly white suburb similar to Walnut Creek.¹⁶⁶ Many second and third generation European immigrants conflated geographic and social mobility and left Berkeley and established interracial metropolitan communities for all-white suburbs.¹⁶⁷

At the same time, during the 1940s and 1950s, a political divide emerged among white middle and upper-class residents. White conservatives denied that Berkeley's growth necessitated improvements to the infrastructure and refused to address the housing crisis. Conservatives on the city council refused to convert Codornices Village into permanent low-income housing.¹⁶⁸

In 1961, a coalition of white and African American liberals won a majority of seats on Berkeley's board of education and city council and gained control of the government from white conservatives. As key members of this coalition, white women accepted that Berkeley was multi-racial and insisted that the government should expand its role to provide all residents with quality schools, housing, and other resources regardless of their race and class. Although they did not advocate for racial equality, they accepted Berkeley's diversity and promoted policies that improved the housing and quality of life in Black neighborhoods. African Americans, however, sought complete civic equality and partnered with white liberals to realize their shared goal of improving the quality of life in West Berkeley. Through these efforts, liberals implied that all

¹⁶⁶ Ann Curtaz Oral History Interview, Interviewed by author on October 20, 2008. Interviewed in interviewee's home in Berkeley, CA.

¹⁶⁷ Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*.

¹⁶⁸ "Berkeley Growth Means Millions More Needed to Build Schools, Says Chief." Oakland Tribune. March 18, 1953.

residents had a right to basic municipal resources. Although white liberal women did not advocated for racial equality, their postwar activism on housing laid the groundwork for school integration during the 1960s.

Chapter Five: Gender, School Integration, and the Politics of Liberalism in Montclair and Berkeley

During the 1940s and 1950s, overcrowded conditions in Black neighborhoods and an aging housing stock created concern about Berkeley and Montclair's continued desirability as residential communities. As a result, housing policies dominated local politics. In Berkeley, an interracial liberal coalition led by white women advocated for improved housing in Black neighborhoods while in Montclair white women adopted a more paternalistic attitude towards African Americans and attempted to construct public housing in Black neighborhoods with little input from African Americans. Although the relationship between white women and African Americans was more hierarchal in Montclair, in the process, these white women activists accepted African Americans as members of the community and attempted to improve the quality of life and housing in their Black neighborhoods. At the same time, Black and European immigrant women worked to create local organizations that supported their vision of West Berkeley and Montclair's fourth ward strove as residential communities with quality housing, schools, churches, and other resources.

During the 1960s, school integration moved to the forefront of metropolitan politics around the country as municipal governments responded to state and federal court decisions that mandated school integration. Blacks had challenged school discrimination at the grassroots level as early as the 1930s in cities and suburbs in the Northeast, Midwest, and West, including Montclair.¹ However, the movement for school integration outside the South exploded during the early 1960s. The NAACP filed

¹ Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*. (New York: Random House, 2008).

lawsuits challenging school segregation in Englewood, Plainfield, Orange, and Jersey City, New Jersey, San Francisco, Oakland, and Sacramento, California, Chicago and Centerville, Illinois, Kansas City, Kansas, Hempstead, New York, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.²

This chapter shifts the focus from violent confrontations that occurred in places like Little Rock and Boston to Berkeley and Montclair, interracial communities hailed as models of integration. In Berkeley and Montclair, women's long-standing community activism made them central to battles over education. Liberal white women viewed integration as a way to improve the community by advancing the quality of the public schools. They acknowledge that African Americans were entitled to municipal resources, including the public schools, yet supported integration for reasons rather than racial equality. In Montclair, white women contended that integration was in the entire community's best interests while in Berkeley, white women tied integration to Berkeley's image as a progressive city that was a center of culture and knowledge production.

African American women, on the other hand, provided the impetus behind integration after struggling with limited success to obtain greater resources for majority Black schools. Quality schools were critical to their vision because they provided opportunities for economic and social mobility, and Black women recognized that white residents would provide equal resources for any neighborhood school that white children attended, separately or alongside Black children. They strongly supported school integration, but viewed it as one issue among many in their struggle to obtain a voice in their community's development. Despite their different motives, African American and

² "Suits Challenge School Conditions in New Jersey." Chicago Daily Defender. April 17, 1961. "NAACP Pushes California School Integration Plan." Atlanta Daily World. September 2, 1969. "NAACP Pushes Northern School Desegregation." Chicago Daily Defender. March 22, 1962.

white liberal women's common investment in their community allowed them to work together to implement school integration. Their grassroots cooperation blocked the eruption of either significant white flight or racial violence.

Despite women's centrality to school integration in Montclair and Berkeley, important differences also existed in racial politics. In Montclair, white liberals adopted a paternalistic attitude toward the Black community. They insisted that they should control school policies because of their knowledge and professional expertise, with only limited input from even middle-class Blacks. This attitude forestalled the creation of a robust interracial liberal coalition as African Americans rejected white liberals' condescending attitude and demanded recognition as equal civic leaders, sparking racial tension in Montclair. Still, some middle-class African Americans obtained greater input in Montclair's development by partnering with white liberals.

In Berkeley, white and Black liberals had a more egalitarian relationship and formed a robust coalition. At the same time, working-class residents lacked a voice in school policy and community development. Working-class Blacks and young white radicals formed a radical coalition and sought a more inclusive, egalitarian city government while many working-class white residents left Berkeley.

Finally, white liberals' distinct efforts to cull support for integration from the broader white community reflected Berkeley and Montclair's different demographics and postwar development, which created different conceptualizations of community identity. White liberals portrayed Berkeley as a city whose position as an international center of culture and knowledge production placed it at the forefront of progressive change. By implementing school integration without a court order, Berkeley would maintain its

reputation as a progressive city and provide a positive model of metropolitan race relations. In Montclair, white liberals tapped into the white community's pride in their town by declaring school integration vital to its desirability and identity as a middle-class white suburb and thus integration represented the greater public good. In both communities, however, white liberals ignored the Black community's civic exclusion and the inequitable distribution of educational resources that created the need for school integration. Moreover, white liberals erased the fact that this change occurred because Black residents demanded it rather than because of the white community's progressivism or benevolence. They replaced the long history of school discrimination with a narrative focused on the white community's racial progressivism.

This chapter focuses on women's role in school integration Berkeley and Montclair during the 1960s. The first section analyzes the existing literature on school integration and women's activism. The second section discusses how changing demographics impacted local politics while the third section examines how white liberals attempted to control school integration. In the process, they used their support for change to portray Berkeley as a progressive community and Montclair as an attractive suburb. The fifth section analyzes white and African American women's centrality to integration, and the final section explores the politics of white conservative and African American women who opposed integration.

Berkeley and Montclair: Models of Integration

Integrated schools remain the exception rather than norm throughout the U.S. more than sixty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*.³ Violence and public protest

³ Gary Orfield and Susan E. Easton, *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education*. (New York: The New Press, 1996), pp. 23-51 and Erica Frakenberg and Gary Orfield,

erupted when school integration occurred in places as such as Mississippi and Boston. Moreover, after school districts integrated, many white residents pulled their children from the public schools, resegregating the schools.⁴

Berkeley and Montclair's ability to implement school integration without white flight or racial violence provides a strong analytical foundation for a comparison of school politics. Indeed, both communities are hailed as models of school integration. Barbara J. Moran studies Montclair's Hillside Junior High School as a model for other junior high schools while H. Kenneth Schoonover, Jr. favorably compares Montclair's successful implementation of integration to nearby Plainfield.⁵ Nancy Ann Spiller also cites Montclair as a model, arguing that the entire community's commitment to quality schools, a racially diverse town, and strong sense of community pride allowed integration to occur without a significant loss of white pupils.⁶ Additionally, the New Jersey School Board studied Montclair as a model of integration in a series of articles published in 1992.⁷ Berkeley's school system is often discussed in similar terms. *The New York Times*, for instance, labeled Berkeley High School "the most integrated high school in

eds., *Lessons in Integration: Realizing the Promise of Integration in American Schools*. (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2007).

⁴ Charles C. Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle Over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870-1980* (Jackson, M.I.: University of Mississippi Press, 2005) and Ronald P. Forsimano. *Boston's Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

⁵ Barbara J. Moran. *Inside a Gifted/Talented Magnet: An Analysis of the Environment and Curricular Patterns by Race and Gender in the Hillside School in Montclair, New Jersey* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University, E.D. Diss., May, 1987) and H. Kenneth Schoonover, Jr., *The Desegregation of the Plainfield, New Jersey Public Schools, 1962-1972: A Case Study* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University, E.D. Diss., Dissertation, Rutgers, New Brunswick, NJ), 1988.

⁶ Nancy Ann Spiller, *Racial Segregation in New Jersey's Public Schools: Progressive Public Policy at a Crossroads* (Madison, N.J.: Drew University, 2001, Doctorate of Letters), pp. 150-63.

⁷ *The School Leader: Official Publication of the New Jersey School Boards Association*. January-May 1992.

America” and the author of *Class Dismissed*, a book chronicling a school year at Berkeley High, viewed the school’s diversity as unique.⁸

In addition to examining school politics, Berkeley and Montclair provide an opportunity to examine women’s centrality to school integration. Between 1920 and 1970, the period between the advent of woman suffrage and second wave feminism, women expanded their roles to obtain a greater civic voice in issues related to their local community. Indeed, Eve Marchiony, a Montclair resident, used women’s civic leadership to convince residents to vote for Virginia Weiss for town commissioner in 1972. Marchiony declared, “Women sustain the amazing variety of cultural, recreational, educational, and service programs that make Montclair unique. Women know first-hand about parking problems, recreational programs, transportation difficulties, housing needs, education, health programs, and refuse collection. Women talk to policemen on the job, storekeepers, teachers, firemen, skating rink employees.”⁹ If elected, Marchiony declared that Weiss would “call upon some of these areas of special knowledge, making her an outstanding commissioner.”¹⁰ Marchiony not only implied that Weiss had special insights into community affairs, but that if elected she would employ her insights to benefit the entire town.

Similarly, the *Berkeley Gazette* urged residents to appreciate women’s significant role in civic life, reminding residents that, “the housewife has vitally important role in community affairs that is often ridiculed and condemned.”¹¹ The Berkeley Board of

⁸ Meredith Maran, *Class Dismissed: A Year in the Life of an American High School, a Glimpse into the Heart of a Nation.* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), pg. xiv. “School Integration Failing Short of Idea.” *New York Times*, October 18, 1994.

⁹ “Eminently Qualified.” *Montclair Times*, May 4, 1972.

¹⁰ “Eminently Qualified.” *Montclair Times*, May 4, 1972.

¹¹ Sylvia Porter, “Biggest Bargain: The Housewife.” Undated Article. *Berkeley Gazette*. Bernice Hubbard Mays Papers, Box One. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley.

Education's ability to pass school bonds, for example, hinged on the local LWV's ability to cull support from white liberal men and other residents. In a newsletter before a vote on a bond issue in 1959, the LWV reminded members that the "real job of selling the bond issue to the voters will depend upon citizen groups as the League and PTA."¹²

Marchiony and the *Berkeley Gazette* articulated a widely-held but often unstated assumption that women were the leaders of their family and neighborhood. Their husbands commuted to work, leaving them to manage the household as well as supervise community programs. The explicitness of these statements is unusual. However, the fact that few residents discussed women's community leadership suggests that most accepted it as normative until the mid 1970s when second wave feminists upended assumptions about gender roles. When school integration emerged as a central political issue a decade earlier, however, white women led the debate as accepted community leaders.

The rationale behind liberal white women's support for integration represents a crucial continuity with their previous community activism. In both Montclair and Berkeley, liberal white women supported school integration because they believed that it would improve the community rather than because it would advance racial equality. Previously, white women advocated housing reform to improve the quality of life for low-income Blacks and established social welfare programs that provided African Americans and European immigrants with material assistance and education. Thus, although the issues that white liberal women focused on shifted over the course of the twentieth century, their impetus to improve the community by helping minorities was a persistent theme in their activism.

¹² "Voters' News." League of Women Voters of Berkeley Newsletter. February 1959. Bernice Hubbard Mays Papers, Box One. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley.

Carol Sibley's support for school integration illustrates this continuity. Sibley moved to Berkeley in 1943 after marrying Robert Sibley, a well-known local businessman who embraced conservative politics and asked her to confine her civic involvement to overtly non-political organizations such as the YWCA. Her decision to become involved in the community Y illustrates how improving Berkeley was the central motivation behind her community activism. The university Y branch, she remarked, "had very little concern about Berkeley and our problems... [the university branch] was very much interested in the south...they didn't work on the things that I as an activist would have like to see them work on."¹³ Sibley found that, "the Community Y was a place where you could really zero in on the problems of the city and see what you could do to help solve them."¹⁴ As further evidence of her commitment to affecting change at the local level, Sibley was repeatedly nominated for national leadership positions in YWCA, but declined, noting that she "liked working at the local level...I never had any political ambition."¹⁵

¹³ "Carol Rhodes Sibley: Building Community Trust: Berkeley School Integration and Other Civic Endeavors, 1943-1978." Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris, 1979, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley, pp. 106.

¹⁴ "Carol Rhodes Sibley: Building Community Trust: Berkeley School Integration and Other Civic Endeavors, 1943-1978." Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris, 1979, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley, pp. 106.

¹⁵ "Carol Rhodes Sibley: Building Community Trust: Berkeley School Integration and Other Civic Endeavors, 1943-1978." Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris, 1979, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley, pp. 106.



Image 5.1: Carol and Robert Sibley with a University of California Administration Official.
Photograph courtesy of the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

After her husband died in 1958, Sibley's civic involvement expanded into overtly political roles. Civic leaders had previously asked her to run for the Berkeley Board of Education, but she had always declined.¹⁶ In 1961, however, Sibley decided to run, musing that, "well, maybe this is what I ought to be doing."¹⁷ She spearheaded integration efforts during her tenure on the board of education between 1961 and 1971.

Her support for integration flowed from her commitment to improving Berkeley.

Lenny Meller, a reporter for the *Berkeley Gazette*, hailed Sibley as the "grand dame of

¹⁶ "Carol Rhodes Sibley: Building Community Trust: Berkeley School Integration and Other Civic Endeavors, 1943-1978." Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris, 1979, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley, pp. 112.

¹⁷ "Carol Rhodes Sibley: Building Community Trust: Berkeley School Integration and Other Civic Endeavors, 1943-1978." Interviewed by Eleanor Glaser and Gabrielle Morris, 1978. Regional Oral History Office, Berkeley, California.

liberal politics,” crediting her with “more than two decades of unshakeable civic commitment despite being the subject of a bitter recall election because of her support for school desegregation.”¹⁸ As evidence of her civic commitment, he cited Sibley’s refusal to resign from the board during the vicious recall campaign in 1964, which was spearheaded by white conservatives. Instead, she successfully fought to retain her seat and then pressed forward with integration.

Sibley claimed that she supported school integration because it would improve the public schools and emphatically denied that her views were driven by political ideology or a personal agenda. Since she had not previously held public office, some white conservatives assumed that her political views mirrored her husband’s and expressed shock and anger over her vote for integration.¹⁹ Sibley, however, maintained that integration was not a political issue and even remarked that she “did not think of the school board as being a political office. I just thought that the place you were elected to was where you served. It never occurred to me that it was going to become what it certainly did during the period I was on the board, a political affair.”²⁰ Sibley sought to promote school policies that served the good of the entire community and painted political interests as narrow and divisive. She emphasized that her campaign platform was “excellence for all children” and did not mention integration. Although she did not mention issues of race explicitly, she later insisted that she “certainly meant people of all

¹⁸ Lenny Meller, “Sibley on the Mend.” Berkeley Daily Gazette. 1968 Article. Sibley, Carol Vertical File. Berkeley Historical Society. Berkeley, California.

¹⁹ “Carol Rhodes Sibley: Building Community Trust: Berkeley School Integration and Other Civic Endeavors, 1943-1978.” Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris, 1979, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley.

²⁰ “Carol Rhodes Sibley: Building Community Trust: Berkeley School Integration and Other Civic Endeavors, 1943-1978.” Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris, 1979, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley, pp. 115-16.

races.” Only later, however, did Sibley come to believe that integration would enhance the quality of education throughout the school system, claiming that, “we [the school board] saw integration as a very strong step in the direction of quality education.”²¹

Since Sibley insisted that she campaigned for the board of education to improve Berkeley, African American women provided the impetus behind school integration and viewed it as part of their struggle to transform their neighborhoods into attractive communities. Educational equality was crucial to the Black freedom movement. It promised mobility out of service sector jobs into blue-collar and professional positions that offered higher wages and autonomy from white residents.²² Illustrating the importance of education to African Americans, Black migrants immediately demanded equal access to the public schools after arriving in the North and West.²³ In Montclair and Berkeley, African American women viewed integration as the best way to improve their children’s education, yet continued to demand improved facilities, smaller classes, and more Black educators in their schools. They also demanded greater control over neighborhood schools and input into policies.²⁴

In addition to their separate organizing within their own communities, women’s interracial networks proved central to the implementation of school integration in Berkeley and Montclair. African American and liberal white women supported integration for different reasons, yet their common investment in Berkeley and

²¹ “Carol Rhodes Sibley: Building Community Trust: Berkeley School Integration and Other Civic Endeavors, 1943-1978.” Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris, 1979, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley, pg. 120.

²² See Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

²³ *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, eds. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2003) and Thomas J. Sugrue. *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*. (New York: Random House Press, 2008).

²⁴ Davison M. Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North: The Battle over Northern School Segregation, 1865-1965*. (Cambridge, M.A.: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Montclair's development compelled them to work together for quality, integrated schools.

Liberalism and School Integration

White conservative businessmen and professionals who favored low-taxes, limited municipal spending, and a small local government had controlled Berkeley and Montclair's governments since the early twentieth century. These conservatives denied the need for broader government representation, contending that their professional expertise allowed them to create policies in the best interests of the entire community.

During the mid to late 1950s, however, a political transformation occurred that opened the door for school integration. Berkeley and Montclair's governments shifted leftward and embraced a stronger Black civic voice. Berkeley's postwar growth, driven by the University of California's expansion and Black migration, shifted local politics leftward. By the late 1950s, an interracial liberal coalition comprised of white and Black professionals replaced Berkeley's conservative coalition.²⁵ This new liberal coalition created a robust government that supported comprehensive municipal planning, increased spending on Berkeley's schools and infrastructure, and Black representation in civic affairs. In Montclair, this shift was less dramatic. The same white upper and middle-class businessmen and professionals still controlled the government and adopted a paternalistic attitude towards the Black community. However, their politics shifted leftward. They embraced some degree of racial liberalism by acknowledging the need for Black representation in Montclair's government.

²⁵ Alan Ware, *The Democratic Party Heads North, 1877-1962* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and *The Breakdown of Democratic Party Organization, 1940-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

At the same time, sharp distinctions in existed in Montclair and Berkeley's rhetoric surrounding school integration reveals how their development shaped local politics. While Berkeley's population grew during the postwar period, Montclair's population stagnated and the town remained a predominantly white residential suburb with a significant Black community. The town's smaller size and history of close interracial interactions engendered a more paternalistic attitude among white liberals towards the Black community. White liberals supported and attempted to control integration, viewing it as in the town's best interests because it was necessary to maintain quality schools and Montclair's desirability as a residential community. Tellingly, the Montclair Board of Education combined plans for school integration with proposals for other educational improvements in an attempt to shift the public debate from integration to how the plan would improve Montclair's schools. Additionally, a political divide emerged between liberals who were often members of the upper and upper-class classes and middle-class white conservatives who opposed integration. Angry white conservatives claimed that the school board ignored their views and blocked school integration's implementation for almost a decade.

The University of California's postwar metamorphosis an international center of knowledge production solidified the white community's image of Berkeley as a progressive community at the forefront of social change. African Americans tapped into this image and argued that Berkeley could serve as model of positive race relations by implementing school integration. By 1968, Berkeley integrated its schools without government pressure or a court order, years before Montclair. Further indicative of Berkeley's increasingly leftward political tilt, by the end of the 1960s, an interracial

radical coalition comprised emerged as the primary opposition to white liberal coalition's political control. In Montclair, in contrast, white conservatives formed white liberals' primary political opponent.

Although Black and white students attended the same high school, a stark racial divide remained between West and East Berkeley ensured that junior high and grammar schools were segregated.²⁶ In 1962, African Americans comprised between 73 and 92 percent of residents in four West Berkeley census tracts while seven census tracts in East Berkeley, the city's most desirable section, were more than 95 percent white.²⁷ Because of this housing segregation, 76 percent of students at Burbank Junior High School were African American compared with less than 1 percent at Garfield Junior High.²⁸

In 1958, Roy Nichols, vice president of the Berkeley NAACP and pastor at South Berkeley Community Church, convinced the board of education to appoint a committee to study racial discrimination in Berkeley's public schools. He tapped into the white community's image of Berkeley as a progressive city, contending that, "Berkeley is a center of religious and secular learning, yet its response to its challenges is typical of most unenlightened cities." Because of the university's presence, Nichols declared that, "Berkeley should be setting the pace for the nation in civic endeavor and human

²⁶ Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana, I.L.: University of Illinois Press, 1976); Matthew Lassiter, *Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Arnold Hirsch, *The Making of the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Self, *American Babylon*.

²⁷ July 1962 Report of Citizens' Committee to Study Discrimination in Housing in Berkeley. Pg. 29-30. Institute for Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

²⁸ "Integration Plan for Grades K-9," *Berkeley Unified School District Publication, Bound April 18, 1990*, pg. 113.

relations” and challenged the school board to “continue working toward a ‘model Berkeley’” by ending school segregation.²⁹

Split between liberal and conservatives, Berkeley’s board of education agreed to appoint an interracial citizens committee to study the topic. In addition to concluding that junior high and elementary schools were segregated, the committee uncovered evidence of discrimination against African American teachers, guidance counselors, and administrative personnel, overcrowding in predominantly Black schools, and the placement of Black students on a vocational instead of college preparatory academic track.³⁰ The school board refused to integrate the schools, but agreed to hire additional Black educators and created a school resources volunteers program, which placed adult volunteers who provided free tutoring, worked in the libraries, and organized enrichment activities in West Berkeley’s schools.

In 1961, liberal Democrats captured a majority of city council and board of education seats for the first time in decades, providing African Americans with the opportunity to push desegregation. T.J. Kent, Jr., an urban planning professor and leader of the liberal coalition, contended that conservatives had failed to adequately respond to the effects of the large Black migration. He specifically pointed to their refusal to fund new schools or other improvements to Berkeley’s aging and inadequate infrastructure, alleging that, “everything that had run down during the war, stayed run down.

²⁹ 1961 Campaign AD. Roy C. Nichols Papers. Box One, Folder 3. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley.

³⁰ November 20, 1967 Letter from Phyllis Clement, President of Friends of Intergroup Project, Berkeley to the Berkeley Board of Education. Box One, Carol Sibley Papers. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Conditions got worse. Schools, especially, caused concern.”³¹ He described the liberal coalition as “renewing the promise of Berkeley,” proclaiming that they would undo the deleterious effects of the conservative coalition’s policies.³²

In May of 1962, one year later, the Berkeley NAACP and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) convinced the board of education to appoint a second committee to examine school segregation. By this time, liberals, including Roy Nichols, controlled the school board. CORE tapped into the board’s pride to obtain support for school integration, claiming that, “Berkeley has the chance to show the country what a model school system and integrated community can look like.”³³ The new board quickly approved CORE’s request and formed a committee to study integration. Six months later, the committee recommended that the board immediately integrate the junior high schools by busing students to paired schools.³⁴

Despite liberal board members’ swift approval of junior high integration, white conservatives forced a recall election of Sherman Maisel, Roy Nichols, and Carol Sibley, the three board members who voted in favor of it. Nichols had already resigned his seat after moving to New York to accept a position as head pastor of a more than one thousand member church, but returned to campaign for Maisel and Sibley.³⁵ The effort to recall Sibley and Maisel narrowly failed, allowing them to push forward with junior high

³¹ T.J. Kent, Jr., *Berkeley’s First Liberal Democratic Regime, 1961-1970* (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute for Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1976), pg. 10.

³² T.J. Kent, Jr., *Berkeley’s First Liberal Democratic Regime, 1961-1970* (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute for Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1976), pg. 10

³³ May 1, 1962 Presentation to the Berkeley Board of Education by the Berkeley Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, CORE. Berkeley Schools Vertical File-Integration. Berkeley History Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

³⁴ November 20, 1967 Letter from Phyllis Clement, President of Friends of Intergroup Project, Berkeley to the Berkeley Board of Education. Box One, Carol Sibley Papers. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

³⁵ “Early Redistricting of Schools Opposed by Majority of Board.” Berkeley Gazette. February 5, 1964.

integration. In September of 1964, Berkeley integrated its junior high schools.

Immediately after, African Americans pushed for elementary school integration. The board moved more slowly on this issue, anticipating opposition. Finally, in September of 1968 elementary school integration occurred by busing children to paired schools.

White liberals tapped into the image of Berkeley as a progressive community to cull support for integration. At a public meeting discussing the plan for junior high integration, Seymour Martin Lipset, a University of California faculty member, contended that, “it is both a moral obligation as well as a political and social necessity to integrate the schools...Negro children in integrated schools in Berkeley do better in reading than do Negro children from similar class backgrounds and levels of measured intelligence who attend predominantly Negro schools.”³⁶ He contended that, “Berkeley can show the country what a model school system can look like.”³⁷

Indeed, many white residents explicitly linked school integration to Berkeley’s position at the forefront of progressive change. Louise Stoll, a white resident whose son attended an integrated elementary school, wrote in the *Berkeley Gazette* that she had “followed with pride the development of the School Board’s decision and action toward implementing total integration by 1968.”³⁸ Similarly, Mrs. Betty Lyman applauded the board of education’s actions in another letter in the *Gazette*, lamenting that, “too long

³⁶ Seymour Martin Lipset, “De Facto Segregation in Berkeley and the Common School Tradition.” Speech Given at Board of Education Meeting, 1963. Institute for Government Studies, the University of California, Berkeley.

³⁷ Seymour Martin Lipset, “De Facto Segregation in Berkeley and the Common School Tradition.” Speech Given at Board of Education Meeting, 1963. Institute for Government Studies, the University of California, Berkeley.

³⁸ Letter to Editor. *Berkeley Gazette*. October 19, 1967.

have morality and justice been textbook words.”³⁹ Stoll and Lyman both expressed pride in Berkeley.

Further revealing the centrality of a progressive community to white liberals, the local PTA declared in an annual newsletter that “Berkeley has long had an enviable reputation for coming to grips with its problems. In keeping with this tradition, it was the first city with a population over 100,000 to completely integrate its schools at all levels. In doing so, the Berkeley community became fully committed to the idea of providing equal educational opportunities for all its students, regardless of race.”⁴⁰ The local PTA extolled, “The Berkeley PTA Council and its affiliate units take pride in its role of leadership and participation in contributing to the successful integration of the Berkeley Schools.”⁴¹ The article thus explicitly tied integration to the long-standing support of the white community, including the PTA, for progressive causes.

Neil Sullivan, Berkeley’s school superintendent from 1964 to 1968, claimed that Berkeley’s successful implementation of school integration not only confirmed its reputation as progressive community, but also provided a model for other communities. In an article published in *Public Management*, a magazine for policy makers, planners, and municipal officials, he proudly wrote that “Berkeley became the first city in the United States with a population over 100,000-including a sizeable minority-to totally desegregate their schools through a two-way busing program.”⁴² He acknowledged Berkeley’s uniqueness yet insisted, “although local conditions vary from community to

³⁹ “Desegregation Plan Mapped.” *Berkeley Gazette*. September 28, 1967.

⁴⁰ “Berkeley PTA Council, Report of Committee on PTA Structure.” Box 4. Berkeley School Desegregation Collection. Bancroft Library University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁴¹ “Berkeley PTA Council, Report of Committee on PTA Structure.” Box 4. Berkeley School Desegregation Collection. Bancroft Library University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

⁴² Neil V. Sullivan and Thomas D. Wogman. “Anatomy of Community Change.” *Public Management*. Vol. 51, No. 5, pp. 4-6. May 196.

community, the experience of Berkeley can lend encouragement to those cities that are-or should be-facing this challenge.”⁴³ Berkeley, he boldly declared in the article, “set an example for all cities of America.”⁴⁴

This image of Berkeley celebrated the city’s racial diversity and successfully cultivated support for integration. White residents not only tolerated the Black community’s presence; indeed it was critical to the white community’s civic pride. At the same time, white residents erased Berkeley’s history of school segregation and overlooked the Black community’s agency in demanding educational equality.

Moreover, the liberal coalition’s image of Berkeley ignores that racial politics remained controversial well into the 1970s. Berkeley’s leftward political shift sparked the creation of a radical coalition of Black working-class residents and students. This coalition demanded an aggressive affirmative action programs, the elimination of different academic tracks, the introduction of Black history and culture into the public school curriculum, and the creation of a resource center for Black students at Berkeley High School.⁴⁵ White liberals rejected these demands, claiming that integration had eliminated racial inequalities in the schools.

Montclair, like Berkeley, had segregated schools. In 1964, only .4 percent of upper Montclair’s residents were Black while the fourth ward was predominantly African American.⁴⁶ The town’s junior high and grammar schools reflected this stark racial divide. Glenfield Junior High was 99 percent African American while Mt. Hebron Junior

⁴³ Ibid., pg. 6.

⁴⁴ “Berkeley to Bus Its Non-White Students.” Chicago Daily Defender. March 2, 1968.

⁴⁵ See Various Articles on School Integration from 1970s School Desegregation Folder. Berkeley Public History Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

⁴⁶ “Selling Integration: A History of the Magnet School System in Montclair, New Jersey.” Jane Caroline Manners. (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard College, 1997).

High was more than 95 percent white. Only two of the town's eleven grammar schools were integrated. Four grammar schools were 100 percent white, two were 70 percent white, one was 85 percent Black, and two were 90 percent Black.⁴⁷

The implementation of integration occurred more gradually in Montclair as the government encountered stiff opposition from white conservatives and white liberals remained reluctant refused to view Blacks as equal civic leaders. In May of 1961, the NAACP's investigation of conditions in Montclair's schools uncovered evidence of widespread discrimination. The NAACP's education committee, headed by Frances Carter, found that predominantly white junior high schools had a more rigorous curriculum, better facilities, and more experienced teachers than Glenfield.⁴⁸ In response to the findings, the NAACP demanded that the board of education close Glenfield, arguing it was an "inferior, segregated school."⁴⁹

The board of education refused to close the school and appointed their own committee to investigate the allegations. Urging caution, board members asked Black residents to wait until the committee filed a report.⁵⁰ Seven months later, the committee recommended closing Glenfield and transferring students to George Inness Junior High School, which was approximately 20 percent Black⁵¹ The committee's proposal,

⁴⁷ Montclair Public Schools Actual Enrollment 1963-1985. Chart: Montclair, New Jersey, Montclair Board of Education Administrative Building. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁴⁸ "Glenfield School Battle Continues in Deadlock State." Montclair Times. September 14, 1961. "Glenfield." Montclair Times. September 28, 1961. "Selling Integration: A History of the Magnet School System in Montclair, New Jersey." Jane Caroline Manners. (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard College, 1997).

⁴⁹ "Glenfield School Battle Continues in Deadlock State." Montclair Times. September 14, 1961. "Glenfield." Montclair Times. September 28, 1961. "Selling Integration: A History of the Magnet School System in Montclair, New Jersey."

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "Taylor Committee Report." Montclair Times. March 29, 1962.

however, left Mt. Hebron untouched.⁵² This incited complaints from African Americans, who alleged that the board protected it as an all-white school. In response, the board of education revised the plan and in September of 1962, one year after the NAACP's initial protest, Glenfield's former students attended George Inness and Mt. Hebron.⁵³

The committee also proposed the construction of a \$3.85 million junior high school that all students would attend as a solution to existing segregation and as a means to improve the town's educational system.⁵⁴ The new school's auditorium, science laboratories, a library, guidance center, and space for expanded language, music, and industrial arts programs would allow the board of education to modernize and improve the junior high school curriculum.⁵⁵ White liberals supported this proposal because it tied school segregation to greater improvements in education.⁵⁶ White conservatives, however, opposed the plan and in 1963 and 1964 voted against the authorization of the bond issues needed to construct the new school.

After voters rejected the bond issue a second time, the school board refused to address segregation yet acknowledged that it remained an issue. One board member bluntly stated, "Our three lowest achieving elementary schools are predominantly Negro, and de facto segregation exists in these schools. It is the board's responsibility to take

⁵² Montclair Civil Rights Audit, Reported at Montclair Forum, December 11, 1947. Rutgers Special Collections. Rutgers University. New Brunswick, New Jersey.

⁵³ "New Jersey Gov. Joins Negroes to Fight School Bias." Atlanta Daily World. September 7, 1962.

⁵⁴ Patricia O'Shea, *Integration: An After-School Program to Improve Race Relations Among Middle School Students in Montclair, New Jersey* (Bank Street College of Education, M.A. Thesis, 1979)

⁵⁵ "The Single Junior High: Questions and Answers." Montclair Times. January 9, 1964. Montclair Schools Folder. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey. "Selling Integration: A History of the Magnet School System in Montclair, New Jersey." Jane Caroline Manners. (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard College, 1997).

⁵⁶ "PTA Boards Support Plan." Montclair Times. January 9, 1964.

such remedial actions as is ‘reasonable and practical.’”⁵⁷ However, he noted, “how to reduce the racial imbalance in these schools and meet the needs of the children while losing as few as possible of the educational advantages of the present neighborhood system is the problem that the board faces. The crux of the problem is that there are nearly 1,000 Negro pupils in two schools, Nishuane and Glenfield, located in one center of a long narrow town.”⁵⁸ Recognizing the impossibility of integrating the town’s junior high and grammar schools without abolishing the neighborhood school system, the board refrained from further action.

At the same time, white liberals started to acknowledge the need for Black residents to have a stronger civic voice. Previously, white residents claimed that they appointed and elected the most qualified residents who were leaders in their professional fields to civic leadership positions. Unfortunately, they always viewed upper-middle class white residents as the most qualified and ignored the need for broad community representation. Thus, a small segment of the community controlled the government. The fact that white residents valued consensus and town commissioners, Montclair’s only elected office, were elected by the entire community rather than a single ward reinforced the Black community’s civic exclusion. African American candidates could not claim to represent only the Black community’s interests when seeking public office without appear divisive and, since Blacks only comprised 25 percent of the electorate, candidates had to gain support from the white community. Furthermore, the influential Community

⁵⁷ The Single Junior High: Questions and Answers.” Montclair Times. January 9, 1964. Montclair Schools Folder. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

⁵⁸ The Single Junior High: Questions and Answers.” Montclair Times. January 9, 1964. Montclair Schools Folder. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

Committee's slate of candidates was usually elected and the organization declined to endorse Black candidates.⁵⁹

In 1964, however, the white residents who controlled the Community Committee started to acknowledge the need for Black civic representation and nominated Matthew Carter, a National YMCA staff member and ordained Baptist minister, for town commission. Carter, Montclair's first Black town commissioner, was nominated only after the committee scrutinized the political positions of several potential Black candidates at forums in February and March. It then decided that Carter "reflected the energy of the total Negro community."⁶⁰ He likely gained the committee's support by refraining from championing Black civil rights and insisting that as a commissioner, he would be "concerned about the total population" rather than just the Black community.⁶¹ Carter, for example, who belonged to the Montclair NAACP, used "negotiation and persuasion to show the rightness of our position" when faced with discrimination. He also declined to participate in boycotts and pickets.⁶² His appropriation of the white community's political rhetoric was so successful that during his reelection campaign four years later, he received more votes than any other candidate and became mayor.⁶³

Despite Carter's election, Montclair white liberals refused to view Black residents as equal civic leaders. Marsh, a middle-class African American, had been a member of the board of education since 1959 and was vice-president in 1965 when Howard Finney

⁵⁹ "Some Unfinished Tasks in the Area of Human Relations in Montclair and Vicinity." Presented for the Ministerial Association of Montclair and Vicinity. December 1, 1961. Leo Marsh Papers, Katz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota.

⁶⁰ "Negroes Aim Is Candidate." Montclair Times. January 23, 1964.

⁶¹ "Carter is a Man of Patience, Reason." Newark Sunday News. May 17, 1964.

⁶² "Carter is a Man of Patience, Reason." Newark Sunday News. May 17, 1964.

⁶³ "Some Unfinished Tasks in the Area of Human Relations in Montclair and Vicinity." Presented for the Ministerial Association of Montclair and Vicinity. December 1, 1961. Leo Marsh Papers, Katz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota. "Negro Wins in Montclair." New York Amsterdam. May 23, 1964.

Jr., the current president, resigned. An honorific position with little formal responsibilities, the board of education had previously elected the vice-president president when the president's term expired. According to this custom, the board should have elected Marsh president. However, the four white board members feared a negative reaction from the white community if they elected Marsh president and elected Dr. Donald E. Super, professor of psychology and education at Columbia University, instead.⁶⁴ Further revealing the white board members' condescending attitude towards Marsh, they prevented her from providing any input into their decision. They held a clandestine meeting and communicated their decision to her through an anonymous note placed in her mailbox. The note claimed that since Montclair was "not ready for Negro leadership," their decision reflected the town's interests and was not a referendum on her capabilities.⁶⁵

Marsh, however, recognized that the board's decision reflected the white community's refusal to acknowledge Black residents as civic leaders. She immediately resigned, stating that their actions amounted to a "rejection of Negro leadership...this election says to a large segment of the population that my leadership cannot be accepted...the problem is much bigger than I as a person."⁶⁶

Caught between white conservatives and an increasingly militant Black community, the board of education refused to address school segregation until 1966. The New Jersey Education Commission mandated in 1965 that all school districts in New Jersey eradicate any racial imbalance in the local schools. To comply with the mandate

⁶⁴ "Quits School Board on Racial Question." Montclair Times. February 1, 1965.

⁶⁵ Super Named, Mrs. Marsh Resigns-NAACP Asks Probe." Montclair Times. February 4, 1965.

⁶⁶ "Super Named, Mrs. Marsh Resigns-NAACP Asks Probe." Montclair Times. February 4, 1965.

and alleviate the overcrowding the board's decision to close Glenfield caused, the Montclair Board of Education proposed the Montclair Educational Plan (MEP) in 1966. The board claimed the current 7th-9th grade junior high schools and 10th-12th grade high school were obsolete and the MEP would improve the schools by creating 5th-8th grade middle-schools and expanding the high school to accommodate the 9th grade.⁶⁷

Despite strong community support, Montclair's residents voted against the authorization of the bonds needed to fund the MEP, citing the plan's high cost.⁶⁸ African Americans, on the other hand, refused to accept the plan because it deliberately ignored elementary school segregation. In 1966, the Montclair NAACP filed a complaint with the New Jersey Education Commission, asking it to force for the Montclair Board of Education to address elementary school segregation. The commission ruled favor of the Montclair NAACP and ordered the board of education to submit a new integration plan to the state commission for approval within one year.⁶⁹

In response to the decision, the Montclair Board of Education created a plan that bused elementary and junior high school students to paired schools and called for extensive renovations to predominantly Black schools. This new plan was less costly, yet the busing provision sparked opposition from white residents. The board of education dropped this plan and quickly proposed a new plan that called for a new \$9.8 million community-wide middle school and rezoned the elementary schools to achieve greater

⁶⁷ "Conditions of School Deplored." Montclair Times. October 26, 1967.

⁶⁸ "School Imbalance Vexes Montclair." New York Times. May 29, 1966. O'Shea, *Integration: An After-School Program*.

⁶⁹ "Marburger Decision in Rice School Case." Montclair Times. August 29, 1968.

racial balance. White conservatives, however, again voted against the required bonds, decrying the new school as an unnecessary expense.⁷⁰

Indeed, white conservatives remained a potent political force much longer in Montclair than Berkeley. After 1964, Berkeley's radical coalition was the primary opposition to the liberal coalition's political control but in Montclair, in 1968, five white conservatives campaigned for town commission on the basis of their opposition to school integration. White liberals portrayed white conservatives' opposition to integration as selfish and divisive. Bayard Faulkner, a member of the Community Committee, asserted, "under the conditions prevailing in Montclair, some subordination of personal proclivities and attitudes is necessary if the town is to successfully cope with the pressing problems, racial and otherwise, which we face."⁷¹ Faulkner implied that Montclair's town commission could only solve racial conflict and convince residents to support school integration by pursuing the welfare of all residents rather than only a group of residents. Although voters elected the Community Committee's slate of candidates, white conservatives mounted a serious political threat by challenging the idea that Community Committee's candidates acted in the interests of all residents.

White liberals claimed to act in the interests of all residents, yet their persistent attempts to control Black residents forestalled the creation of a robust interracial liberal coalition. Montclair was split between white liberals, African Americans, and white conservatives. In 1969, a crisis erupted when the board of education created federally funded Head Start Program targeting low-income Black children without consulting the

⁷⁰ Letters to the Editor. Montclair Times. October 27, 19170. "'CHOICE' Petitions Are Filed." Montclair Times. September 18, 1969. Letters to Editor. Montclair Times. October 15, 1970.

⁷¹ Open Letter to Montclair Voters. By Bayard Faulkner. Printed in Montclair Times. May 9, 1968.

Black community. The board of education declined to hold public hearings or offer other avenues for community input about the preschool, flouting a federal law mandating parental involvement in Head Start.⁷²

African Americans filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education that charged the school board with, “spending hundreds of thousands of dollars, illegally and contrary to Federal law requiring meaningful parent participation and illegally imposing a Director of the Head Start Program without parent participation.”⁷³ The federal government ruled against the board of education and reallocated the grant to the Montclair Child Development Center. Audrey Fletcher, a Black resident, directed the preschool and encouraged parental involvement.⁷⁴

Tension between the Montclair Board of Education and Black community was high. The board granted the Child Development Center’s request to hold its programs inside of Glenfield Junior High, but provided four dank, dangerous basement rooms rather than the requested classrooms. At the same time the school board used the bright, airy classrooms the development center requested for its preschool.⁷⁵

African Americans refused to accept this blatant inequality, declaring, “The plan to relegate the 75 Head Start children into the cold, damp cellar of Glenfield School is a product of racism and retaliation against the Head Start parents’ lawful refusal to have imposed on them an unconcerned Head Start Director contrary to Federal Law.”⁷⁶ As evidence of the board’s racism, they cited dangerous conditions in the rooms which

⁷² “Parents Defy Ouster Order.” Montclair Times. September 9, 1969.

⁷³ “Parents.” Montclair Times. September 11, 1969. “Parents Defy Ouster Order.” Montclair Times. September 9, 1969.

⁷⁴ “Parents.” Montclair Times. September 11, 1969.

⁷⁵ “Head-Start Settlement Accepted.” Montclair Times. September 18, 1969.

⁷⁶ “Head-Start Settlement Accepted.” Montclair Times. September 18, 1969. “Parents.” Montclair Times. September 11, 1969.

threatened children's health and safety, including "metal protruding electric sockets over which a child could trip and become easily electrocuted...numerous large cement protrusions from the cellar floor against which a 3 or 4 year old children would be certain to have serious accidents in normal activities...gas in the walls which permeates the air...exposed dangerous metal radiators, old utility equipment, and dark conditions."⁷⁷

The Black community viewed the board's attempt to place Black children in basement classrooms as a disgraceful continuity of Montclair's long history of segregation, claiming that Montclair had "operated for many years a racially discriminatory school system, providing inferior programs for the poor Black community."⁷⁸ Reverend Charles Brady, pastor of St. Peter Claver Church articulated the Black community's refusal to accept their subordinate status, proclaiming at a rally that, "no longer are we going to sit back and let the hypocrites walk over us...we are human beings and the cellar is not the place for our youngsters."⁷⁹

Despite the vociferous complaints, the board of education refused to provide other rooms. In response, the Black community organized a sit-in. For four days, approximately four hundred African Americans sat in the contested classrooms and marched to the municipal building and the school system's administrative building at the end of the day.⁸⁰

Finally, the board of education and town commission negotiated a settlement with the Child Development Center that provided different classrooms. The settlement was not a total victory since the rooms were not those initially requested. Moreover, the

⁷⁷ "Parents Defy Ouster Order." Montclair Times. September 9, 1969.

⁷⁸ "Parents Defy Ouster Order." Montclair Times. September 9, 1969.

⁷⁹ "Parents." Montclair Times. September 11, 1969.

⁸⁰ "Head-Start Settlement Accepted." Montclair Times. September 18, 1969.

preschool agreed to bear the cost of renovating the class rooms. Still, the new rooms were a significant improvement, especially after more than a hundred volunteers painted and decorated them.

During the early 1970s, integration sharply divided liberal, conservative, and African American residents. At the center of the tempest, white liberals attempted to cull support for integration by tying it to other educational improvements. In 1971, Mach Turner and Kenneth Silver, co-chairs of the Citizens Committee for Educational Planning, an local organization dedicated to improving the schools, declared that Montclair's schools were in a state of crisis. They stated in the *Montclair Times* that, "citizens are perplexed and chagrined, an air of uncertainty exists...no mere feeder pattern, whether old or new, conservative or radical, will make any difference if the school system does not take a new approach to improving educational quality."⁸¹ These to men recommended that the board of education improve all schools to gain support for integration, insisting, "citizens would accept additional busing if children receive superior education."⁸² Despite their plea, white conservatives steadfastly opposed busing.

In February of 1972, the Montclair Board of Education, facing an impending deadline for submitting a plan for school integration to the New Jersey Commission of Education, voted to use zoning and busing to integrate the junior high and elementary schools.⁸³ Since the plan did not call for school renovations or the construction of a new school, voters did not have to approve issuing bonds to fund it.

⁸¹ Letter by Mach Turner and Kenneth Silver, November 30, 1971. Montclair Times.

⁸² Letter by Mach Turner and Kenneth Silver, November 30, 1971. Montclair Times.

⁸³ O'Shea, *Integration: An After-School Program*.

However, Montclair voters repudiated the plan three months later in a hotly contested election that was a direct referendum on integration. For the first time in decades, the Community Committee's slate of candidates, Virginia Weiss, Charles Sanders, Richard Kersey, Robert Bubb, and Mervyn Robinson, lost.⁸⁴ Voters instead elected Peter Bonastia, Richard Bonsal, Ralph D'Andrea, William Grant, and Theodore Malachlan, who pledged to block the school board's integration plan. On the other hand, the Community Committee's candidates stated that they "would promote interracial understanding and broad acceptance of school integration throughout the community."⁸⁵

The Community Committee's candidates, Virginia Weiss, Charles Sanders, Richard Kersey, Robert Bubb, and Mervyn Robinson, stated that if elected, they "would promote interracial understanding and broad acceptance of school integration throughout the community."⁸⁶ Moreover, they contended that they supported the integration plan because it represented the entire community's interests. These candidates issued a joint statement in the *Montclair Times* claiming that "the plan offers a compromise and opportunity for all the varying points of view to work together towards the resolution of the real problem which is to provide equal quality education for all children in our neighborhood school system."⁸⁷ As Charles Sanders declared, "I'm not politically oriented-I am motivated by a deep sense of civic concern and pride in our town."⁸⁸ Similarly, Virginia Weiss claimed that if elected, she would "lead polarizing groups together toward a middle ground of compromise and understanding."⁸⁹ Mrs. Chandler

⁸⁴ "Candidates Endorse Neighborhood Schools." *Montclair Times*. May 4, 1972.

⁸⁵ "Weiss Campaigns." *Montclair Times*. April 27, 1972.

⁸⁶ "Weiss Campaigns." *Montclair Times*. April 27, 1972.

⁸⁷ "Housing Seen 'Root Cause.'" *Montclair Times*. May 4, 1972.

⁸⁸ "Housing Seen 'Root Cause.'" *Montclair Times*. May 4, 1972.

⁸⁹ "Weiss Campaigns." *Montclair Times*. April 27, 1972.

Grannis, president of the Montclair PTA, reinforced Weiss' claim that she sought the broader public good. According to her, Weiss possessed, "the rare quality of seeing these matters not in the narrow terms or any special interest or group or momentary issue, but in broad terms of the many aspirations that must be balanced in such a town as this." According to Grannis this made her "the finest and ablest of all candidates."⁹⁰

The divide between white liberals and conservatives over school integration mirrored Montclair's social cleavages. The Community Committee's candidates hailed from the upper-middle class while the independent candidates were less affluent middle-class residents. Ralph D'Andrea, one of the independent candidates, was a third generation Italian-American who worked as a school principal in Nutley. In contrast, Robert Kersey was legal counsel for an international oil company, Mervyn Robison was vice-president of a consulting firm, Virginia Weiss was president of a real estate firm, and Charles Sanders was president of a manufacturing company.⁹¹

Illustrating this social divide, white conservatives alleged that white liberals' support for school integration was hypocritical. White conservatives angrily asserted that white liberals and their children often attended private schools. In a scathing letter published in the *Montclair Times*, Gayle H. Bishop contended, "these candidates [the Community Committee's slate] who support busing remind me of Northern congressmen who support busing for only Southern children...these commission candidates who attended private schools themselves and who send their children to white private schools want us to integrate through busing."⁹² He dubbed them "members of elite power

⁹⁰ "Rare Quality." *Montclair Times*. May 4, 1972.

⁹¹ "Commission Hopefuls Await Verdict Tuesday." *Montclair Times*. May 4, 1972.

⁹² Letter to Editor. *Montclair Times*. April 13, 1972.

cliques” and claimed that their affluence rather than qualifications had earned them the nomination.⁹³

Although the Community Committee’s candidates lost the May election, white liberals still controlled the board of education and implemented the integration plan that September anyways.⁹⁴ The new commissioners, however, attempted to gain control over the school board by increasing the board’s size from five to seven members and reducing the terms from five to three years. In March of 1975 white conservatives finally gained a majority of board of education seats. To cripple the school system, they sliced \$562,000 from its budget, the exact amount spent on busing.⁹⁵

Their boldness alarmed many white residents, even those who opposed busing but desired quality schools; and, in May 1976, white liberals regained control of the town commission after campaigning for “quality integrated education.”⁹⁶

In response to the election results, the school board adopted a magnet school plan in 1976 as a comprised between white conservatives and liberals. It created specialized new academic programs designed to improve and expand Montclair’s curriculum and attract Black and white students to schools outside their neighborhood. Formerly majority Black elementary and junior high schools featured gifted and talented programs while schools in white neighborhoods provided additional reading, writing, and arithmetic instruction. Parents could enroll his or her child in any school as long as all schools remained racially balanced, abdicating the need for mandatory busing.

⁹³ Letter to Editor. Montclair Times. April 13, 1972.

⁹⁴ “How the Town Voted on Tuesday.” Montclair Times. May 11, 1972. Each independent candidate received more than 5,000 votes, compared with the 3,000 to 3,600 votes received by the five Community Committee’s candidates.

⁹⁵ O’Shea, *Integration: An After-School Program*.

⁹⁶ O’Shea, *Integration: An After-School Program*.

Despite the clear differences in the white community's reactions, Berkeley and Montclair implemented school integration without significant white flight or violence during the 1960s. In Montclair, white conservatives blocked the implementation of integration for almost ten years. In this context, white liberals convinced the white community to support integration by tying it to improved education for all residents rather than claiming it was a question of racial justice. White liberals in Berkeley, in contrast, quickly implemented integration, which they claimed demonstrated the city's progressive character. The primary opposition to their policies came from white and Black radicals during the 1970s who sought greater neighborhood control over schools.

Moreover, in Berkeley and Montclair, civic pride discouraged white residents from leaving. Ray Halpern, a free-lance writer and Berkeley resident, noted, "even the conservatives simply did not sabotage or move to the suburbs. They fought politically, and eventually became supporters of the new system."⁹⁷ White residents supported quality schools more than they opposed integration, allowing it to occur without white flight or violence. This distinguishes Montclair and Berkeley's racial politics from those of all-white suburbs and ethnic urban enclaves such as Boston where white residents employed violence, racial slurs to defend school segregation and, after those tools failed, relocated to segregated schools districts.

Gender and School Integration

Comparing school integration in Berkeley and Montclair brings to the forefront the centrality to civic issues related to the home and neighborhood and important continuities in women's activism. White liberal and African American women worked

⁹⁷ "Tactics for Integration." Ray Halpern, December 21, 1968. *SR*. Box 1, Folder 3. Carol Sibley Papers. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

together to implement school integration, but for starkly different reasons. African American women had long struggled against racial discrimination in the public schools as part of their effort to realize their vision of a neighborhood with quality schools and housing. They were the impetus behind integration, forcing Montclair and Berkeley's school boards to address deplorable conditions in predominantly Black schools. On the other hand, liberal white women's support for integration emerged only during the early 1960s out of their long-standing attempts to improve Montclair and Berkeley rather than their advocacy for racial equality.

During the 1950s, African American women advocated for improvements to predominantly Black schools as part of their struggle to imprint their community vision. For example, they repeatedly protested overcrowded, unsanitary conditions in West Berkeley's elementary schools. In March of 1953, Mrs. Alex Sherman, president of the Jefferson PTA chapter, demanded that the Berkeley Board of Education rectify excessively noisy conditions in Jefferson's cafeteria. According to Sherman, "there was a terrible combination of echoes, reverberations, and tremors, really beyond my explanation."⁹⁸ In response to her letter, the school board earmarked \$45,000 for acoustical work at that school.⁹⁹ Similarly, in 1957 the Lincoln PTA requested that the board of education reduce overcrowding at Lincoln.¹⁰⁰ Speaking on behalf of the PTA at a board meeting, Cecil Burgess stated that many parents who lived within the district enrolled their children in Oakland's schools because of Lincoln's deplorable

⁹⁸ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. March 3, 1953. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

⁹⁹ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. March 3, 1953. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁰ In 1963, Lincoln Elementary School was 96.8 percent African American. Berkeley Unified School District, *Integration Plan for Grades K-9* (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley Unified School District Publication, 1990), pg. 113.

conditions.¹⁰¹ Burgess thanked the board of education for recently improving the school's playground, but insisted that facilities remained inadequate. She requested money to repair the storage building for playground equipment, erect a fence surrounding the playground, and construct two bungalows for additional classroom space.¹⁰² In response to the PTA's lobbying, the board appointed a committee charged with examining conditions at all West Berkeley elementary and junior high schools.



Image 5.2: Bert Williams with students on the step of Burbank Junior High School. He was one of the few teachers employed as a teacher in the Berkeley Public Schools during the 1950s. Photograph courtesy of the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

Additionally, Black women demanded that Berkeley and Montclair's school boards hire more Black educators. In 1943, Francis Albrier and the East Bay Women's Welfare Club forced the Berkeley Board of Education to hire Berkeley's first Black teacher, yet only a few African American educators worked in the schools and they

¹⁰¹ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. February 5, 1957. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰² Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. April 17, 1957. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

received fewer promotions than white educators. In 1955, African American women protested the dismissal of Nona Moffatt, a teacher at Longfellow Elementary School, recognizing that it reflected a pattern of discrimination. The board refused to provide a specific reason for her dismissal and instead generally claimed she “failed to measure up to the standards of the Berkeley School System.”¹⁰³ At Longfellow, where she taught, more than 90 percent of students were Black, yet almost all teachers were white.¹⁰⁴ Black women recognized that Black teachers such as Moffatt provided Black students with a model of professional achievement and sympathetic ear for complaints about discrimination. Speaking on behalf of the Longfellow PTA at a board of education meeting, Mrs. Moore insisted that Moffatt was “an excellent teacher with outstanding qualifications” and demanded that the board grant her tenure.¹⁰⁵ Vivian Osborne Marsh spoke on behalf of the National Council for Negro Women’s East Bay chapter and also demanded an explanation given her extensive qualifications.¹⁰⁶ The board of education agreed to reconsider its decision in response to their lobbying, yet three weeks later reaffirmed the decision to deny Moffatt tenure.¹⁰⁷

In Montclair, African American women transformed Glenfield School from an overcrowded institution into a vibrant community centerpiece.¹⁰⁸ Lydia Barnett, a

¹⁰³ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. June 7, 1955. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁴ In 1963, Longfellow Elementary School was 89 percent African American. Berkeley Unified School District, *Integration Plan for Grades K-9* (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley Unified School District Publication, 1990), pg. 113.

¹⁰⁵ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. June 7, 1955. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁶ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. June 7, 1955. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁷ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. June 27, 1955. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Offices. Berkeley, California.

¹⁰⁸ “The Public Schools: Signposts for the Community.” League of Women Voters Publication, September 1968. Community Organizations Collection. Montclair History Room, Montclair Public

lifelong resident, recalled that Black residents active in the Glenfield PTA created enrichment activities and improved the school's facilities despite the board of education's refusal to fund the school adequately.¹⁰⁹ Because of their efforts, "Glenfield School was really something...we had a drum and bugle corps, full orchestra and band, played glockenspiel, and dances... we did some terrific things."¹¹⁰ By creating the enrichment activities and improving the school's facilities, Barnett's parents and their neighbors transformed the school into a source of pride for Black residents.

Black women's struggled to improve predominantly Black schools, yet also lobbied for integration, recognizing that white residents would refuse to provide predominantly Black schools with equal resources. Amanda Williams, mother of four and president of the Berkeley-Albany PTA Council, articulated this perspective in 1970 when advocating for school integration before the California State Legislature. She stated that she "had seen what an integrated school district means...since white students have been bused to ghetto schools, these schools have been renovated and modernized: air conditioning in cafeterias; new tables and chairs; venetian blinds; and other physical improvements. The Black community has learned that one of the dividends of quality integrated education is better facilities and surroundings to enhance their children's education."¹¹¹ Williams explicitly declared that the board of education invested

Library. Montclair, New Jersey. In 1967, elementary school students were more was 96 percent African American and the school's 204 junior high school pupils were more than 99 percent Black when the Montclair Board of Education closed the embattled school in September of 1962.

¹⁰⁹ "Montclair: It Ain't Just Cookies!" May/June 1990 Article. African Americans in Montclair. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹¹⁰ "Montclair: It Ain't Just Cookies!" May/June 1990 Article. African Americans in Montclair. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹¹¹ March 1970 PTA Newsletter. Box 1, Folder 19. Carol Sibley Papers. Bancroft Library University of California. Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

additional money in Black neighborhood schools once white children attended them. This, she recognized, resulted in tangible improvements to the schools.

Seeking equity in educational resources, African American women continued to push for full integration at all levels. After Berkeley integrated its junior high schools, the board of education had declined to integrate the elementary schools. In April of 1967, fifteen Black women who represented the Conference on Quality Education for South and West Berkeley attended a board meeting and demanded immediate elementary school integration.¹¹² In response, the board of education appointed a citizens committee to create a plan for this process. Unsatisfied with the committee's speed, the organization appeared before the board again in June of 1967 to urge the board to integrate the elementary schools that fall. At the meeting, Velma Bradley asked that board members organize workshops to "bring about orderly change in the direction of integration."¹¹³ Furthermore, she reminded board members that their campaign platform had included elementary school integration. She stated, "the wheels of progress have been set in motion...we urge you to direct the administration of the Berkeley School District to come up with a "Berkeley Plan" for complete school integration."¹¹⁴ That fall, the board of education integrated the elementary schools. .

Similarly, in Montclair African American women forced the board of education to address school segregation. In 1961 Frances Carter, chair of the Montclair NAACP's education committee, led a study of discrimination in local schools and then demanded

¹¹² Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. April 4, 1967. Berkeley School System Administrative Building. Berkeley, California.

¹¹³ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. June 6, 1967. Berkeley School System Administrative Building. Berkeley, California.

¹¹⁴ Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. June 6, 1967. Berkeley School System Administrative Building. Berkeley, California.

that the board of education address the instances the study uncovered.¹¹⁵ After the board refused to act, the NAACP's education committee formed the Parents Emergency Committee and boycotted Glenfield Junior High School. This boycott forced the board to close Glenfield and send the Black students to other schools.

Because of this pressure, Carol Sibley, the president of the Berkeley Board of Education in 1967, credited African American women with forcing integration.¹¹⁶ She recalled, "We had a lot of pressure, good pressure, from people who were afraid we weren't going to go ahead with this...people like Mrs. Morley Baer; of course, people like Amanda Williams, and all the rest."¹¹⁷

In addition to forcing schools boards to address school segregation, African American women also mobilized the community in support of it. During the 1960s, female leaders in the Berkeley and Montclair NAACP chapters pushed educational issues to the forefront of the Black community's agenda. Frankie Jones served as president of the Berkeley NAACP from 1965 to 1968, the critical years for school integration in Berkeley, and was succeeded by Mary Jane Johnson, who advocated for school integration as a leader in the Berkeley PTA. Illustrating the importance of Black women to the Berkeley NAACP's leadership, in 1973 women occupied five of the seven leadership posts.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Octavia Catlett served as president of the Montclair

¹¹⁵ Frances Carter Oral History Interview. Interviewed by author, June 13, 2008, home of interviewee, East Orange, New Jersey.

¹¹⁶ "Carol Rhodes Sibley: Building Community Trust: Berkeley School Integration and Other Civic Endeavors, 1943-1978." Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris, 1979, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley.

¹¹⁷ "Carol Rhodes Sibley: Building Community Trust: Berkeley School Integration and Other Civic Endeavors, 1943-1978." Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris, 1979, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley, pg. 120.

¹¹⁸ NAACP Collection. Box One. 1965-6 and 1968-9 Membership Roster. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, California. NAACP Collection. Box One. 1973-4 Membership Roster. African American Museum and Library. Oakland, California.

NAACP from 1956 to 1960 and treasurer from 1960 to 1966. In 1961, the start of the struggle for integration, Margaret Bass was the chapter's vice president, Mattie Harrison recording secretary, Evelyn Whitlock treasurer, and Alfreda Jackson corresponding secretary.¹¹⁹ As leaders of the Montclair NAACP, these women filed a complaint with the New Jersey Commission of Education against the Montclair Board of Education that eventually forced Montclair's government to address elementary school segregation.

Liberal white women also supported school integration, but only after African Americans had forced local school boards to address the issue. Furthermore, they supported integration because they decided that it would help minority children, which was in the best interest of the entire community. Their support for integration thus stemmed from their long-standing attempts to improve the two communities.

In Berkeley, white women in the PTA strongly backed the board of education's plan for school integration. At a community meeting held on January 23, 1964, Mrs. Andrew West, the PTA's spokesperson, informed the 2,500 present that, "we want total integration from pre-school through the twelfth grade."¹²⁰ White women in Whittier, Franklin, and Emerson's PTA chapters also expressed strong support for the integration plan at the meeting. Three years later, in the midst of a heated debate, the Council declared in the *Berkeley Gazette* that, "the Berkeley PTA Council reiterates its support and endorsement of the school board's commitment to total integration of the Berkeley

¹¹⁹ "Mrs. Smith Heads N.J. NAACP. New York Amsterdam News. May 29, 1965. "Retired-But Not as Crusader." Montclair Times. August 3, 1961. "NAACP Elects George Rice." Montclair Times. January 5, 1961.

¹²⁰ "2,500 Jam Theater for Hadsell Report." Berkeley Gazette. January 23, 1964.

Schools beginning in September 1968. We will support and help to implement whatever effective plan the board adopts.”¹²¹

Although liberal white women in the Berkeley PTA supported integration, they justified their support by maintaining that it would improve the education all children received. Thus, they did not view it as a question of racial justice, but rather a vehicle for improving the public schools and, by extension, the larger community. The PTA Council’s statement in the *Berkeley Gazette* claimed that, “We believe that total integration with every school and classroom reflecting Berkeley’s racial and socioeconomic balance is the most significant hope for the dramatic improvement of the education of our children.”¹²² Likewise, Mrs. Edward Dutton, a member of LeConte Elementary School’s PTA, contended that integration would improve local schools. She described racial integration “an educational blessing” and thus urged the board “to take even more dramatic boundary changes to fully integrate the school system and pledge to help the school district initiate a sister school program, increased counseling, and an expanded summer school and compensatory educational programs in order to speed the total integration of the junior high and elementary schools.”¹²³ Moreover, since she contended that integration enhanced all children’s education, she expressed a strong desire that her son attend an integrated school.

The Berkeley LWV also supported school integration, but more indirectly. The LWV blocked the Parents Association for Neighborhood Schools’ (PANS) attempt to force a referendum on the school board’s junior high school integration plan.¹²⁴

¹²¹ “PTA Council Reaction.” *Berkeley Gazette*. December 7, 1967.

¹²² “PTA Council Reaction.” *Berkeley Gazette*. December 7, 1967.

¹²³ “Integration in Berkeley.” *Berkeley Gazette*. December 4, 1963.

¹²⁴ “New Charges in Berkeley School Row.” *San Francisco Chronicle*. May 30, 1964.

Members decried the referendum as unsound and issued a statement reminding voters that, “policy-making has been delegated to the school board and we do not consider a citizens’ vote on a specific policy a proper procedure.”¹²⁵ The LWV convinced Berkeley’s city council to withhold the necessarily municipal machinery for a referendum, blocking PANS’ attempt to thwart junior high school integration.¹²⁶

The Montclair LWV also indirectly supported integration, but couched its support in terms of seeking the good of the community. For example, when the Montclair LWV culled support for Montclair Education Plan (MEP), which called for the construction of an integrated, community-wide junior high school, it focused on the plan’s educational advantages and declined to discuss integration itself. Mrs. Cheves Walling, LWV president, declared in the *Montclair Times* that, “the League believes that the Montclair Educational Plan will foster the welfare of all the children by providing conditions in which each child can receive more coordinated guidance and instruction and each teachers can make sure that child, group and curriculum all work together towards developing responsible, productive citizens.”¹²⁷ Walling ignored the MEP called for the construction of an integrated community-wide middle school that would the town’s segregated junior high schools. The League even claimed that citizens had a responsibility to vote for the MEP because of its educational benefits, positing, “What kind of neighbors will be attracted to Montclair-if it becomes known that its citizens have ceased to care about maintaining excellent schools?”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ “Parents’ Peace Offer in Berkeley School Recall.” *San Francisco Chronicle*. June 9, 1964.

¹²⁶ “School Pool Plan Fails in Berkeley.” *San Francisco Chronicle*. June 10, 1964.

¹²⁷ “League Vote Favors MEP.” *Montclair Times*. December 10, 1965.

¹²⁸ ‘Great Stake,’ Says League.” *Montclair Times*. February 10, 1966.

Montclair's residents voted against the authorization of the bonds needed to fund the MEP in 1966, the second time in two years residents had rejected integration. This setback encouraged the Montclair LWV to advocate more openly for integration, connecting it to the school system and ultimately town's health. In a 1968 report, the League noted, "the people of Montclair have always demanded and obtained the best in public schools. This policy has not only given the results so highly prized by parents, but has resulted in steadily increasing values for their properties and in prosperity for our merchants."¹²⁹ The League's report highlighted the fact that residents currently had twice the national average in disposable income and properties were well-maintained, yet warned that the town's failure to integrate the schools threatened this prosperity.

The League also contended in the report that the community faced two choices: racial tension in a deteriorating community or integration, quality schools in an attractive suburb. The League lamented that the rejection of two school integration plans indicated that, "feelings have hardened...our present school system suffers from racial segregation, paralysis of indecision, overcrowded and antiquated plants, large teacher turnover, and low teacher moral."¹³⁰ Soon, the League contended "this community will be faced with a choice between integrated schools with a quality education and integrated schools with a make do education...we urge every citizen to think seriously about the decision before him and the effect it will have on the future and very fabric of this town."¹³¹ Since the

¹²⁹ "The Public Schools: Signpost for the Community." League of Women Voters of Montclair-Glen Ridge, Inc. September, 1968. Montclair, New Jersey. Montclair History Room. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹³⁰ "The Public Schools: Signpost for the Community." League of Women Voters of Montclair-Glen Ridge, Inc. September, 1968. Montclair, New Jersey. Montclair History Room. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹³¹ "The Public Schools: Signpost for the Community." League of Women Voters of Montclair-Glen Ridge, Inc. September, 1968. Montclair, New Jersey. Montclair History Room. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

LWV viewed integration as inevitable, it contended that the white community should strive to create a quality, integrated school system with high academic standards that attracted white residents to the town rather than oppose integration and educational improvements. The League implored residents to rally behind the creation of an integrated, modern school system.

The LWV also connected Montclair's continued attractiveness as a suburb to school integration and efforts to obstruct integration to racial violence. Montclair, the League asserted, "Is at a crossroads. Harmonious race relations contribute greatly to a community's health." The League favorably compared race relations in Montclair with cities such as Detroit and Washington. While violent riots erupted in these cities during the summer of 1968, race relations in Montclair remained non-violent. Due to the absence of violence, the League insisted, "Montclair is not Detroit or Washington. It is possible to solve our problems here. Communication is still open. We are small enough in size and we are blessed in abundance with talented people whose goal is the solution of Montclair's problems."¹³² Emphasizing that Montclair was at a critical juncture and that school integration necessary to avoid violence, members forewarned, "The League of Women Voters believes that Montclair now faces its last chance for a peaceful, non destructive resolution of its school problems."¹³³

The Montclair PTA backed school integration even earlier than the LWV, emphasizing it would improve the schools. While the LWV declined to discuss the

¹³² "The Public Schools: Signpost for the Community." League of Women Voters of Montclair-Glen Ridge, Inc. September, 1968. Montclair, New Jersey. Montclair History Room. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

¹³³ "The Public Schools: Signpost for the Community." League of Women Voters of Montclair-Glen Ridge, Inc. September, 1968. Montclair, New Jersey. Montclair History Room. Montclair Public Library. Montclair, New Jersey.

MEP's racial implications, the Montclair PTA officially supported it, asking residents to "seize this opportunity to control change." To gain support for the plan, the PTA stressed educational improvements, including modernized school facilities and reorganization of the junior high curriculum and described the MEP as a "comprehensive proposal with careful economy."¹³⁴ Mrs. Chandler B. Grannis, president of the Montclair PTA, declared that the plan would allow Montclair to shift from the junior high to middle school concept. This, she declared, would "reduce social and athletic pressures on seventh and eighth graders...and give children opportunities they could not possibly enjoy in a large number of schools including more specialized instruction, modern teaching devices, better library services, more flexible groupings, and improved curriculum offerings."¹³⁵ When she mentioned that the MEP would also integrate the 5th-8th grades through the construction of a community-wide middle school, she insisted that this would also improve educational outcomes, proclaiming, "All children grades 5-12 would be enriched by the experience of racial integration."¹³⁶ Segregation, she further contended, "resulted in the cultural deprivation of all students, both Negro and white."¹³⁷ Like other liberal white women who supported integration, Grannis thus highlighted the educational benefits of integration and the MEP.

Montclair's PTA chapters and Junior League of Montclair also supported the board of education's proposal for a \$10 million bond issue in 1970 to fund the

¹³⁴ "PTA Council Endorses Plan, Lauds It as Comprehensive." Montclair Times. November 18, 1965.

¹³⁵ "PTA Council Endorses Plan, Lauds It as Comprehensive." Montclair Times. November 18, 1965.

¹³⁶ "PTA Council Endorses Plan, Lauds It as Comprehensive." Montclair Times. November 18, 1965.

¹³⁷ "PTA Council Endorses Plan, Lauds It as Comprehensive." Montclair Times. November 18, 1965.

construction of a community-wide middle school and renovations to elementary schools.¹³⁸ If approved, the plan would integrate the junior high schools and elementary schools by busing students to a paired elementary school. The Bradford, Grove Street, and Edgemont School PTA chapters voted to campaign in favor of the bond issue before the upcoming election, emphasizing the plan's educational advantages. Louise A. Johns, president of the Edgemont PTA, maintained, "It is time we in Montclair took a positive stand for our young people. A positive stand will be a 'Yes' vote on the \$9.86 million bond issue no Nov. 3."¹³⁹ Johns declared that the bond issue and plan was in the town's best interests. The Junior League also claimed that the board of education's proposal would improve the public school and ignored mentioning the racial implications. Corinne Driver, president of the Junior League, stated that, "we believe that the proposed changes to alleviate over-crowded and antiquated facilities are long overdue...the outcome of this referendum will affect the direction which Montclair and the surrounding communities will take for many years to come." By voting "yes" for the bond, she claimed that residents allowed, "Montclair to maintain a standard of excellence in education."¹⁴⁰

White liberal and African American women backed school integration in Berkeley and Montclair. At the same time, their motivations for supporting integration differed. White women ignored the long history of racial discrimination in the public schools and contended that integration represented the communities' best interests because it would improve the public schools and, by extension, the entire community. Carol Sibley, a member of the Berkeley Board of Education, stressed that she supported

¹³⁸ "PTA Board Backs Resolution." Montclair Times. October 22, 1970.

¹³⁹ Letter to Editor. Louise A. Johns. October 22, 1970. Montclair Times.

¹⁴⁰ "League Board Favorable." October 29, 1970. Letter from Corrine Driver to Editor.

integration because she sought, “the best possible education for all Berkeley children.”¹⁴¹

In stark contrast, African American women viewed school integration as a way to obtain education equality for their children and improve their neighborhood schools. They recognized that integration would provide their community with access to more qualified teachers, better school facilities, challenging courses that prepared Black students for college, smaller class sizes, and other educational resources.

Although white and African American women’s reasons for supporting integration differed, their common investment in quality, integrated schools and long-standing investment in Montclair and Berkeley as attractive residential communities encouraged them to reach across racial lines and create interracial networks that provided grassroots support for integration.

The PTA served as the centerpiece of interracial efforts in Berkeley. Before junior high integration occurred in 1964, the Berkeley PTA purposefully encouraged minorities to assume leadership positions in local chapters. Their aim was “to increase the understanding of all ethnic groups.”¹⁴² The PTA also organized events throughout the 1960s designed to increase interracial understanding, including meetings with the board of education’s task force on integration. At these meetings, African American and white women met together and discussed elementary school integration before it occurred.¹⁴³

Additionally, the Berkeley PTA organized programs that addressed the concerns of women who opposed integration. The spring before elementary school integration

¹⁴¹ “Early Redistricting of Schools Opposed by Majority of Board.” Berkeley Gazette. February 5, 1964.

¹⁴² Berkeley School Desegregation Collection. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Box 4, folder 16. Berkeley, California. From February 1964 PTA Newsletter.

¹⁴³ Berkeley School Desegregation Collection. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Box 4, folder 16. Berkeley, California. From February 1964 PTA Newsletter.

occurred, the Berkeley-Albany PTA Council organized a daylong program for parents. More than 800 parents rode school buses to the school their children would attend in the fall, toured the new school, and met their child's new teachers.¹⁴⁴ PTA chapters also sponsored coffees, potlucks, and other interracial meetings that summer, designed to decrease the fears of parents who opposed integration. Although these events undoubtedly failed to change the minds of all parents opposed to desegregation, it allowed African American and white parents to meet and softened their opposition by making white women recognize that Black residents also were committed to quality public schools and had similar aspirations for their children.

Amanda Williams, the Berkeley PTA's first Black president, recognized that women's common investment in the community and commitment to quality public schools allowed them to work together to implement integration. She recalled that, "we worked hard to bring this about...it took patience and faith. It was something we knew was right to do. We have problems in the schools now, as we had before, but at least now they will be dealt with by both groups. If they are solved, it will only be by both groups working together."¹⁴⁵ Mary Jane Johnson, president of the Berkeley NAACP from 1968 through 1974, declared that integration succeeded because Berkeley "was able to bring different races together and have them learn that human beings are human beings."¹⁴⁶

Carol Sibley and the *Berkeley Gazette* likewise emphasized the importance of women's interracial networks to the implementation of school integration. Sibley

¹⁴⁴ "The First Year." Report of the Berkeley Unified School District, 1968-1968 Academic Year. Berkeley Schools Vertical File-Integration. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

¹⁴⁵ "The First Year." Report of the Berkeley Unified School District, 1968-1968 Academic Year.. Berkeley Schools Vertical File-Integration. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

¹⁴⁶ "Berkeley Makes History." August, 1968. Berkeley Unified School District Newsletter. Berkeley Schools Vertical File-Desegregation. Berkeley History Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

declared, “community involvement is the priceless ingredient...Berkeley illustrates the kind of progress that can result when the community is involved in a meaningful way.”¹⁴⁷ Similarly, the *Gazette*, emphasized the importance of community involvement to integration, stating that, “churches as well as dozens of community groups responded to the challenge of integration in Berkeley...the PTA was active on a variety of fronts, churches and synagogues opened their doors to the discussion of integration, the University YWCA held summer day camps during July and August that included an equal number of Caucasian and Negro children and was designed to give the youngsters a chance to get to know each other before the opening of the fall semester, and several groups of parents got together and started newsletters for their zones and organized house meetings.”¹⁴⁸ Although the *Gazette* did not mention women specifically in the editorial, they led the organizations it listed as facilitating interracial cooperation.

The praised Carol Sibley for her role in the implementation of school integration as a member of the Berkeley Board of Education illustrates how white and Black women worked together despite their different motivations. After her death in 1986, a biracial group organized a celebration of her community service. The event praised Sibley for “building a community of trust across all the cultures, ages, and races.”¹⁴⁹

Comparing Berkeley and Montclair’s politics surrounding school integration illuminates the centrality of women’s interracial networks to the implementation of school integration without violence or white flight and how white and Black women’s

¹⁴⁷ Plan Changes in Schools WITH the Community, not for the Community.” Speech. Carol Sibley Papers, Box 1, Folder 1. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹⁴⁸ “The Community.” *Berkeley Gazette*, August, 1968. Berkeley Schools Vertical File-Desegregation. Berkeley History Room. Berkeley Public Library. Berkeley, California.

¹⁴⁹ Program, “A Community Celebration of the Life of Carol Rhodes Sibley.” Carol Sibley Vertical File. Berkeley Historical Society. Berkeley, California.

support for integration emerged from their efforts to realize their community visions. Since white and Black women had different visions, they also articulated different hopes and visions about what integration would accomplish. White women sought to improve the community while African American women pursued educational resources for their community. At the same time, their common investment in Berkeley and Montclair's development allowed them to work together to implement integration.

Is Busing the Answer?

Although liberal white and African American were pivotal to school integration's implementation in Berkeley and Montclair, some working-class African American women as well as white conservative women opposed integration. Like liberal white and African American women, they demonstrated a clear investment in Berkeley and Montclair as attractive residential communities, yet believed that integration would harm rather than improve the local schools. In Berkeley, opposition to integration was strongest among working-class Black women while white conservative women provided the strongest opposition in Montclair. However, in both communities women opposed integration because of rather than in spite of their investment in their community.

White conservative women in Montclair and Berkeley denied that integration improved the quality of education in the public schools. Less affluent than liberal white women, they often hailed from the middle-class and asserted that school integration was an ill-advised experiment that white liberal elites foisted upon the entire community. White conservative women claimed that neighborhood schools offered the best education and more resources for Black neighborhood schools was the answer.

Some African American women favored improved neighborhood schools instead of integration. Like the Black women who supported integration, still sought to improve their community's schools, yet valued the opportunities for parental involvement in neighborhood schools and failed to see any inherent educational benefit in integration. Additionally, they contended that integration placed an unfair burden on Black children by often forcing them to travel to schools located in white neighborhoods.

Many working-class African Americans rejected the contention that integration would automatically improve the educational achievement of Black students and maintained that these claims harmed Black children's confidence in their abilities. Margaret Wilson, a West Berkeley resident, declared at a public meeting that "Negro children are hurt by the charges that transferring from Garfield to Burbank [a predominantly Black school] would adversely affect a child's education."¹⁵⁰ She maintained that predominantly Black schools encouraged children's academic success, asserting that "the good that exists at Burbank is being forgotten in the debate over school integration."¹⁵¹ Burbank, she claimed, offered educational advantages for Black children. Since white liberals used their belief that Black children learned more in biracial classrooms to justify school integration, African American women who spurned the idea that Black children were less intelligent than white children also often opposed integration.

These women also contended that busing placed an unfair burden on Black children. In Berkeley, the board of education's plan for integration bused Black children from the Berkeley flatlands to the Berkeley Hills for K-3rd grades and allowed white

¹⁵⁰ "2,500 Jam Theater for Hadsell Report Hearing." Berkeley Gazette. January 23, 1964.

¹⁵¹ "2,500 Jam Theater for Hadsell Report Hearing." Berkeley Gazette. January 23, 1964.

children to attend their closest school until the fourth grade. In a letter published in the *Berkeley Gazette*, Virginia Wade maintained that this “placed an unfair ‘burden’ on Negro children”¹⁵² Rather than bus Black children, she demanded that the school board allocate additional resources to predominantly Black elementary schools. This would erase educational inequalities while also allowing Black children to attend their neighborhood school. Aryle Maude Ralph similarly stated that she “was opposed to the assignment of children to any special school districts for the purpose of achieving racial balance” and asserted that the school board could best address racial inequalities by “insuring that a good balance of equipment and teaching staff exists at all schools in our city.”¹⁵³ She claimed that providing neighborhood schools with additional resources would enhance Black children’s educational achievement without forcing them to attend school in other sections of town, declaring that neighborhood schools allowed “children to develop pride in their own school and neighborhood.”¹⁵⁴ By increasing their neighborhood pride, she contended that local segregated schools offered a better learning environment than integrated schools.

White conservative women objected to integration, but their opposition was tinged with racism. Like Black women, they opposed busing for the purposes of integration and maintained that neighborhood schools provided the best educational environment. By claiming to support neighborhood schools for educational resources, white conservative women lobbied for their children’s right to attend all-white schools yet also denied that racism motivated their actions.

¹⁵² Editorial Page. *Berkeley Gazette*. November 14, 1967.

¹⁵³ May 19, 1964. Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Building. Berkeley, California.

¹⁵⁴ May 19, 1964. Berkeley Board of Education Minutes. Berkeley Unified School District Administrative Building. Berkeley, California.

In Montclair, white conservative women formed the Committee for the Neighborhood School System in 1964 to fight the board of education's plan for an integrated community-wide junior high school. Mrs. John Melville and Mrs. William Koenig, the organization's leaders, circulated a petition expressing opposition to the plan. The petition stated, "We support the principle of neighborhood schools in New Jersey and in Montclair. We are seriously concerned that this educational system that has been successful for so many years is being threatened."¹⁵⁵

By claiming to support neighborhood schools for educational reasons, Koenig and Melville ensured that Mount Hebron Junior High, where their children attended, remained segregated while denying that racism motivated their actions. Regardless of their income level or social class, Blacks could not rent or purchase property in the vicinity of Mount Hebron.¹⁵⁶ The school reflected this fact: it was more than 99 percent white.¹⁵⁷ Although they never explicitly discussed race, when they lobbied for neighborhood schools, they fought for their children's right to attend an all-white school.

Conservative women who opposed integration in Berkeley similarly claimed that neighborhood schools provided a better education. Mrs. Shirley J. Struhm was secretary of the Parents Association for Neighborhood Schools (PANS), which formed in 1964 after Berkeley's board of education voted to integrate the junior high school. PANS petitioned for a referendum on school integration. When the courts informed PANS that Berkeley's charter prohibited direct referendums on schools policies, the organization

¹⁵⁵ School System Debate." *Montclair Times*, February 4, 1964.

¹⁵⁶ Jane Caroline Manners, *Selling Integration: A History of the Magnet School System in Montclair, New Jersey* (Cambridge, M.A.: B.A. Honors Thesis, Harvard College, 1997).

¹⁵⁷ For more on grassroots conservative opposition to school segregation, see Lassiter, *Silent Majority* and Kruse, *White Flight*.

gathered enough signatures to force the recall vote on Carol Sibley and Sherman Maisel, the board members who had voted for integration.¹⁵⁸

White conservative women also decried integration as a political cause that white liberals championed with little input from the broader public. In Berkeley, Struhm accused Sibley and Maisel, the school board's white liberal members, of "foisting radical experimentation upon Berkeley's school children."¹⁵⁹ Similarly, Mrs. Joseph Miller viewed integration as apolitical crusade rather than sound educational policy and asserted that, "I don't believe in sacrificing this little troop of hill children in the cause of integration. It's sending a boy out to do a man's job."¹⁶⁰ Margaret Miller, the mother of a son enrolled in Berkeley's schools, also argued that white liberals used children as political pawns and demanded that her son, "not be made a guinea pig."¹⁶¹ She urged further the board take additional time, declaring, "I am totally against busing my child out of his neighborhood elementary school...we cannot rush integration...our children are our most treasured possessions and we should have some say in what happens to them."¹⁶² Miller requested that the board "leave the grammar schools as they are, work to improve the schools that need improving with additional teachers and smaller classes, individual help, counseling with parents and especially trained personnel."¹⁶³ Margaret

¹⁵⁸ "Recall Vote Ordered By Court." Oakland Tribune. August 19, 1964.

¹⁵⁹ "Recall Vote Ordered By Court." Oakland Tribune. August 19, 1964.

¹⁶⁰ "Teamwork by white, colored youths sought." Berkeley Gazette. December 4, 1963.

¹⁶¹ September 20, 1967 Letter to the Berkeley Board of Education from Mrs. Margaret Miller. Carol Sibley Papers. Box One. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹⁶² September 20, 1967 Letter to the Berkeley Board of Education from Mrs. Margaret Miller. Carol Sibley Papers. Box One. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

¹⁶³ September 20, 1967 Letter to the Berkeley Board of Education from Mrs. Margaret Miller. Carol Sibley Papers. Box One. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

Miller, Shirley Struhm, and Mrs. Joseph Miller viewed integration as an unwise experiment that white liberals hastily initiated that would harm school-age children.

Although white conservative women claimed not to act out of racial prejudice, in reality they supported segregated schools. Struhm lived at the edge of the Berkeley Hills and her children attended Garfield Junior High School, which was more than 98 percent white. As secretary of PANS, she worked to ensure that her children continued to attend a segregated school. Mrs. Joseph Miller claimed that she was not racist, yet objected to sending her children to predominantly Black schools. She insisted that, “Burbank is a bad school...I wouldn’t want to send my children there. It isn’t a question of race but type of people.”¹⁶⁴ Miller and Struhm maintained that they supported neighborhood schools because these schools provided elementary and junior high school students with the best education, yet strove to ensure that their children to attend nearly all-white schools.

In Montclair, white conservative women also viewed integration as undemocratic, contending that liberals’ ignored most residents’ views. White conservative women organized Citizens for an Elected School Board in September of 1969 to change to school board from being appointed by the town commission to being elected by residents.¹⁶⁵ Montclair voters had already rejected three plans for junior high school integration proposed by the Montclair Board of Education. Thus, Citizens for an Elected School Board contended that the board of education’s continued support for integration was clearly against the wishes of most residents. They attempted to make the board of education’s views directly reflect the popular will by making the board elected rather

¹⁶⁴ “Teamwork by white, colored youths sought.” Berkeley Gazette. December 4, 1963.

¹⁶⁵ “Two Named By ‘Citizens.’” Montclair Times. September 11, 1969.

than appointed. Mrs. Arthur Porcelli, president of Citizens for an Elected School Board, asserted, “The selection of the members to the appointment Board of Education makes the members more removed from the popular will.”¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Dorothy Kintzing, secretary of the organization, claimed, “Our belief is that board members are hampered by the lack of constituency inherent in the appointed system. We want to give board members the two essential tools of democratic government: direct responsibility to the people of Montclair and a mandate for them expressed in popular vote.”¹⁶⁷

Although women were instrumental in school integration’s implementation in Berkeley and Montclair, women also opposed it. Like white liberal women, white conservative women were invested in the community, but sought the interests of their children rather than claiming to help minority children. In their view, white liberals forced school integration upon the community. They never explicitly discussed race, but lobbied for the perpetuation of segregated junior high and elementary schools. Some African American women rejected the claim that integration would improve their children’s educational achievement and preferred to lobby for improved Black neighborhood schools instead of integrated schools, valuing the local control that neighborhood schools promised.

Conclusion

During the 1960s, gender ideology still tied women to their family and neighborhood. White and Black women demonstrated a tremendous investment in their community by working to create what they perceived as a quality school system and

¹⁶⁶ “Elective Board is Favored.” Montclair Times. September 18, 1968.

¹⁶⁷ “Two Named By ‘Citizens.’” Montclair Times. September 11, 1969.

remained at the forefront of school politics despite articulating different reasons for supporting integration and, at times, even opposing integration.

White liberal women claimed that school integration was in the entire community's best interests because it would improve the public schools, which were a central part of their vision of Berkeley and Montclair as attractive residential communities and worked alongside Black women to create quality integrated schools.

White conservative women opposed school integration, but remained invested in Montclair and Berkeley's public schools. Many were less affluent than white liberal women and viewed school integration as an undemocratic experiment that white liberal elites foisted on the community. White conservative women rejected the contention that integration would improve the public schools and claimed that neighborhood schools provided the best education. Insisting that they supported segregated neighborhood schools because these schools offered the best education, white conservative women seldom mentioned race and, when they did, denied that racism motivated their actions.

Long interested in obtaining more educational resources for their community, African American women demanded that white liberals integrate the public schools. Black women viewed it as the most expedient way to improve their children's educational opportunities. At the same time, some Black women remained focused on improving neighborhood schools, which they contended offered Black children many educational advantages.

Despite the common importance of women to school integration, differences also existed in Berkeley and Montclair's politics surrounding school integration. In Berkeley, white liberals used the implementation of school integration to construct a narrative of

the city as a progressive community that provided a model of positive race relations. In Montclair, white liberals claimed that school integration was in the entire community's interests because quality schools and the avoidance of racial violence were necessary to remain attractive to prospective middle-class white residents.

In both communities, school integration illustrates the complexity of racial politics. White liberals applauded themselves for implementing school integration. Unfortunately, this concealed a complex history of racial discrimination in the public schools. White progressives attempted to subordinate and control minorities during the interwar period, yet also improved the quality of life for them and acknowledged that racial minorities were members of the community entitled to municipal resources. During the 1960s, white liberals attempted to control school integration, but connected it to helping Blacks and improving the community rather than racial equality. On the other hand, once integration occurred, Black children had access to modern school facilities, new textbooks, qualified teachers, and a more challenging curriculum as white residents refused to accept substandard schools for their children. African American women realized their long-standing goal of providing their children with the educational opportunities necessary for economic mobility.

Conclusion: Racial Utopias?

On July 4th, 1974 Octavia Catlett made history as the first woman and African American to serve as Grand Marshall of Montclair's 24th annual Independence Day parade. *The Montclair Times* hailed the predominantly white parade committee's decision to honor her civic contributions, stating that Catlett was an "outstanding woman" who "richly-deserved" the honor.¹ According to the *Times*, "she represents a large group of outstanding women in the community that have made significant contributions to the improvement of Montclair."² As evidence, the paper cited her leadership in the Montclair NAACP between 1943 and 1948, 1954 and 1960, and 1971 and 1972, a period spanning almost three decades, as well as her 38 year career as a teacher in the New York City public schools, and participation in Montclair's Citizens Advisory Committee for Community Improvement. The *Times* praised Catlett, hailing that "her manifold accomplishments have been in the cause of justice, equality, harmony, opportunity, and responsibility for every citizen in Montclair."³

Catlett's selection as Grand Marshal demonstrates how white residents viewed African Americans, especially professionals like Catlett, as equal citizens and civic leaders by the mid 1970s and celebrated Montclair's racial diversity. White civic leaders excluded Black social clubs and organizations from the first Independence Day Parade held in 1950 and the parade route bypassed Black neighborhoods.⁴ The white

¹ "Richly-Deserved Honor." *Montclair Times*. June 27, 1974.

² "Richly-Deserved Honor." *Montclair Times*. June 27, 1974.

³ "Richly-Deserved Honor." *Montclair Times*. June 27, 1974.

⁴ Audrey Fletcher Interview. Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, February 5, 2001. Montclair African American Oral History Project. Montclair Historical Society. Montclair, New Jersey.

community's celebration of Catlett's civic leadership thus represents a stark change in racial politics. At the same time, similar to how liberal white women supported integration because it benefitted the entire town, the *Times* praised Catlett for gendering civic responsibility and harmony and omitted any mention of her efforts to secure civic equality for African Americans.

Comparing Berkeley and Montclair's racial politics during the pre and post WWII eras reveals how white, African American, and European immigrant women's efforts to realize their community visions placed them at the forefront of racial politics and shaped Berkeley and Montclair's development. During the Progressive Era, women's activism focused on urban issues, but during the 1920s and 1930s, the locus of women's activism followed middle and upper-class white women to rapidly developing suburbs. Berkeley and Montclair exemplify this trend. White, African American, and European immigrant women transformed Berkeley and Montclair into residential communities that featured attractive homes, quality schools, and a physically healthy and morally wholesome environment for families. More importantly, linking the post and pre WWII eras demonstrates that women's community investment forestalled the possibility of white flight to racially homogeneous suburbs during the postwar era, ensured that Montclair and Berkeley remained attractive residential communities, and transformed Berkeley and Montclair into liberal communities that celebrated their racial diversity.

Linking women's post and pre WWII civic activism identifies that the helping impulse is an important continuity in white women's activism in racially and socially heterogeneous suburbs. Between 1920 and 1970, white women linked improving Montclair and Berkeley to assisting racial and ethnic minorities even as the issues they

focused on changed to reflect local politics. During the interwar period, white women in the Junior League of Montclair, Mobilized Women of Berkeley, and other women's clubs created social welfare programs that provided material and educational resources and improved family life for minorities. After WWII, white women active in the Berkeley and Montclair's LWV chapters advocated for housing reform. Finally, during the 1960s, white women in the PTA and LWV supported school integration. White women contended that their reforms and programs benefited the entire community by improving the standard of living for minority residents. Similar to what Mary Corbin Sies finds in late 19th and early 20th century streetcar suburbs, white women in Montclair and Berkeley transformed public policy and shaped community development by creating what they perceived as a safe and uplifting environment.⁵

Metropolitan and feminist scholars including Becky Nicolaides, Elizabeth Ewen and Rosalyn Baxandall, Lisa McGirr, and Sylvie Murray have highlighted the centrality of women's networks and organizations to suburban civic life and politics in communities as diverse as Queens and Levittown, New York and South Gate and Orange County, California.⁶ Berkeley and Montclair's female residents were likewise central to civic life and politics.

At the same time, Berkeley and Montclair's white female activists' racially inclusive community vision reflects how Montclair and Berkeley were a different type of

⁵Mary Corbin Sies, "The Domestic Mission of the Privileged American Suburban Homemaker, 1877-1917: A Reassessment," *Making the American Home: Middle-Class Women & Domestic Material Culture, 1840-1940*, eds. Marilyn Ferris Motz and Pat Browne (Bowling Green, O.H.: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988), pp. 193-210.

⁶Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 154-5; Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Sylvie Murray, *The Progressive Housewife: Community Activism in Suburban Queens, 1945-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003) and, "How Did Suburban Development and Domesticity Shape Women's Activism in Queens, New York, 1945-1968," *Women and Social Movements in the United States* (online journal) Issue 10:1 (2006).

suburban community than Levittown, South Gate, Orange County, and even Queens. Ewen and Baxandall, Nicolaides, and McGirr focus on racially and economically homogeneous suburbs inhabited by either working-class or middle-class white residents that primarily developed during the postwar period. Residents' communities consistently attempted to exclude African Americans and other minority groups from their communities.

The female activists in Queens that Murray examines in the *Progressive Housewife* more closely reflect Montclair and Berkeley's white female activists. These women also enjoyed high levels of educational attainment, hailed from the upper middle and middle-classes, espoused a progressive political ideology, and lived in a socially and racially heterogeneous community. Still, Queens' racial diversity emerged after WWII while Montclair and Berkeley had pockets of Black and Japanese residents during the interwar period. This long history of racial diversity encouraged white female residents to view minorities as members of the community and support progressive policies designed to improve their standard of living.

My dissertation also identifies new groups of women that shaped suburban development. Japanese American, European immigrant, and African American women were also agents of change in suburban communities. Barred from most other suburbs during the interwar period and, for Blacks, the postwar period as well, these women had even more at stake in shaping their neighborhood's development than white women. They fought to create vibrant communities that reflected their cultural and ethnic beliefs, provided a physically and morally safe environment, and offered opportunities for their children's educational and economic advancement. Given their political exclusion,

geographic confinement, social subordination, and lack of access to most white-collar and professional jobs, minority women overcame tremendous obstacles to realize their community goals.

Additionally, linking the post and pre WWII eras sheds new light on the origins of white working-class women's resistance to housing and school integration. Matthew Lassiter, Thomas Sugrue, Robert O. Self, and other metropolitan historians have noted white working-class women's tenacious grassroots resistance to integration without contextualizing their community activism.⁷ In Berkeley and Montclair, they surmounted significant barriers including unwelcome industrial, dense residential and commercial development that Berkeley and Montclair's governments approved against their will to transform their neighborhoods into vibrant communities. They viewed integration as an attack on their autonomy and right to control their neighborhood's development.

In addition to these crucial insights about suburban women's activism, the comparative approach identifies an important new type of metropolitan community that scholars have previously ignored. Montclair and Berkeley represent two of dozens of racially and socially heterogeneous suburbs clustered in the Midwest, Northeast, and California around Boston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Newark, and other nineteenth century industrial cities that developed before WWII. These communities, commonly referred to as "inner-ring suburbs" include the Oranges, Bloomfield, and Glen Ridge, New Jersey, Chestnut Hill, Mt. Airy, Bryn Mawr, and Ardmore, Pennsylvania, Shaker Heights, Ohio, Evanston, Illinois, Pasadena, California,

⁷ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007).

New Rochelle, New York, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. Only a handful of metropolitan planners and historians have examined the development and politics of these communities. Moreover, the dominant framework for understanding U.S. metropolitan history and development ignores what little research exists.

Understanding the history of development and racial politics of inner-ring suburbs like Montclair and Berkeley is critical to contemporary metropolitan planning and policies. Currently 20 percent of Americans reside in these communities. Moreover, these communities often have tremendous racial and economic diversity. While most inner-ring suburban residents hold managerial or professional positions, 33 percent of immigrants currently immediately settled in these communities after arriving in the U.S. Similar to how Italian immigrants, African Americans, and Japanese comprised a higher percentage of Montclair and Berkeley's population than Newark, New York, San Francisco, or Oakland during the 1920s and 1930s, currently immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa often comprise a higher percentage of the population in inner-ring suburbs than in nearby cities.⁸ Thus, while most inner-ring suburban residents hold managerial or professional positions, ensuring that the mean income is usually higher than for the entire metropolitan region, many residents live below the poverty line and considerable economic diversity exists. Finally, like Montclair and Berkeley's residents, most inner-ring suburbanites currently espouse a liberal political ideology. More scholarship is needed to understand the development of the unique issues facing these communities.

⁸ Robert Puentes and David Warren, Brookings Institute, *One-Fifth of America: A Comprehensive Guide to America's First Suburbs* (Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institute, February 2006).

The dissertation's comparative approach as well as examining the pre and post WWII eras also demonstrates how the categories urban and suburban obscure the social, racial, and political complexity of metropolitan regions. During the interwar period, both Montclair and Berkeley's white residents frequently identified as suburbanites but categorized Berkeley as urban after WWII as Black migration and the University of California's growth increased Berkeley's population. Both communities remained primarily white and middle-class, yet white residents had sharply different conceptualizations of their community. Berkeley's white residents crafted new image as a progressive city at the forefront of social change while Montclair's attempted to ensure that the town remained a desirable white middle-class suburb. When Berkeley or Montclair's residents advocated for school integration, their actions reflected their conceptualization of Berkeley and Montclair. The categories urban and suburban are important, but primarily because the actions of residents reinforced these categories. Scholars should consider how residents defined their community and, more importantly, how it shifted over time, rather than place communities in the constructed categories of urban and suburban.

The comparative approach also highlights differences between Berkeley and Montclair's development and racial politics. Both white communities embraced school integration and created a racially inclusive community vision, but for different reasons. In Berkeley, white residents envisioned Berkeley as a progressive city that served as a model for other metropolitan communities. The University of California's presence as an international center of knowledge production and culture fueled this ideal and shifted

racial politics leftward. White liberals embraced school integration out of this impulse, viewing it as a progressive movement that Berkeley should lead.

In Montclair, on the other hand, white liberals contended school integration and an expanded Black civic voice were in the entire community's best interests. The significant Black population harmed Montclair's desirability to prospective white residents who preferred to move to racially homogeneous communities. The LWV declared that Montclair had a choice between quality integrated schools or a downward spiral of decline fueled by violence, citizen indifference, and lack of communication between white and Black residents. White liberals accepted school integration and an expanded Black civic voice out of their pride in and desire to maintain Montclair's position as an attractive residential community.

Despite the different reasons for supporting school integration, Montclair and Berkeley's white communities' civic pride predated the civil rights movement and existence of a large Black community. The white community's support for integration emerged from their pride rather than support for racial equality. Scholars should link pre and post WWII racial politics to better understand the rationale behind white communities' reaction to Black migration and the civil rights movement.

Additionally, Montclair's politics had a strong paternalism that reflected the history of domestic service. In Montclair, the employment of more than 50 percent of Black residents in service sector jobs during the interwar period created a complex racial politics predicated on the white community's social and political subordination and control of African Americans. Even after Blacks obtained other employment, the white

community proved reluctant to accept Black civic leadership and assumed that they understood and acted in the interests of African Americans.

On the other hand, the economic diversity of Berkeley's Black community allowed Blacks to obtain a strong civic voice earlier. During the interwar period, most African Americans worked in professional jobs or as Pullman Porters. During the 1940s, recent Black migrants usually worked in industrial rather than service sector jobs while established Black residents held professional positions. Berkeley's Black community enjoyed greater economic and social autonomy from the local white elite than Montclair's and obtained civic leadership positions earlier. Berkeley's white residents elected Roy Nichols president of the Berkeley Board of Education in 1964. In sharp contrast, the Montclair Board of Education's white liberals refused to appoint Bessie Marsh as president in 1965, citing that Montclair was "not ready for Negro leadership."⁹

The emergence of a radical coalition in Berkeley during the early 1970s also politically empowered the Black community. Blacks routinely formed almost 50 percent of member of the Berkeley Board of Education and City Council between the mid 1970s and 1980s. The Black community was the swing vote between the liberal and radical coalitions because they voted for Black candidates regardless of their political affiliation. The liberal and radical coalitions always nominated several Black candidates.¹⁰ Once in power, Black city officials implemented aggressive affirmative action employment laws, mandated the inclusion of Black history into the public school curriculum, and funded improvements to municipal services in Black neighborhoods. Black civic leaders also ensured that the Black community obtained recognition through countless symbolic

⁹ Super Named, Mrs. Marsh Resigns-NAACP Asks Probe." *Montclair Times*. February 4, 1965.

¹⁰ *Experiment and Change in Berkeley, 1950-1975*, eds. Harriet Nathan and Stanley Scott (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of Governmental Series, University of California, Berkeley, 1978).

gestures such as renaming public schools after Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. and instituting municipal holidays for their birthdays.

Berkeley and Montclair currently struggle to maintain their civic vibrancy. Most white middle and upper-class women hold full-time jobs, leaving scant time for civic engagement. Norma Gray, a longtime West Berkeley resident and parishioner at St. Joseph's, recalled that, "The mothers' club provided most of the volunteer services...when that dwindled it became much more difficult. When women began to go back to work, it became obvious. We had volunteer everything at the school and parish at one time. In fact nobody got paid for anything. Today everything is paid."¹¹ Gray noted that the loss of female volunteers forced the parish to hire paid staff, stating that, "The choir directors, pianist, and organist are all paid and CCD directors [religious education directors]."¹² While women undoubtedly still participated in neighborhood organizations, full-time employment likely limited the scope and intensity of their participation. Both communities must figure out a way to keep taxes affordable while continuing female volunteers' important civic initiatives.

Berkeley and Montclair also currently face a similar challenge in maintaining their economic and racial diversity. Paradoxically, their reputation as integrated communities attracts white and Black professionals seeking a diverse community. This increases the cost of housing beyond the affordable range for working-class Black residents. In Berkeley, working-class Blacks have moved to developing suburbs farther from the Bay Area's metropolitan center in search of affordable housing. African

¹¹ Norma Gray Interview. Interviewed by author October 21, 2008 in interviewee's home. Berkeley, California.

¹² Norma Gray Interview. Interviewed by author October 21, 2008 in interviewee's home. Berkeley, California.

Americans represented only 11 percent of residents in 1993, down from 19 percent in 1980.¹³ Tony G., a former African American resident, rented an apartment when she worked in Berkeley, but purchased a home in Vallejo. She cited Berkeley's high housing as her reason, stating that, "We looked in Berkeley but we found a new house with a large yard for \$78,000 in Vallejo. We couldn't get anything close to that in Berkeley."¹⁴

Similarly, Blacks form a decreasing percent of Montclair's population. Blacks formed 30 percent of residents in 2000, but only 27 percent by 2008.¹⁵ *The New York Times* described Montclair as, "a magnet for young urban professionals seeking to raise their children in the suburbs, but still thirsting for the culture and diversity of city life."¹⁶ Robin Ross, a lawyer, and her husband, a neurosurgeon, stated that they moved to Montclair from Hoboken after she became pregnant with twins "because we wanted to our children to grow up in a diverse, integrated town with a fully integrated school system."¹⁷ James Sherril, a resident of the fourth ward, remarked that the formerly Black neighborhood was mostly white by 2004.¹⁸

In 2002, the extension of a train line into the fourth ward accelerated the influx of white professionals. The Montclair Connection would decrease the travel time between New York and Montclair to less than forty minutes, making the neighborhood attractive to commuters. Chares L. Smith, the fourth ward's town council representative, contended that the project offered his predominantly Black constituents little value, stating that, "the connection would save time for passengers, but would go through

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey.

¹⁴ "African Americans Leaving Berkeley Behind." *Oakland Tribune*. August 3, 1993.

¹⁵ 1990 U.S. Census Data and 2000 U.S. Census Data. U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey.

¹⁶ "Culture, Parks, and Broad Social Diversity." *The New York Times*. August 17, 1997.

¹⁷ "Culture, Parks, and Broad Social Diversity." *The New York Times*. August 17, 1997.

¹⁸ "Montclair School Diversity Prize, but Work Remains." *The Star-Ledger*. May 18, 2004.

seventeen properties in a mostly working-class neighborhood that doesn't use the train to go to New York City.”¹⁹ John Sterling, a longtime resident, remarked that because of the train line's imminent opening, “there is [sic] always people that want to live here...it will be a thirty minute ride to New York City and it is making people come here from Long Island.”²⁰ Gwen Williams, who lived in Montclair her entire life, linked the Montclair Connection to the fourth ward's higher rents and home prices. She declared that, “you can tell the newcomers...in New York they don't think anything of paying \$2,000 a month for an apartment. They come here and buy a house for \$300,000 and are still making out better. That's why rents are so high.”²¹ These longtime Black residents recognized that the fourth ward drove home prices upwards, making the neighborhood unaffordable for the Black working-class.

The influx of Asians and Latinos has also reshaped local politics and civic life in Montclair and Berkeley. In Berkeley, Blacks are currently the second largest minority group, comparable in size to the Latino population but significantly smaller than the Asian population.²² In Montclair, Latinos comprise 6 percent of the population and Asians 4 percent.²³ In the next decades, integration of Asians and Latinos into civic life will be a key political issue.

Additionally, in the coming decades metropolitan politics will more likely reflect Berkeley and Montclair's nuanced politics predicated on controlling and subordinating

¹⁹ “Culture, Parks, and Broad Social Diversity.” The New York Times. August 17, 1997.

²⁰ Interview with John Sterling. Interviewed by Kenneth French. African American Oral History Project. Interview Conducted by Kenneth French. November 26, 2000.

²¹ Gwen Williams. Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard. African American Oral History Project. September 18, 20001.

²² U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey. Asians comprised eighteen percent of Berkeley's residents in 2008 while Latinos and African Americans each comprised approximately ten percent.

²³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey.

minorities rather than the post WWII model of excluding them entirely from the community. Montclair and Berkeley demonstrate that racial diversity does not necessarily lead to racially equality. Moreover, Montclair and Berkeley's current trends suggest that racial diversity can also create escalating housing costs and less social diversity. Metropolitan communities must create new ways to provide affordable housing while maintaining a high quality of life. Finally, communities must create new ways to foster civic engagement since it is crucial to maintaining vibrant communities.

Women's activism transformed Berkeley and Montclair into multi-racial communities with high levels of civic engagement. During the interwar period, women claimed that their civic activism complemented their role as wives and mothers, but by the 1950s women explicitly linked their civic leadership to their role as mothers. In 1929, Lucretia Grady declared that, "the undertakings of women's clubs in Berkeley have proved that women do not have to give up the activities of the supervision of the home to take up larger responsibilities outside....outside responsibilities may easily be dove-tailed with the home and social life."²⁴ Grady cited herself as an example. Despite having four children and responsibility for maintaining a large estate, she joined several women's clubs in Berkeley. In the Berkeley LWV's 1954-1955 annual report, Mrs. Robert Craig, a Berkeley resident and officer in the LWV, hailed the linked between women's home and civic leadership, exclaiming, "Meet Mrs. Berkeley New Member! She is relatively young; she has preschool or school age children, or both...she belongs to a many organizations but those centering around her children-church, PTA, Scouting-are apt to

²⁴ "Glimpses into the Lives of Outstanding Berkeley Women." Berkeley Gazette. November 21, 1929.

have her attention.”²⁵ White and minority women had varying degrees of success at implementing their specific community goals, yet through their community activism, they created a new suburban vision of Berkeley and Montclair as communities where all residents regardless of their race or class lived in attractive neighborhoods.

²⁵ 1954-1955 Annual Report. League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, and Emeryville Records. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

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